

The Night Visit, Part One
John 3:1-3

It's unfortunate that there is a chapter break here. Verses 23-25 in chapter 2 should go with the first verse in chapter 3. There shouldn't be a break between these verses and chapter 3. There certainly is a link between verse 23, 24, and 25 with chapter 3. Nicodemus is logically tied to these verses. Nicodemus himself was one of those superficial believers whose faith was based solely upon the signs he had witnessed. His faith, like those in the previous verses (2:23-25), was not genuine. It was a faith, but it was the wrong kind of faith. Therefore, Jesus refused to commit Himself unto him.

In chapter three we understand that Nicodemus was not like those who believed intellectually. Nicodemus was a different kind of man. It is true that he acknowledged the facts concerning the miracles that Jesus did. But with Nicodemus there was something more. He could not just walk away. It was something Jesus did, or it could have been something that Jesus said. We do not know what it was that triggered Nicodemus. But something had touched this man deeply. His conscience was convicted. His very being was troubled.

He felt a thirst and hunger in his soul. He was strictly religious. He was committed to Judaism. But seeing the miracles, and hearing the words of Jesus had aroused something in Nicodemus that had been troubling him for years.

Verse 1 tells us that Nicodemus was "a man of the Pharisees." The Pharisees were an elite religious party in Jerusalem. They no doubt originated during the intertestamental period. And according to the first century Jewish historian Josephus they were small in number (around 6,000) but popular with the people.

Now that seems a little odd (that they were popular with the people) because the Pharisees looked down on the common people. Yet they had gained the common peoples respect.

When Judaism was spoken of in the first century people would without question think of the Pharisees. It was this religious party that caused Jesus so much trouble. Their words against Him were slanderous. They hated Him. They were always trying to get Him to speak in contradiction to the law.

They were always testing Him, desiring that He would fall. They wanted to prove to the masses that Jesus was a fake, but they failed in every attempt.

Matthew 16:1 says, "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven." Matthew 19:3 says, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his

wife for every cause?” Matthew 22:34-36 says, “But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

They would have loved to see Jesus fail. But He didn't fail. Instead, He said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:23-28).

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