

What Nicodemus Teaches Us



About Following Christ

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- During the course of Jesus' life and ministry He had many enemies.
- From the Jews, His own people in Nazareth, and even His own brothers he found that people were often against Him.
- Yet Christ also had many believers and followers, some of whom might have been a surprise to their own peers.

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- One such individual was a man by the name of Nicodemus, first seen in **John 3:1**.
- We learn that Nicodemus was a Pharisee, the strictest sect of Judaism who upheld their own customs and beliefs with rigidly judgmental legalism.
- They bound the law more strictly than did God who gave the Law!

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

~ Matthew 15:1-2

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

~ Galatians 1:14

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- As strict as the Pharisees were they also believed that the Law could be amended to whatever suited their needs.
- They were the counter group to the Sadducees who were the most liberal sect of the Jews and did not believe in Angels, Spirit, or Resurrection (**Acts 23:8**).

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- The majority of the time we see Saducees and Pharisees in the Bible it is usually in a negative sense.
- Some of Jesus' harshest sayings were against the Saducees and Pharisees

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. ~ **Matthew 23:13-15**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Nicodemus is a Greek name, yet he was a Jew? In all likelihood Nicodemus was a Hellenist **(born into Judaism but outside of Palestine)**.
- Nicodemus was a wealthy and powerful man given his title and associations **(Matthew 27:57; John 19:39)**.

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- He was called a **“Ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1)** a title usually reserved for members of the Sanhedrin.
- The Sanhedrin was the Supreme Court of all Jewish Civil, Criminal, and Religious Law.
- It was made up of 70 hand picked Pharisees as well as wealthy and powerful Jews. These men answered only to the High Priest.

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Nicodemus was not just a wealthy and powerful Jew, or a teacher, or a Pharisee, or member of the Sanhedrin...
- Jesus reveals that he may have been one of the top leaders in all of Israel:

Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?

~ John 3:10

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Not simply “a teacher” as any rabbi would be.
- The Greek contains the definite article “The”
- Nicodemus was not only “a teacher” Jesus refers to Him as **“The Teacher”** indicating he may have held more influence and power than most others.

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- This is the world in which we see Nicodemus, dominated by tradition, legalism, and politics.
- It is from this background that Nicodemus comes forward to see Jesus.
- What an intensely powerful person this could be for the cause of Christ.

**He Came By Night
To See The Light
of the World...**



What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- There is a great deal of speculation as to why Nicodemus chose to come to Jesus at night:
 - Fearful of being seen by his colleagues
 - He worked during the day
 - Perhaps the crowd that followed Jesus dissipated in the evening.

While we cannot really say why Nicodemus chose to come to Jesus at night the important fact is, **HE CAME TO SEE CHRIST.**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- This great teacher calls Jesus “Rabbi” (**John 3:2**)
- “We Know that you are a teacher come from God”
- One may ask, “Who is the ‘We’ being referred to here?”

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? “But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ?”

~ John 7:25-26

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Nicodemus had heard the Word taught by Jesus and believed....

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

~ Romans 10:17

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- To truly be pleasing to God it is essential that one has faith:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

~ Hebrews 11:6

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- **Nicodemus believed that Jesus Christ had come from God:**

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

~ John 17:19-21

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

Nicodemus was also convinced by the signs and wonders which he saw Jesus perform

Of These signs and wonders the gospel writers recorded about 35 – if you count Christ's resurrection then the number would be 36

These include:

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- 23 Healings (Lame, Mute, Blind, Diseases, etc)
- 3 risen from the Dead (4 counting Christ)
- 3 Supplied food or drink
- 3 Involved Fish (2 Large Catches; Coin)
- Three Involved Nature (Withering the Fig Tree; Calming the Storm; Walking on Water)

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- **What Was Jesus' response to all of this?**

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

~ **John 3:3-5**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Jesus reveals to Nicodemus that he has room to grow:

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?”

~ John 3:9-10

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

~ John 5:39

The Fair Minded Pharisee



What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- We are never told from that point if Nicodemus was baptized with John's baptism.
- Nor are we explicitly told that Nicodemus was at this point a follower of Christ.
- However there is evidence to suggest that he had become a disciple...

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- The Pharisees arrogantly argued that because they didn't believe Christ was the Messiah that no one else should believe it either **(John 7:48)**
- Anyone who does believe in Him does so because they are ignorant **(John 7:49)**
- Yet the Pharisees themselves were the embodiment of ignorance...

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

“Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”

~ John 7:52

However, they forgot about a man who had spent 3 Days in the belly of a great fish (**2 Kings 14:25**)

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- **Nicodemus speaks up to defend Christ:**

Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"

~ John 7:50-51

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Nicodemus was referring to an Old Testament Scripture in Deuteronomy which the Pharisees would later ignore during Christ's trial:

Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him (continued)

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.

~ Deuteronomy 1:16-17

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- What was the reward for Nicodemus upholding the Word of God and defending Jesus Christ?
- The other Pharisees turned on him with ridicule...

“Are you also from Galilee?” ~ **John 7:52**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- “Are you also one of these ignorant people?”
- The answer was that he already acquainted himself with the very people who believed in Jesus, the very people whom were being mocked.
- We are not told what his response was to the ridicule, although it seems to imply that he went away without saying another word (**John 7:53**)

Devoted Disciple



What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- A few years later Jesus was betrayed, arrested, tried in violation of the Law, scourged, and crucified.
- He died in one of the most gruesome forms of death mankind has ever known, in what was typically reserved for the worst of criminals.

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- **After His death Joseph of Arimathea who was a:**
 - A rich man (**Matthew 27:57**)
 - A prominent council member who had not consented to Jesus' death (**Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51**);
 - A disciple who was waiting for the kingdom, but secretly feared the Jews (**Mark 15:43; John 19:38**)
 - **Joseph and Nicodemus together took care of the body of Jesus. It would have been thrown into a ditch otherwise.**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus seem to have similar traits to one another, almost are the spitting description of one another.
- Nicodemus brought oil and Myrrh for Jesus to prepare His body for burial (**John 19:39**).
- The same gift of Myrrh that was brought at His birth was also brought at His death

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- Jesus was not buried by loving family, or His loyal disciples, or even by friends.
- Instead He was buried by two Pharisees of the Sanhedrin, the group that had ultimately condemned Him to die.
- How did it feel to remove the nails from His hands and feet? How did it feel to wipe the blood from His body? How did it feel to dress Him for burial?

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

- The secrecy, the shame, the timidness was now gone, and it was clear to everyone that Nicodemus was a follower of Christ.
- At this point the curtain of the New Testament closes on Nicodemus, and while the Bible never tells us if he became a Christian or what happened to him, his story ends on a high note, and we can hope for the best.

Lessons For The Church Today



What Nicodemus Teaches Us

1. There is Always Room to Grow

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

~ 2 Peter 3:18

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

2. Don't Get Too Big For Your Britches

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

~ Galatians 3:28

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

3. Your Faith is based Upon Real Evidence

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.

~ Hebrews 11:1

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

4. We Must stand up for Jesus knowing that the world will condemn us in doing so:

But God has **chosen the foolish** things of **the** world to put to shame **the** wise, and God has **chosen the** weak things of **the** world to put to shame **the** things which are mighty

~ **1 Corinthians 1:27**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

5. We, like Nicodemus, Must Seek Christ

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

~ **Matthew 6:33**

What Nicodemus Teaches Us

6. Perhaps One Of The Greatest Gift You Can Give God is To Tell Others About The Gift He Has Given You:

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

~ Romans 6:23

This Morning With Nothing To Fear

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,
for it is the power of God to
salvation for everyone who believes**

~ Romans 1:16

Will You Also Come To Christ?