

THE MAN WHO CAME BY NIGHT

Text: John 3:1-3

INTRO: This event evidently took place fairly early in the ministry of Jesus, but He had already worked numerous public miracles, JN 2:23. Most likely, the religious leaders were already beginning to fear the power of this young Nazarene. No wonder Nicodemus chose to come to Jesus by night when prying eyes would be less likely to take note of his visit. The apostle John mentions Nicodemus three times, & each time makes reference to the fact that he came by night.

I. THE MAN, NICODEMUS.

A. He was a Pharisee.

Acts 26:5, They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Matt 23:1-2, Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes & to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

B. He was a ruler of the Jews, JN 3:1. Most scholars believe the word is used in the sense of being a member of the Sanhedrin court, an elder.

- C. He was a teacher of Israel, JN 3:10.
- D. He described himself as old, JN 3:4.

II. HE CAME TO JESUS. Why would this Jewish leader come to this young Teacher?

- A. He had an open mind, willing to learn
 - 1. His peers spoke against Jesus without a fair hearing. Nicodemus was willing to listen.

READ JOHN 7:32, 45-52.

2. Thus Nicodemus was more like Nathaniel in JN 1:46. Nathaniel was skeptical & reluctant, but willing to come & see for himself.

3. Many today have doubts because they have heard Jesus & His cause misrepresented, or have seen ungodliness in the lives of Jesus' professed followers. All we can say to you is be like Nicodemus. Before you reject Jesus, hear Him out, study His word, come & see for yourself.

B. Nicodemus was more than willing to learn-- he was desirous of learning. He was serious-minded, sincere. He did not wait till Jesus came to him. "If He ever speaks in my neighborhood..."

C. He recognized that Jesus had something he needed. Tho Nicodemus himself was a teacher, he saw in Jesus a Master-teacher, a Teacher who had come from God.

D. He was a man of courage in the face of fear. He came by night, JN 3:2; 7:50; 19:39. Why by night? He was no dummy. He foresaw the opposition Jesus would face. He watched as the resentment built. There were a lot of reasons to be cautious about being identified with this lowly Nazarene.

1. Peer pressure. JN 7:48.

The Jews had perhaps already agreed that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue, JN 9:22, 34.

2. Before long, the Jewish leaders were not only desirous of killing Jesus, they were even willing to kill Lazarus because of his testimony of Jesus, JN 12:10-11. To follow Jesus could be a potentially dangerous undertaking.

3. Other leaders were afraid of Jesus: If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, & the Romans will come & take away both our place & our nation. (JN 11:48).

4. So, Nicodemus came by night. But the important thing is, he came. There are 2 types of courage:

a. That of the person who seemingly knows no fear. Debate preachers, door knockers, etc. I have utmost respect for them. Thank God for such people of courage.

b. But I have no less respect for those who exhibit courage in the face of fear, who do what is right, goose bumps, shaky knees & all. Not everyone can face Goliath as David did. Some us are more like Gideon or Barak. But there was a place for each of them in the service of God.

III. JESUS' MESSAGE TO NICODEMUS: "YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN." John 3:3-5.

A. This surprised Nicodemus. It shocked him. He was religious. He was devout. He was active in his religion. He was upright morally. He was a Jew, a citizen of the chosen nation. He was old.

B. In the original there is a play on words. Nicodemus correctly states that no one is able to do what Jesus does unless God is with him. Jesus responds that no one is able

to see the kingdom of God without being born again.

C. Nicodemus may have understood better what Jesus was talking about than is commonly assumed, but he saw the needed change as difficult, especially difficult for an old man to make. How can a man start over when he is old?

NOTE: The Greek shows Nicodemus expected the answer to his question to be "No."

D. Commentators & scholars have had difficulty in explaining vs 8, but the bottom line is that the person born of the Spirit will show the evidence thereof in his thoughts, his words & his deeds. And the person who does not show such influence will never see the kingdom of God.

E. But being born again is more than a duty & a requirement. It is a sacred privilege & honor as well.

READ ROMANS 6:3-7.

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