

Everyday Life Bible Study
Jesus and Nicodemus
John 3:1-21

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V1-2 - came under cover of night

2 possibilities

- sent by sanhedrin to inquire - "we" language
- OR came on his own

He was still trying to figure out who Jesus was

Not ready to make that kind of leap at this point

The only miracle that we've talked about on this podcast - water to wine
2:23 talks about many signs Jesus performed in Jerusalem during Passover
Official start to his public ministry that caught the attention of everyone

Many believed in him

No indication that the religious leaders were bent on getting rid of him at this time
Although the context of this conversation with Nicodemus suggests they were not thrilled

Although they knew something big was happening, they were doing their best to dismiss it

Understand that nothing like this had ever happened in their lifetime

In fact, there was about 400 years of silence since the prophets spoke on God's behalf
Although the Pharisees believed in the supernatural (unlike the other sect of Sadducees that did not), it's possible they had come to the point of believing they just don't happen anymore

God used to do those things, but not anymore

Many people feel that way today

That because they haven't experienced the supernatural, God must not do those things anymore

To reject miracles outright would be to deny the Bible

So no denying that they used to happen, or that God can do it, but that's just not how God works today

So when they see something remarkable, or hear about something supernatural, they respond with skepticism

So perhaps you can understand where this ruling council is coming from

Not to excuse them, because we all come to faith in Jesus by faith and they refused

They continually refused to the point of becoming combative and murderous

But there was something different about Nicodemus

You hear a sincerity in his questions

Later in John 7, Nic comes to Jesus' defense before the Sanhedrin
In John 19, he comes with Joseph of Aramathea to provide for the care of Jesus body after his crucifixion
So Nicodemus is a member of the ruling class who has some kind of faith in Jesus.

V3 - Jesus immediately turns the conversation to the heart of the matter
Now, once again, 2 possibilities
1 - Jesus simply cut to the chase and go to the heart of the matter
2 - (the one I like to believe) - There was a longer conversation and we're only told about the most important part

We know the Gospels don't tell us everything that happened
What it does tell us is everything we need to know in order to have faith in Jesus
In the gospels, we also discover a Jesus that loved to socialize with people
I'm sure that what we read in John 3 is what Jesus wanted to get to with Nicodemus
But I'm also sure it wasn't the only words he spoke to him

V3-4 - Nic took him literally
We have the advantage of hindsight and knowledge of the rest of the story
We know exactly what Jesus meant, but this was a brand new thought

If today, you had a conversation w/ an interesting person and they told you, "You must be married again"
If you're married, you would wonder what that person is talking about
They may be speaking in metaphor, but how are you to know?
So Nicodemus is confused and Jesus goes on to explain that he's not talking about a physical rebirth, but a spiritual one

Again, Nicodemus is confused. Why is that necessary?
He has the Law, the scriptures and the prophets. He has the way of God
He knows what it takes to enter the kingdom of God
And it is all accomplished through the flesh

Now Jesus is telling him that he must be reborn in Spirit in order to get to Heaven
V9-12 - Jesus gave him an earthly example and he's having a hard time understanding
Nicodemus, Israel's teacher, a religious guide, cannot comprehend heavenly things

V14-15
He's speaking, of course, of his future act of redemption for mankind
The way we can be born again

Then comes the most famous Bible passage of modern times
V16 - If you have a red letter edition Bible, some are in red, but most are black
Most scholars agree that this is John's testimony about Jesus and not Jesus talking

"Loved the world" - The one greek word that every christian knows - agape
What does it mean? "Unconditional love"
Actually it simply refers to the love of God which we know to be unconditional
4 greek words for love

- storge - love b/c of a bond (parent/child)
- Philia - love for our fellow man - brotherly love - Philadelphia
- Eros - erotic - romantic love between man/woman
- Agape - the love God has for his creation

So God has this great, unconditional, strong love for his creation
But the word "world" isn't simply referring to the mountains and trees, it's the people
Understand that the people were not in what you would call good standing with God

They were sinful and going astray. That's why he sent Jesus
God loved the wayward people of this world so much, even to the point that he would
grant that his only Son would come to them as his ambassador
We know what that ultimately meant for the Father
This stirs up some thoughts in me about God's relationship with humanity

What was the condition of people at that time? Sinful and degenerate
Yet, his attitude toward them was love
Enough love to cause him to sacrifice his only Son
He made us as humans
We like to say, "I'm only human"
That means, "Sorry...I goofed. I'm human. That's what I do."

What we use as a negative, is exactly how God loves us
Human! He loves us in all of our humanity
He wants to redeem us, not from our humanity
To do that would be to leave this world
Not to rip our humanity from us
Not to be reborn of the flesh, but of the Spirit

To change us on the inside and make us OF HIM
So when we tell people that God loves them not matter what, we are speaking the truth
Think of the one person you believe to be the farthest person from God you know
This is not to be judgmental, just honest thoughts
God loves that person

Now think of yourself
This is very MUCH judgmental b/c we're constantly judging ourselves
In all of your humanity and weakness, God loves you
We often think of our humanity as the one thing that separates us from God
But how could that be? He made us as humans!
He knows the weaknesses of being human!

Our humanity is why we need him
It does not separate us from his love, but actually is the primary reason why he loves us so much
And the love is the motivation of why he sent his only Son to save us
We use the phrase, "I'm only human" as a derogatory comment
But God says, "That's exactly why I love you"

But just because we are objects of his love doesn't mean that we automatically reap the benefits

V17-18 - Jesus' mission was not to bring judgment and condemnation on those who don't believe. But that day is coming
In the meantime, we live in an age of grace
If we believe in him, his grace covers us, our sins are forgiven, and we have eternal life with Jesus in the Kingdom of God

Consider the comments made in the podcast about Kenneth Copeland. What do you think of that?

Many Christians are quick to criticize Copeland over his comments
But how many of us avoid certain people, or certain types of people?
Do we intentionally not engage with some people because they're not like us?

Maybe they don't look like me or act like me
Perhaps they have different political views
What if they don't smell nice?
God, give us the same kind of love for people that you have

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Until next week, my prayer for you is that the Bible would become reality in your everyday life