

Lent Series: Lent 2

It comes from above



Wednesday 25th February 2026

All Saints Newton Heath Lent Series 2026

This week and for the next four Wednesdays we are going to continue to use artworks based on the readings. Perhaps this method may also work for us in our Lenten discipline of observing the traditional themes of

Prayer

Fasting

Abstinence

Almsgiving

Some weeks these themes may fit in better than others, and we won't always use the Old Testament reading and the Epistle

Genesis 12.1-4a
(The Call of Abram)

*[Abram] on the Way
to Canaan (1614)*
Pieter Lastman



The focus here is the vision of God.

God dwells in

unapproachable light. There are still visions. Abram and his entourage move forward. His hands are folded in prayer. The young man in blue is probably Lot, Abram's nephew.

Abram's wife, Sarai, is looking more towards us than the other characters. This draws us, the viewers, into the picture. Note the light from above.

Note the ram which is an allusion to the future episode we know as *Abraham and Isaac*.

John 3.1-17 Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Three images to help us here.

Christ speaks to Nicodemus at night (c 1622)

Boethius Bolswert 1580-1633

Note the turban given to Nicodemus, indicating he was a Pharisee. Not also the 'halo; around the candle flame, and the halo around Christ. Nicodemus seems baffled, looking into the distance.



Christ instructing Nicodemus

Jacob Jordaens 1593-1678

Note that there is plenty of light, but Jordaens has Nicodemus in shadow. We are to understand that his background as a Pharisee makes it difficult for him to grasp the spiritual dimension of Jesus's words. His world is more legalistic and literal. He needs to look beyond the literal and material. Contrast this with how Abram looks up, as he is guided by The Spirit to make and continue his journey. His headgear is different from the Bolswert engraving, but that need not bother us.



Christus und Nikodemus (c 1886)

Fritz von Uhde

Like the other images, the scenery and costume are of the artist's time.

How might we imagine this today?

Nicodemus seems to be wearing a kind of academic robe, suggesting he was a thinker. He's not looking at Jesus's left arm, raised above, but at Jesus. Is he missing part of the point.



In this contemporary setting, in an industrialised world, Uhde intends to convey the message that what Jesus said then is intended for today, for all time. The divine is accessible. This is an un-idealised setting. He faced criticism at the time for making the setting of images such as this rather mundane.

If you like, von Uhde's intent was to convey a social gospel, not one that was just accessible by the elites.

Jesus's encounter with Nicodemus, offering light in darkness, clearly had an effect. We just have to look at Nicodemus's involvements with events after the crucifixion.

Fr A

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