

# John's Gospel @ CF!

John 3:1-15

Sermon Notes – BK

April 7, 2024

The Gospel of John... continued

We are in CHAPTER 3 today!

LAST TIME we were in John 2 –

- **Jesus** went from making wine out of water to cleansing the temple in Jerusalem
  - o **From the symbol** of what the wine to become (His blood that *brings cleansing*)
  - o **To the place Jesus cleanses... and will later (literally) replace AS the one who will bring us to God (the Temple).**
    - o **No longer *a place* – but *a person, THE One who brings what the Temple was supposed to represent:***
      - Redemption
      - Purification
      - Cleansing
      - Believing
    - No longer *controlled by people*, but led by the Holy Spirit
    - There is a later cleansing we read about during the Passion week (we just experienced last week...) - the gift that literally keeps on giving!

TODAY – John continues to build on belief and “believing;”

- What it means, and
- What it looks like.

This time John will show it from a different angle –  
THIS time it is going to *rattle* some thinking...

Last time we were in John, we read the words at the end of chapter 2...

**John 2:23-25**

***<sup>23</sup> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.***

In John chapter 3... the Apostle John continues with one such man many would have felt very privileged to have a meeting with – Jesus however, never “adjusts” with anyone He encounters.

- He treats all people with truth and intention.
- He is not enamored with people of importance.
- He does not speak down on those who are outcast.
- 

Setting: Jesus is still in Jerusalem, and Jesus has a meeting...

There are a few people we read about in the Bible that are named, we often remember...

SOME, like **Zacchaeus**, we can **see the full story**, know **how it ends**, and **get a good understanding** where their heart is at.

There is **another one of these** people we will read about in **chapter 4**, the **Samaritan woman**... an **interesting contrast** to today's character we will get to eventually.

***SOME are a little more mysterious.*** The meeting we see today that Jesus has with Nicodemus is **kind of like that**.

**PAUSE...**

It is **interesting to read in the different takes on Nicodemus** through the lenses of the **different scholars**.

- Some have him as **one who was going with an agenda** to find things to **use against Jesus**
- Some have **Nick as one who was fearful** and **never came to a place of faith**
- Some see **Nicodemus going through a process** and this is just **one of the early steps of the process** that lead him into a place of full faith in Jesus eventually.

**What about you?**

Let's go through this to give you more to work with ☺

**John 3:1-15**

***<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>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." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup>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?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."***

***<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."***

**PAUSE**

Let's remember what John wrote that just preceded this...

***“<sup>24</sup>But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”***

NOW John writes...

***1Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.***

**John was building up to this conversation because it was a significant one.**

One that leads to likely the MOST well-known verses in the Bible, we will get to **next week**.

**This is quite an exchange**, between **Jesus and Nicodemus**, is it not?

**This was not all of the conversation (probably)** – I believe what we have here in John 3 is maybe more of a summary...

**We see Jesus is not fazed by the position Nicodemus held**

**Nicodemus –**

- A Pharisee and a ruler (as part of the Sanhedrin)
  - o **The Sanhedrin –**
    - An adaptation of a ruling council God established many years before
    - **The Jewish ruling body of 70 men and the High Priest**
    - **The court that would ultimately convict Jesus**
- **We will see him a couple times** more in John’s Gospel (Ch. 7:50 and 19:39)

**This conversation, John tells us Nicodemus came to Jesus “at night.”**

**Why at night?**

**Not certain**, but there are **differing ideas as to why** this was at night...

**Some say:**

- **Nicodemus** was ***afraid*** (we do see this implied of him later in the Gospel)
- OR - **Nic wanted Jesus all to himself, undistracted** (strong possibility) – Religious leaders often talked into the wee hours of the morning.
- OR - John was pointing this out, because of an underlying theme – contrasting light and dark (seen also in 3:19).

**My opinion:**

- I believe there was likely some ***“I want an uninterrupted conversation with Jesus”*** and
- Maybe also, ***“I want to talk with Jesus without the influence of others around”***

**Nicodemus respects Jesus** – maybe he does **not** want to have a “debate” with other Pharisees as he is trying to talk with Jesus.

**PAUSE**

With John, the fact this is at **night** is **significant enough, he mentions it.** *Almost like a reference back to 1:5...*

### John 1:5

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

All that said, this exchange is a good one...

As this conversation begins, Nicodemus speaks...

*“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 –

- Calls Jesus **Rabbi** (teacher) – showing Jesus respect
- Acknowledges Jesus is **“from God.”**
- **Proclaims Jesus’ source is God, “...for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”**

This seems like a good introduction to the conversation, doesn’t it?

Well - Jesus jumps the track of conversation Nicodemus lays down...

- Jesus gets to what is really going on
- Jesus gets to the heart of the matter.

### John 3:3

*Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

We continue to see John’s use of “truly, truly” –

- Starting off with this was **likely the strongest way** of saying something was true.
- Jesus followed THAT with **“I say to you...”**
  - o This is **authoritative** (in fact, this implies it was His idea!)
  - o This is **audacious**

Jesus says, *“...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

We will see this is NOT in Nicodemus’ thinking.

### John 3:4

*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?”*

The word **“again”** has two meanings

- o **Again (another time)**
- o **From above**

Nicodemus was **understanding this as “again”**

- o **Not** surprising
- o This would have been the **obvious** reaction **for most of us.**

**PAUSE**

Jesus – *Right out of the gate* is calling this Pharisee to a whole new place of thinking...

Nicodemus was a respected man of privilege, power and position.

For Nicodemus, and for all Jews – being BORN Jewish was their “in” – for being *the people of God*.

Jesus was telling Nic that if he was not “*born from above,*” he (one of the elite of the elite in Israel) *was NOT “in!”*

This would have been *jarring* information for Nic.

Jesus then speaks His second “*..truly, truly...*”

**John 3:5-6**

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

So Jesus DID mean, “*from above?*” I believe so!

With many things that John teaches, I believe **there are layers to this...**

Water –

- The “birth” that comes **through baptism**
  - o **Jewish converts** (Proselytes) were “born” through baptism
  - o **JTB’s baptism** that led up to the ministry of Jesus
- **Not as likely “the waters” of childbirth**, as that term was not used of like that in those days...

Spirit –

- **This** clarifies the “*from above*”
- This is a **clear reference to the HS** whom Jesus will send after He ascends to Heaven

It could also stem from a prophesy Nicodemus would have been well acquainted with in Ezekiel –

**Ezekiel 36:24-28**

*<sup>24</sup> I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Whatever the case may be – **Nicodemus was not getting it.**

Jesus goes on to say...

### John 3:8

***<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”***

Jesus uses the dual nature of the Hebrew word, “*Ruah*” and/or the Greek word, “*Pneuma*” here, as a play on words... they both can mean

#### Wind AND Spirit

Jesus is expanding the thinking of Nicodemus... a man that thought ALL God was, was found in the scriptures... THIS is where eternal life was found for him/them!

Jesus speaks to this very thing later in John 5 to the religious leaders...

### John 5:39

***You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,***

You know this is rocking Nic’s world, as he asks Jesus...

***“How can these things be?”***

You can hear the bewilderment of a lifetime – ALL the learning and excelling in rank, power and recognition...

Here he is told **ALL** he was leaning on... *his whole religious “net” was full of holes!*

Could you imagine how unnerving that would be?

**THIS ONE –**

- Who performs miracles
- Who teaches in such revelatory ways
- Who demonstrates in all He does that what He says is TRUE...

***“How can these things be?”***

**JESUS ALWAYS HAS VETO POWER.**

- o Jesus made it all
- o Jesus has been there for it all

Jesus is communicating TRUTH – nothing new... but totally POWERFUL.

### John 3:11

***Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.***

This is the third “truly, truly”

**Why is this in the plural, “we?”**

- o Could it be speaking more of what the disciples will know?

- Is this in response to Nicodemus' "*we know you come from God...?*"
- Is this a subversive reference to the Trinity?

I like to think it is the last one, but we cannot say.

**BUT** Jesus goes on to say,

**John 3:12**

*If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*

Jesus was telling Nicodemus that his understanding of God was all off.

But Jesus is now making it clear... "*You must be born from above.*"

Jesus is the only qualified one to instruct with such "truly, truly" confidence because – (as Jesus says to Nic)...

**John 3:13**

*<sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*

God's only begotten son – is the **ONLY** one to bring this news.

And it **does not end** there...

**John 3:14-15**

*<sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

THIS is how you are "born of the Spirit!"

THIS is how Nicodemus could find eternal life!

**AS** Moses was instructed by God to lift up the object that was bringing them condemnation (the snake)

- Jesus would be lifted up on the cross – the only one who **COULD** bring condemnation...

Instead – by His resurrection from the dead... would bring them **LIFE!**

Jesus was shifting the thinking that "eternal life" was not in "being Jewish," but by believing in Jesus

As one commentator put it –

*Most Jews of that time looked for the Messiah to bring in a new world, in which Israel and the Jewish people would be pre-eminent. But Jesus came to bring new life, in which He would be preeminent. (Guzik)*

**Jesus – ONLY Jesus!**

***“...that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”***

**Do you believe in Jesus?**

**The truth Jesus spoke to Nicodemus is still true for us today, that**

***“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”***

**It is sad the saying being “Born again” has been so over-used that it has lost its meaning...**

**That said, it has not lost its truth!**

***“You must be born again.”***

**This simply means that you believe in Jesus... -**

***“...that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”***

**What about you?**

**DO you believe?**