

John Series 2019

John 2:23–3:15

John 2:23-3:15: The Gospel

Intro

The Gospel — not just the basics, to be learned and moved on from
It is the power for salvation to the unbeliever
It is the engine that powers the new life of the believer
It is the most profound truth in our vocabulary

The Setup: Nicodemus' Context

1. The testimony of John (Jn 1:19-34)
 1. They asked who Jn was
 1. A Voice Crying In The Wilderness
 2. Is 40:3-5 --God comes next...
 2. Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world
 3. Jesus existed before me
 4. Jesus is the Son of God == King (Ps 2; Jn 1:49)
 5. Jesus baptizes w/ the Holy Spirit
2. Jerusalem at the Passover
3. Jesus cleanses the Temple
 1. What sign?
 2. By what authority?
4. Many believed in His name, observing the signs He was doing. Nicodemus is one of them.
5. He didn't entrust Himself to them--*something defective about their belief*
 1. *Easy come easy go -- faith based on miracles . . . meh*

It was **night**. And dark. (cf. Jn 3:19-21)
Nicodemus came to the **Light**.

Nicodemus

1. A Pharisee
 1. PhD in Theology and Bible
 2. Religious Authority (orthodoxy)
2. A ruler -- enforcer
3. THE Teacher of Israel: Top Shelf Guy
4. BUT -- he's intrigued by Jesus, and defers to HIM!

- A. We Know: No one can do the signs you do unless God is with him.
1. Who is “we?” -- Top Shelf Guys, to some extent
 2. THE teacher of Israel is Nicodemus
 3. Jesus is **a** teacher, only
 4. What is Nicodemus after? Why did he come?
 1. Nicodemus’ root issue: who are you, Jesus? (Cf. The delegation questioning J The B)
 2. Who are you and why did you come?
 3. What does this mean to me (Nicodemus)?
 4. Root root issue: How do I get into the kingdom?

B. No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born (**from above/again**).
-- ἄνωθεν cf. Jn 3.31; Titus 3:5

1. Jesus raises the stakes: class is in session
 1. The goal is not learning a teaching, but seeing the Kingdom of God
 2. The requirement is not a doctrine, but a **transformation**

C. WHAAAAT? A man cannot: be born a second time, can he?

1. As a Pharisee
 1. I thought I was ALREADY born into the kingdom (being a Jew) AND
 2. by keeping the law (as I have).
2. Nicodemus misunderstands:
 1. ἄνωθεν - how can one have a second birth (yet another birth) — **again?**
 2. How do I start over, since I am old?
3. *What did you do to be born the first time?*

“I don’t know how to do that, Jesus. How can I start over? What do I do to be born a second time?”

D. No, Really: No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born **of water and the Spirit**. (i.e. from above)

1. Options (Optional Section)
 1. Believer’s Baptism -- would mean nothing to Nicodemus
 2. John’s Baptism -- not viewed as a birth
 3. Repentance -- related to John’s Baptism, but that imagery is nowhere (cf. Jn 1:33-34)
 4. Water = natural birth -- possible, but kind of not helpful

5. **One water/spirit birth from above -- most likely**
 1. Ezek 36:25-27; Jn 4.7-14; Titus 3:5
2. *Spirit, spirit, breath, wind all the same word in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew (in each language)
3. **You cannot control it, Nicodemus. It is of the Spirit.**
 1. Jn 1:11-13 -- Not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
 2. By this kind of birth do you **enter** the Kingdom

E. How can these things be?

1. Nicodemus should have known this -- it's all over the OT (Gen 15:6; Ps 32:1)
2. Back to Nicodemus' opening statement: You all really don't believe My testimony
3. My Testimony is based on where I'm from (****above****)
 1. As the Son of Man
 2. Who **descended** from Heaven
4. "**How can these things be?**"
 1. The Son who descended must be lifted up
 2. The person must believe/trust for life
 3. Explain: How do you answer a question to someone who won't believe earthly things and therefore can't believe the heavenly things? How do you teach an OT scholar? **With THE OT!**
 1. The illustration (Num 21:4-9) would resonate with Nicodemus
 2. The illustration would point out the problem (Jn 5.45-47)
 3. Just like the Israelites didn't believe Moses in Numbers, which brought physical death, Israel today doesn't believe him, resulting in spiritual death.
 4. The illustration would point out the solution
 1. The Israelites could do **nothing** to save themselves.
 2. They didn't understand what God would do to save them.
 3. It made no sense -- **they just had to trust him.**
 5. Likewise, we can do nothing of ourselves to earn/acquire eternal life.
5. How? Just as Moses lifted up the serpent and God provided life, **the Son of Man must be lifted up by God, and we must trust Him to grant us Eternal Life**
 1. The thing that provided the life was God in the "lifting up."
 2. The thing that was lifted up was an image of their sin -- Jesus became our sin. (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21)
 3. The people rejected God and the one whom He sent (Moses)
 4. This brought death
 5. The people repented and confessed and sought help from the intercessor

6. **God did not remove the snakes**

7. Instead, he setup a system that they might live by faith. "Look and live."

8. Nicodemus' theology couldn't save him.

9. Nicodemus' religion couldn't save him.

10. Nicodemus' righteousness couldn't save him.

11. Nicodemus' lineage couldn't save him.

12. What could save Nicodemus was that:

1. he came out of the dark (night) and into the light (Jesus) and put his life into Jesus' hands

F. Why? The Motive: **Love**. (Jn 3:16) God does this because He loves us.

1. Jesus loved Nicodemus

1. Jesus could have given N. a million different images/metaphors to explain the gospel.

2. Jesus used the one image Nicodemus would know and witness (Jn 19:38-39)

2. When Nicodemus came to Jesus that night, Jesus **knew** that in almost exactly two years, Nicodemus would standing at the foot of the cross, looking up at the Son of Man lifted up. And Nicodemus would remember that Jesus said, "look and live."

3. **What do you think he did?**

4. **What will you do?**

The End