

## Nick & Joe Save Easter

Pastor Ken Ritz \* April 8, 2012 \* New Life Vineyard Church

*So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.*

Acts 12:4 NKJ

- **If Nick and Joe weren't part of the Easter story, then Jesus would have risen from the dead in a mass grave, which was part of a garbage dump in a valley outside of Jerusalem, called Gehenna.**

*Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."*

*Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again."*

*"How can anyone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"*

*Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

John 3:1-5

- **Jesus tells us that in order to enter the kingdom of God and be born into God's family, we must have a spiritual rebirth.**
- **A common misbelief: God is like a "cosmic Santa-Claus" who is interested only in our behavior.**
- **Yet Jesus told us that eternal life is based on belief, not behavior.**

*"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

Verse 9

*"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Verses 13-16

*Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.*

*...Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"*

*"No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied.*

*"You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted.*

*"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them."*

*Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"*

*They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."*

*Then they all went home.*

John 7:32, 45-53

*Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.*

*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

John 19:38-42

- **Nicodemus and Joseph didn't realize that their actions [asking for the body, wrapping it, putting it in a tomb, and sealing the tomb, after which Roman soldiers were posted to guard it] provided critical documentation and evidence by multiple witnesses, that proved the resurrection.**