

The Man Who Knew Too Much

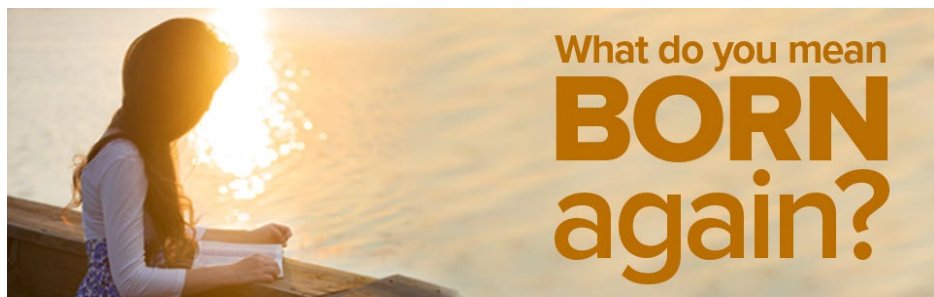
John 3.1-3

If a person tries to do what is right, don't you think God should let them into heaven? Maybe you know non-Christians who are better than some Christians you know. Would God really refuse them? Jesus' response to Nicodemus addresses questions like these – the core truth of the gospel.

- Nicodemus: *Do you know someone like this? Is it you?*
 - A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (wealth, prestige)
 - He was drawn by Jesus' signs (miracles) cf. John 10.37-38
 - He was looking for the kingdom, and missing the King
- Nicodemus: *What he knew that wasn't so...*
 - Human righteousness was the way to God
 - He could get secret knowledge from Jesus
 - He *didn't know* who Jesus was
- What does it take to be a “real Christian”?
 - Not...spiritual experience or special knowledge
 - Simply be “born again” (believe in Jesus!) – John 1.12-13

If you died tonight, do you know for certain you would go to heaven?

If you died tonight, and God asked you, “Why should I let you into My heaven?”, what would you say?



1. We're going to spend two weeks looking at Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, but let's begin by focusing on just John 3.1-3. We learn two things about Nicodemus in v1: He was a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews – a member of the Sanhedrin. Who were the Pharisees? Do a study of their history and beliefs. What stands out? What mattered to them? Why? What were they looking for? Are there any Pharisees today? What might an unsaved Pharisee look like? Could a Christian be a “Pharisee” today? How and why?
2. Being a “ruler of the Jews,” a member of the Sanhedrin, was a high honor, and a position of power. This indicates Nicodemus was both respected and wealthy. What unique challenges does the possession of wealth and power present to a person spiritually? Read Matthew 19.16-26. Consider the irony: Those who are rich in this life have a spiritual handicap, while the poor have an easier road to spiritual riches (see James 2.5)! Have you ever stopped to pray for a wealthy or politically powerful person to come to faith? It takes a miracle!
3. In John 3.2, we read that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, under the cover of darkness, but we aren't told why: Why do you think he did? What impressed Nicodemus about Jesus (see John 2.13-23)? Some scholars suggest that since he was impressed by the “signs” (miracles) Jesus performed, he was not really sincere. If you saw Jesus perform miracles, wouldn't you be drawn to Him? What was the purpose of Jesus performing miracles (see John 10.37-38)?
4. Jesus' response to Nicodemus in John 3.3 seems somewhat abrupt. Meditate on Nicodemus' words in verse 2, and Jesus' response in verse 3. What hopes, longings, or inquiries are *behind* Nicodemus' statement to Jesus? What “kingdom” would a Pharisee in the first century, with Israel under Roman domination, have been looking for? What was Nicodemus hoping to learn from Jesus? But what kingdom did Jesus want Nicodemus to see? Jesus chose the words “born again” (or “born from above”) for a reason. What does being “born” suggest? What did this entail? (You can read John 1.12-13 and John 3.4-15 for a fuller explanation.)