

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews

The 3rd chapter of John reads as follows -

Page | 1

1

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

Page | 2

12

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

22

After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23

And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24

For John was not yet cast into prison.

25

Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

26

And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

27

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

31

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32

And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33

He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

What of Nicodemus?

We know he was a **ruler of the Jews**. (John 3:1). It is generally agreed he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the great governing council of the nation. In this story, we see in him sincerity and timidity struggling together. He came to Jesus **by night**, manifesting his timorous fear. At the same time, he expresses genuine belief that Jesus was **a teacher come from God** because **no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him**. (John 3:2).

We later read that Nicodemus boldly defended Jesus against the unjustified suspicion of the Jews. **Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?** (John 7:50-51). And there's strong reason to believe he accompanied Jesus faithfully thereafter to the end of his earthly journey, as one who came to aid in embalming his body. **And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate; that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes,**

about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. (John 19:38-40).

So we have in this story an example of a child of God, who in the beginning of his following after the Savior was fearful of man and cautious. He didn't have the courage to approach Jesus in the daylight where he would be seen. But eventually he was an open and strong defender of the faith and ultimately was one of only two men who did honor to our Lord's dead body. In this sample, we learn never to despise **the day of small things** in religion. (Zechariah 4:10). Do not label a person as having no grace because the first steps toward God are timid and wavering and the first movements are uncertain, hesitating and stamped with much imperfection. The Lord received Nicodemus. He did not break the **bruised reed** or quench the **smoking flax**. (Isaiah 42:3). In everything there must be a beginning and we do well to deal with all beginners in a gentle and loving manner. Matthew Henry sums it up this way: *And though now he came by night, yet afterward he owned Christ publicly.*

What be the substantive aspects of their conversation?

Jesus and Nicodemus conversed essentially of two vital topics. Nicodemus did not desire to discuss human government or the politics of the day – matters he obviously dealt with on a daily basis. No. Instead, he focused on: (1) The new birth; and, (2) salvation by faith in the Son of God. Though he was slow in the uptake, Nicodemus obviously had meaty topics on the mind.

The new birth: What a remarkable expression. **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** (John 3:3). The initial reaction of Nicodemus shows he understandably didn't get it. **How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?** (John 3:4). So Jesus

clarifies to make it plainer to the hearer's mind. **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** (John 3:5, 6). That last quotation from Jesus clarifies and explains the former.

Perhaps this language from J. C. Ryle will help further explain this concept –

To possess the privileges of Judaism, a man only needed to be born of the seed of Abraham after the flesh. To possess the privileges of Christ's kingdom, a man must be born again of the Holy Spirit. The change which our Lord here declares needful to salvation is evidently no slight or superficial one. It is not merely reformation, or amendment, or moral change, or outward alteration of life. It is a thorough change of heart, will, and character. It is a resurrection. It is a new creation. It is a passing from death to life. It is the implanting into our dead hearts of a new principle from above. It is the calling into existence of a new creature, with a new nature, new habits of life, new tastes, new desires, new appetites, new judgments, new opinions, new hopes, and new fears.

The metaphor of wind helps!

To help Nicodemus grasp the import of his words, Jesus turns to wind as a helpful symbol. **Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.** (John 3:7, 8).

Generally speaking, the wind is mysterious and inexplicable. Christ says of it: You simply cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. You cannot handle it with your hands or see it with your eyes. You can't take a bite out of it. You can't swallow it. You can't smell it

(although on occasion you can smell other material that the wind stirs up). You are not able to identify precisely where you first felt it or how long it lasted. And yet, you can't deny its presence and existence.

The same holds true with respect to the operations of the Spirit in the new birth of one of God's children. It's mysterious and even incomprehensible how it happens, but it would be foolish to stumble at the phenomenon because we can't explain it. Yet what's one thing we do detect about the wind? We hear it. Jesus said we hear **the sound thereof**. (John 3:8). So, objective proof is available when the Spirit is at work.

To this effect, consider Barnes:

Nicodemus had objected to the doctrine because he did not understand how it could be. Jesus shows him that he ought not to reject it on that account, for he constantly believed things quite as difficult. It might appear incomprehensible, but it was to be judged of by its effects. As in this case of the wind, the effects were seen, the sound was heard, important changes were produced by it, trees and clouds were moved, yet the wind is not seen, nor do we know whence it comes, nor by what laws it is governed; so it is with the operations of the Spirit. We see the changes produced.

And Ellicott:

And yet the new spiritual birth, like the physical, cannot be explained. We can observe the phenomena, we cannot trace the principle of life. He breatheth where He willeth, in the wide world of man, free as the wind of heaven, bound by no limits of country or of race. The voice is heard speaking to the man himself, and through him to others; there is the evidence of the new birth in the new life. We know not whence He comes, or whither He goes. We cannot fix the day or hour of the new birth with certainty. We know not what

its final issues will be. It is the beginning of a life which is a constant growth, and the highest development here is but the germ of that which shall be hereafter (1John 3:2). [**Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**]

Before leaving this discussion of “wind”, a few Bible verses on the topic may be of help. A sampling of such includes:

He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. (Psalm 78:26)

From the story of the valley of bones, we see this: **Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.** (Ezekiel 37:9)

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. (Ecclesiastes 1:6). According to our text, this is a good description of the Holy Spirit’s workings – quite busy, organized and effective.

Now in the context of the wicked, **[t]hey are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.** (Job 21:18).

Remembering that the wind often symbolizes the Holy Spirit, are we to understand from the following that the work of the Holy Spirit is finished by the time Revelation 7:1 arrives? **And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.** (Revelation 7:1)

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (Psalm 103:16)

He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. (Psalm 147:18)

But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! (Matthew 8:27)

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind[.] (Psalm 104:3) That's quite a picture; the wind moves about by its wings, all the while God walking on that winged wind.

So we also have this verse that is generally understood to be referring to the Holy Ghost, as reflected by its context: **And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:2)**

I surveyed many dozens of verses mentioning wind, and offer these as being some of the more helpful in aiding us in better grasping the Holy Spirit concept.

Master/Teacher.

At verse 10, Jesus upbraids Nicodemus a bit, with this rhetorical question: **Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?** The original word here is translated “teacher” in verse 2. So, Jesus is essentially stating that Nicodemus is supposed to be a teacher of Israel, and therefore should have understood this basic doctrine, that was not new and is clearly taught in the Old Testament. Specifically, we find in the Old

Testament: **Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10) And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 11:19) And this comparable verse: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).**

So, the question that Jesus poses in this verse 10 clearly implies that the doctrine of regeneration is so abundantly disclosed in the Old Testament that Nicodemus was culpable in being ignorant of it.

For more understanding on verse 10, consider Matthew Poole's observations:

Our Saviour doth not so much wonder at as upbraid the ignorance of Nicodemus, and all of his sect, who went for masters, or teachers, and that in Israel; who had the law and the prophets, and yet were ignorant of those things which were necessary to be known to every ordinary person's salvation. Will any say, But where was there any thing spoken in the books of the law and the prophets about regeneration, or a being born again?

Answer. What other things could be meant by the circumcision of the heart, commanded by Moses, Deu 10:16, promised in Deu 30:6; by the new heart, and the new spirit, promised Ezekiel 36:26; by the clean heart prayed for by David, Psalm 51:10? A teacher in Israel should from hence have understood the necessity of a new and of a clean heart; but the whole sect of the Pharisees were so taken up with the trifles of the rites and traditions, and the works of the law, that

as to these spiritual things of nearer and much higher concernment to people's souls, they knew and spake little of them.

These are heavenly things!

Christ refers to “heavenly things” in verse 12, and then pointedly tells Nicodemus at verse 13: **And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.**

Here's the message Nicodemus needed. There can be no other means of heavenly truth than here stated. No man has learned it and is able to teach it except the Son of man who ever was, and is in, heaven. **No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.** (John 1:18) This had to be an eye-opener for Nicodemus, although again it was learnable via the Old Testament. **Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?** (Proverbs 30:4)

This does not mean that no one else had gone to heaven or had been saved, for Enoch and Elijah had been borne there (Genesis 5:24/Hebrews 11:5 [Enoch] and 2 Kings 2:11 [Elijah]) and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others were there, but the key is that nobody had ascended and returned so as to be qualified to speak of the things there in heaven.

And consider this unique language at the end of verse 13: **[E]ven the Son of man which is in heaven.** At the very time Jesus was on the earth conversing with Nicodemus, it is said (indeed He says!) the Son of man (Himself) is in heaven. The

writers explain that this means Jesus had two natures: His divine nature, which is in heaven; and His human nature, which is in the earth. Other passages speak of Jesus in this vein: **When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? (John 6:61, 62). I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. (John 17:4, 5).**

Closing the loop on this passage (verse 13), please note these writings from Jamieson-Fausset-Brown:

There is something paradoxical in this language—"No one has gone up but He that came down, even He who is at once both up and down." Doubtless it was intended to startle and constrain His auditor to think that there must be mysterious elements in His Person. The old Socinians, to subvert the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, seized upon this passage as teaching that the man Jesus was secretly caught up to heaven to receive His instructions, and then "came down from heaven" to deliver them. But the sense manifestly is this: "The perfect knowledge of God is not obtained by any man's going up from earth to heaven to receive it—no man hath so ascended—but He whose proper habitation, in His essential and eternal nature, is heaven, hath, by taking human flesh, descended as the Son of man to disclose the Father, whom He knows by immediate gaze alike in the flesh as before He assumed it, being essentially and unchangeably 'in the bosom of the Father'" (John 1:18).

As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. (Isaiah 3:12-13).

In sum: Rulers are weak, effeminate and destitute of manliness.

The Counseling and Mental Health Center at the University of Texas at Austin recently launched a new program to help male students “take control over their gender identity and develop a healthy sense of masculinity.”

Treating masculinity as if it were a mental health crisis, “MasculinUT” is organized by the school’s counseling staff and most recently organized a poster series encouraging students to develop a “healthy model of masculinity.”

The program is predicated on a critique of so-called “restrictive masculinity.” Men, the program argues, suffer when they are told to “act like a man” or when they are encouraged to fulfill traditional gender roles, such as being “successful” or “the breadwinner.”

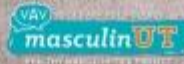
<https://pjmedia.com/trending/university-of-texas-to-treat-masculinity-as-a-mental-health-issue/>

Expanding MasculinUT



“ I don't identify as masculine, it's just imposed on my body. One way I embrace my femininity is by wearing make-up and doing my nails. ”

To learn more about the visual campaign and the MasculinUT program visit tiny.cc/masculinUT



Expanding MasculinUT



“ Even though I’m masculine, I can wear makeup, and if I feel like wearing a dress, I can do that too and it’s totally fine. ”

To learn more about this visual campaign and the MasculinUT program visit tiny.cc/masculinUT



@UTaustinVAV
#MasculinUT



UT Austin VAV is proud to be a part of the