

From Visitor to Disciple: The Story of Nicodemus

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[0:00] John chapter 2, verse 23. We'll read through 3, 21. Now while he, that's Jesus, now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

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

In reply, Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. How can a man be born again when he is old? Nicodemus asked.

Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born. Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

[1:18] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again. 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. How can this be? Nicodemus asked.

You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus, and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth. We speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen.

But still, you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

[2:20] For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

This is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. Well, it's nighttime in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

And two men are talking. One is Jesus of Nazareth. The eternal Son of God who took our human nature upon himself and became one of us.

[3:35] And he's here to save his people from their sins. Amen. But he was born and then grew up in an out-of-the-way sort of town called Nazareth.

And he's now 30 years old and he's just recently started his public ministry. While in Jerusalem for the Passover, he created quite a stir when he cleared out the temple of its money changers.

And then he taught in the temple and performed many miraculous signs, even calling God his Father. Now, he's probably had a full day of work.

Exhausting ministry as we find throughout the Gospels. Yet here he is, ever the friend of sinners, ready to receive his visitor in the night. But who is he?

Well, his name is Nicodemus. And he is, without a doubt, one of the most religious people in all of Israel. He's a Pharisee.

[4:40] He belongs to the strictest religious party in Israel. They were famous for their keeping carefully the law of God.

In fact, there was a saying that was going around that if only two people made it into heaven, one would for sure be a Pharisee. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council.

That means he was one of the 71 men who sat on that supreme court, the highest court in Israel.

And then he's also said to be a distinguished religious teacher in Israel.

Perhaps the most prominent of all because Jesus calls him in verse 10, the teacher of Israel. So, he's made a lifetime of studying, interpreting, and teaching God's law.

Now, Nicodemus is one of the many who had witnessed Jesus' many miraculous signs and was amazed at them. And yet, what he hears Jesus saying and what he hears his own fellow Pharisees saying confuses Nicodemus.

[5:57] And so, he's going to have his questions answered and he seeks a meeting with the Lord Jesus. He comes at night, probably not wanting to be seen talking with him.

I mean, what would his own colleagues say? Those other distinguished Pharisees and Sanhedrinists. What would they say if they found him consorting with Jesus of Nazareth?

Because very early on in the ministry of Jesus, the ruling establishment of the Jews had condemned Jesus. They had bitterly opposed him from the start.

You see, he wasn't one of them. He hadn't come up through their schools. His preaching was different. He didn't just endlessly quote the rabbis. Yes, he spoke with authority as if he had it in himself.

And he wasn't afraid to step on their toes and to expose their many sins. They were offended at him. And furthermore, they were not at all pleased to see this popularity rising in Israel.

[7:01] They were jealous and envious of him. And so, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin were against the Lord Jesus. And so, under the cover of night, this leading public figure in Israel sneaks his way for an interview with Jesus.

Nicodemus is very complimentary in his opening words, isn't he? Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one can perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.

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

So, get Jesus thrust. You have just called me a teacher of God that's come from God. If you believe me to be a teacher from God, then hear what I say, Nicodemus.

No new birth, no heaven. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. Now, what Nicodemus doesn't realize is that the one sitting across from him knows him through and through.

[8:17] Verse 25 of chapter 2 says that he doesn't need man's testimony about man because he knew what was in a man. And so, as he looks across at Nicodemus, he not only sees his pharisaical garbs, but he sees right into his heart.

And what he sees is that Nicodemus holds to the fatal flaw of the Pharisees. Which is this, that as long as you are born a descendant of Abraham and do your best to keep God's law, well, then you're in.

You're in the kingdom of God. You belong. You're safe and secure. And so, Nicodemus thinks, if anyone's in, I'm in. So he thought.

So he had been taught. And so he had taught others. And we can hardly imagine the shock that Jesus' words brought to Nicodemus.

For in one opening statement, Jesus just pulls the rug right out from under him. He touches the nerve center of Nicodemus. And knocks his eternal security right out from under him.

[9:27] No one, not even you, Nicodemus, can see the kingdom of heaven. Unless he is born again. The new birth is absolutely essential if anyone wants to get into heaven.

And now Nicodemus knows nothing about this new birth that Jesus is talking about. He's dumbfounded and he asks, how can a man be born when he's old? Surely he can't enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born all over again.

And Jesus' answer in essence is, Nicodemus, I'm not talking about a physical birth. I'm talking about a spiritual birth. I tell you the truth. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he's born of water and the spirit.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again.

You see, there's two births that Jesus is talking about. You've been born once of the flesh, you must now be born a second time of the spirit. Being born physically in Abraham's line won't cut it, Nicodemus.

[10 : 41] Even if you could get back into your mother's womb and be born all over again, that's not the answer because you would come forth a sinner again. Because that which is born of flesh is always flesh.

Flesh, fallen human nature, only gives birth to other flesh, fallen human nature. Fallen descendants of Abraham only give birth to other fallen descendants of Abraham.

No, you can dress up the flesh. You can dress up fallen human nature. You can put it in religious clothing. You can educate it. You can make it very respectable. You can teach it to hold conservative morals, Christian values, and be outwardly religious.

It can even wear the clothing of a Pharisee, of a Sanhedrinist. But it's still fallen human nature and cannot enter the kingdom of God.

You see, we're born sinners. We're born sinners. And that's why it's not a little window dressing that we need. We need to be remade all over again. Born again.

[11 : 54] This time by the Spirit of God. It's a spiritual birth Jesus speaks of. You see, being born of the seed of Abraham may get you into the nation of Israel.

But only being born by the Spirit will get you into the kingdom of heaven. You must be born again. That's the only birth that counts is the spiritual one. And friends, this is the change that you and I, every last one of us, must have happened to us.

If we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. We need to be remade. And this change that Jesus speaks of is so radical that he refers to it as a new birth.

That results in an entirely new man. So this man who's born again, he's so new. His will is new. What he chooses is different.

[12 : 49] His appetites, his tastes, his desires are new. What he likes and what he hates. It's different now. His habits and his mind are new.

His views of sin. His views of self. His views of the world. His views of the Bible. His views of Jesus. They're new.

So new that for all practical purposes, he himself is a new man. He's been born all over again. And Jesus makes it clear that you can no more do this for yourself than you can give birth to yourself.

That's what he refers to it as a birth. Because you don't birth yourself. You are given birth by another. And so it is with this great change that must come upon you.

It's that which God's spirit must do to you. He must give you birth. Now that is so opposite to all that Nicodemus had been taught, believed, and taught others.

[13 : 56] He always thought that by his own religious deeds and pedigree and self-improvement, that a man could make himself fit for heaven. And now he's being told that salvation in the first place is not something that you do at all.

It's something that God does to you. He gives you this new birth. He births you all over again.

He comes to live within you. He takes out the old heart that's stony and hard, and he puts in a soft, pliable heart. And he moves you and changes you to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself.

That's only possible as the Spirit of God gives this new birth. So Nicodemus is being called upon to abandon every attempt to become right with God by anything he can do for himself, and to see his need for a change that only God can do.

And that's the love of Jesus coming to this poor, benighted Pharisee. Do you see the love of Jesus in that? Not letting him go on in his religion and yet lost, but saying to him, you need to be born again.

[15 : 19] Now Jesus then compares the Spirit's work in the new birth to the wind. Verse 8, The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going.

So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. There's a mystery about the wind and about the Spirit's work.

There's a sovereignty about the Spirit and the wind that we hear it sound, the passage says. Did any of you hear the wind Tuesday night?

Has it blew? You could hear it, couldn't you, from the inside of your house. That's what Jesus says. You can hear it, but you can't see the wind. The wind is invisible.

What you see are its effects. And so you saw the snow going horizontally, didn't you? You saw it swirling. And in the fall you see the leaves blowing.

[16 : 18] But you don't see the wind. You don't know where it's come from and where it's off to. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

And though the Spirit's work is invisible, inward, in the mind, the will, the affections, the heart of man, yet you can't miss where he comes.

Its effects are so visible, even as the wind that's blowing. The fruit of the Spirit can be spotted like apples on a tree.

The Apostle John writes his first epistle and explains, what are the marks of someone who's been born of the Spirit? What are the marks of somebody who has had happen to him, what Jesus tells Nicodemus must happen to all men if they're to enter heaven.

And so John tells us, what does a man look like who's been born again? And he says, well, they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior. They do not continue to make a practice of sin, but rather they practice righteousness.

[17 : 29] They love other Christians. Other Christians are their people. They enjoy being with them and they love them in word and in deed. They overcome the world.

They don't let the world squeeze them into its mold. They keep themselves from the wicked one, Satan's ploys. And they walk as Jesus walked.

They walk as Jesus walked, obeying God's commands and viewing them as not at all burdensome. Now those are the ones born of the Spirit, John says.

The Spirit's presence cannot be missed. Have you had this spiritual transformation? Has this new birth happened to you by God's Spirit?

Spirit? It's absolutely essential if anyone is to enter heaven. Now, in the 18th century England, there was a group of university students at Oxford University called the Holy Club.

[18 : 34] And they would get together and they would pray and read the Bible. They fasted. They visited prisons. Read the scriptures to the prisoners. Visited the poor. Gave them money. Gave them the scriptures.

And in this Holy Club were two young men who were very zealous. George Whitefield and John Wesley. And though they were very religious, they were both strangers, absolute strangers to the new birth.

That is, they were very religious, but they had never had their hearts changed. And so they did a lot of religious things, but it was still the flesh. It was not a new heart like Jesus is speaking of.

Well, each one in his own way and in God's, or I shouldn't say in his own way, but God in his own way, in his own time, brought new birth to each one of them.

George and to John. They were born again. From the heart, they received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And at once they began to preach the necessity of the new birth to a nation that was full of religious people.

[19 : 56] Well, the opposition arose from the clergy in the Church of England who objected to their preaching. I mean, here you are as a minister of the Church of England.

And while your parishioners were baptized Christians at birth. And now, here come these young fanatics along, and they're saying, and getting them all stirred up and thinking that, no, no, unless you have a new birth, an inward spiritual birth, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven.

And so the clergy locked them out of their churches. So John Wesley and George Whitefield took to the open fields and just preached in the open air.

And thousands flocked to hear them and were converted. It was the clergy, the religious leaders who opposed these preachers of the new birth.

It was the Pharisees. It was the Sanhedrin who opposed Jesus' message of the absolute necessity of the new birth. And there are still many religious people today who are absolute strangers to this new birth.

[21 : 08] They've never experienced it, and yet they think and will tell you they're on their way to heaven. I tell you, no. That unless you were born again, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, it's significant that these words of Jesus were spoken to Nicodemus and not to the immoral Samaritan woman in the next chapter, chapter 4, that he meets at the well of Sychar.

Now, they applied to her as well. That's true. But he speaks them to Nicodemus, one of the most religious men on the planet. Because, you see, if they had been spoken to the immoral woman, well, we could all say, of course she needs to be born again.

Look at her. She's an utter sinner. But because Jesus speaks them to one of the most outwardly religious, moral men, he shows that no man, however religious and moral he may be, can get into heaven without a radical transformation of his heart called a new birth by the Spirit.

So, whoever you are, and whatever morality and religion you may have, without this new birth, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[22:31] Now, that's the first thing Jesus told him. It's absolutely essential to getting into heaven. There's a second thing without which you can't enter heaven. Something else that's absolutely necessary, and it's this.

You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from your sins. Now, since Nicodemus was a student of the Old Testament, Jesus goes to the Old Testament in an event there to make his point.

He refers, in verse 14, to Moses lifting up a snake in the desert. He's referring to an event back in Numbers chapter 21.

There in the desert, the Israelites sinned against God by complaining once again to God.

Complaining about God's way with them. So, God's judgment was to send poisonous snakes to bite them.

Now, there were many poisonous snakes in the desert, but God had protected his people from them. But now that all changes. And now it's God himself who is calling these poisonous snakes out of their hiding places.

[23:40] And they're obeying their creator. And they're creeping right into the camp of Israel. And they slither right into their tents.

And cries and shouts are heard as they fasten upon people and leave behind their deadly venom. And many Israelites died.

Why? Well, this is God's judgment upon sin. Sin against him deserves death under his wrath. Death under his curse.

Under his judgment. Indeed, the wages of sin is death. And many Israelites died. Others were still dying. And as they cried for mercy, God revealed his gracious provision.

He tells Moses, make a snake. Put it up on a pole. And anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. The divine remedy from poisonous snake bite was look and live.

[24:46] Look and live. Strange remedy this, wouldn't you say? Look and live. How can looking at a lifeless snake on a pole give life to dying people?

Does it sound absurd to the natural man? God intended it to sound exactly so. It provides the perfect test.

Will men in their sin humble themselves and take me at my word and believe me and obey me even when they can't understand?

Will they bow to me rather than to their own intellect? Look and live. Don't look and you won't live. So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole.

And then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. It happened just as God said it would. Nicodemus was familiar with this story.

[25:51] But notice, kids, though the bronze snake was lifted up and the remedy was at hand even within eyeshot. Not a single one lived but those who looked.

So the guy that made his home remedy and mixed it up and drank it but didn't look, he died. As did the guy who did nothing and waited around thinking he could get better on his own but didn't look. He too died. Everybody died that didn't look. Only those who looked lived. Oh, but all who looked lived. All who looked lived.

However near death they were, however weak in faith, when they looked, they lived. They lived.

And Jesus takes this well-known event in Numbers 21 and he applies it to himself.

He moves from the symbol to the substance. From the type to the reality.

[26:57] From the serpent on a pole to the Savior on a cross. Verses 14 through 16, Jesus says to Nicodemus, Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up

that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Did you know that John 3.16 is surrounded by snakes?

Did you know it's in the context of that story of snakes biting and killing Israelites that Jesus speaks those words? He preaches the gospel to Nicodemus from Numbers 21.

It's an event in Israel's past that has abiding application and consequences for every one of us here. You say, oh, that happened so long ago. It did. But it preaches to us about realities that are real to us today.

It points in the first place to our sin and its punishment. We all have sinned. We all have grumbled and complained against God and done many other worse things.

[28 : 20] And the punishment is death. The soul that sins, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Death is presently at work in our bodies.

Did you know that? From the youngest child here to the oldest one among us, death is presently at work in us. It's at work. Like the poisonous venom of a snake, this is what our sin deserves.

Death. But it's a death far worse than just dying of snake bite. No, it's death under the curse of God. It's a death that will separate us from God forever and ever. It's what the Bible calls the second death. Death in the lake of fire. Hell.

And that's what our sins deserve. And there's nothing we can do to fix the problem. There are no self-help remedies. There's no religion that we can do. There's no way that we can, by our good deeds, undo one of our bad deeds.

[29 : 26] Guilty, vile, and helpless we. Helpless we. And yet, this story tells us and shows to us that it's into such a dark world of misery that God sends His divine remedy.

God's gracious remedy for our salvation is a person. It's not a snake. It's His own Son, Jesus Christ. But notice, it's His Son lifted up. It's His Son lifted up. For just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

What does this lifting up mean? Well, John tells us later in John chapter 12, when he comments on the words of Jesus, Jesus is teaching again and He says, but I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men to Me.

And John comments for us, by this, He showed the kind of death that He was going to die. The lifting up was the lifting up upon the cross by which He would die.

[30 : 45] So God's remedy for our sin-sick condition is His own beloved Son, lifted up on the cross of Calvary, where He becomes sin for us, where He takes the venom of sin upon His own body.

The curse of God is put on Him, and He's cursed in our place, suffering the punishment that we deserve forever and ever. For Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

How? By becoming a curse for us. As it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree, who's lifted up.

And there He is, lifted up to be cursed, to experience death under God's wrath in our place, damned that we might know God's favor forever and ever.

He dies that we might live. Do you see the gospel in the wilderness? But just as the bronze snake lifted up did not cure unless it was looked upon, even so Christ crucified will profit you absolutely nothing unless you look.

[31 : 55] Unless you look with a look of faith, which Jesus says is believing on Him. Believing on Him.

You must look to live. You must believe in Him to not perish, but to have everlasting life. There's plenty of healing, pardon. There's plenty of sanctifying blood, cleansing, pardoning blood in Jesus Christ crucified.

There's everything that you need to be saved in Christ and in Him crucified. But it's only yours if you believe. It's only yours if you look and live.

How sad to think that some, even in this room this morning, may be that close, within eyeshot of Christ and Him crucified, as He's preached to you. But that you're still perishing in your sins because you've not looked with faith on the Son of God and said, that's my only hope for heaven and I put all my weight on Him.

You see, this is a look of faith. It's a look away from self. It's a look away from all my religion and good deeds and anything that I do to try to make myself right from God. No, it's a look away from self.

[33:07] It's a look that says, there, there is all my righteousness. My right standing with God is there in Christ. And everyone who so looks will live.

Whosoever looks will live. Whosoever believes shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Doesn't matter how shot through you are with the poison of sin and guilt. Doesn't matter what you've done, how long you've gone on in sin. If you'll look this morning, you'll live. You'll live and live forever.

There's a lot of merit in the blood of Christ. Think of all the sins of His people from all time. And there's so much value in Christ's blood that that blood cleanses them all of sin.

That blood would cleanse you if you would look and live this morning. Nicodemus came to get some answers for his questions. The answers he got shocked him to the core.

[34:16] He thought he was fit for heaven. Now his whole religious system had just been chopped down at the root. No kingdom of God unless you're born again by the Spirit. No eternal life unless you believe on the Son of God who must be lifted up.

Well, these words of Jesus followed him home that night out into the dark street. They followed him to bed. They followed him into work the next morning. They wouldn't let go of him. What is this about the Son of Man being lifted up?

What is this new birth? No doubt, Nicodemus started going through the scrolls a bit more carefully. Looking into the things that Christ had spoken.

At some point, we don't know when, Nicodemus was born again. The change by the Spirit took place in his heart. And he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

The details are not clear. We only have two further snapshots of Nicodemus in John's Gospel. He's not found anywhere else in Scripture. The next time we see him is at the end of John chapter 7.

[35:25] It's two years after this private meeting with Jesus and Jesus is again at Jerusalem for a feast, this time the Feast of Tabernacles. And as he taught in the temple, some were putting their faith in him as the Messiah.

The Pharisees got wind of this and they and the chief priests sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus. Well, the guards eventually returned empty-handed back to the chief priests and Pharisees. Why didn't you bring him in? They said. And they answered, no one ever spoke like this man spoke. They were there to arrest him. And they were arrested by his speech.

What? These religious leaders, these Pharisees cannot believe it. You mean he's deceived you also? The Pharisees retorted.

Has any of the rulers of the Pharisees have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No. But this mob that knows nothing of the law there's a curse on them.

[36:34] Of course, they believe in him. They're cursed, know nothings. But none of us Pharisees have believed on him. Now, if Nicodemus already by now does believe in Jesus, his own cronies know nothing about it.

No. None of us have believed. And it's in this hostile climate that Nicodemus does manage a timid rebuke of them in defense of Jesus.

Verse 50. Nicodemus, there he's mentioned. Verse 50. Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he's doing?

He raises a procedural question. He's not playing his whole hand, is he? And they replied, are you from Galilee too? Look into it and you'll find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.

They were expecting one not from Galilee and so they rejected him. Well, he was looking into things a whole lot more than they realized and at some point he did come to believe on Jesus.

[37:41] Perhaps at first secretly because of fear of the Jews but at last he comes out into the open. The other place we see Nicodemus is John chapter 19. It's almost another year later and Jesus has come to Jerusalem the last time for the feast of Passover because his hour has now come and so he is arrested, he's tried by the council, he's condemned and he's crucified and I wonder was it then that Nicodemus first came to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ savingly?

How could he see the Lord Jesus lifted up on the cross without remembering that conversation some three years earlier and what that Jesus said to him as he looked across him that night and said just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert so the son of man must be lifted up that whoever believes on him should have eternal life.

And there he is lifted up and Nicodemus looks with the eye of faith and believes. Was it then that he believed for the first time?

Here he is now a lifeless corpse strange remedy this for eternal life strange way to receive eternal life through a dying savior strange medicine this the great physician wounded for our transgressions so that by his wounds we are healed?

Whenever it was that Nicodemus first believed it was not until then when he sees the Lord Jesus lifted up that he comes out of the shadows and nails his colors to the mast I am a follower a disciple of Jesus the crucified.

[39:38] You see it. John 19:38 later Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus but secretly because he feared the Jews and Luke tells us he was also a member of the council the Sanhedrin a good and upright man who had not consented to their decision and action with regard to Jesus' death.

Could it be that Joseph and Nicodemus had all along been comparing notes about Jesus? As two members on the council perhaps together putting their faith in Jesus Christ but secretly for fear of the Jews well Friday night at Galgotha the secret was to come out it was over and Nicodemus comes out of the shadows for with Pilate's permission Joseph came and took the body away verse 39 he was accompanied by Nicodemus the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night and Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about 75 pounds taking Jesus' body the two of them wrapped it with the spices and strips of linen and then they laid Jesus in the garden tomb where no one had been laid.

Seems to me that John Nicodemus is not mentioned in any of the other gospels but that John wants us to be amazed at the change that has come over this man that the same man who three years earlier had secretly come to Jesus at night for fear of even being seen with him is now the one who comes forward to give Jesus an honorable burial in his death and identifies with him openly and boldly in front of all men.

When does he do this? when all of his other disciples have deserted him and fled Nicodemus steps out of the darkness into the light. When does he do it?

Not when Jesus is working miracles wowing the crowd but when Jesus is a corpse hanging on a tree lifted up. It's then that he comes out and pays him the honor that he deserves.

[42:00] This is the savior of sinners. This is my redeemer. I am a follower of the crucified one. You can do to me what you will but he is mine and I am his.

And he identifies with Jesus Christ at his lowest point as he appears to man. A dead man. A crucified man. It was political suicide for this leader of the Jews but Jesus now means more to him than his own life itself.

What a change. My friend you can be changed. It doesn't matter what you are this morning what you have been. You can be changed. The spirit of God is able to transform the life to make it new. This is a new Nicodemus with a new view of Jesus. He's far more than some miracle worker. He is the Messiah whose greatest miracle is salvation from sin by dying on the cross under God's wrath in my place.

That's what Nicodemus is saying to us and John is saying be amazed at God's power to make sinners new, clean, washed in the blood of Jesus and be amazed at what it cost the father to save this religious sinner.

[43:17] It cost his own son being damned in his place. Be amazed at the love of God that sent his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Have you believed? Are you a new creation in Christ Jesus? Trust in this Savior. He identified with us when to do so meant damnation.

Have you identified with him? Have you let it be known I'm a follower of Jesus? The New Testament way to identify with Jesus as his follower is the waters of baptism.

Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of sins. And you come forward in baptism and say I'm a new creature and I didn't do it he did it all but I believe in the Lord Jesus and my sins have been washed away and I'm unashamed to identify with him who identified with me at Calvary.

Let's pray. Oh Lord we're so used to the things we're used to seeing that we just discount so much.

[44:39] The fact that there can be a whole new birth that people can change can be changed with a supernatural birth from heaven.

will give us to see it happening over and over again among us here. Thank you for the gift of your son. Make him precious where this morning he's boring where this morning he means nothing to people make them to see how much they need him and how he perfectly meets their need and so to look in faith and to receive him we ask in Jesus name.

Amen. Perhaps you're in the condition that Nicodemus was in with questions that desire and answer and he went to Jesus. I urge you to go to Jesus to lay your questions out before him.

If any of us here could be of help to you we're more than happy to hear your questions and to point you to the Savior. But don't go on without this Savior. Amen.