

Jesus Knows Your Heart

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[0 : 00] We're continuing on this morning in our walk through the story of Jesus according to John. If you have your Bible with you, please open it up. I'd encourage you to do that and to follow along.

If you don't have one, make use of the Pew Bible. We have that there for you as well. And last Sunday we looked at and we talked about what does it mean to be born again?

It's kind of a big question and we got into that a little bit, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. We learned a little bit about what Jesus had to say about that, that there's this second birth that we must undergo to enter the kingdom of God.

And it's not a physical rebirth, it's a spiritual birth, something God does in us by his spirit. But we're going to continue on looking at this conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus and find out how this conversation ended up.

Because we kind of had that big question last Sunday of, well, how is this going to turn out for Nicodemus? What's going to happen with him here in this story?

[1 : 10] So let's just kind of remember what got us into this conversation in the first place. John kind of gave this summary.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem and he was there for the Passover and the week which followed. And it says this in verse 23, it says that many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind for he knew what was in each person.

So Jesus seems to have this knowledge of people that goes beyond what just any ordinary person would have of another person.

Nicodemus said this in his first thing he said to Jesus. He said, no one could perform the signs you're doing if God were not with him. But let's also notice that his disciples saw that he has this knowledge of people that no one could have unless God were with him.

[2 : 26] And as we'll find out, it's even more than that. So that's what we're looking at this morning. We're looking at this truth of what Jesus knows about people.

I put it up there on the screen in a different translation just to give you a little bit of a sense of the word for word. Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to those people at the Passover and the festival.

For he knew all men. And because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man. For he himself knew what was in a man.

What is John telling us here? As I was studying deeper into this, one of the things that really just jumped off the page was the tense of the verbs in the original language.

It's a very grammatical thing, but it really does give us a whole other sense of what John is talking about here. So to kind of just give you a little bit of a picture, this is not a good English translation, but it kind of gives a sense of the tense of the verbs that John uses.

[3 : 36] But Jesus was not entrusting himself to them. That's to the people who saw his signs and believed. For he was knowing all men.

And because he was not having need that anyone testify concerning man. For he himself was knowing what was in man. So you get a sense a little bit from the tense of the verbs here.

This is not John just kind of reflecting back and here's a principle that I found out later. Jesus knows what's in people's hearts. No, the sense of it here is that here Jesus is at the festival.

And as he's having interactions with people, his disciples are watching and they're noticing that he has knowledge of the people that he's talking to and interacting with.

He knows things about them. Specific things. It's kind of a sense. You almost get the sense that it happened repeatedly. And as they're watching this, the disciples notice that Jesus isn't getting information about these various people from anyone.

[4 : 52] Like there's nobody running background checks on them and slipping him notes about this person or that person. You get the sense that as he has these interactions with people, he just knows things about them.

Just like he did with Nathaniel when he said, I saw you sitting under the fig tree. Not only does he know things about people, but John tells us that he was knowing what was in them.

He was knowing what was in man. And probably the NIV has it right when it says that he was knowing what was in or he knew what was in each person.

And so this whole story of Nicodemus, this conversation is an example of that. John has just made the point. Jesus knows what is in people.

He knows what's in a man. And then he goes off into this story of Nicodemus. And here's an example of the kind of thing that I'm talking about when I say that. And to see that link, you can look just at the beginning of chapter 3 and the very end of chapter 2.

[6 : 04] It's on the screen there. For he himself knew what was in man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. So Nicodemus is the case.

He's the case test, the example. And so that's where we're going this morning. We're going to look at what does Jesus know about Nicodemus? And I think that's really the main purpose why John has included this in the story at this point.

You remember that first thing that Nicodemus said to Jesus? This is how the conversation starts. Nicodemus says, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.

For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him. And already, right off the bat, we start to see this contrast starting. John's putting this in to tell us about what Jesus knows.

But the conversation starts with Nicodemus telling Jesus what he knows about Jesus. Or what he and his fellow Pharisees, members of the ruling council, think they know about Jesus.

[7 : 20] We've seen the signs that you're doing. And so we know that you are a teacher. We know that you're a teacher. But even here, you know, we start to see this contrast.

I mean, John's just told us, Jesus knows what's in a man. He knows people. And the picture we get of Nicodemus and the Pharisees here is just of ordinary people just trying to figure out, who is this Jesus guy?

What's his deal? I mean, we're seeing the miracles. So he's got to be at least a teacher. They don't really know who Jesus is.

And this contrast just gets stronger and stronger as we go throughout this conversation with Nicodemus. So let's be reminded of it a little bit.

The first thing we see is right after this, Jesus kind of responds. We looked at this last Sunday. He tells Nicodemus that he has to be born again to enter the kingdom of God.

[8 : 29] So Jesus knows that entrance into the kingdom of God requires second birth. And Nicodemus responds with, how can a man be born when he's old?

He doesn't know what Jesus is talking about. That's the first part of the conversation. Then it goes on from there. And we see that Jesus knows that this second birth is a spiritual birth.

is something that God does by his spirit in a person. And Nicodemus in verse 6, it says he's surprised. He wonders at this because he still doesn't know what Jesus is talking about.

Jesus goes on. He talks about what he knows, how being born of the spirit is, it's like the wind. He gives an analogy. He explains it a little bit.

In fact, he even kind of says that just like the wind, it's not something that, I guess, ordinary man, we might say, can understand because we can't see the spiritual just like we can't see the wind.

[9 : 44] Nicodemus' response is, how can this be? How can these things be? He still doesn't know what Jesus is talking about. So you see this. Jesus knows what's in a man and he knows all these things.

But Nicodemus, he doesn't know. He doesn't understand, really, what Jesus is talking about.

Eventually, it comes down to a bit of a head in verse 10 where Jesus chides Nicodemus.

He says, you are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things? Another word for no.

This is really a big theme here.

And can you imagine how Nicodemus is feeling as he hears this? Imagine how you'd be feeling if you're him, you know, and Jesus looks you in the eye and says this to you in front of other people. You are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things? Like, I imagine I'd be feeling a little bit embarrassed, maybe a little bit humiliated or shamed, you know, like, if I'm proud, maybe a little bit even angry.

[11:08] Like, what do you mean? Are you telling me that this born again of the spirit stuff is like the basics and I don't get it? Or are you saying that I'm not qualified to be a teacher in Israel?

But we want to give Nicodemus a little bit of slack. I mean, it's easy for us to look at him and think, oh, poor Nicodemus. He just doesn't get it.

But let's think about what we know, what we understand. Put yourself in the room there with the disciples as Jesus starts saying these things to Nicodemus.

If you want to enter the kingdom of God, you need to be born again. Do you know what Jesus is talking about? Do you understand spiritual birth and what all that entails and how it works?

I think if we're honest, we have to admit that just like we can't see the wind, we don't really know how the spiritual works. We're kind of a little bit in the same boat as Nicodemus.

[12:29] Jesus knows these things as if they're, you know, this is how it is and we don't really know what he's talking about either. We have what he says to go on and what we have in other places of the word of God.

But this is something that we don't fully understand. Spiritual birth? Another thing that kind of gets at us and we're kind of drawn in to ask this question as we go through the story is what's really going on with Nicodemus here?

Let me ask you the question. Do you know if Nicodemus is a true believer or not? Any thoughts? There's been some indication a little bit on both sides. I mean, he started out good in what he said. He kind of seems to be an example of one who's seen the miracles and has believed in his name. But he's also an example of someone who Jesus did not entrust himself to.

[13:37] He started out good by saying, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God because we've seen the miracles and no one can do those things unless God were with him. But then on the other side, just a teacher?

What about the Messiah? What about some of these other things that John the Baptizer has been saying that the other disciples have confessed about Christ? Is Nicodemus a true believer or not? We don't know. And I'm going to guess that probably Jesus' disciples are wondering too. They're kind of looking at it from the same kind of human perspective that we have. What's really going on here with Nicodemus?

Is he going to join us? Is he one of us? Does he believe? Even as we come down to verse 9, Nicodemus, after all this talk of being born of the Spirit, he says, how can this be?

We don't even know what he meant by that. Was that an expression of wonder? Was it an expression that was, was it a sincere question?

[14:51] How can these things be? Like, how does it work? Was this a statement of skepticism? Like, how can this be? Or unbelief?

unbelief. Does Nicodemus agree with all this stuff that Jesus has been saying or does he disagree with it? We don't know. Because we don't know what's in a man.

What's really going on in the heart of a person. And this is, this is where we come to this pinnacle moment in the passage because Jesus does know whether Nicodemus is a true believer or not.

He does know what's going on in Nicodemus' heart. And he's actually about to tell us that, he's about to tell Nicodemus what Nicodemus really believes.

And so let's see that as we read on. Jesus says, very truly, verse 11, I tell you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen.

[15:58] but still, you people do not accept our testimony. Now there's a couple things in here we want to just notice before we get to the answer.

Jesus speaks in the first, the first person plural. He says, we. Who are the we? Now, commentators and scholars, they've put a whole bunch of different ideas to this.

At the end of the day, we don't really know what Jesus meant by that. Don't take it as gospel truth. My best guess is that perhaps other things were talked about in this conversation, in this exchange, and John the Baptist, baptizer, came up and Jesus is including him in this statement.

You know, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen. John had seen some things about Jesus that God had revealed to him.

He was a true prophet of the Lord. And his purpose, John has already told us, was to testify to what he had seen about Jesus, what the Lord revealed to him about Jesus.

[17:05] And so perhaps he is included by Jesus in this statement. But either way, let's not miss what is present here. At the very least, Jesus is referring to himself.

You can almost read that right into the words. Very truly, I tell you, I speak of what I know and I testify to what I have seen.

But still, you do not accept our testimony. The word people is not there in the original. It's actually you plural. We don't have that in English.

Y'all would be the closest approximation. So, he's speaking to Nicodemus about Nicodemus, but also about his associates, the Pharisees.

I tell you, I speak to you of what I know, says Jesus. I testify to you what I have seen.

[18:06] But you, Nicodemus, do not accept my testimony. So there it is right there. Jesus has made it clear. Nicodemus has not accepted his testimony.

And in case there's any doubt, in the next verse, Jesus makes it crystal clear. He says it again to Nicodemus. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe.

How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? this is an interesting moment in the conversation.

Maybe you've had a conversation or two that has gone this way where you kind of get to this moment where it's like we can't really go any further unless we sort this out. That's kind of the feeling I get as I hear these words of Jesus.

I've spoken to you of earthly things, things that pertain to earth, what goes on on earth between man and God and things like that and you do not believe. You haven't believed the words that I've said to you.

[19:14] And so what's the point of going on and talking about heavenly realities if you don't even believe the words I say about the earthly realities?

It's a pretty stern thing to say but what's crystal clear is Jesus' statement Nicodemus you do not believe.

You have not believed the things that I have said. So Jesus does know what is in a man. He knows what's in the heart and mind of this particular man Nicodemus.

Nicodemus came saying we know that you're from God. He seems in one sense to be someone who believes but Jesus knows Nicodemus' heart.

He knows that deep down he does not accept the testimony that Jesus has given. He does not believe that he is the Messiah.

[20:21] God God has given this knowledge.

That's the big question. How can he know well enough to tell a man what's going on in his own heart and his own mind that whether he believes or not whether he's a true believer or not my mind goes back to these words spoken through the prophet jeremiah the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure who can understand it that's the way the human heart is says the lord who can understand it nobody can understand what's really going on in the human heart especially of another person and there's even the sense in this passage the heart is deceitful in which we we don't even understand fully what's going on in our own hearts but the amazing thing about god is this he says i the lord i yahweh search the heart and examine the mind he knows what's going on in the hearts of people he's god and jesus also has this knowledge he knows what's going on in man so what's going on here jesus will say this later in john we're not there yet but jesus says in john 10 verse 37 and 38 he says do not believe me unless i do the works of my father if i do them believe the works that you may know and understand that the father is in me and i in the father so jesus he's talking about his oneness with god i am in god the father he is in me there's a oneness there and the evidence of that is that we do the same things i do the works of my father the lord god searches the heart and mind of man he knows what's in a man and you've seen that i do too it's evidence it points to who jesus is that he is not just a man he is as john has been telling us the son of god he is the word who was god and then became flesh and came to live among us from there jesus goes into he he says this this really i think we call it a crazy thing it's it's it's a wonderful thing in verse 13 he says to nicodemus no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from

heaven the son of man now why does Jesus say this it's kind of an interesting thing to say but if we think back on what Jesus has been saying he's been saying I know about earthly things and I know about heavenly things he's been saying I I speak what I know I testify to what I have seen and I could speak to you Nicodemus about heavenly things I could speak to you about earthly things how do you have that knowledge how do you know heavenly things I think this is part of the answer that Jesus gives he says no one has ever gone into heaven no man has ever gone into heaven and and been there in the heavenly realms we could talk about the prophets having visions you know they they saw glimpses of heaven but nobody's like been there in the heavenly realm to see it nobody says has ascended is it kind of the literal the word gone up into heaven no mere man has done that but there is one says Jesus who has come down from heaven and I think part of the implication there is I know about the things of heaven I I can tell you about what I have seen heavenly things because I've been there I've come down from heaven that's how I can tell you about those kinds of things and I understand those kinds of things no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven the son of man son of man is the title that Jesus uses to refer to himself a number of times this is how the conversation closes and we looked at this at the Lord's table last Sunday what I love about this is that Nicodemus and Jesus there they are talking face to face Jesus is looking Nicodemus in the eyes and all this while as he talks to him he knows that Nicodemus does not accept the things he's saying he knows that Nicodemus does not believe what he's saying he doesn't consider it to be true and yet at the end of the conversation this is what he says he gives Nicodemus yet another gracious opportunity to believe you're going to see something Nicodemus I'm going to give you one more sign to watch out for and to look for that will show you that will that will help you see that I am the son of man the one who has come down from heaven and the sign was this we talked about it last Sunday that he would be lifted up on a pole or on a cross so that whoever looks to him might be saved just like the old testament story when God sent those venomous snakes among the people they were to look to the snake on the pole and if they did that they would be saved the same kind of thing is going to happen with me Nicodemus Nicodemus watch for it those who believe as in truly believe may have eternal life the question is will Nicodemus believe will he see the sign will he recognize it this is kind of where the rubber hits the road and we talked a little bit about this in Sunday school touched on it at a couple points but believing versus truly believing

Jesus knows what's in the heart he knows what's in your heart he knows whether what we say when we say I believe is genuine or not and true belief is characterized not just by saying the words we know that you are a teacher who has come from God but by truly accepting the words that Christ has said receiving his testimony considering the very words that he said is true this is the big question if Nicodemus believes that Jesus has come from God as a teacher then the implication is that he should listen to him because Jesus speaks God's words he should obey and do the things that Jesus tells him to do and yet

Jesus he knows that Nicodemus does not truly believe he recognizes that that perhaps he has come from God because no one could do these kinds of things otherwise but he's not willing to take that next step and to actually consider yes you are the Messiah he does not believe yet we'll have to find out later on in the gospel how this story goes with Nicodemus does he end up becoming a believer or not but there's a word here for us I think Jesus knows not just what goes on in Nicodemus his heart he knows what goes on in your heart in my heart he knows what's in a man some people they're they're tough to read it's tough to get a sense on the kind of person they are some people are really good at keeping their cards close at putting on a good show and we wonder about them sometimes

[30 : 15] Jesus doesn't have that problem he knows what's in a man he knows you he knows what's in your heart he knows what's what you've buried deep down beneath the surface the things that you'd maybe not like others to see he sees that he is the Lord he searches your heart my heart he knows our thoughts he doesn't need anybody to tell him about you he knows you this is an awesome reality of who Jesus is but it's also a precious one it's awesome you might even say that it causes us to tremble because we know that there will come a day when the

Lord Jesus will come and he will judge this world in righteousness as he said in another place what we've whispered in the dark corner of our room will be proclaimed from the rooftops everything will be exposed and made known our secret thoughts and desires every action every deed we can't hide anything from him and that's something that should cause us to tremble but there's another

side to this that Jesus knows what is going on in our hearts is also precious it doesn't matter what you're going through doesn't matter what difficulty or trial you face what kind of grief you have in your heart Jesus knows how you feel he understands he sees that and you're not alone in that and that's a precious reality for those of us who believe we may tremble at the thought that Jesus knows our sin but let's not forget that he has come to be the lamb of God which takes away our sins and it is sweet it is precious that he is with us through whatever we go through he knows it he knows how we feel we're not alone it may seem at times like other people just don't get what I feel or what's going on in my heart but there is one who does the Lord

Jesus this is this is an awesome and a precious reality Jesus does not need anybody to tell him about you or me because he knows you and me inside and out let's pray father in heaven we thank you that you have given us this word and it does strike to the heart to our hearts thank you that you are a glorious God and that your son Jesus is glorious as well thank you that you are with us through through all things that you know us Lord we ask that you would just continue to to grow our love for you to help us see how we can continue to live in light of these things that are true of you and also how we can declare your glory and help others to see it too we love you we pray this in Jesus name amen