

# Nicodemus Leaders

by Anton Bosch

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*The sermon calls on believers to take a stand for the Truth, even if it means facing persecution, and to choose between the passing pleasures of sin and the reward of righteousness.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 32:26, Matthew 5:10, John 3:16, John 3:19, Hebrews 11:25

**Topics:** "Fear Of Man", "Standing For Truth"

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## Description

Anton Bosch delves into the stories of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, highlighting their fear of openly identifying with Jesus due to concerns about image, popularity, and position. He draws parallels between these men and modern spiritual leaders who know the Truth but remain silent for fear of consequences. Bosch emphasizes the importance of standing up for the Truth, even in the face of persecution, using biblical examples like Moses and the call to be salt and light in the church.

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## Transcript

We all know the story about Nicodemus who visited Jesus under the cover of darkness in John 3 and to whom Jesus spoke about being born again and to whom Jesus uttered the famous John 3:16.

It is interesting to note that Nicodemus is mentioned three times in John's gospel. In addition to the well-known passage in John 3, he is also mentioned in chapters 7 and 19. He is the only man by that name in the Bible and there can be little confusion about who he was. His name is not common like that of Mary or James, yet every time John refers to him, he refers to Nicodemus as "he who came to Jesus by night". Thus his visit to Jesus at night became the thing that will forever identify him.

Then there was "Joseph of Arimathea... a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). Just like Nicodemus, Joseph was also a spiritual leader of the Jews who believed in Jesus but would not openly identify with Jesus and boldly declare his allegiance to the Son of God.

The reason for all the secrecy is obvious. It would not have been good for their image, popularity and position in society if they had openly identified with Jesus. Thus they were no different to Peter, another leader amongst his peers who denied Jesus and would not openly side with his Teacher at a crucial time.

Just as the Jews of Jesus' day had departed from the true faith and were following their own traditions and inventions, rather than the Word of God, so many churches and denominations today have left, or are departing from, the true faith. They substitute this with a religion of their own traditions and imaginations.

And just as in Jesus' day there are still some spiritual leaders in churches who are exactly like Nicodemus, Joseph and Peter. They know the Truth but will not speak out for fear of what others will say, or because they fear the loss of their status, position or income.

These modern Nicodemuses will approach those who stand for the Truth under cover of darkness and, just like Nicodemus, recognize, acknowledge and support the Truth. But they will not take an open stand for Truth - and against error - for fear of the consequences. Almost every assembly and every denomination has its share of people like this who will hide in the crowd while the Truth is denied, sold and crucified. While they know the Truth, they choose to remain secret agents, feeding information to those who are waging the battle, but they themselves prefer to operate at night, under cover of darkness.

We are familiar with the fact that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about being born again, but have you ever looked at the entire message of Jesus to Nicodemus? Jesus concludes his comments to this leader with the following words:

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:19-21).

Don't think these words are said in isolation. They are directly linked to the opening of the passage which tells of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that he loved the darkness rather than the light. We far too glibly apply these verses to burglars and robbers who work at night but Jesus did not aim them at sinners: he directed them at a religious man who recognized who Jesus was but preferred to remain incognito!

Friend, if you recognize that your church or denomination is moving in the wrong direction and have created (or begun to create) their own religion of their own design which is not according to God's Word - then you need to take a stand. If you remain silent because of "fear of the Jews", then Jesus says that you are in darkness. If you are of the Truth, then you must come to the light, and you must let your light shine and you must speak up for the Truth.

Off course there will be repercussions. Yes, they will hate you, destroy your reputation, strip you of your position and cast you out as a piece of rubbish. Yes, you may lose all your friends, maybe even your salary, health and self-respect. But did they not do the same to Jesus and to all the men of God in the entire Bible? And did Jesus Himself not say:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." (Matthew 5:10-15). Note again that we are to be salt and light, not just in the world, but especially, in the church. Note also the connection between being light and persecution.

You can hide for a while, but the time will come when you will need to take a stand. Nicodemus and Joseph were "under cover" for a few years but the time came when they had to nail their colors to the mast. It was Joseph who had to brave Pilate's wrath and ask for the broken body of Jesus. It was Joseph and Nicodemus who buried Jesus in Joseph's tomb. But in a sense it was too late. Jesus was dead. Many modern Nicodemuses wake up when it is too late and when the Truth has been killed and all that remains is to bury the remains of the Truth.

Praise God, the Truth rose again and can never be destroyed. But don't wait until it is too late before taking your stand boldly beside the Son of God. Moses also hid under his Egyptian clothes but the day came when

"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:25-27).

It was this Moses who, when all of Israel had turned to idols, cried "Who is on the LORD'S side?" (Exodus 32:26). Again, the consequences of the sons of Levi responding to that call were not pretty, but God honored their stand and He will honor your courage. But you must choose and you must do so today.

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