

**Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ**  
**Nic at Night: You Must be Born Again**

We are in the very early stages of Jesus' ministry, which takes place in Judea/Jerusalem

Last time...the first cleansing of the Temple by Jesus Christ

This time...Nicodemus comes to Jesus

**John 2:23 – 3:8**

Chapter 2

v23 in Jerusalem at the Passover:

The context is Ch 2:13-22, Jesus is in Jerusalem at the Passover

The Feast of Passover was on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Ex 12)

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, every father, with a lighted candle and in solemn silence,  
“turned his house upside down” in a search to be certain that his house had  
been purged/cleansed of all leaven

Leaven (that which puffs up) = sin (pride)

Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Passover (John 5:39, 1 Cor 5:7, 2 Cor 5:21)

Therefore, Jesus Christ, the Servant of God, was purging/cleansing His Father's  
house of all leaven...the greed, avarice, corruption, and hypocrisy of  
the Sadducees, Pharisees, High Priest

Later...Jesus would warn His disciples of the “leaven of the Pharisees and  
Sadducees”...their doctrine (Matt 16:1-12)

Did the hypocrites, the “leaven” in the Father's house, understand

- who Jesus was?
- what He was doing?
- how God viewed them?

Did the people understand the hostile rulers Jesus was boldly confronting...  
in this time of high Messianic expectation and yearning for the Kingdom  
of God...

were the religious rulers (Sanhedrin) and NOT the political rulers (Romans)?

Did anyone understand Whose Presence was in their very midst...  
and His intense displeasure with the shepherds of His flock?

many believed...miracles:

The righteous anger of Jesus was reserved for the rulers, the hypocrites,  
who were taking the name of the Lord in vain.

He was kind, gentle, merciful, loving, gracious, and compassionate with the flock  
and with all who would come to Him with sincere motives of heart

So, not only did Jesus boldly confront the false shepherds (Ezk 34), He also  
lovingly embraced the flock and ministered to them with great compassion  
He began to reveal His Identity to them all via many miracles...

- happenings that could not be explained naturally
- works of Divine power displayed to change man's realities

What miracles?

They are unrecorded

Ch 21:25 but Ch 20:31

As a result, many "believed on" His Name/Authority/Character  
GREAT start of His ministry; all is going to go well with Jesus, isn't it?!

Do miracles produce salvation...change man's heart?

Is believing in miracles sufficient for salvation?

Luke 16:28-31 not even the greatest miracle if do not believe  
Word of God

John 12:37 5 days before the last Passover, the general  
populace did not believe on Jesus, even though He  
had performed many miracles during the course of  
His ministry

John 6:22-27 "You seek Me not because you saw the miracles  
but because you ate the bread and were filled."

Was this a saving faith?

John 6:28-29 but by end of Ch 6, nearly all could not continue  
Heb 13:21 good work = do God's will thru Jesus Christ

Heb 4:3 we which have believed do enter into (God's) rest  
Heb 4:11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest

What is the "work" needed to enter into God's rest?

To believe/do His will thru Jesus Christ vs to do our will...

To continue to follow Jesus every day/circumstance

Miracles "fade" but the Word of God is alive every day and forever

Did Jesus "buy" all this miracles-inspired ministry support?

v24-25 he knew all men...he knew what was in man:

Jesus was not campaigning for Mr. Congeniality in a Messiah pageant  
Jesus was not sent to tickle the ears of people and win a popularity contest  
Jesus was not a man-pleaser, not seeking the approval of men,  
His “food” was to do the will of the Father Who sent Him

Thus, Jesus did not seek the testimony of man, only the testimony of His Father

And, as God become Man, Jesus knew the hearts of all men...

- Gen 6:5-6
- Jer 17:9
- Rom 7:18
- Matt 15:18-19
- Self-centered, Me-first and God-last (Me First and the Gimee Gimees)
- fiercely independent and defiant of authority
- proud
- strong-willed
- hard-headed but thin-skinned
- corrupt (sin nature) and self-destructive

He knew, pending a radical change, men would follow Him only as long as it was

- convenient for them
- in their best interest...there was something of value in it for them

And He knew God’s meaning of

- convenient
- best interest
- value

was radically different than man’s

With v23-25 as the background, Jesus receives a visitor and has a very interesting...  
and world-shaking...conversation

### Chapter 3

v1 Pharisees...Nicodemus...ruler:

Nicodemus

- Pharisee – self-righteous, legalistic, conservative, spiritual
- member of the Sanhedrin – a very distinguished person in the nation
- teacher/master of the Word of God

And...stirred by the works – leaven purging and miracles – of Jesus

v2      came to Jesus by night:

Let's put ourselves in Nic's shoes

- a national dignitary...a VIP
- a celebrity...socially a high-profile person (millions FB/T followers)
- highly educated (formal)...crazy smart
- a tenured college professor, at the top of his field
- sees and hears a Galilean...country bumpkin without any education... who obviously has great authority
- a member of the institution and ruling class this Galilean so powerfully opposes (while not confronting/opposing the Romans)

And this man comes to Jesus for answers to his questions

What did Nicodemus have to do before taking his first step toward Jesus?

- acknowledge the conviction within his heart, stirred by the actions and words of this Galilean
- set aside his prejudices (about Galileans)
- acknowledge that this simple Galilean knew something about the the most important point in Jewish theology that he didn't
- humble himself
- set aside, as best he could, the fear of the consequences if his peers found him hanging out with the "enemy"

So, Nicodemus came secretly under the cover of darkness

Passover season...it was a spring night in Jerusalem

As would most of the residents of the city, Jesus would probably be on the roof, perhaps in the "guest chamber on the roof"...*Aliyah*

In these days of the gathering of Israel, Jews from anywhere in the world can immigrate to Israel by "making aliyah"... by coming to "the guest chamber on the roof" in Israel

Nicodemus came secretly under the cover of darkness...but he came!

He came seeking answers and insights, he came not seeking an argument

He is sincere, earnest, open...as is the conversation Jesus has with him

Nicodemus starts the conversation...the student has a question for the Teacher

But he starts by making an opening statement.

Rabbi...teacher come from God:

The “master/teacher of Israel” (v10) calls this “uneducated” Galilean,  
“Rabbi/Master”...a title of great honor  
(Oh, if he only knew then what he would know later!)

Then he says,  
“we”

We who?  
Other Pharisees, other Rabbis, priests?  
Acts 6:7

“we know”

Having examined the evidence, to understand  
“we know that you are a teacher come from God”  
Given the Identity of the Person to whom he is speaking...  
Immanuel, God with us...  
this is a vast understatement  
“for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him.  
Ch 2:23  
Again, if he only knew...God was with him!!!!

v3 Except a man be born again:

What does this have to do with Nic’s statement in v2?

Jesus received this Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin...kindly, just as He  
does everyone who comes sincerely looking for answers instead of an  
argument

How does Jesus respond to Nic’s statement in v2?

- He ignored this man’s testimony of Him (v24-25)
- He did not acknowledge Nic’s ignorant and myopic “compliment”
- He answered Nic’s as-of-yet-unasked question, the question of his heart and the reason he came to Him secretly this night
  - Jesus knows what is in his heart (Ch 2:24-25, Jer 17:10)
  - Jesus always gets right to the heart of a matter
  - In so doing, He gave Nic even more evidence of His Identity

What is

- the question of Nic’s heart?
- the reason Nic came?
- the burning issue that led Nic to
  - set aside his prejudices
  - face his fear
  - humble himself before this Galilean?

The Kingdom of God

Jesus' answer to Nic's heart-burning question is

- not political, it is spiritual
- not outward, it is inward (Luke 17:21)
- not worldly, it is other-worldly...radically different than the thinking and teaching of His people's teachers and of this man

Note: Ch 18:36

Thus, why Jesus confronted the religious vs the political leaders...  
the heart of the matter for which He was sent involves the heart,  
not the politics

“Unless a person is born anew, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

Man (Adam and Eve, male and female) was created in the image of God  
Man was clothed in light, had eternal life, and had pure, unrestricted  
fellowship/relationship with God

Then Man sinned...and death, darkness, and separation ruled

Man needed (understatement)

- a new relation to God, a new relationship with God
- a new relationship with fellow man
- a new future...the past being past, all sin forgiven,  
and all things made new
- a new nature...of life vs death

God's solution to man's need:

- resurrection...
  - man dead to God made alive to God by Spirit of God
  - unto eternal Life and Light and pure unrestricted  
relationship  
(John 8:12, John 14:6, John 17:20-21)
- forgiveness of sin by a just and offended God...  
paid for by John 1:29
- a new start, a new birth...born anew, born again

According to Jesus Christ, a RADICAL change is required for a person to  
enter into the Kingdom of God...

- a complete transformation and regeneration
- a resurrection
  - the only sign Jesus ever gave
  - the witness of the early Church
  - our witness in a dead world to its dead inhabitants
  - the hope of God (Acts 24:15)

“Born again” is NOT to be confused with “spiritual”  
The Pharisees were “spiritual”  
Man is born “spiritual”...a need to worship...but is still dead in his sin until he is born again/anew  
“spiritual” usually means believing a lie...  
Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age, Mormonism, etc  
believing the spirit of anti-Christ

“Born again” is NOT what was consumed and celebrated this week  
Bruce Jenner...the world’s greatest athlete in 1976...coming out of a post-surgical recovery room looking like a woman  
Bruce Jenner changing his name to Caitlyn Jenner...dressing in women’s clothing and posing for magazine covers for the whole world to see  
Male DNA is different than female DNA...  
for the entirety of a person’s life  
The surgical knife cannot change a person’s DNA  
Bruce Jenner’s DNA is still male...as He was made by God  
God makes NO mistakes

This is utter confusion and madness...insanity  
This is darkness...not “enlightening”  
This is bondage...not freedom  
This is fiction, “make believe”...not reality  
This is defiance, an attack on the image of God...work of the devil

Thankfully, we must get back to a sincere and not insane Nicodemus

v4      How can a man be born when he is old:  
Hearing from this Galilean he respects the answer to his primary question  
(that he didn’t even have to ask) about the entrance requirements to the Kingdom of God, Nic has a follow-up question...  
“How?”

How old is Nic?  
He describes himself as “old”/“aged”  
Was Nic in the (2<sup>nd</sup>) Temple 18 years ago, a part of the audience of doctors listening to Jesus of Nazareth in Luke 2:46?

Is it physically possible for an old man to go back into his mother’s womb  
(e.g. Shaq) for a “do over”, a “repeat performance”?  
Then physical birth is obviously not what Jesus was talking about

So Jesus elaborates

v5-6    born of water and the Spirit:

Unless a person is

born

- procreated (of the father and by extension of the mother)
- conceived and regenerated

of

- water
- physically, of the flesh
- 1<sup>st</sup> birth of generation

and

- in addition to
- also required

THE Spirit

- Holy Spirit
- spiritually, of the spirit
- 2<sup>nd</sup> birth of regeneration

he cannot enter into THE Kingdom of God.

2 births...neither the result of our effort!

1. physical
2. spiritual

2 dimensions of life

1. carnal...temporary, fleeting and fragile, trapped in space and time
2. eternal

signified by 2 baptisms

1. of John, of water
2. of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit

“Born again” means

- born anew
- born from above
- born of God not man
- regeneration of the spirit...by believing/receiving the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ
- resurrection...man dead to God made alive to God by the Spirit of God

Let's go back and put ourselves in Nic's shoes again



In Jewish thinking, when a Gentile proselyte converted to Judaism,  
he took upon himself the Kingdom of God, i.e. Judaism  
As a consequence of what he did (to meet the requirements of Judaism),  
he was said to have had a 2<sup>nd</sup> birth...  
born anew into the Kingdom of God, i.e. into Judaism (religion)

But Jesus said the exact opposite of all Nic had heard, thought, and taught  
The birth anew, the second birth, was the cause of entrance into the  
Kingdom of God...not the consequence  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> birth was spiritual work of God, not religious work of man

Therefore...

- The entrance into the Kingdom of God was NOT to convert to Judaism
- Judaism was NOT the kingdom of God!!!!!!

This Jewish ruler and master just had his Jewish religion all blowed up by  
this “Teacher come from God”!

Note: John 4:22

Jesus (Who is of the Jews) = salvation

His name means “Jehovah is salvation”

In exchange for blowing up his religion, Jesus has given Nic his very first  
ray of hope in entering the Kingdom of God

Gen 15:6 (pre-Law)

Hab 2:4 (vs works)

John 6:28-29

Matt 5:17-18...the Law that condemned and crushed Nic  
and all the Jews

A thoughtful man now has MUCH to think about and digest regarding the most  
important point in Jewish theology – the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the high calling of Adam’s race...God’s calling/inviting  
to Adam’s race to be made new/alive and to come back into pure  
unrestricted relationship with Him

The entrance is not earned by improving ourselves...for we cannot

The entrance is not earned by conversion into the “right” religion...for their aren’t  
any (all teach salvation is by “good” works)

The entrance is not purchased...by us for we are spiritually bankrupt

Not even a good and powerful man like Nic is worthy of entrance UNLESS...  
by submission of every fiber of his being to Jesus Christ, God’s King  
This non-negotiable truth can only be learned from Jesus Christ

Therefore...

v7-8 Marvel not...must:

Then, perhaps up in the guest room on the roof (*aliyah*), a gentle, warm spring breeze beckoned by the Creator became an object lesson.

The wind blows where it wishes  
You hear its sound but you cannot see it  
You see things carried by the wind but you cannot see the wind  
Such is the working of God the Holy Spirit  
Such is the 2<sup>nd</sup> birth of The Spirit...  
inward and unseen with outward manifestations

Jesus is speaking to one man...“thee” = “you” singular  
salvation is an issue of personal relationship

Then...”ye” = “you” plural = “we”  
An unqualified news flash/invitation from God to all of Adam’s race

You MUST be born again/anew if you want to go to heaven...  
this is the holy and Almighty God’s non-negotiable requirement

If this radical change is not required and can be negotiated, then

- Jesus Christ is a liar and died in vain (Gal 2:21)
- The Father Who sent His Son to die is a monster
- The Holy Spirit is a liar

You are alive to sin and dead to God...  
you MUST be dead to sin and alive to God

You MUST

- acknowledge the conviction within your heart, stirred by the actions and words of this amazing Galilean
- set aside your prejudices and preconceived ideas about who gets to heaven and how
- acknowledge that Jesus Christ knows more, much more, about the most important issue in life than you do
- humble yourself before Jesus Christ...and do what He says
- set aside as best you can the fear of man and the fear of the consequences if your unbelieving family and friends find you hanging out with the “enemy”

You MUST believe on/lean on Jesus Christ if you want to gain entrance to the Kingdom of God

You MUST believe entrance into the Kingdom of God comes by His work and not your own...that it is a gift of God for those who do believe.

You MUST believe before you can understand this mystery of God.

By faith, which comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:17),  
believe the miracle of resurrection

- the hope of God
- the power of God
- the gift of God

God Who cannot lie says in His Word that all have sinned and fallen short of His glory  
Therefore, all need

- a new relation to God, a new relationship with God
- a new relationship with fellow man
- a new future...the past being past, all sin forgiven, and all things made new
- a new nature...of life vs death

Who wants a new start, to be

- born again
- born anew
- alive to God by the Spirit of God

Stand up...and raise your hands Jesus Christ in surrender that leads to victory

Note:

As revelation of this mystery unfolds...by faith

1 Cor 15:42-46, 36

Eph 1:13-14

To be born again, resurrected, we must first die.  
We are born spiritually dead...so we must agree with God  
on that point and then die to self to receive His Life.