

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S5E9

Nicodemus: Under The Cloak Of Darkness - (John 3:1-4)

Description – Who was Nicodemus? Join us today as we examine the man who was seeking after the Messiah.

Today we're moving on to John 3 and Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus.

Imagine you lived in the Swiss Alps with the incredible views. You'd get to see them every day, day after day, but if you're not careful you can lose the luster of what's around you. The same can be said of scripture, especially passages that we're familiar with, like John 3:16 here in John 3.

John 3:1-4

There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him."

³ Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ "How can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

Nicodemus - his name means, "conqueror of the people"

The Mishnah / Talmud has a background story on the origin of Nicodemus.

We know that Nicodemus is one of if not the wealthiest disciples / followers of Jesus.

Nicodemus is a pharisee. He's one of the religious elite of the day.

Nicodemus was also part of the sanhedrin. This was an exclusive group of 70 men who acted like the religious congress of the day.

We also know that Nicodemus defends Jesus before the other pharisees. (John 7)

John 7:50-52

⁵⁰ Nicodemus—the one who came to him previously and who was one of them—said to them, ⁵¹ "Our law doesn't judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it?"

⁵² "You aren't from Galilee too, are you?" they replied. "Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

And we know that Nicodemus provides for Jesus's burial and entombment with spices and oils.

John 19:38-42

³⁸ After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus's body. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and took his body away. ³⁹ Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰ They took Jesus's body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ There was a garden in the place where he was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it. ⁴² They placed Jesus there because of the Jewish day of preparation and since the tomb was nearby.

Notice how Nicodemus comes to Jesus here in John 3, He comes at night. We know he was probably very well known amongst the people, he was wealthy, like a popular megachurch pastor today, the whole town would have known him.

John 3:2

² This man came to him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him."

Up to this point, what has Jesus done? He's turned water to wine, and he's gone into the temple and flipped the tables.

So Nicodemus is acknowledging that Jesus is doing these things from God. He's saying, I caught the connections of water to wine, to Moses, and we know why you cleansed the temple.

John 3:3

³ Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We could do a whole podcast on just this line, but we've done lots of podcasts already on "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God." These are synonymous terms, used interchangeably in the bible for the same thing.

If you're not born of God, you cannot see what God is doing right now.

Think of the difference between the Greek & Hebrew perspective. Greeks looked at Heaven as a place you go. You leave here and go there. (Geographically). Hebrews looked at it as an incarnation, a place here and now. The Jews looked at Heaven as a power and a presence.

So we end up thinking that the goal of salvation is we get to go to heaven. We leave here and go there.

We think we're going there, but in reality when you know how the story ends, God comes back to rule and reign on a new heaven and new earth.

Back to John 3:3, notice that Jesus doesn't say if you're not born again you won't GO to heaven. He says, "...he cannot see the kingdom of God."

See - means to experience or participate in, right now.

The fact that we don't have to wait to participate in the kingdom work of God is freeing.

Matthew 21:28-30

²⁸ "What do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'My son, go work in the vineyard today.'

²⁹ "He answered, 'I don't want to,' but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ Then the man went to the other and said the same thing. 'I will, sir,' he answered, but he didn't go. ³¹ Which of the two did his father's will?"

They said, "The first."

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.

Notice the tense here: It's all present tense. It's a reality right then and there in the 1st century.

Mark 10:23-25

²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ The disciples were astonished at his words. Again Jesus said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Again, present tense, Jesus talking about entering the kingdom today. Also, with this passage, the hardest place to be is a place of comfort. You've got all your possessions, your food, your health, you lack for nothing. You don't see or have any need for a Savior.

The kingdom of heaven is the rule and reign over a person's life today that brings intimacy and obedience with the king of the kingdom.

We trust in the King with obedience and dependence on Him.

Next week, we'll look at 6 ways a person could be born again.