

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Nic at Night: Lifted Up

Last time...Nicodemus comes to Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God, the most important topic in the theology of Judaism

This time...Jesus Christ's conversation with Nicodemus continues...possibly concludes

Location: We are in Jerusalem

The very same Jerusalem of which had been prophesied about 2500 years ago

Zech 12:2-3 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.
And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

The US Supreme Court this week ruled in a way consistent with that prophesy
If American citizen is born in Jerusalem, can NOT put "Israel" on passport...
at the insistence of the Obama Admin

- for the sake of "peace"

1 Thes 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

- thereby saying Jerusalem is occupied territory
- Jerusalem is an international city (UN Resolution 181 in 1947)

In his strong dissent, Chief Justice Roberts cast the majority's decision as dangerously groundbreaking.

"The court takes the perilous step, for the first time in our history, of allowing the President to defy an act of Congress in the field of foreign affairs."

This decision was hailed by the enemies of Israel as a victory
With friends like USA, who needs enemies?

In USA's future:
cut in pieces
sudden destruction

Keep your eyes on Jerusalem!

John 3:9-15

[v1-15]

Jesus answered Nicodemus's question about the Kingdom of God before he even asked it...for He knew Nic's heart...and blew up his religion
Nic's follow-up question: How?

Jesus elaborated

v9 How can these things be:

Nic, who is thunder-struck since his "world" has come crashing down,
has another follow-up question: How?

Nic wants to know "How these things can be" before he believes that
"these things be"

Does Nicodemus have a mind "too smart" to have the faith of a child?
Jesus would later say to His disciples, Matt 18:1-6

Is Nic's mind so crowded with human reasoning and "higher education"
that there is no room for faith
(believing without complete knowledge)?

Is Nic's thinking so rigid...
inflexible due to religious training and preconceived ideas...
that his mind is in danger of breaking vs bending (to the will of his Maker)

Is Nic so strong-willed that he is unable to see a better way, God's way?

Nic, as all men, can naturally understand how a person can do something
to become different...and in so doing, be different/changed

I can enter Navy Seal training, perform the requirements of the program,
and be very different (abilities, knowledge, thoughts, etc)
Become a Navy Seal to be a Navy Seal

I can diet and exercise to get to my ideal weight and fitness...
when I was 30 years old
Become "30 years old" to be "30 years old"

But Jesus Christ said a person must be different in order to become
different/changed

Be a Navy Seal to become a Navy Seal
Be 30 years old to become 30 years old

How does one be and then become...without doing anything?

How...in the/this world...does that work?

Will the US Navy salute that flag?

Is my shape and strength able...as is?

In this world, a person must strive...with great effort and much time...

to become different in order to be different/changed

What is the “success rate” for people to strive to become something they are not and then to be something they are not right now?

Consider graduation rates, New Years resolutions, promises broken...

Why do you suppose the self-help book publishing business is so big?

How well do we change ourselves?

Why do you suppose psychiatry is a cash-cow business?

So many problems, no answers, never-ending hourly sessions

But in Jesus’ other-worldly kingdom, a person must be different in order to become different/changed

And only God Who created man in His image can do what is needed...
and keep it so

A person must be born again to become the child of God and citizen of the Kingdom of God (Phil 3:20)

How can these thing be?

Because the Kingdom of God is contrary to the kingdom of this world...
inward vs outward

Was John’s baptism of water for the remission of sins the gate of “be-ing”...
out of the kingdom of the world and into the Kingdom of God?

No...it was an act of humility and submission to God’s will

Jesus’ baptism of Holy Ghost that is the gate out of the kingdom of the world and into the Kingdom of God

In fact, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is the Gate!

Truth that will be developed by Jesus in John 10:4 and John 14:6

The mystery of God...be-ing in order to become...is to be born again by the Spirit of God to become a child of God

The mystery of God requires faith by the finite in the Infinite...
it cannot be understood with carnal human reasoning

Hab 2:4

Heb 11:1, 6

Rom 8:1-8

Rom 11:33-34

God the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God

1 Cor 2:16...by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Word of God

Nic's mind is worldly (carnal) vs other-worldly (spiritual), as is Jesus'

He is not born again of the spirit of God so he is not spiritually discerned

v10 Art thou a master...knowest not:

Is Jesus insulting Nic, throwing him under the bus?

No, He is the Good Shepherd with one of His sheep, who has come to Him
honestly seeking answers and not an argument

Nonetheless, Luke 12:48 and James 3:1

What was it Jesus expected Nic to "know"?

The Word of God

Is 40:12-14, 18

man is not going to know all God does
understanding "How" comes after believing,
not before (seeing is NOT believing)

Is 55:8-9

Jer 31:31-34

Ezk 36:24-29a

a new covenant
new heart, new spirit, God's Spirit, God's work

These passages is what Jesus is telling Nic about the Kingdom of God...
and He expected the master of Israel to know this

v11-12 We...our:

On this spring night in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ and Nic are having a conversation
They are not on the same page

So...who is the

- "We" that speak
- "We" that know
- "We" that testify of what "We" have seen?

Nic

- is hearing of heavenly things, is on the receiving end of the talk...
is not speaking, on the giving end of the talk
- does not know what heavenly things Jesus is talking about
- cannot see heavenly things
- has not received "Our" witness of heavenly things
- does not understand

Who is the “We” and “Our”?

1. Jesus and His 5 disciples?
 - Ch 2:24-25
 - unlearned and ignorant (Acts 4:13)
2. Jesus and John the Baptist?
 - James 5:17
 - Acts 14:15
3. Jesus, Moses, and the prophets?
 - Ditto
 - 1 Peter 1:12
4. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit...*Elohim*,
the Godhead revealed in Scripture (starting in Gen 1:1)

If Nic is...and we are...listening carefully, Jesus just declared His Identity –
God of AI&J, Maker of heaven and earth

Starting with the “master of Israel, Jesus Christ is tearing down strongholds

- preconceived ideas
- man-centered religious dogmas and standards
- human reasoning
- spiritual (2 Cor 10:3-5)

So what is the connection between man on earth and God in heaven?

v13 up to heaven...down from heaven...in heaven:

The

- “what” to connect man on earth with God in heaven
- “how” these things can be

is a “Who”...Jesus Christ Himself, the Messiah, the Son of man, the Son of God

Putting ourselves in Nic’s shoes again, hearing the connection to heaven and
the Kingdom of God is a person...the “Son of man”

- Num 23:19?
God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he
should repent?
- Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah: mortal man
- Ezekiel (so called 93 times by the Lord) ascended up to heaven,
came down from heaven, is in heaven?
But Jesus said “no man” has!

But wait...

- Dan 7:13-14
I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.
- Creator that walked with Adam and Eve
- The LORD that appeared to Abraham
- I AM in the burning bush spoke with Moses
- The Angel of the LORD to Hagar, Abraham, Balaam, Gideon, Samson's parents, 186,000 Assyrians

So...what Jesus is saying is

- He has ascended up to heaven, came down from heaven, is in heaven (John 8:23)
- He is the Son of man connecting man on earth and God in heaven
- He is the "How can a man be born again when he is old" (v4, 1 P 1:23)
- He is the "How can these things be" (v9)
- He is the greatest revelation of God to man (John 14:8-9)
- the Kingdom of God is...His!

v14 Moses lifted up the serpent...believeth...eternal life:

At one point in the wilderness wanderings of unbelieving Israel,

- the people were very discouraged
- they sinned with their lips and hearts
 - blamed God and Moses
 - despised God's faithful provision
- the LORD sent poisonous snakes to bite those who believed the lie
- after many of them died, they came to their senses and asked Moses to intercede for them
- the Lord instructed Moses to build a brass snake and to lift up it up on a pole
- the snake-bitten would be healed...if they simply looked up on the brass serpent
- Tradition: not just look to the brass snake but to God in heaven Who delights in mercy (Micah 7:18)

To Nic...and to us...Jesus

1. equates the brass serpent with the Son of man...Himself
 - the serpent being the prophetic type and shadow
 - The Son of man being the Substance and fulfillment
2. connects the Son of man being lifted up and being born again (v7) in order to enter the Kingdom of God
 - “must”
 - whereby God wins the war declared in Gen 3:15, the undo-ing (resurrection) of spiritual death
3. proclaims His mission, why the Father sent Him...in “parable” form
 - revealed
 - yet still concealed
4. starts to prepare His people for
 - the suffering and death of their Messiah, God’s King (Dan 9:26)...Cross will be His 1st Throne
 - and why

Why MUST

- we be born again (v7)
- the Son of man be lifted up?

v15 whosoever believeth...not perish...eternal life:

So whosoever

- Jew
- Gentile
- any of Adam’s race

that believes/trusts/leans on Jesus Christ will

- not perish...eternal death
- but have (be given) eternal life

The Son of man MUST be lifted up on a pole like the brass serpent for

- God’s Plan of Redemption of fallen man to be accomplished
- the satisfaction of God’s perfect justice
- every individual man to consider and make a correcting choice
 - Ezk 18:4, 30-32
 - 2 Peter 3:9
- so man might be born again, of the Spirit of God...the Gospel... which he MUST be in order to enter the Kingdom of God

Jesus is telling Nic...and us...of

- God's declaration of War in the Garden of Eden...and His winning
- a transaction between God and man that is available to all...
also "spoken" of in the Garden of Eden (just before exile)
- an offer of eternal life from the Source and Giver of Life to all who are
alive to sin and dead to Him
- The Kingdom of God...eternal life, new birth/born anew that comes
to man by God taking on and conquering death
- the most precious gift ever given...received by faith, not works lest
any man should boast
- "How"...He is the answer to all of Nic's follow-up questions

The mystery of God...John 1:1, 14, 29, 12

- God's Plan of Redemption of fallen man MUST be accomplished by
the humiliation and death of the Kinsman-Redeemer/Messiah,
Who alone is able to offer an acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the
world (Heb 7-10)
- The harmony of God's Justice, Mercy, and Grace

Nic heard but did not understand...nor would he until he

- heard Jesus, hanging on the Cross, say
 1. Luke 23:34 Father forgive them
 2. Luke 23:43 Today you will be with Me in Paradise
 3. John 19:26-27 Behold thy son, behold thy mother
 4. Matt 27:46 My God My God why have You forsaken
 5. John 19:28 I thirst
 6. John 19:30 It is finished
 7. Luke 23:46 Father into Your hands I commend
- saw Jesus of Nazareth die on that Cross

With his mind filled, perhaps, with John 3, Gen 22, Ps 22, Ps 69, Is 53...

he went with Joseph of Aramathea to bury the Lamb of God

Because then he had the mind of Christ

1 Peter 4:1-2 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh,
arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that
hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;
That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the
flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Matt 10:32-33