

'The Son of God and the Lord of Glory Series'

Sermons in the Gospel of John

Message 23 - 'Should this Man go to Heaven?
John 3:1 - 2



To truly be converted by God's grace is to know and experience the love of Jesus. To truly be converted is to know the assurance of peace with God. To truly be converted is to know that all is well for the today, tomorrow, and eternity. The true Gospel leads to true conversion which leads to true disciples. In this conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus spoke the truth without compromise. He could have altered the message to gain the support of a very significant individual. Instead the Lord dealt with truth and that which Nicodemus needed to hear for his eternal benefit. In this conversation and following instruction, the Lord Jesus gives a clear indication of the workings of real conversion, and the necessity of being born again! As an introduction to Nicodemus we can see:

The Man's Make-up (v1) - Nicodemus is presented to us, and he is a representative of all men standing as sinners before a holy God. This man is a good representative too from the human perspective! He embodied the best of culture, education, ethics, religion, and indeed piety. Despite all this he is a failure spiritually because he had never found God. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Before our Lord's teaching exposed the true nature of their practices, the Pharisees were the chief exponents of an ethical way of life, and in some respects were seen as the best of people. Nicodemus was also a scholar. In his day, this was very significant, as it tells us that this man had likely been exposed to both Jewish and Greek education/culture. This man was well taught, well read, and here we find him coming to Jesus. Nicodemus was also a politician. He was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was the highest legislative body in Judaism. Nicodemus is an educated man, one of standing, he is religious, pious, good background, a politician with authority. Surely this is the type of man who would do a good job to represent us, to represent man? Surely such a man is on the path to heaven. Yet, the point of the record of this conversation in John, is to show that in spite of his achievements, in spite of his prominence in education, politics, culture, and even religion, Nicodemus was spiritually in desperate need. He needed to know God. He was like anybody else outside of Christ, for all his human achievements, he was still empty, he was still searching, he was still lost, he was still unhappy, he was still spiritually blind.

The Man's Mind (v2) - This man seems to have a good understanding, he had knowledge, he knew his theology. Surely through his understanding and intellect Nicodemus could place himself in a position to wrestle with things until he worked out how he could achieve peace with God? Yet, in v2, we see that John makes it clear that even man's intellect is inadequate when it comes to the realm of the spiritual. A product of the fall, man no longer seeks God, in fact he runs from Him. The effect of the fall also means that for man to know anything about God, it has to be revealed to us by the working of God. Our own reason is incapable of knowing or understanding, we have to have it revealed to us (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Look at v2. Nicodemus claims to have in his words real intellectual knowledge and reason about the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem is, that despite this knowledge, Nicodemus was far from the reality of the situation. This is why the Lord speaks to him in such a way in v3. When God saves a person, the spirit of man is dealt with and brought into right fellowship with God, and just as the Fall affected man's mind, so does salvation. Salvation affects it positively, and a man's mind is dealt with in an ongoing process after his conversion. Should this man, Nicodemus, go to heaven? Looking at the evidence of his make-up, of his mind, there were and are many who would say that looking at the externals, yes! He seems to be a good man, living an upright life, with some notable achievements, and he is religious. He seems to have come to the right conclusions about Jesus on first look, saw the miracles etc. Yet this is not the reality. Based on these two verses, should this man go to heaven? NO! He is lost, and for all the external qualities there are to be admired, he was still fast bound in his sin. That is why Jesus speaks firmly to him in v 3 saying, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs