

ALWAYS BE READY
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Many people believed that Jesus was from God due to the miracles He performed. "While He was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many trusted in His name when they saw the signs He was doing." (John 2:23)

In John chapter 3, we find the account of Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. (The Sanhedrin was the equivalent of our Senate, the top lawmakers of the day.) Nicodemus wanted to talk with Jesus, so he arranged a nighttime visit. He would never let this be known because if it came out, he would be removed from his lofty position. Thus, the visit at night, hoping not to be seen.

Nicodemus tells Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him." (John 3:2b) Nicodemus uses the word "we," not "I," because he knows many of the Jewish people have come to believe that.

He is here to ask about a statement Jesus had made: "Jesus replied, 'I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:3) Nicodemus does not understand. He is thinking the worldly view, not the spiritual view. Because of his misunderstanding, his question is this: "But how can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" (John 3:4)

The doctrine that a man can bury his old sinful life and begin a new one with freshness of youthful hope is foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1:18; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), and taught in the New Testament (Rom. 6:8; 8:3; 12:2; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15-16). Jesus answered, "⁵ I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5-6) Now Nicodemus is even more confused.

The key phrase is, "Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." There are two requirements: that no one is a member of the kingdom of God until he is born again, and that the Savior declares the impossibility of one entering who is not born of water and the Spirit. One must be baptized and let the Spirit lead their life. Getting wet is not enough. If that person doesn't change from their old, sinful life and lead a Spirit-filled life, all that has happened is they got wet. "Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 3:21)

Our fleshly body is endowed with sinful carnal desires. It is the inward man. Then Jesus says, "⁷ Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. ⁸ The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:7-8) The wind's origin is invisible, but its effects can be seen; it is the same with those born of the Spirit.

Now Nicodemus is even more confused. "Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?'" (John 3:9) He has gone from a skeptic to a humble inquirer. He wants to truly understand what Jesus is telling him. "¹⁰ Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know these things?" ¹¹Jesus replied. "I assure you: We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, but you do not accept Our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about things that happen on earth and you don't believe, how will you

believe if I tell you about things of heaven? (John 3:10-12) Jesus tells Nicodemus you would not understand things of heaven because you do not accept what I have told you. If you, Nicodemus, cannot understand the connection between human life and the rebirth of the Spiritual life, you will not understand things of heaven. How can Jesus tell things about heaven if He has not been in heaven?

“¹⁴ No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15) No person has ever ascended to heaven, come back to earth, and told of what was seen. Jesus refers to Himself as one who came from heaven to earth. This implies that He existed before He appeared on earth, heaven was His true home, and that on earth, His spirit was in communication with heaven. Please take time and read Philippians 2:1-11. It supports the last words of John 3:15.

“¹⁸ Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God. ¹⁹ This, then, is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and avoids it so that his deeds may not be exposed.” (John 3:18-20) Anyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved. Faith in Christ is essential to salvation. “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) The name Jesus means Savior. For one to disbelieve that name is to reject the salvation of Jesus. “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it.” (Acts 4:12)

Please remember this passage is about an unbeliever, Nicodemus, coming and asking questions about Christianity. Jesus shares with him the Good News. What a great example for Christians to follow. “...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...” (1 Peter 3:15) Simply tell them what God has done for you (and them) by Jesus’ death on the cross so that we can receive salvation. Have a blessed week.

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