



JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS

Jesus revealed the heart and core of His purpose on earth during His early Judean ministry. Some who followed Him thought He had come to set up a military kingdom, others thought He was one of the Old Testament prophets returned from the dead. In His discourse with Nicodemus, He explained His purpose, the reason for His suffering, His death, and even His birth. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

Here are your goals for this lesson:

- Compare Nicodemus' expectations of the Messiah with Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy
- Memorize John 3:5

Read John 2:23-3:21.

Memory Verse:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5)

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and a scholar of good reputation. He came to Jesus by night as a person willing to admit the validity of the miracles of Christ. Nicodemus was a man with many questions. He had some difficulty accepting Jesus as the promised Messiah. Nicodemus was also a man of courage. He would one day stand in defense of Jesus before the Sanhedrin council (John 7:50).



Nicodemus was bothered by the character of Jesus' kingdom and was perplexed by the personality and ministry of Jesus. Because Jesus did not organize the Jews to fight the Roman leaders, Nicodemus thought that He might not be the Messiah. His limited knowledge of the Old Testament prophets restricted his thinking to a Messiah who would overthrow Roman rulers and free the Jews. Nicodemus would have also been bothered by the character of Jesus in such actions as the Temple cleansing. Nicodemus could not reconcile Jesus with the man the Scriptures prophesied as the coming Messiah.

During His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus told Nicodemus that the most important thing to recognize was that he must be born again. This didn't make sense to Nicodemus. He could think only of physical birth and replied that a person could not be born a second time. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5). Some have used this verse to further the incorrect teaching that baptism is needed for salvation. However, the common interpretation of this verse is that being born of water refers to the natural birth. When a confused Nicodemus asked Jesus how a person could be born again, he was thinking of a physical birth. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that he needed two births--the one that brought him into this world, and one that would bring him into the God's Kingdom.

Jesus spoke of a transformation that must take place in our life by and through the work of the Spirit of God. Nicodemus had to turn in faith and repentance to believe in Jesus as his Savior. The Holy Spirit comes into contact with man's spirit through the Word of God. As the Word convicts the unbeliever, he is made accountable for his sins to God. He is unable, of himself, to do anything to escape a just punishment except to receive the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The Bible does not record Nicodemus's conversion experience. We do know, however, that he later defends Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin and helps Joseph of Arimathea with Christ's burial.

Jesus placed the emphasis of His entire conversation with Nicodemus upon the necessity of being born into God's kingdom. Nicodemus was an educated man and was a religious leader, but these characteristics were not sufficient for his salvation. The concern of Jesus was that Nicodemus needed to encounter the reality of a spiritual change through Christ wrought by the Holy Spirit. This same necessity exists for each of us today. If we never receive forgiveness for our sins nor ask Jesus into our life as our own personal Savior and Lord, then we would spend an eternity in the torment of a literal burning hell. God loves each of us, and for this very purpose He sent His own Son that we might have life through His name (John 3:16).

Question #1 MultipleSelect

Show Answer

Some of Jesus' followers thought He was whom?

- the Messiah
- an Old Testament prophet returned from the dead
- a false prophet

Question #2 MultipleSelect

Show Answer

Who was Nicodemus?

- the high priest
- a ruler of the Jews
- a scholar
- a Roman soldier
- a man full of questions

Question #3 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Why might Nicodemus have questioned whether or not Jesus was the Messiah?

- because Jesus did not fight the Roman government
- because Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah
- because Jesus had so few followers
- because the prophecies in the Scriptures were not very exact

Question #4 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

What was the emphasis of Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus?

- Nicodemus' position as a Jewish leader
- prophecies concerning the Messiah
- the necessity of being born again to enter into God's kingdom
- Jesus' teachings on loving God and one's neighbor

Question #5 TrueFalse

Show Answer

Nicodemus came to Jesus on the Sabbath day at noon.

- True
- False

Question #6 TrueFalse

Show Answer

Nicodemus defended Jesus before the entire Sanhedrin.

- True
- False

Question #7 TrueFalse

Show Answer

Nicodemus probably understood why Jesus cleansed the Temple.

- True
- False

Question #8 TrueFalse

Show Answer

After hearing Jesus, Nicodemus fell on his knees and worshiped Him.

- True
- False

Question #9 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and a:

- Scribe
- Pharisee
- Sadducee
- Priest

Question #10 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born of water and of:

- God
- life
- the Spirit
- woman

Question #11 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

To believe in Jesus as his Savior, Nicodemus had to turn through faith and:

- works
- good deeds
- repentance
- love

Question #12 MultipleChoice

Show Answer

Nicodemus' education and importance was not sufficient for his:

- popularity
- leadership
- wealth
- salvation

Question #13 FillInBlank

Show Answer

Fill in the blanks.

John 3:5: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be _____⁰ of water and of the _____¹, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

