

*O LORD. We join together in asking that truth would be free  
to make her sorties upon us all, which way You please.  
Guide our minds for your designs. We ask that,  
nothing smothers truth's golden beams. (Spurgeon)*

### Part I: Understanding Nicodemus' Dilemma

Before one begins any journey, it goes without saying that for the journey ahead he has to be a member of the living. The dead don't travel. If the Bible is true, that everyone that born into this world, though by all appearances they are alive, then in God's eyes they are dead. Contrary to what many believe, man doesn't hit the ground running. He somehow has to be quickened or made alive. It is at this very beginning that we want to begin. What sets the Bible apart from other travel books is that it assumes, then treats death, enabling the traveler to travel. So that's where we begin this 10 sermon series.

As we're all well aware, Nicodemus had a dilemma. The key words in the following passages, without defining his plight, expose his dilemma.

**John 3.3-10:** Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 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?"

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

Q In short, what was Christ telling Nicodemus, and by extension humanity, about himself? A "**Nicodemus. With who you are and what you have, you cannot see or enter the kingdom of God?**" So what was his dilemma? What spiritual DNA was passed down to him from Adam?

As I hope to show you, this is the very first issue that must be addressed when it comes to thinking or speaking about salvation. **It's**

**where Christ began with Nicodemus.**

We ask ourselves, "It's quite obvious that Nicodemus had a problem. What would be, if any, the very first passage in the Bible that gives this **dilemma** meat and bones? ... that defines **it** in easily perceived terms? ... that names its 4 symptoms?"

I suggest for your careful perusal ...

**Gen 1.1-2:** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was without form<sup>1</sup> and void<sup>2</sup>, and darkness<sup>3</sup> was over the face of the deep<sup>4</sup>.

Q What four terms are expressive of the state of all things BEFORE God began His creative work? A without form<sup>1</sup>, void<sup>2</sup>, darkness<sup>3</sup>, deep<sup>4</sup>

! THESE, I would suggest to you, are what give Nicodemus' Dilemma meat and bones.

You may query, and I wouldn't blame you if you did. "**Tim. Genesis is talking about the physical creation, whereas John is talking about the spiritual.**"

I will wholeheartedly agree, but let me ask, **How do you read your Bible? .. as a Christian, or as a mere gatherer of facts?** Further, let me draw your attention to two undeniable biblical truths.

1 We know through Scripture that **HOW** God creates physically (*aka first creation*) is EXACTLY **HOW** He creates spiritually (*aka second creation*). Since His creative ability and execution of it are perfect, He doesn't need to tweak or change it to fit the circumstances.

2 We know through countless Scriptures that man is born in an unimaginable plight and dilemma. As the profit exclaims, **Who can know it!**

Q Dear saint. Are you looking to understand better the sinfulness of your sin, in order that you might have sweeter communion with your Saviour?

A Begin with Genesis! The Scriptures are one!

What better New Testament expression could we find to put meat and bones on Nicodemus spiritual dilemma than the Old Testament expressions, **without form ... void ... darkness ... deep!**

## Part II: Flucidation (making clear) of Nicodemus' Dilemma

Q If we truly intend to understand John 3 and its practical implications, why then is it so vitally important to begin the conversation in Genesis?

A Let me begin to attempt to answer this question. And I do so by asking you a question, which perhaps you've never asked yourself before?

Q What do you suppose is the most important doctrine in the Bible? How would you answer?

Picture with me a sphere. This sphere represents the whole Word of God, our Bibles.

Now, slice this sphere in half, right at its equator and lay it open with its interior exposed.

Within this sphere is one sphere after another defined by their outer circumference, with each sphere getting smaller as it approaches the center sphere. All these sphere share the same mass and are one unit.

Each sphere represents a doctrine in the Bible. The closer one travels to the center, the more the doctrine has to do with God and His Person, Who is the center of all things. For example, at the very core, we might find the doctrine of His incommunicable attributes, such as His omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience.

Now let's travel to the very outermost sphere. As we pass each of these doctrinal spheres, while maintaining themselves as a unit, we find they have less and less to do with the Person and character of God than the innermost sphere.

Now, let's jump just outside of the outermost sphere. Here we find a mass of numberless humanity, born from the beginning of time, continuing their lives in whatever nation, neighborhood or state they were born into. They are the offspring of two who were exiled from the Garden of Eden.

God tells this mass through His Word that it is their manifest duty to journey to the very core of this sphere, where the Triune God sits on His throne.

In my perception there is a progressive order to the doctrines of the Bible, and, that it teaches, that if we are to eventually understand

and embrace the innermost doctrine, the outermost doctrine is where humanity **MUST** begin its journey, i.e., in the understanding of it, submitting to it, and embracing it.

This outer sphere **cannot be kicked down by a decision, a point I will cover in my second message this evening titled (Divine Hoverer: Antidote to Nicodemus' Dilemma)**

The **MUST** above is what makes this outermost doctrine the most important. **Its importance lies not in its essence, but rather in its position. (explain)**

This outermost sphere (biblical doctrine) sums up **Nicodemus' Dilemma**. Christ was in essence telling Nicodemus, "You're in such a bad state that, unless you undergo an **outward influence**, you will never be able to understand and enter the kingdom of God. The Bible continues to tell the same story while *today is still called today*."

## Part III: The Effect Upon Nicodemus of His Dilemma

### I Nicodemus Attempted to Understand Spiritual Things Through Everyday Experiences

*John 3.4: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"*

! Before we jump to look down our noses at Nicodemus, let's remember 2 important facts.

- 1 No doubt Nicodemus had either seen or heard of the ability of Christ to perform miracles, and **YET** that was not enough.
- 2 In my perception, the Holy Spirit intends through this passage to show what state humanity is in.

### II Nicodemus, As a Result of His Natural Birth, Was Rendered Spiritually Sterile

*John 3.6:* That which is born of the **flesh** is flesh.

### III Nicodemus, As a Result of His Natural Birth, Was Unable to Comprehend Spiritual Truths

*John 3.7, 9:* Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

9 Do not **marvel** that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

### IV No Matter the Spit and Polish of Nicodemus, He Could Not Free Himself From His Dilemma

*John 3.10:* Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

Story of polishing a rock in a jar.

Final thoughts:

- ① You see. All that *total depravity* could produce was Nicodemus' dilemma with its progeny of *total inability*. Why? Because it was fertilized by his spiritual *formlessness ... voidness ... darkness ... deepness*.
- ② Look into the mirror of God's Word. If in your attempt to live as a Christian, it's exposed a silhouette of the grave rags of your inability still clinging to your soul's shoulders, begin again with a visit to Genesis.

 But this is not the whole story. There is more, much more. God willing we'll see you this evening for the continuing story. *The Divine Hoverer: Antidote to Nicodemus' Dilemma*, an exposition of *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*.