

The Religious Man: Nicodemus

Encounters With Jesus--part 2

Feb. 16, 2013

DAY 1: What is My Problem?

1. We're looking at how Jesus related in ten different encounters. Last week we started with a young man, Nathanael the skeptic. This week we look at Nicodemus the religious man.
2. What's wrong with the world? What is it that keeps messing things up? Government tries to find solutions for problems, but the solutions will never be good ones until there is an accurate assessment of what's wrong. In the extreme, we throw money at problems hoping that'll solve the problems. Money and government programs don't touch at the root of humanity's problem.
3. How would you answer the question, "What's wrong with the world?" Be as specific and thorough as your time allows.

4. What is the solution to man's problem? Be as specific and thorough as your time allows.

5. How would you define sin?

6. "Sin" has several biblical definitions. Next to each one, rate your *awareness* of sin in your own life:

- ___ To miss the mark
- ___ To fall short
- ___ To go astray
- ___ To rebel against God.

Roman 3:23 since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

7. What do you think it means to fall short "of the glory of God?"

DAY 2: Born Again: the Need

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.

1. Pharisees were the most religious Jewish people in the land.

John 3:2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

2. What strikes you about Nicodemus' comments?

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

3. What strikes you about Jesus' comments?

4. How do you think Nicodemus would respond to these comments?

5. Was Jesus saying that even a religious leader like Nicodemus could NOT enter of kingdom of God?

6. If it was true, as Jesus said, that Nicodemus could not enter the kingdom of God, why not?

7. What does Jesus say is the only way one can make it into the kingdom of God? (John 3:3)

8. What do you think it means to be born again?

9. Are you born again? How do you know?

DAY 3: Born Again, the Explanation

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

1. What negative connotations do people have of someone who is "born again?"

2. Nicodemus was hopelessly confused as to the meaning of being "born again."

John 3:4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

3. Does Nicodemus the Pharisee's confusion and ignorance surprise you? Why or why not?

4. To what extent do you think Nicodemus even understands the nature of sin within him?

5. This would be an astounding statement to just about everyone I know. "You mean to tell me that as a pillar of the community, a responsible tax-paying citizen, a law-keeper, not one of those things is good enough?!" How do you think Jesus would answer that question?

6. I think Jesus would say, "Nicodemus, you haven't gone far enough in your understanding of sin. There is something inside you that goes untouched and unchanged. You have more in common with the dregs of society than you care to admit. You both have the same root problem, and unless that problem is fixed, you, and no one have any chance of getting into heaven."

How do those words strike you? True? Humbling? Harsh? Hard to believe? Other?

7. What thought lingers with you from today's verses or thoughts?

DAY 4: Born Again: Illustrated by a Birth

1. Jot down how each of the following statements strike you?
 - a. Both the most moral man and the worst moral man need the same thing.

 - b. Unless they get what only Jesus can give them, whatever they put first in their life will choke out the life He wants to give them and build in them.

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

2. Think about the time you were born--the first time. How much did you do to bring about your own birth? How much was required of you?

3. How much did your mother do?

4. Why do you think Jesus would use being born to illustrate how one can enter into God's kingdom?

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

5. Jesus outlines two requirements for entering into God's kingdom. The first is baptism by water. In the bible, baptism was an outward symbol of inward repentance.

6. The second requirement is being "born of the Spirit."

The heart of sin is looking to anything other than God for salvation, for real life, for joy, for peace, to teach us how to love, to find our purpose, etc. Sin is putting ourselves in God's place. This goes against Commandment Numero Uno...

Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

7. How are you doing with this first Commandment?

DAY 5: Born Again Illustrated by the Wind

1. The life inside you that could give you joy and peace, hope and life, love and every good and perfect inner gift is dead. It cannot generate the life of God in you, until you see your need and put your trust in God. Allowing God to have His rightful, central place in your heart is the only way to have the life of God in you. This, only the Holy Spirit can do; you can't. Only God can make you "alive" to His spiritual truth.

John 3:6 "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

2. How does Jesus illustrate the necessity of being "born again" by God?

John 3:7 "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

3. Nicodemus is an expert in the Old Testament scriptures. What do Jesus' words imply about Nicodemus' current spiritual state?

John 3:8 "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

4. Jesus illustrates being "born of the Spirit" by comparing it to the wind.

a. What things are true of the wind?

b. How do some of the traits of wind relate to being born of the Spirit?

5. You can't "see" the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind? What effects (fruit) do you think should be seen in someone who has been "born of the Spirit?"

Galatians 5:22-23 but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

6. In what ways are you like Nicodemus? If you are born again what fruit do you see in you?