

# PM John 2:13-3:12 Jesus Teaches Israel's Teacher

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[ 0 : 00 ] So that's John's Gospel, chapter 2, and we'll pick up the reading from verse 13 and we'll go on into chapter 3 and verse 12.

We believe that it's a book that God spoke to prophets in the Bible and through Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

And that he revealed to us things about himself and things about his plan and purpose and things about ourselves.

And that's the reason that we use the Bible. Now there are four, you could loosely call them accounts of the life and times of Jesus.

And these are found at the beginning of the New Testament in Gospels called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. So we're looking at one of those four Gospels and we're breaking into what we're told here about Jesus.

[ 1 : 32 ] So let's read then from chapter 2, verse 13. The Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Jesus was staying at the time up very much in the north of Israel in a place called Capernaum. And it was a long, long journey to Jerusalem, probably about 60 hours or something.

Anyway, so he went up to Jerusalem because it was this very important feast for the Jews called the Passover. And in the temple, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and money changers sitting there.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned the tables.

And he told those who sold pigeons, take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade.

[ 2 : 47 ] His disciples remembered that it was written, this is in the Old Testament and then there's the quote, zeal for your house will consume me.

So the Jews said to him, and that's probably meaning some of the Jewish leaders, what sign do you show us for doing these things?

Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

And then the writer of the gospel informs us, but Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[ 3 : 57 ] Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, sorry, now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher, come from God. Now, sorry, I'm just going to stop there.

I was distracted by a certain insect that is wandering around there. And I failed to read a part, so I'll just go back to verse 23.

Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus, in his part, did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher, come from God, for no one can do these things that you do unless God is with him.

[ 5 : 19 ] Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Do not marvel or wonder that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

Amen. Amen. And may the Lord add his own blessing to the reading of his word. If then you could turn back with me to John chapter 3.

[ 6 : 57 ] John chapter 3. And we're going to be looking at that meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus.

Let's just pray to the Lord again.

Heavenly Father, we just ask you to bless your word as we consider it, and that you might speak to each heart here this evening, and that you might be glorified, and that we might hear unto our eternal good.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Now, when we're looking at any of those four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we're looking back 2,000 years ago to what's happening around in Israel. Israel. That's the same country that we hear so much about in recent years, Israel and Gaza.

[ 8 : 18 ] What like was Israel when Jesus was walking about Israel in his day?

The first thing I think that we need to bear in mind, it was an occupied country by the Romans. And that was greatly resented, and there were people who would use violence to try and do something about that occupation, but they were so weak that it was impossible for anything like that to be successful.

What about the believers, if I could call them that, the people of God? And you know that Jesus was a Jew, and most of the people, not all of them, would have been of the Jewish faith or converts to the Jewish faith.

And at the time of Jesus, there was a sense that there was something on the edge of happening. And that something was the coming of the kingdom of God. Now, where did that idea come from? It came from about a thousand years previous, when a famous king called King David died.

[ 10 : 03 ] There was a promise made to Israel that there would one day be a new king that would come from the same lineage of David.

And that new king would restore all the glory of the kingdom that hadn't very much glory, and still didn't have very much glory in Jesus' day.

And just as there are certain things that we hear in our news regularly, and perhaps we talk about, that whole situation with Israel, the slaughter of the Jewish people in October the 7th, two and a half years ago, or however long ago it was, and then the slaughter of the Gazan people since then, and how we talk about the Ukrainian war, and different things like that.

What they were talking about in Jesus' day was the imminence, the nearness of the kingdom of God. There was only one problem.

Oh well, it's probably not only one problem. But one of the problems was, by Jesus' time, most people had envisaged the kingdom of God in physical, political terms.

[ 11 : 29 ] In other words, they thought that this new king that was going to come would kick out the Romans, and liberate the people of Israel from their occupation, and rise again as a great and glorious nation.

Of course, that didn't happen. When Jesus Christ came on the scene, his biggest idea, his biggest concept, his biggest message, was this.

The kingdom of God is at hand. And it was understood by so many, unfortunately, as I said, politically, and physically.

Now I think it's important to have all of that in the back of our heads, as we come and approach this meeting with Jesus. So it begins, there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

So, first of all, what we're told about this man, he was a Pharisee, and he was a ruler of the Jews.

[ 12 : 58 ] Now, the Pharisees were a sect of Judaism. I was talking this morning about different sects of Judaism. And, he was of the sect of Judaism called the Pharisees.

They had a very good origin, because around A.B.C. 160, not that long before Jesus was born, we think he was born in 4 B.C.

Anyway, around B.C. 160, there was a great revolt against the desecration of the temple, the holy temple of the Jewish people.

And, that great revolt was called the Maccabean Revolt. And, a group of Jewish people who, were part of that revolt, and part of the great protest against the desecration of the temple, were the Pharisees.

They came to be known as the Pharisees, the separatists. separatists. And, they wanted to preserve and protect the law. Unfortunately, they had morphed into a fanatical group, where, they had about 600, honestly, extra rules, to try and protect the law.

[ 14 : 21 ] No wonder Jesus said to people, at one point, come to me all you that labor are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because his yoke, the yoke that they had put on the Pharisee, the Pharisee people, had put on the, the masses, was something absolutely awful.

So, Nicodemus is a Pharisee, but Nicodemus is also in government. And, we also know that Nicodemus was quite wealthy.

And, it's interesting, that here we have, the self-made man. Here we have someone, who's powerful, politically, who is, and religiously, and who is wealthy.

But, verse 2 tells us, this man came to Jesus, by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know, that you are a teacher, come, from God.

For no one can do, these things that you do, unless God is with him. First thing I want to say, is this, why, did Nicodemus, come, at all?

[ 15 : 39 ] That's the question I want to ask. Well, we'll ask, in a moment, why he came at night. But, let's ask the first question.

Why did he come at all? He was a leading Pharisee. He was in government, a ruler of the Jews. He, was a self-made man.

As far as he was concerned, he was keeping the law, to the nth degree. I think he must have come, because he felt something, deep within himself, was missing.

I feel, he must have come, because he felt, that there was an ache, and a void, within, deep within his being. And I wonder, could there be somebody, here tonight even, who, in the quietness, of their own self, feel, there is a void, in something, that they cannot put their finger on, that is missing.

There's a, an Australian singer, called Nick Cave, and he has a line, in one of his songs, looking, for something, that we, do not know.

[ 17 : 12 ] Looking for something, that we do, what we know, is there's, a void, there's an emptiness, there's a sense, of incompleteness, there's a sense, that there's something, not right.

Why did he come at night? We're not told. So, all you can do, is speculate. Some people have wondered, did he come at night, because he was embarrassed, as a, very well known, and qualified, professional, religious teacher, to be seen, coming to this, unprofessional, Nazarene, who was a wandering preacher.

Some people wonder, well, maybe he came at night, because, he wanted, the quietness, of night. But, I'll tell you, what I think, when you look, through the gospel, of John, John loves, using, double meanings, with words.

And, John, loves to, be evocative. Remember, when it says, when Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, John writes, later on, actually, in this gospel, and Judas went out, that is, to betray Jesus, from the upper room, that they were all in.

And, John adds, it was night. And, I think, John is saying, there's something, of darkness, in Nicodemus here, that he perhaps, doesn't know.

[ 18 : 51 ] Anyway, there he is, Nicodemus, coming at night, to see Jesus.

And, he speaks, very respectfully, to Jesus. Rabbi, we know, I want you to notice, the plural here, we know.

And, I want you to then, catch this, at this point, this is not merely, a conversation, between two people. This is a conversation, between, the people of Israel, whom Nicodemus represents, and Jesus, and his disciples, and what they represent.

I'll, I'll, I'll, I'll, see more of that, later on. Rabbi, he says, it's quite funny, isn't it?

We know. We know, he says. But, you know, if you just, fast forward, to verse 9, fast forward, to verse 9, just now, and you'll get, what happens, by the end, of the conversation, Nicodemus said to him, how can these, things be?

[ 20 : 18 ] So he comes, quite confident, we know, we know, that you're a teacher, come from God, for no man, can do these signs, that you do, unless God, is with him.

You might say, generously, that, as far as that goes, he was correct, he was a teacher, that's true, but he was far more than a teacher, and you see, this gospel, John, begins with, the following statement, I quoted it, in the morning, in the beginning, was the word, chapter 1, verse 1, and the word, was with God, and the word, was God, he was in the beginning, with God, all things, were made, through him, and without him, not anything, that was made, not anything made, without him, was not anything, made, that was made, in him, was life, and the life, was the light, of men, and then, in verse 14, and the word, became flesh, and dwelt, among us, here we have, this, dazzling, identity, of who Jesus is, right at the very, door, of John's gospel, at the entry door, Nicodemus, we are Pharisees, we know so much, and I'm a ruler, as well, and we know, that you, are a teacher, come, from God, for no man, can do these, signs that you do, unless God, is with him, now, when you, look through, these gospels, one of the things, that you pick up, sometimes, is, either Jesus, ignores, someone's statement, or, he, knows, what their, what their need is, and he cuts, to the chase, and he goes, straight in, and this is, exactly, what Jesus did, on this case, because, no sooner, had Nicodemus, made those, respectful, comment, when, Jesus, replied, or answered, truly, truly, I say, to you, and that you, is in the singular, unless, unless, one, is born, again, he, cannot, see, the kingdom, of God, now, here's, an interesting, thing, he, probably, thought, he, was, a, dead, sure, candidate, for the kingdom, of God, Nicodemus, that is, look at me, I'm a Pharisee, after all, I'm, an academic, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I know the law, inside out, and the 600 and odd, eh, oral laws, that are now, in the Mishnah, and, in some other, eh, book, eh, that, that, that, that we use to protect the law, if anybody will be in the kingdom, of God, surely it will be me, Jesus answered them, notice, now, when Jesus puts truly, truly, he means, this is of momentous importance, about what I'm about to say, unless, one, is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, now, what I want us to do as well, tonight, I want us to, have this question, in our minds, what's involved, in being a true believer, in being a true Christian, what actually, happens, to someone, who becomes a Christian, well, Jesus has come up, with an answer, he says, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one, is born again, he cannot see, the kingdom of God, now, that word, see, means, it means, they can't experience it, you'll never experience, the kingdom of God, Nicodemus, until, and unless, you're born again, now, interestingly enough,

[ 25 : 36 ] John, the author, of this gospel, has already, given us this idea, let's turn, to chapter one, shall we, and, we read, in chapter one, verse 11, Jesus, came to his own, that's his own, Jewish people, and his own people, did not receive him, but to all, who did receive him, who believed, in his name, he gave, the right, to become, children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will, of the flesh, nor of the will, of man, but of God, in other words, when, one, truly, receives Jesus, as their, personal, saviour, when, one, truly, believes, not just, intellectually, but, stakes, their, entire, future, on Jesus, is, tantamount, to be born again, the apostle Paul, in his second letter, to the, Corinthians, in, in chapter, five, and verse 17, makes this, statement, therefore, to Corinthians, chapter five, verse 17, if anyone, is in Christ, he is a new creation, something new, has been created, to the, for the true believer, to be a believer, and to have received Christ, theologians call it regeneration, but don't worry about that, it means, a new creation, it is, similar to, a new life, emerging, that is born, Nicodemus, said to him, how can, a man, be born, when he is old, can he enter, a second time, into his mother's womb, and be born, now, again, putting it generously, Jesus, had said, unless, one is born, again, our English translation, has the word, again, now, this, the word, in the original language, that's behind our original, our English word, again, is a word, that has two meanings, two distinct meanings, although, they're not that distinct, that you can see, their connection, and their relation, one meaning, is again, and another meaning, is above, and, depending on, the context, will be the translation, and, it's probably, correct, to use again, here, but I'm going to suggest, to you, it's wrong, when it's used, even in the ESV, or any other translation, when it's used, and translated again, the second time, we'll come to it, in a minute, Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born, when he's old, can he enter the second time, into his mother's womb, and be, but do you see, what's happening here, just as, people like Nicodemus, only saw the kingdom of God, in physical, and political terms, his mind, can only connect, physically, and naturally, and not spiritually, he doesn't recognize, that Jesus, is talking about, spiritual truths, Jesus answered, and said, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one, is born, of water,

and the spirit, he cannot, enter the kingdom, of heaven, so, Jesus, once again, cuts to the chase, and says to Nicodemus, in effect, you could put it like this, he says to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, I've got, news that you'll hardly believe, you can be up to your neck, in religion, you can be up to your neck, in the knowledge, of the law, you can be up to your neck, in the knowledge, of the Bible, and yet, you haven't truly believed, and received, Jesus Christ, and, why, is it possible, that that can be the case, verse 6, gives the answer, verse 6, gives the answer, Jesus' words, once again, listen to them, that, which is born, of the flesh, is flesh, and that, which is born, of the spirit, is spirit, let me put it, another way, man, human beings, searching for God, from, from, from, from, from starting, from themselves, even if, that search, becomes, religious, and there's a religious, ingredient, in that search, it can never, rise above, a human, quest, and search, and enterprise, rise, but, to be, a believer, is, to have, a new life, which is, spiritual, and, it can never, be the outcome, of, any, human endeavor, or project, and that's, why Jesus, says to him, that, which is born, of the flesh, is flesh, and that, which is born, of the spirit, is spirit, and he says, to him, do not marvel, that I said, to you, you must, be born again, now, let me tell you, something, about this, statement, of Jesus, in, verse 7, when, when Jesus, says to Nicodemus, do not marvel, or wonder, do not, try to tax, your brain, in trying, to unravel, the mystery, of God, in bringing, about the new, birth, and he says, to him, do not marvel, that I said, to you, now that, you, is in the singular, it's a singular, but guess what, the next you, is a plural, in your own ESV Bible, there's the number, two, against that second you, and if you look down, at the bottom, of the page, the Greek for you, is plural here, what's going on, what's going on,

[ 33 : 33 ] Jesus, is not only, addressing Nicodemus, Jesus, is addressing, Nicodemus, as representative, of the Jewish people, of Israel, and I believe, he's saying, you Israel, need to be born again, now, that shouldn't, startle us, should it, because, Paul says, in chapter 4, of Romans, to be a Jew, born a Jew, is not, to be a true Jew, he says, Paul says, the true Jew, follows, in the faith, of Abraham, who is the father, of us all, you'll find all that, in Romans, chapter 4, they said, we have Abraham, as our father, and Jesus said,

God is able, to raise, his people, from the stones, there, it's not enough, to be connected, to the lineage, one must be born, of the spirit, of God, indeed, in that first statement, that Jesus made, in his interview, the grammar, if you look at, the Greek grammar, it's basically, if anyone, wants to get into, the kingdom of heaven, any person, that's the grammar, of what's being said, they need to be born again, whether you're Jewish, or whether you're Gentile, Jesus says to him, look Nicodemus, the wind, now you'll, you'll see another number there, there are some, Greek words, which mean, both wind, and spirit, in other words, the Greek word, is pneuma, you've heard of that, word probably, pneumatic, a pneumatic drill, but anyway, the Greek word, is pneuma, and that word, can be variously, translated, spirit, or wind, and it's the same, in the Old Testament, the Old Testament, has got a word, that can be translated, wind, or, or, or spirit, ruach, the wind blows, the spirit blows, says Jesus, where it wishes, and you hear it sound, but you don't know, where it comes from, or where it goes, okay, he's giving them, an analogy of the wind, wind, and that analogy, is, is, he's already been talking about, need to be born of the spirit, and he ends up, after he gives that analogy, so it is with everyone, who's born of the spirit, so he's using the wind, as an analogy, of the work of the spirit, of God,

Nicodemus says, how, can these things be, the one who, begins, the conversation, with Jesus, we know, ends, with, how can these things be, now the story, of Nicodemus, is a wonderful one, because, he stands up, for Jesus, when, the situation, for Jesus, is becoming, more deadly, and the Jewish leaders, want to have him, killed, and, and, Nicodemus, in John 7, I think it's verse 50, or something like that, says, surely we don't, condemn a person, without hearing them first, and of course, after, Jesus was, crucified,

Nicodemus is there, with Joseph, of Arimathea, helping, with the burial, of Jesus, and he does that, publicly, not at night, so it looks, very very much, like that, the seed, fell, on good ground, with, that, in that meeting, and that interview, and as I say, John lets us know, in chapter 1, that this, language, of being born again, is tantamount, to receiving Jesus, as your saviour, and to believing, in him, with one's whole heart, do you tonight, believe, in Jesus, not simply, as a historical figure, not simply, as someone, that we read about, in the gospels, in the New Testament, but as someone, whom we have fled to, for refuge, from our guilt, and from our sin, someone, that we have, committed, ourselves to, because, he has, offered, to come, and take away, our heavy burdens, and he has offered, to give us peace, and he has offered, to give us a future, and offered, never to leave us, or

forsake us,

[ 39 : 53 ] I trust, that that's the case, with everyone here, this evening, may the Lord, bless these thoughts, to each one of us, for his glory, and, for our, eternal good, do, Thank you.