

The Gospel of John

3:1-9

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.

✠ **John 3:1-2** *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

Nicodemus, so who was this guy anyway?

Well, according to scripture he was "a ruler of the Jews". To put it simply, he was a Sanhedrin.

A what?

A Sanhedrin, he was a leader of a very strict sect of religious leaders.

Halley's bible handbook describes them as such: *The recognized headship of the Jewish people, in the days of Christ. It is thought to have originated in the 3rd century B.C. It was composed of 70 members, mostly priests and Sadducean nobles, some Pharisees, scribes, and elders (tribal or family heads), presided over by the high priest.*

His full name (according to John Gill's exposition of the entire bible) is Nicodemon ben Gorion and you may have heard of his brother Josephus ben Gorion who was the writer of "*Josephus the Wars and Antiquities of the Jews*".

The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy members all of whom were required to be over thirty years of age and married. They must be of good reputation and well instructed in the law.

It is also believed that Paul was a Sanhedrin.

✠ **Acts 26:5** *They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.*

So this Nicodemus was a pretty big guy for his time, it would like being one of the right hand men of the pope.

We notice that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. There are two or more possible reasons why.

First because he feared for his own standing in the religious circle and didn't want to be banded for being seen talking to Jesus alone.

Second he also could have come at night to speak personally with Jesus, wanting a one on one conversation with Jesus without all the crowds.

As high of an official that Nicodemus was, he could have sent one of his servants to ask Jesus the questions that he had for Jesus. But instead he chose to ask Jesus first hand, even if it was at night and even if someone could have seen him talking to Jesus.

He was just too curious himself to send someone else and he wanted to find out firsthand about Jesus and what Jesus was teaching.

It kind of makes you wonder what the religious leaders were talking about, since we just read in chapter two of how Jesus cleaned house (God's Temple) during the Passover. Nicodemus was very likely one of the men who spoke with Jesus in chapter two. But you can rest assured that he was there, and heard what Jesus was saying. Remember?

† **John 2:16** *And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"*

Nicodemus heard something strange but wonderful, it was strange that anyone would call God's temple "**My Father's house**" this was just not done. None of the religious leaders ever referred to the Temple as their father's house. This would have sparked an interest in Nicodemus.

Then Jesus' second statement he just couldn't understand and wanted to know what it had meant.

† **John 2:19** *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

So Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and says;

✚ **John 3:2** *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

One thing that Nicodemus says that just cracks me up is? "**Rabbi, we know**"

"We" we who? Nicodemus is the only one there.

But there was very likely much discussion about Jesus and all that He was doing already, and this being the first year of Jesus' ministry.

I wonder if this discussion started Nicodemus thinking, because apparently the other religious leaders refused to believe or even listen to Jesus.

It makes you wonder if others hear your conversation about Jesus with someone else, and if it sparks an interest in them to search out Jesus just as Nicodemus did? If you think about it, they may come to you asking questions.

Are you prepared?

Have you read God's word?

Have you prayed for Godly wisdom and for His words to flow from your mouth to others?

But we know that Nicodemus did hear Jesus' words and wanted to know more. This was a softening of his heart that was not happening to these other religious leaders, who refused to listen to God and choose their own way as the right way (Even if it was wrong).

Now before we get too hard on Nicodemus, two very important things to note.

First off, two years later Nicodemus defended Jesus in front of the Scribes and Pharisees, which were of the same sect.

† **John 7:50-52** *Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."*

Also, after Jesus died, he helps prepare Jesus' body and put it in the tomb.

† **John 19:38-40** *After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.*

By reading verse 39 we can tell that Nicodemus was very well off financially.

† *And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.*

We will study these verses more when we get to their respective chapters. So did Nicodemus become a believer? I plan on seeing him in heaven!

So once again Nicodemus says to Jesus.'

✠ **John 3:2** *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

Jesus answers with.

✠ **John 3:3** *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

"Now wait a minute. Nicodemus didn't ask Jesus about the kingdom of God. What's going on here?"

Jesus knew the heart of Nicodemus and got straight to the heart of the matter. Nicodemus didn't want to know about signs, he was just making conversation, but Jesus cut to the chase and told Nicodemus exactly what he came to Jesus to seek after. But he did know that the kingdom of God was with Jesus and he could tell by the signs Jesus did. Just read his question again to Jesus.

✠ **John 3:2** *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

People will go to church on Easter and Christmas and may even go another time if you invite them. They will say they are going because you are supposed to on these holidays, or just to shut you up so you stop asking them to come to church with you. But the truth is, they are going because everyone is seeking God.

The problem comes when they are seeking God and are given a detour into a cult or a false doctrine. In their ignorance and hunger for God (Which we all have) they grasp onto what they think God is or where they think He is.

But there is only one true place to find God, and that's in the bible.

Let's say you wanted to build a house from scratch. A friend gives you a book on how to do everything from laying the foundation to the right way to roof a house.

But then along comes someone who is a baker in a bakery and they say, "*I know how to build a house. You don't need that book.*" The end results would be disaster. Your house would end up being a loaf of bread. Not suitable to live in.

That's what happens with cults and false religions. They say they know God, but in reality they know nothing about the God of the bible. Or they will twist the words in the bible to make their way the right way.

The Sanhedrin appeared to know God. Of course they knew His laws forwards and backwards. In fact, they knew it so well that they even added to it, calling it expounding on God's law and what God meant.

Just as you can read the bible a hundred times, but if you don't apply it to your life or you add to it, then you really know nothing about God or what He says in His word.

That's what was going on here with Nicodemus. He knew God's word, but didn't really know God. But he was searching and that's why he went to Jesus.

✠ **John 3:4** *Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"*

Some may read Nicodemus' response and think he is an idiot for asking such a question. But the thing was, he was being honest and didn't understand what Jesus was saying. Even though he had all this knowledge of God's word, he humbled himself enough to say that he didn't understand.

† **Prov 18:2** *A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart.*

Nicodemus was not a fool. He wanted to understand and not express his own opinion. This is wisdom.

We also read of Thomas and have even called him “Doubting Thomas” because he asked questions. Wisdom comes by asking not by keeping your mouth shut to appear to look smart to others. If Nicodemus didn’t ask the questions he might have walked away and never been saved, all because of his pride.

You may have heard the expression “*there is no such thing as a stupid question, just stupid mistakes for not asking.*” To appear you know all about the bible and God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit is really showing our ignorance and pride.

Even though I teach God’s word. There are so many things I have no idea about. People may ask me a question and there are times that I really have to search the scriptures for those hard to find the answers, or ask another brother or sister in the Lord. I rather give the right answer then just skim over the answer appearing to have knowledge when I really don’t know what I’m talking about.

We have all had the run around with car salesmen and even Christians who run around the truth of God’s word. It’s not fun being around.

But Nicodemus was honest and Jesus knew this and expounded on what He said to Nicodemus.

✠ **John 3:5-8** *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

People will read verse five and say that Jesus is saying that you must be baptized in order to be saved. We discussed this in past studies in chapter one.

But you must also notice that water is used here without any mention of baptism. Also as Nicodemus knew the Old Testament and God’s law, he knew that water represented a cleansing.

He also knew the following verses in the Old Testament.

✠ **Ezek 36:25-27** *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

So Jesus says, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*

Nicodemus you should understand if you remember what I said through Ezekiel. But to explain it further.

✎ *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

We cannot see physically when someone is saved. Even ourselves, we notice a change in our lives, but we cannot see any physical thing changing us.

On a Fall day, when the wind is blowing the leaves on the trees, you cannot see the wind blowing the leaves or even the wind blowing the clouds in the sky making them move. But you do see the effects of the wind on the trees and clouds. So it is with the Holy Spirit in our lives. People cannot see the Holy Spirit in us or Jesus physically there with us working in us, but they do see the effects of the Holy Spirit and Jesus in our lives.

I remember before I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I used to cuss a lot. Every other word was a four-letter word and I'm not exaggerating. My mouth was so bad I would make a sailor blush. But the day I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I said four cuss word the whole day and have never returned to cussing since. This was the effect of the Holy Spirit in my life. That old thing had passed away and my speech became new. No one could see the Holy Spirit in me making this change, but they saw the effects of the Holy Spirit in my life.

✎ *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

Maybe you have had a similar experience, maybe not cussing, but possible drugs or alcohol was taken away. Maybe you stopped looking at pornography or you quit smoking. The Spirit works different ways in each person, as He sees the thing that needs to be changed in their life.

So after all of this Nicodemus asks:

✎ **John 3:9** *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"*

Have you noticed a pattern here? Have you noticed Jesus is doing most of the talking? This also is wisdom, knowing when to ask simple, not long-winded questions, and listening to the answers.

Could you imagine speaking with Jesus face to face, having His undivided attention, asking Him anything you wanted? That's what Nicodemus was experiencing here, and when Jesus speaks you don't want to do very much talking, just listening to what Jesus has to say!

I think we will stop right here and continue on next week, because there is so much in Jesus' response that we can't just skim over it.
But go ahead and read the rest of chapter three and take notes and prepare for next week's study.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy!