



MESSAGE/SERIES:

Series: Jesus in John

Message: "Nic at Night"

Text: John 3:1-21

DATE: September 13, 2020

SCRIPTURE FOR THIS WEEK:

(These verses will help you understand themes within as you read our core text as scripture proves scripture)

John 3:1-21 (Regeneration), Zechariah 9:9-10 (Jesus reign & kingdom foretold), Jeremiah 31:28-32, Matthew 11:25-27 (Spiritual understanding is a gift from God), 1 John 2:20-21, 27 (Anointing of the Spirit a Gift), 1 John 5:20 (God has come and given us understanding), 1 Corinthians 2:6-9, 12-17 (We cannot understand the Wisdom of Christ without the Holy Spirit), 1 Thessalonians 1:5 (Word comes to us with conviction of the Holy Spirit), Deuteronomy 30:6 (God circumcised the heart that we will love), Jeremiah 24:7 (Gives a heart to know the Lord), 2 Corinthians 5:17 (new creation), Philippians 1:6 (He starts a new work in you), **2 Corinthians 4:6** (shines light into our darkness), **Romans 8:6-8** (Dead= separation and inability), Ephesians 2:1 (Dead in trespasses and sins), Lamentations 3:37-38, Romans 9:21-24 (He is the Potter)

OPENING SCRIPTURE:

[John 3:1-21]

*"Now 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 him, "Truly, truly, 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, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the 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 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."

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 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. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 3:1–21.

BACKGROUND & OTHER STUDY HELPS:

[REGENERATION] "Does Our Spirit Come Alive at Regeneration? The human spirit is not something that is dead in an unbeliever but comes to life when someone trusts in Christ, because the Bible talks about unbelievers having a spirit that is obviously alive but is in rebellion against God—whether Sihon, King of Heshbon (Deut. 2:30: the Lord "hardened his spirit"), or Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:20: "his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly"), or the unfaithful people of Israel (Ps. 78:8: their "spirit was not faithful to God"). When Paul says, "Your spirits are alive because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10), **he apparently means "alive to God,"** but he does not imply that our spirits were completely "dead" before, only that they were living out of fellowship with God and were dead in that sense. In the same way, we as whole persons were "dead" in "trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but we were made alive to God, and we now must consider ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God" (Rom. 6:11). It is not just that one part of us

(called the spirit) has been made alive; we as whole persons are a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).”

Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 481.

“Nicodemus claims he can ‘see’ something of who Jesus is in the miracles; Jesus insists no-one can ‘see’ the saving reign of God at all, including the display of miraculous signs, unless born again.”

D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 187–188.

[WHO IS NICODEMUS] “A Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin (“leader of the Jews”), and a scribe (“teacher of Israel”; John 3:1–14). Nicodemus came to Jesus at night (possibly so as not to compromise his position) as a person perplexed by Jesus’ discourse about the new birth. He later defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:50–52). After Jesus’ death, Nicodemus provides an enormous amount of spices for Jesus’ burial, thus implying that he was wealthy (John 19:39–40).

James A. Brooks, “Nicodemus,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 963.

[NICODEMUS LATER ON] “John 7:50–52: Nicodemus somewhat defends Jesus before the Pharisees at the Festival of Booths. When other Pharisees speak against Jesus and seek His arrest, Nicodemus argues that Jesus should receive a fair trial according to Jewish law. The text does not clarify his motives. Borchert suggests that, as a fair-minded member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus is urging just treatment for the accused (Borchert, *NAC*, 294). Tenney, while acknowledging that Nicodemus’ question “was not an open declaration that he had faith in Jesus,” allows more room for the possibility that Nicodemus sympathizes with Jesus: “Nicodemus may have felt that if he championed Jesus’ cause unequivocally, he would lose his case; but if he raised a legitimate legal objection, he might prevent drastic action” (Tenney, *EBC*, 88).

Kelly Adair Seely, “Nicodemus,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

“Nicodemus first appears in John 3:1–12, where he visits Jesus by night and is confronted with the “born-again” discourse. About six months before the crucifixion the “chief Priests and Pharisees” seek to have Jesus arrested as a deceiver (7:32, 45–52). Nicodemus protests, arguing that the law required them to give Jesus a fair hearing (7:51). He is accused, in response, of having joined Jesus’ Galilean followers (7:52). Nicodemus last appears after Jesus’ death, bringing a large quantity of spices to anoint Jesus’ body (19:38–42). The three Nicodemus episodes in the Fourth Gospel are connected by editorial marks in 7:50 and 19:39

Though Nicodemus is often portrayed as timid, Robinson (1985: 284) is probably correct in seeing him as quite courageous. Most likely, Nicodemus came by night, not

out of fear, but to avoid the crowds that would have interrupted his interview with Jesus. His reaction to the council's desire to arrest Jesus was boldly calculated to bring out the irony of their lawless act at the very moment in which they were ridiculing the lawless behavior of the "crowd" (7:49–51). And he certainly showed more courage at the Cross than did the absent Disciples of Jesus."

Jon Paulien, "Nicodemus (Person)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1105.

[V2- "WE"] "It is most natural to think that Nicodemus saw himself speaking for at least some of the Pharisees or members of the Jewish ruling council (v. 1) who were in essential agreement with him. Nicodemus is likely hiding somewhat behind his colleagues, his 'we' betraying a touch of swagger or nervousness."

D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 187.

[SCRIBES]

"A scribe who was also an expert and authority on Jewish scriptures."

David Witthoff, ed., *The Lexham Cultural Ontology Glossary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

"Little of historical value is known about individual scribes before a.d. 70, the most famous pair being Hillel and Shammai (*m. 'Abot* 1:1–18). Hillel came to Palestine from Babylon and, because of his poverty, hired himself out as a day laborer. His kindness and gentleness characterized his school and the leniency of his decisions (*b. S[~]abb.* 30b–31a; *b. So[~]ṭa* 48b). He drew up seven hermeneutical principles in order to establish the harmony between Scripture and tradition (*t. Sanh.* 7:11).

Shammai, a native of Judea, is said to have been more stringent than Hillel in his interpretation of the law. Even though both agreed on the need to fulfill the letter of the law, the two schools met to discuss their differences (*m. S[~]abb.* 1:4–11).

As the regulations of the scribes were intended to be applicable throughout the Jewish community, the most respected authorities lived and worked in one place to reach common conclusions."

Graham H. Twelftree, "Scribes," *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1086.

[BORN AGAIN] Greek *Anothen*- 3 renderings (1) *born from the beginning*, (2) *born again as in for the second time*, or (3) *Born from above as in from God*

OUTLINE:

I. (V1-12) THE TUSSEL & THE TEACHER

A. (v1) *“Now there was a man of the **Pharisees** named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.”*

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee

a) *Which meant he was a very religious man*

b) *Pharisee literally meant “separated one”*

(1) Separated from the world

(2) Religious elite

(a) *The elite did not converse or ask questions to commoners as Jesus would have been viewed by the Pharisees*

(b) *Jesus would have been viewed as Rogue or against Judaism*

2. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews (Member of the Sanhedrin court the High Court of the Jews)

a) *Which meant he was a very influential man*

b) *Member of the Sanhedrin court (the High Court of the Jews)*

3. Nicodemus was a Scribe and teacher

a) *Which means Nicodemus was a very wise man*

b) *Which meant He taught Jewish scriptures*

c) *Which meant he was considered one of the expert and authority on Jewish Scriptures*

B. (v2) *“This man **came to Jesus by night...**”*

1. Option 1- Nicodemus came by night out of fear

a) *Fear of losing his positions*

b) *Fear of losing his pull with the people*

2. Option 2- He came by night to have Jesus all to himself and to have a deep conversation with others to interrupt

3. Option 3- These are both correct and he desire to up hold all of these elements

4. Night is a symbol of evil and hardness of heart in Scripture

- a) Nicodemus was part of fallen man and had an evil corrupt heart (Romans 3:23)
- b) Nicodemus was part of the opposition party as we are all enemies of God from birth (Romans 5:10)

C. (v2b) "...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.**"

- 1. God has revealed to Nicodemus that Jesus was **a teacher** (an authority on scripture)
- 2. God had revealed to Nicodemus that **Jesus had God on His side** (as confirmed by the signs Jesus performed)- "God is [was] with Him"

D. (v3) "Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot **see** the kingdom of God."

- 1. If one is not **Born Again** he cannot **see** the Kingdom of God (The Spiritual & Eternal kingdom) (being born again is described later in v5)
 - a) *Does not know it exists*
 - b) *Cannot comprehend its dimensions*
 - c) *Therefore by implication does not desire the Kingdom of God*

E. (v4) "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

- 1. Nicodemus did not understand or see the Kingdom or its method of entry
- 2. We must be given understanding to be able to obey God's command for repentance (although man is held accountable as we are made in God's image and are accountable to the creator)
 - a) *We are all born accountable to God (Psalm 51:5, 58:3)*
 - b) *Many Children of believers found safe before birth and in heaven (2 Samuel 12:23, John 4:53, Acts 2:39, 1 Corinthians 7:14, Matthew 18:10)*

- 3. Nicodemus' response was evidence of Christ's statement being true in (v3) unregenerate man "cannot see" the Kingdom of God

F. (v5) “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit...**”

1. Born of water- Repentance (a turning from sins)
2. Born of Spirit- Faith (given from above)

G. (v5b) “...he **cannot enter** the kingdom of God.

1. The unregenerate cannot come into the Kingdom of God/the family of God (present & eternal)
2. The unregenerate cannot come into the eternal kingdom (heaven future sinless state of eternal presence with God)
3. The Unregenerate are those to whom God has not opened their eyes to see the kingdom
4. **Effectual Call** of God involves:
 - a) *Opening our Spiritual eyes to see (through drawing of the Spirit of God- John 6:44)*
 - b) *Also to desire surrender and know the need to repent before God*
 - (1) Regeneration leads eventually leads to Conversion (faith & repentance)

H. (v6) “That which is **born of the flesh is flesh**, and that which is **born of the Spirit is spirit.**”

1. **Born of flesh**) The Physical man identifies from birth in thought, actions, and nature with Adam (fallen man)
 - a) **The doctrine of depravity**- as “total inability.” or “inherited corruption.” (Guilty by association)
 - (1) *But man is willfully rebellious against God and is (personal guilt)*
 - b) *These earthly bodies and minds cannot enter heaven as they are and require glorification (when Jesus returns)*
2. **Born of Spirit**) The Spiritual must be birthed and connected to Christ and His Spirit
 - a) **The Doctrine of regeneration**- where we are **birthed from above** into a spiritual and eternal kingdom
 - (1) Salvation is by faith given from above

(2) Salvation is not by works performed by fallen earthly bodies

(3) **The Spirit is the initiator of salvation** in a present sense (although salvation is from eternity past and is sourced through the real and permanent work of Christ on the Cross)

(a) The Spirit gives the gift of faith for the purpose of drawing our souls to Christ and a desire to follow Him alone (a real answer to the specific call)

- I. (v7-8) Jesus says Do not marvel at the teaching of regeneration (Faith being born from above)
1. The Wind is illustrated as something we cannot see but we know is real (the Spirit and Salvation is real)
 - a) *We do not initially know where the Spirit comes from but we know he is dealing with our hearts (conviction- we see as God sees things)*
- J. (v9-10) “Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “**Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?**”
1. The point is made that one of the smartest human teachers of the time could not understand the mysteries of god without the Spirit making them known (who today is smarter than Nicodemus?)
 - a) *No one can understand the teaching of regeneration (being born again) apart from the Spirit making it known*
- K. (v11-12) We cannot understand the basic foundations of salvation without the Spirit... (it is not possible)
- = The Tussel comes when we try and understand Spiritual things with Human intellect & reasoning
- = The Teacher of Israel could not understand the Spiritual matters and salvation by himself

II. (V13-21) THE TEACHER & THE TARGET

A. (v13) *"¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."*

1. Jesus was making it clear that the mysteries of heaven could only come to earth through a heavenly messenger (Jesus)
2. No one can go to heaven unless they are from heaven (believers are new creations in Christ)
 - a) *1 Corinthians 15:20-23 (Jesus first fruits of the resurrection)*

B. (v14-15) *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."*

1. **Numbers 21:9**- Moses lifts up a bronze Snake that was a foreshadowing of Jesus who would be lifted up to heal the wound of Sin
2. Jesus was foreordained (before the foundations of the earth) to go to the cross for the sins of those who would believe
3. All of those who believe in Jesus will have eternal life
 - a) *"Have"- eternal beings of the Kingdom from the moment we believe*
 - b) *Faith in Jesus is the only requirement for eternal life*
 - (1) It is not faith plus anything

C. (v16) *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

1. (the main focus here) God has now **extended His love to all people groups** and not just the Jews
2. He gave His **Only Son** for the sins of those who will believe
 - a) (KJV) renders *"begotten son"*-- *Begotten Just means only Son and not created Son*
 - (1) **Hebrews 11:17 "Only Son"**- (Jesus and the Father just as Abraham & Issac)
 - (2) Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in His human form (philippians 2) but was not begotten in a spiritual or wholistic sense

3. **“Whosoever believes”-**
 - a) *All whom the Father draws and gives faith from above (John 6:44)*
 - b) *All who confess Jesus as Lord (in that order)*

4. **“Shall not Perish but have everlasting life”-** Shall not be utterly destroyed (are eternal beings)
 - a) *Every man must die a physical death (except those at the Lord’s return and Elijah & Enoch)*
 - b) *Everyone who does not confess Jesus as Lord will die a second death (eternal separation from God in Hell)*
 - c) *Everyone that confesses Jesus will live eternally in heaven with the Father*

D. (v17) ***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”***

1. The first coming of Chris- He did not come into the world to judge the world but for redemption (the cross)

2. Target- He came to give life to those who would believe

E. (v18) ***“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”***

1. Condemnation is upon all fallen man (Romans 3:23, 6:23)

2. If we do not believe in Jesus we just receive our just reward for being a sinner/and enemy of God (eternal condemnation)

3. Jesus came to right the ship that Adam and all humanity failed to achieve Sinlessness (Jesus was and is without sin for us)-Righteous

4. The only unpardonable sin is not believing in the only Son of God(When God opens our eyes we are responsible to respond to His call)
 - a) *We are given faith to respond*
 - b) *We are given new desire to respond*
 - c) *We with a new heart respond and are saved*

(1) (monergistic) Salvation is all God (Ephesians 2:8-9)

F. (v19) “**And this is *the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.***”

1. Jesus who came to save has become the Judge by His sacrifice (Isaiah 33:22)
2. Light is Jesus who came into the world (as The God-Man)
3. People are judged because we love darkness rather than Christ
4. People are at the core evil (Jeremiah 17:9) and not basically good as the world teaches us--
 - a) *We are depraved and broken without Jesus*
 - b) *We love the sin and its pleasures*
 - c) *We do not love Jesus at all*
5. God sent Jesus and man cannot fix himself

G. (v20-21) “**For *everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*** ²¹ **But *whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.***”

1. There are no in between when it comes to following Christ
 - a) (v21) *Either we are drawn to the light by the Spirit*
 - b) (v20) *Or we are against/hates the light (Surrender to Christ)*
2. (v20) Those who hate the light hate Him (truth) because truth exposes our sinful self
 - a) *In our nature we do not want to be judged or told what to do*
3. (v21) Those who follow Christ desire to please God and be found in obedience to the Lord who paid their sin debt
4. (v21) Those who follow Christ know that works are a display or fruit of salvation (John 14:15)

Meditation Moment:

1. Can we come to Christ when we want to? (if not why according to these passages)

2. Does our study of John 3 as a whole change your view of John 3:16? If so what dynamics of regeneration and the target of the text would you apply?
 3. Do you find it ironic or divine that God drew Nicodemus (the smartest of smart teachers of the day) to have the discussion about the only way man can come to Christ?
 4. Discuss v20-21 and the evidence that it is either love or hate when it comes to Christ.
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-----Message from Pastor Michael-----
Church,

When we think about the love God has for His people, those who will believe, and then we look at what God does through His Spirit to make himself known to us does it move you to a greater worship? Man absolutely deserves hell, but Jesus came to redeem. If the Lord is moving in your heart we are responsible to surrender all to follow Jesus. If you love Jesus and understand how He draws man to salvation then we also understand we must be faithful to share truth in love as He uses His church to share more than just John 3:16! Let's build upon the Love for all people groups by trusting in the word and the spirit to transform our loved ones and the world around us.

If you know Jesus you will follow. If you know Jesus you will be a part of His church. If you love Jesus and His church you will share Him with your world.

Love in Christ,

Pastor Michael

