

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW; YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH
SEMESTER – WINTER/SPRING SEMESTER
JROC – Week 5 – A Visit from Nicodemus – John 3
February 6, 2022

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover – having already drawn much attention, Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin came to Jesus (John 3). Nicodemus came to Jesus at night under the cloak of darkness. It seems that Nicodemus did not come to Jesus in an official capacity. Nicodemus had personal questions about this One he called “Rabbi”! (“Rabbi” – was a title of great respect that the Jewish people used for their religious teachers who interpreted the law to them.)

OBSERVATIONS/QUESTIONS:

John 3:1-12 - *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews*

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.” 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.” 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?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water (physical birth) and the Spirit (born of the Holy Spirit), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes (You don’t know everything about the wind, Nicodemus, but you see its effects). So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? (Nicodemus – you don’t know your own Scripture?? The New Covenant is noted in Dt. 30:6; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:25-27) ¹¹ Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was a Rabbi. Rabbinic Judaism believed that “All Israel has a share in the world to come.” This quote is NOT from Scripture. It is from Rabbinic teaching. The afterlife is assured to those who are Jewish. Rabbinic Judaism also taught, “Abraham sits at the gates of Gehenna (hell) to save any Israelite consigned thereto.”

Rabbis taught that those who were born Jewish qualified for entrance into the Kingdom!

How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus? John 3:3 - *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Observations:

Questions:

How did Nicodemus respond?

2

John 3:4 - *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*

Observations:

Questions:

What was confusing to Nicodemus was how it was possible for a man to be born again when he had reached the age of a senior citizen. Nicodemus seemed to understand something about being born again. He understood phases of physical rebirth during the cycle of life. He was confused; how was being born again possible, as Nicodemus understood it, when he, Nicodemus, was old.

In Rabbinic Judaism there were six different ways of being born again.

- When a Jewish boy became of age
- When a man married
- When a man became a Rabbi
- When a man became the head of a Rabbinical school.

According to Rabbinical Judaism, in Nicodemus' status, he was born again according to his human achievements. Jesus told Nicodemus that being born physically as a Jewish person was NOT going to give him entrance into the Kingdom of God. One must be born physically (by water) and spiritually (by the Spirit).

Jesus then told Nicodemus...

John 3:13-15 - *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him*

should not perish but have eternal life. Being born from above, by the Holy Spirit of God originates from God!

Moses' serpent in Numbers 21 was made of bronze which represents the fire of judgment. A bronze serpent speaks of SIN JUDGED. In the same way, Jesus, Who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross (II Cor. 5:21). Jesus took upon Himself our poison/sin. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with. This is a foreshadowing Nicodemus should've known.

Num. 21:4-9 – the people were delivered/saved by looking to the bronze serpent – the serpent judged – the sin judged. Might the people have thought that was foolish?

Isa. 45:22 - *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!*

We have the tendency to do a hundred things to earn our salvation. We need to earn our salvation??? Doesn't that smack of pride? God tells us to only trust in Him – to look upon Him and His love for us in dying for us.

John 3:14-15 – *even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ¹⁵ that whoever believes in (trusts in; surrenders to) Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

3

John 3:16-18 - *For God so loved the world that **He gave** (God PROVIDED the way to Him!) His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (everyone will live forever – into eternity. The person who has placed their trust in Jesus along and received forgiveness of sin will live eternally with GOD. People who don't receive forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross will live eternally – APART from God!!! APART from God's grace and mercy) ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world (man is already condemned because of sin! We're born sinners), *but that the world through Him might be saved.* ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The offer has inherent consequences for those who refuse to believe!