



Jeff Sweeten

Thus Saith the Lord

HONEST QUESTIONING

By Jeff Sweeten

Why did Nicodemus come to Jesus “by night” (John 3:2)? We don’t know but it was a calculated risk for a Pharisee, even at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, to fraternize with the enemy. Jesus had forged deep inroads into the hearts of lost souls and the Pharisees were none too happy about it (cf. Matthew 27:18; Acts 5:39). But, several things compelled this man to question his religion.

First, there were Jesus’ works. Nicodemus confessed that Jesus was from God. There was no denying that, even when many refused His words. He did things that convinced the reasonable mind that what He said was from God. He spoke differently (Matthew 7:28-29) and stunned His detractors into silence (Matthew 22:46) and inaction (John 7:46).

Second, there were Jesus’ words. There were many things that Nicodemus did not understand, which would define his generation. He did not understand the Kingdom or how one could find entrance into it. He was gently chided for his ignorance as Jesus explained the new birth but it was no surprise that his generation misunderstood the nature of the Messiah’s incarnation. Too many in His day were looking for an earthly kingdom that would liberate the nationalistic Jew. In much the same way today, with people who call themselves Christians but are consumed with the false notion that Jesus will return to this planet and establish an earthly throne in Jerusalem. Their obsession has spawned the same damnable heresy that ultimately caused God to reject the Jews of Christ’s day. What a disappointment it will be for those who do not understand the nature of the kingdom (1 Thessalonians 1:8-9; 4:15-17).

Finally, he had an honest heart. The fact that he came to Jesus, the fact that he was willing to ask questions, and the fact that he was willing to weigh the divine answers speaks volumes about Nicodemus’ character. He did not turn away from Jesus in anger because His words were diametrically opposed to much of what he had been taught. He did not cling to his traditions with a death-grip to his own eternal destruction. He did not dismiss information, refusing even to consider a challenge to his entrenched belief system but, instead, puzzled over their contradictions. He was a learner. He was willing to question his belief system.

The easiest way for many folks to go through life is to allow others to do their thinking, to rely on “experts” to tell them what is true or false, instead of facing the discomfort of mental growing pains. The Bible commends questioning. If one is truly seeking truth, one will seek out God’s will (2 Timothy 2:15), test the spirits (1 John 4:1) and constantly be transformed by renewing their mind (Romans 12:2).

Nicodemus defended Jesus’ right to justice (John 7:50-52) and helped Joseph of Arimathea prepare Jesus’ body for its tomb. Why would he risk his position in the synagogue (cf. John 12:42)? Because, he had an honest, questioning heart.

Thus Saith the Lord
is presented by the

Park Heights Church of Christ

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Schedule of Services

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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