

DeeperStudy Newsletter

Issue 13 The Bible Study e-Zine



Steve Singleton

Here is issue 13, I hope you can find some benefit in it. Be sure to read the footnotes of the main article if you want some meat (temporarily turn off any pop-up blocker you might have running). This issue's free offer is really special: we're offering free Christian books! Look also for the highlights of what's new at DeeperStudy: I hope you'll be pleasantly surprised! Please send me any feedback you might have about this issue. Already we have readers all over the world, but we welcome more. Send a link to DeeperStudy newsletter to friends and family that you believe can benefit from it. God bless you as you draw closer to Him.

IN THIS ISSUE...

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- **Are Jesus and John the "we" of John 3:11?**
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When we encounter people of other faiths—Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Baha'is, etc.—observing their obvious devotion to what their religious convictions and the inner peace they seem to have and the gentleness, it makes us want to make a place for them in the kingdom of God. Our Western culture promotes pluralism of all kinds--racial,

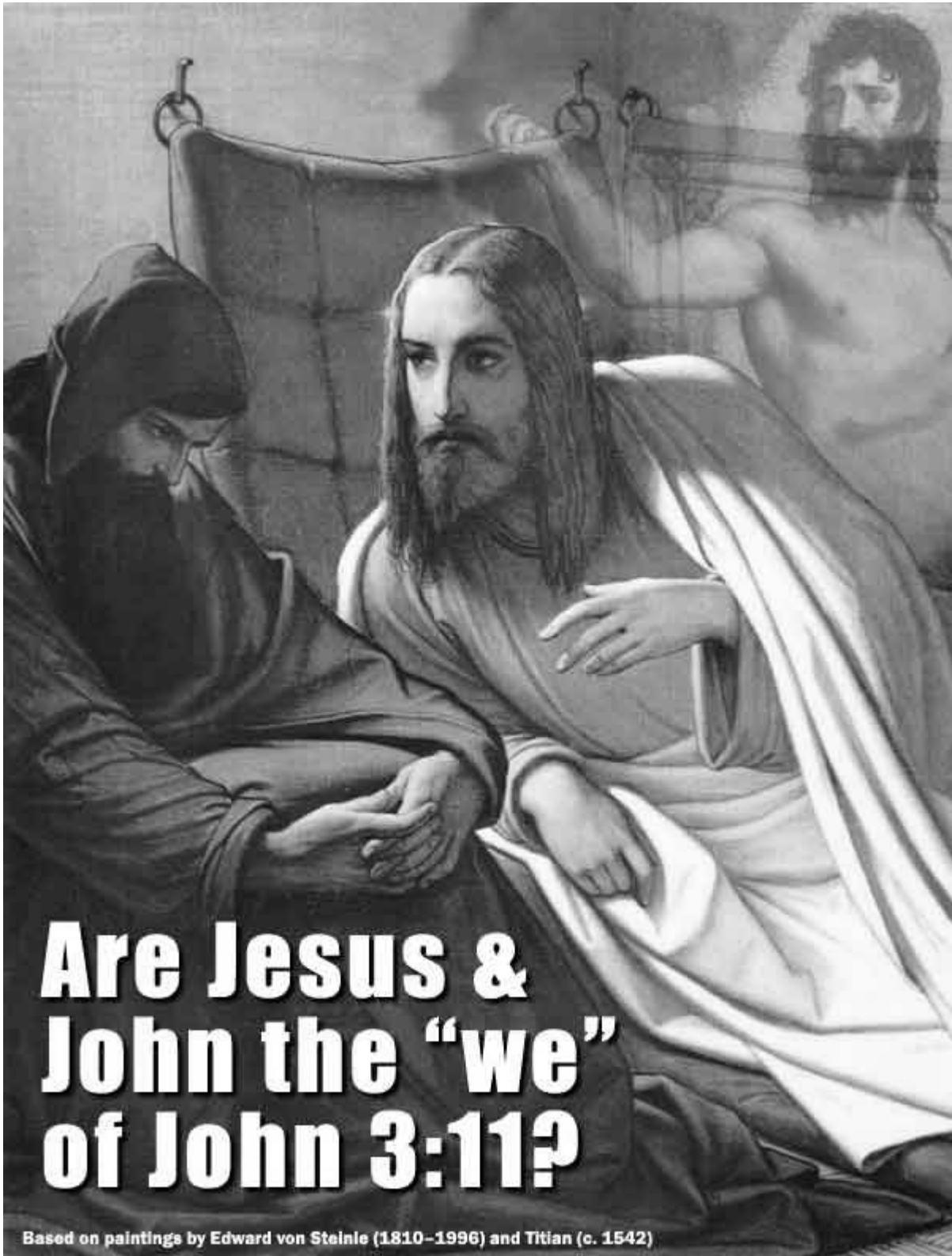
ethnic, political, and religious. Anyone who argues for one Way as the exclusive way of salvation our society opposes, ridicules, and fears.

Of course, God, in His sovereignty, may choose to save anyone He wants. In the exercising of His wisdom, justice, and mercy, He certainly has the prerogative that human judges often exercise: of allowing for extenuating circumstances and the attitude of the defendant. What's more, He can factor in the confluence of a multitude of cause-effect relationships wholly unknowable to humans. We are confident that if He makes such allowances, they will be decisions that will only serve to magnify His holiness, His grace, and His righteousness.

We are not in a position, however, to second-guess or to make reliable predictions about what He will and will not do in His role as Judge of All the Earth beyond what He has revealed to us. Biblical history yields examples when He granted pardons (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 32:1-5; Jonah 3:10) or overlooked shortcomings and failures (2 Chron. 30:17-20; 2 Kings 5:15-19), but it also reports that at other times, He demanded exacting obedience and punished failures to comply to the smallest detail (Lev. 10:1-7; 2 Sam. 6:6-7).

It is not for us to attempt to predict, much less to demand, what He will do or choose in specific cases. Our task is only to proclaim what He has revealed in His Word. Jesus Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). His apostle, Peter, restated the same principle: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul adds: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:31).

For us to grant even hypothetical pardon to anyone who has not responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ seems tantamount to calling Jesus (and Peter and Paul) a liar. If He is truly my Lord--if He is truly yours--we cannot call Him a liar or contradict His express statements. We must, instead, obey His call to "Disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). If that makes us Christians exclusionists, so be it. If that means our stance is a stumbling block to the world, that's all right. The cross has been a stumbling block and foolishness to an unbelieving world throughout the entire history of Christianity. Yet, to those who are being saved, "it is God's power and God's wisdom. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Cor. 1:24-25).

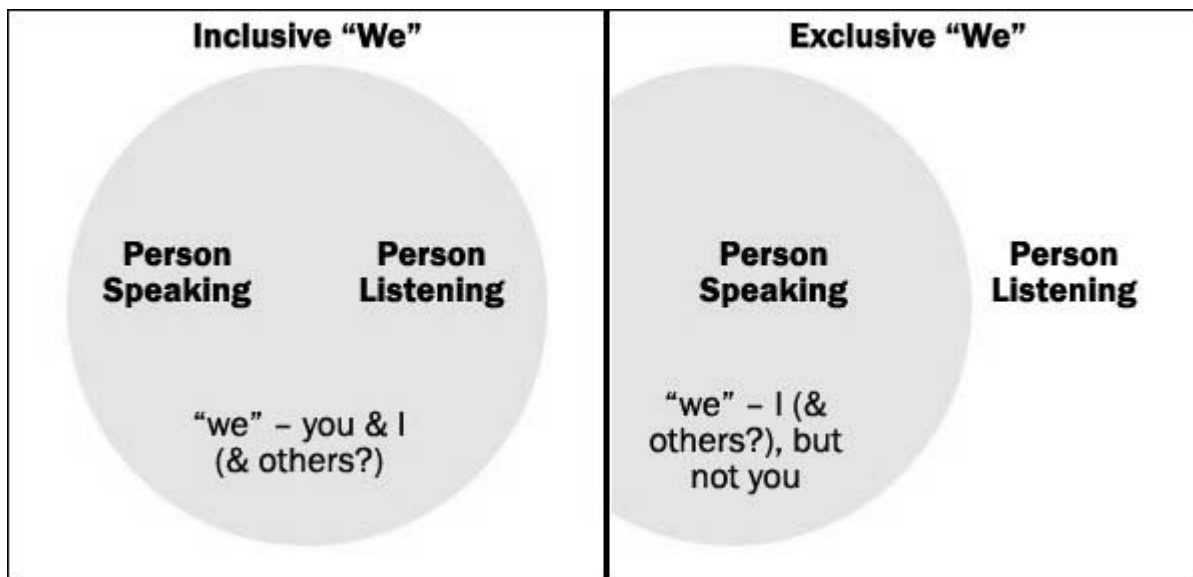


Bengel's Interpretation of John 3:5

The variety of interpretations of the phrase in John 3:5,¹ "born out of water and Spirit" (*gennêthê ex hydatos kai pneumatos*), resolves into two categories: baptismal and non-baptismal.² Those choosing the interpretation that it refers to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ face the challenge of explaining how this would have been immediately meaningful to Nicodemus, living as he was before the cross and the outpouring of the Spirit made Christian baptism relevant.³

Perhaps the most historically consistent interpretation is also the least disruptive of the context of chapter 3: that for Nicodemus, “water” refers to the baptism of John⁴ and “Spirit” to an impartation of the Spirit by Jesus; while for the original readers of the Fourth Gospel (FG) as well as for us modern readers, living after the cross and the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, these two elements combine in the significance of water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. This interpretation, first espoused by J. A. Bengel, was taken up successively by B. F. Westcott, Edwyn Hoskyns, J. A. T. Robinson, and George R. Beasley-Murray, among others.⁵ Perhaps its lack of supporters in recent times is due more to growing doubts about the historicity of the discourses in the FG than to the superior contextual suitability of its rival interpretations.⁶

I seek to demonstrate that Bengel’s interpretation of John 3:5 helps to resolve the conundrum of 3:11: Jesus’ seemingly enigmatic switch from first-person singular verbs and pronouns (“I”) in the preceding context to first-person plurals (“we” and “our”) in this sentence: “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony”⁷ (*amên, amên, legô soi hoti ho oidamen laloumen kai ho heôrakamen martyroumen, kai tên martyrion hêmôn ou lambanete*).⁸ The question to decide is, who are the referents for the first-person plurals of John 3:11. Who is included in the “we” and the “our”? Does Jesus employ an inclusive first-person plural here, including Nicodemus with himself and perhaps others? Or does Jesus use an exclusive first-person plural, excluding Nicodemus but perhaps including others?



Including John in the first-person plurals of 3:11, serves to validate Bengel’s interpretation of 3:5, suggesting that reference to John lies behind the entire dialogue with Nicodemus. In other words, I seek to establish that though John remains unnamed in the Nicodemus dialogue, his presence just beneath the surface is both historically and contextually plausible, and if this is true, unlocks our understanding of the phrase in 3:5: “born out of water and Spirit.” I also hope that this entire exercise will serve as a model for anyone who desires to learn how to explore the context of a passage to gain insights from a proper exegesis of Scripture.

Determining the meaning of “we”: A process of elimination

1) Inclusive “we” ruled out—possible referents for “we” in 3:11

Scholars have proposed no fewer than seven referents for “we” in 3:11. They would all agree that it cannot refer to both Jesus and Nicodemus (inclusive first person plural); the contrast between “we” and “you” makes such an understanding impossible.⁹ Ruling out

that possibility from the start, here are the suggested referents:

Who does “we” include in John 3:11?		Jesus	Nicodemus	Pharisees	John the Baptizer	Disciples of Jesus	God the Father	Holy Spirit	Moses/Prophets	Church
“We” means...										
1. Inclusive		x	x	x						
2. Epistolary		x								
3. Divine fellowship		x					x	x?		
4. Discipleship		x			x					
5. Christian fellowship		x								x
6. Prophets		x						x		
7. Anachronistic										x
8. Contextual		x			x					

Before focusing on the eighth, each of the others merits a brief evaluation.

2) Jesus only¹⁰

The use of the editorial “we” (also called the literary or epistolary plural), easily demonstrable elsewhere in Scripture,¹¹ is a possibility in 3:11. The parallel statement in 3:32 retains the singular throughout.¹² Many examples of this stylistic change to the plural exist in both Greek and Hebrew literature.¹³

Against this view is the lack of any definite example that Jesus ever employed the editorial “we.”¹⁴ Also, no explanation has been forthcoming for the change beyond the Fourth Evangelist’s concern for stylistic variation. The change is all the more perplexing in view of the introductory formula, “Truly, truly, I say to you,” in which no shift to the plural occurs. “I say to you, we...” suggests a stronger reason for switching to “we” than literary variation.

3) Jesus and the Father, the Spirit, or both¹⁵

In the early Johannine discourses Jesus again and again associates himself with the Father. In the Farewell Discourse, he reveals his additional association with the Spirit. The immediate context repeatedly paints a contrast between the divine and the human.¹⁶ Yet, against this interpretation is the difficulty of identifying what either the Father or the Spirit had seen that could be part of their testimony. To say, “We testify to what we have seen,” necessarily means that the testimony is derivative, not originating with the witness, as would always be true with deity. Any referent for “we” and “our” in addition to Jesus, therefore, would have to be human. Furthermore, even in those passages where the Father and the Spirit are clearly discussed, including Jesus with one or the other in a first-person plural is rare.¹⁷

4) Jesus and the disciples with him¹⁸

Certainly Jesus occasionally includes his disciples when saying “we,” even in the FG.¹⁹ But just as in the case of Nicodemus’ first-person plural (3:2), the first-person plurals of 3:11 more likely refer to a person or persons regarded as being in a peer relationship with the speaker. The other occasions in which Jesus includes his disciples in “we,” he is speaking to them, not to a third party. In other words, in the other cases, he employs

an inclusive first-person plural, not an exclusive one. Furthermore, the preceding context says nothing of the disciples' testimony,²⁰ and instead of their "knowing," they are constantly misunderstanding Jesus.²¹

5) Jesus and the Church (or the "Johannine Community")²²

This seems to be the view of most Johannine scholars today. They believe that the Fourth Evangelist creates an anachronism, momentarily leaving the historical situation of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and jumping to a post-Pentecost perspective.²³ What evidence have proponents of this view provided in support of this view beyond their unproven assumptions about the Fourth Evangelist's theological agenda and perspective? As Carson so aptly points out again and again,²⁴ the Fourth Evangelist seems consciously concerned to distinguish what was known during Jesus' ministry from what was learned only after the resurrection.²⁵ Such an abrupt change of perspective would require contextual justification stronger than has been forthcoming from the proponents of this view.

6) Jesus and earlier prophets (including Moses and, perhaps, John)²⁶

At least in the case of Moses and the prophets, scattered references in the FG before and after could serve as conceptual links to the first-person plurals of 3:11. Neither the reference in 3:14, however, nor the Prologue's comparison of Moses with the Logos in 1:17 dovetails with 3:11's concept of delivering testimony. Philip's reference to messianic predictions by Moses and the prophets (1:45) is more appropriate, but the word-group "testify/testimony" does not occur. Only the reference to Moses' testimony in 5:39–47²⁷ is sufficiently similar to suggest a link. The preceding context, however, is more relevant for determining referents of pronouns and the understood subjects of verbs. We call them "antecedents," after all, not "postcedents."

7) The Fourth Evangelist and the Johannine Community²⁸

Involved here is the whole issue about where the dialogue ends and the Fourth Evangelist's commentary begins. A few would take all of 3:1–21 as being from Jesus.²⁹ Most, however, would end the quotation of Jesus with 3:15, making 3:16–21 the Fourth Evangelist's meditation on Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. A few others would begin the meditation as far back as 3:13.³⁰ Taking it back that far would make the Fourth Evangelist ascribe to Jesus the title, "Son of Man," his favorite self-description, but almost never ascribed to him by someone else.³¹ To carry the meditation all the way back to 3:11 would involve a similar, but even greater difficulty: usurping for the Fourth Evangelist the uniquely dominical phrase, "Truly, truly, I say to you."³²

8) Jesus and John³³

In contrast to the difficulties of the alternative interpretations, identifying Jesus and John as the referents for the first-person plurals of 3:11 has the support of several considerations, each of which merits examination. After an exploration of the flow of the context, each element of the verse will contribute its part: the amen formula, the terms of epistemology (*oidamen* and *heōrakamen*), the testimony motif (*laloumen*, *martyroumen*, and *martyrian*), and the rejection of that testimony by those described by the second-personal plural ("you").

The Evidence for Jesus and John as Referents

1) The flow of the context

Even a short summary of the various attempts to outline the early chapters of the FG is beyond the scope of this essay. No consensus emerges among those that would seek to understand the text as it stands, not to mention those who advocate rearranging or editing verses, paragraphs, or even whole pericopes.³⁴ At least there seems to be a

growing awareness that the Fourth Evangelist's conscious organization seems to have involved a pedagogical repetition of themes³⁵ and an arrangement of material that is Semitic in character.³⁶

With regard to the recurring themes, Gary M. Burge³⁷ has pointed out the use of "water" in the FG. Excluding weak variants, "water" occurs 21 times in the FG,³⁸ several times associated with "living/life," or "Spirit," or both.³⁹ The "water" of 3:5 thus links the Nicodemus discourse with John's baptizing ministry, mentioned both before (1:19–33) and after (3:22–36). In fact, the only other times "water and Spirit" are found together are in the testimony of John in chapter 1 and in John's testimony at the end of chapter 3.⁴⁰

With regard to possible Semitic structure, Godfrey Nicholson, for example, sees the Prologue as successively introducing the themes of later chapters: 1:1–5 for 1:1–18; 1:6–8 for 1:19 – 4:54; 1:9–13 for 5:1 – 12:20; and 1:14–18 for 13:1 – 20:31.⁴¹ This would make 1:6–8, the first testimony of John in the FG, a significant introduction to the Nicodemus discourse. John Bligh believes the Nicodemus discourse itself consists of three chiasms: 2:23 – 3:2, 3:2–11, and 3:12–21.⁴² This would make the verses corresponding to 3:11 in the chiasms 2:23, 3:1–2a, 3:10–12, and 3:19–21. All of these concern the receiving of testimony (on which, see below).

Jeffrey Wilson has shown the close parallels between what he calls the "discourse of Jesus" (3:1–21) and "the discourse of John the Baptist" (3:25–36), simplified as follows:⁴³

Discourse of Jesus	Discourse of John the Baptist
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach to Jesus (1–2) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Question b. Title of 'Rabbi' 2. Reply of Jesus (3) Born from above 3. Further replies (5–8, 11–12) 4. Change of tone (13–21) (first to third person) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Out of heaven b. 16–18: life eternal/judging 5. The Spirit (6,8) 6. The one having been born out of the Spirit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach to John (25–27) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Question b. Title of 'Rabbi' 2. Reply of John (27) Given... out of heaven 3. Further replies (29–31) 4. Change of tone (31–36) (first to third person) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The one coming from above b. 35–36: life eternal/wrath 5. The Spirit (34) 6. He gives the Spirit

Wilson concludes that the Fourth Evangelist organized chapter 3 in such a way that he gives John equal status with Jesus just long enough for him to testify to his thoroughly subordinate position. He does this, apparently, to convince some who revere John and would otherwise reject the testimony of Jesus.⁴⁴

Edwin C. Webster sees the Nicodemus discourse and the accompanying material in the rest of chapter 3 as tied closely to the Samaritan woman pericope of chapter 4. He calls them "baptismal dialogues," notes their nearly identical length (88 lines in the Nestle-Aland text), and points out the synonymous and antithetical parallelism between them. He observes that both discussions concern water and Spirit.⁴⁵ The link between the two chapters, 3:22 – 4:3 concerns John and Jesus' independent efforts to cooperate and to avoid competition.

The flow of context, therefore, suggests strong ties between Jesus and John, leading up to and flowing from the Nicodemus discourse. This would tend to justify making John the additional referent of the first-person plurals in 3:11. But the wording of 3:11 itself provides additional evidence.

2) The amen formula

The amen affirmation of Jesus, its double-amen form unique to the FG, has received considerable scholarly attention.⁴⁶ For our purposes, the significance of the double-amen formula in 3:11 is two-fold: to emphasize the importance of what is affirmed, and to reinforce the forensic background of the testimony being discussed. Sydney Temple divides the 25 occurrences in the FG into three categories: “balanced teaching,” “important saying,” and “to strengthen argument.”⁴⁷ He places 3:11 in the third category. Although others would disagree with this classification of 3:11,⁴⁸ it remains undeniable that within all of chapter 3, the only other verses introduced with the double-amen formula (3 and 5) are unquestionably important. Its use in 3:11 serves to emphasize the accompanying saying above the other verses in the immediate context.⁴⁹ If this is true, what makes verse 11 so important? The answer awaits an analysis of the rest of the verse.

Rejecting as he did the common Jewish habit of taking oaths,⁵⁰ Jesus likely intended the amen formula to serve as an acceptable substitute—his version of “I solemnly swear to tell the truth.”⁵¹ This is perfectly compatible with the attendant discussion of testimony and consistent with the Fourth Evangelist’s pervasive use of legal terminology.⁵²

3) The epistemological terms

According to Jerome H. Neyrey, the two issues of chapter 3 are religious epistemology and Christology, as introduced by Nicodemus’ statement (v. 2): “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God....”⁵³ The exchanges between Nicodemus and Jesus keep focusing on who knows (and does not know) what:

Nicodemus	Jesus
“we know” (<i>oidamen</i> , v. 2)	“unless born from above, he is not able <i>to see</i> ” (<i>idein</i> , v. 3)
“How is it possible?”	“unless born out of water and Spirit, he is not able <i>to enter</i> ” (<i>eiselthein</i> , v. 5)
(silent)	“You hear, but you do not know” (<i>akoueis</i> , <i>all' ouk oidas</i> , v. 8)
“How is it possible?”	“do you not know?” (<i>ou ginōskeis</i> , v. 10)
(silent)	“we know... we have seen... you do not receive” (<i>oidamen... heōrakamen... ou lambanete</i> , v. 11)
(silent)	Turns to Christology (what is known to him and John, but unknown to Nicodemus and the Pharisees)

The epistemology of the Nicodemus discourse has been the subject of much study, especially whether Jesus’ descent and ascent constitutes a “heavenly journey,” echoing a theme common to both Judaeo-Christian and pagan religious texts.⁵⁴ In the FG, the epistemology motif springs from the Prologue⁵⁵ and courses its way through the book.⁵⁶ Particularly relevant are the epistemological terms in the narrative of John’s

testimony (1:19–34): “you do not know” (*ouk oïdate*, v. 26); “I myself did not know him” (*kagô ouk êidein auton*, v. 31); “that he might be revealed” (*hina phanerôthêi*, v. 31); “I myself did not know him” (*kagô ouk êidein auton*, v. 33); “you see” (*idêis*, v. 33); and “I have seen” (*kagô heôraka*, v. 34). Knowing and seeing—these are the same terms that recur in 3:11.

4) The testimony motif

Assuming Jesus is the speaker in 3:11, his use of legal terminology, beginning with the double-amen formula, suggests that he understands his encounter with Nicodemus not just as a private conversation, but as a part of his on-going trial before the Jews. To put it from the Fourth Evangelist’s perspective, Jesus pleads his case before the watching world.⁵⁷

As a part of that trial, Jesus testifies, and others join in that testimony. The “witness/testify” word group (*martyr-*) is a prominent feature of the FG’s forensic perspective.⁵⁸ Likewise terms for speaking (e.g., *legô* and *laleô*) are sometimes used in the FG as synonyms for testifying. In chapter one these same terms are used to describe John’s testimony: “for testimony, to bear witness” (*eis martyrian*, v. 7); “to bear witness” (*hina marturêsêi*, v. 8); “testimony” (*martyria*, v. 19); “He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed” (*hômologêsen kai ouk êrnêsato, kai hômologêsen*, v. 20); “bore witness” (*emartyrêsen*, v. 32); “I... have borne witness” (*memartyrêka*, v. 34). After such a cluster of “testify” words, the next time the word-group appears is in 2:25, the introduction to the Nicodemus discourse. The time after that is 3:11. This word-group recurs later in the chapter, as John renews his testimony (vv. 26, 28). The Son’s testimony is also mentioned (vv. 32–33).

5) Rejection of the testimony

Once more, the Prologue introduces a theme that comes up again and again throughout the FG: “the world knew him not... his own people received him not” (*ho kosmos auton ouk egnô... oi idioi auton ou parelabon*, 1:10–11).⁵⁹ Understanding 3:11’s “you do not receive testimony” as referring to Jesus and John transforms it into the key for explaining what hinders Nicodemus from entering God’s kingdom. John’s baptism was based either on the priestly washings, proselyte baptism, or both.⁶⁰ If the former, then to submit Nicodemus would have to admit he was unclean. If the latter, he would have to see himself as no closer to God than a Gentile. Either way would involve a radical humbling quite alien to the pride-engendering life of a rabbi. Having rejected John’s ministry and baptism, Nicodemus was unprepared to accept Jesus as more than “a teacher come from God.”

When temple officials later wanted to know by what authority Jesus cleansed the temple, he asked about the baptism of John, not as a smoke-screen, but because their submission to John or lack thereof was the gateway or the barrier to their acceptance of his answer. When they replied, “We don’t know” (epistemology surfacing once more), Jesus refused them an answer.⁶¹ Reception of Jesus was inextricably tied to reception of John. To reject the one automatically meant rejection of the other: “Our testimony you do not receive.”

Conclusion

To summarize, both the flow of context up to, through, and out of the Nicodemus discourse, as well as every word of 3:11 seem to favor making Jesus and John the referents of the first person plurals. Understanding these words as including John serves to confirm the two-then-one understanding of 3:5’s phrase, “born out of water and Spirit.”

In the context of the historical conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus, the New Birth was a two-stage process. Jesus apparently wanted Nicodemus to humble himself and submit to baptism at the hands of John. Only then would he be spiritually prepared to learn what he needed to know, see what he desperately had to see, and enter where he longed to enter, God's kingdom. Only by submitting to John's call for repentance would Nicodemus be prepared to accept John's testimony about Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" and "he who baptizes in the Spirit." After accepting that testimony, Nicodemus would be ready to submit to Jesus himself, who imparts God's gifts, eternal life and the Holy Spirit. In John 3 Nicodemus did not know, could not see, did not enter. Later, perhaps, he did.⁶²

In the modern application, to all of us on this side of the Cross and the Empty Tomb, these two stages combine into one New Birth involving both the physical and the spiritual. "Born out of water" is the physical, outward aspect, in which we are dipped in water. "Born out of Spirit" is the spiritual, inward aspect, in which we become saturated in the Spirit--we are dipped in the Holy Spirit and we drink deeply of the Spirit.⁶³ These are the two aspects of the same physical/spiritual event. It is the "new birth" that Paul refers to as "the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁴

As a post-resurrection experience, the two are the inseparable initiation of the Christian life that is the universal experience of all saved believers.⁶⁵ This point is critical to our understanding of Christian conversion. The water-bath of the outer person is symbolic of the inner cleansing simultaneously taking place by the power of the blood of Christ. As our bodies emerge from the "watery grave," our old person, who was "dead in sin," undergoes a spiritual resurrection.⁶⁶

Although our situation is different from that of Nicodemus, and the application of Jesus' words for him as a sinner is different than it is for us, the spiritual principle remains the same. A new birth is absolutely necessary for any of us to enter God's kingdom. We cannot participate in His reign without a radical transformation of our whole being. We cannot accomplish this transformation on our own. We must look to Christ to grant us "power to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."⁶⁷

Bibliography

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You can now access 15 classic works of systematic theology by some of the greatest scholars of past generations! These are links to full texts online, including Charles Hodge, A. H. Strong, B. B. Warfield, and others. Also read important works on Jesus Christ by authors such as Josh McDowell, W. M. Ramsay, J. Gresham Machen, and James Denney.

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Notes

1. Hereafter, references consisting solely of chapter and verses) will refer to the Fourth Gospel.
2. These are often called "sacramental" and "non-sacramental" respectively, but it seems preferable to retain more biblical terminology. Linda Belleville ("Born of Water and Spirit": John 3: 5," *Trinity Journal* 1 N.S. [1980]: 125–134) prefers "ritualistic" to "baptismal," giving it four subdivisions: anti-Essene polemic (L. Mowry), Jewish purificatory observances (D. W. B. Robinson), John's Baptism (B. F. Westcott, A. Edersheim, F. L. Godet), and Christian baptism (Chrysostom, H. A. W. Meyer, J. H. Bernard, C. H. Dodd, C. K. Barrett, G. R. Beasley-Murray, and many others). Belleville's non-ritualistic interpretations include: symbolic (Z. C. Hodges), physiological (R. Fowler, D. G. Spriggs), implied dualism (H. Odeberg, R. Strachan, E. Lee, L. Morris), cosmological (Z. C. Hodges), and figurative (Origen, Calvin, G. E. Ladd, R. Schnackenburg). Belleville herself (134–141) defends the figurative interpretation, and her thesis has convinced Donald A. Carson to take the same approach (*The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 194–196, esp. 194 n. 2). Rudolf Bultmann and certain others (Wellhausen, K. Lake, Bernard, Wendt, Merx, Morrison, Braun, Léon-Dufour, Van den Bussche, Feuillet, Leal, and De la Potterie) would omit ὕδατος καὶ, despite its attestation in the entire textual tradition (syr^s reverses the order) (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, et al. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 138 n. 3; Zane C. Hodges, "Problem Passages in the Gospel of John. Part 3: Water and Spirit— John 3: 5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 [1978]: 207, n. 3). Of course, most scholars are quite reluctant to accept such textual emendations. Bruce Metzger states: "The only criterion of a successful conjecture is that it shall approve itself as inevitable. Lacking inevitability, it remains doubtful" (*The Text of the New Testament*, 2d ed. (New York Oxford University, 1968), 183. That there is no dearth of explanations for the presence of ὕδατος καὶ demonstrates that the omission of the phrase is far from inevitable.
3. D. Cole, "Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Gospel of John: A Hermeneutical Inquiry," (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1973), 89.
4. To avoid confusion in this paper, the term, "John," will refer exclusively to John the Baptizer, "the Fourth Evangelist" to the author of the Fourth Gospel, and just like the practice of the Fourth Evangelist himself, no explicit reference will be made to the Apostle John.
5. John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, 2 vols., rev. and ed. Andrew R. Fausset (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1860), 2: 275; B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1908; reprint as one vol.: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 2:107–110; Edwyn Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 213–215; John A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957–58): 263–281; George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Paternoster, 1962; reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 226–232; D. W. B. Robinson, "Born of Water and Spirit: Does John 3: 5 Refer to Baptism?" *Reformed Theological Review* 25 (1966): 21–22; Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the*

New Testament Witness (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 219–220; Beasley-Murray, "John 3: 3, 5: Baptism, Spirit and the Kingdom," *Expository Times* 97 (1986): 168–170; Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentaries) (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 48–50. B. Weiss and Zahn also espoused this view (according to Bultmann, *John*, 146, n. 4). Within the Restoration Movement, Carroll D. Osburn has defended this interpretation ("Some Exegetical Observations on John 3: 5–8," *Restoration Quarterly* 31, 3 [1989]: 234–236).

6. Cf., D. Moody Smith: "... it may be of considerable significance that the Paraclete of the Fourth Gospel is said to recall (14:25–26) and expand upon (16:12–15) what Jesus taught in his earthly ministry. From this observation to the conjecture that the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, so obviously spoken from the standpoint of a spirit-inspired postresurrection community... are to be regarded as the fulfillment of the promise of the Paraclete rather than words of the historical Jesus is but a short step" (*Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources, and Theology* [Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1984], 15–16). In characteristically Johannine irony, we must thank Bultmann for strongly influencing this development in Johannine studies (Gerald S. Sloyan, *What Are They Saying About John?* [Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991], 8–12). A few stand against this trend, including Leon Morris ("History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel," 65–138 in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969], esp. 78–86) and Carson (John, 40–49).

7. Unless otherwise noted English renderings are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV, 2d ed., 1971).

8. Like verse 7, this verse features a switch from second person singular verbs in the preceding context to a second person plural verb (λαμβάνετε). Most scholars understand this to refer to Nicodemus and some contemporaneous group associated with him: either his own disciples (F. P. Cotterell, "The Nicodemus Conversation: A Fresh Appraisal," *Expository Times* 96 [1984–85]: 237–242), his fellow-Pharisees (J. Bryan Born, "Literary Features in the Gospel of John [An Analysis of John 3:1–21]," *Direction* 17, 2 [1988]: 10), or the Jews in general (John Bligh, "Four Studies in St John, II: Nicodemus," *Heythrop Journal* 8, 1 [1967]: 46; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 49). Some would understand it as referring anachronistically to the Fourth Evangelist's intended audience (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2 vols. [Anchor Bible, 29–29A], [Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966], 1:132; Ernst Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* [Hermeneia], 2 vols., ed. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse, trans. Robert W. Funk [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 1:202). The RSV fails to show this change in number, but the New International Version indicates it by the rendering, "you people do... accept." Two witnesses (N and 1071) have οὐδεὶς λαμβάνει ("no one accepts") instead of οὐ λαμβάνετε. MS 700 has the nonsensical reading, οὐδεὶς λαμβάνετε. Also, MS L* has only one ἄμην. Except for orthographic differences on ἑωράκαμεν, these are the only variants in 3:11 (Reuben J. Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus: John* [Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 1995], 28–29).

9. See Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida's warning to translators to avoid rendering the "we's" in 3:11 with an inclusive first person plural (*The Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* [New York: United Bible Societies, 1980], 83). S. Barabas expresses skepticism about any

decision regarding the referents of the first person plurals of 3:11: "There is no certain way of knowing.... Nor do the various tools of exegesis offer any help. Commentators give various opinions, but they are only opinions ("Interpreting the Johannine Literature [John 3:1–15]," 167 in *The Literature and Meaning of Scripture*, ed. M. A. Inch and C. H. Bullock [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981]).

10. See A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1923; reprint: Nashville: Broadman, 1938), 407. Edwin A. Abbott, Brown, Paul D. Duke, and Carson also hold that Jesus is the only referent for "we," but for a different reason: they believe Jesus is speaking ironically in response to Nicodemus' use of the first person plural in 3:2 (Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* [London: A. & C. Clark, 1906], 312; Brown, *John*, 1:132; Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 165; Carson, *John*, 198–199). Plural of majesty was proposed by De Wette and Lücke (according to Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel* [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886], 385). R. Schnackenburg considers von Harnack's suggestion of a "majestic plural" inappropriate to the context and out of keeping with Jesus' typical use of ἐγώ in giving "utterance to his full dignity" (*The Gospel According to St John* [Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament], 3 vols., trans. Kevin Smyth [New York: Seabury, 1980], 1:376). J. H. Bernard also rejects the plural of majesty as "not ascribed to Jesus anywhere" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* [International Critical Commentary] [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928], 1:109).

11. E.g., 1 Thess. 3:1: "Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone...." Apparently the Fourth Evangelist himself employs the literary plural in 21:24 (compare 1 John 1:4 with 1 John 2:1).

12. Other differences between 3:11 and 3:32 are that 3:32 has third person, not first, and is not a saying of Jesus, but a saying either of John or of the Fourth Evangelist. Nevertheless, the parallels between 3:11 and 3:32 are striking. See Wayne A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972):56.

13. See Frederick W. Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), 146–147; Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 217.

14. Sydney Temple, *The Core of the Fourth Gospel* (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 106. A possible exception is Mark 4:30: "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?" (πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολὴ θῶμεν;). The parallel passage in Luke 13:18 uses the first-person singular.

15. Proponents of this view include: Chrysostom (God – *Homilies on John* 26.3 [on John 3:6]); Holy Spirit – Bengel, *Gnomon*, 277; Abbott, *Grammar*, 312 (in addition to his "Johannine irony" view, see note 10 above).

16. E.g., from above/(from below) – 3:3, 7; flesh/Spirit – 3:6; earthly/heavenly – 3:12; ascended/descended – 3:13.

17. Only in 14:23 and 17:11, in both cases referring to Father and Son in the first person plurals. Of these, only 14:23 is strictly analogous to 3:11, because only its first person plural is exclusive.

18. Proponents of this view include: Godet, 385; Westcott, 1:113; C. K. Barrett (on one level of meaning), *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 1955), 1760; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (New International Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 221; Schnackenburg, 1:376 (though Schnackenburg's explanation approaches interpretation four); Peder Borgen, "Some Jewish Exegetical Traditions in the Fourth Gospel," in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 441, ed. M. de Jonge, (Louvain: Louvain University, 1977), 258.

19. E.g., 65: "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" (cf. 9:4; 11:7, 14; 14:31). Synoptic occurrences are: Mark 1:38; 4:30; 4:35 (par. Luke 8:22); 10:33 (par. Matt. 20:18; Luke 18:31); 14:42 (par. Matt. 26:46; Luke 22:28); and Matt. 17:27. Other first person plurals in the sayings of Jesus are cases in which he either quotes others (e.g., in parables) or suggests what others should say (e.g., often in the Sermon on the Mount).

20. Bernard 1:110.

21. Already in 2:21–22; see also 4:31–34; 6:4–9; 11:7–16; 13:27–29, 36–37; 14:8–11, 18–24; 16:16–33. See M. de Jonge, "Nicodemus and Jesus: Some Observations on Misunderstanding and Understanding in the Fourth Gospel," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 55 (2, 1971):337–359; Carson, "Understanding Misunderstanding in the Fourth Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* 33 (1982):59–91; Carson, *John*, 198.

22. Proponents of this view include: Bernard, 1:110; C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1958), 328, n. 3; Barrett (on a deeper level of meaning), *St. John*, 176; J. N. Sanders and B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries) (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 126; Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), 96; James Montgomery Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives, 81, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 171; Temple, *Core*, 106; Haenchen, *John*, 1:202; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 49; Born, 10. This retrospective point of view is explained by R. Alan Culpepper: "[T]he Johannine narrator... tells the story from a point of view which in its retrospection is informed by memory, interpretation of scripture, the coalescing of traditions with the post-Easter experience of the early church, consciousness of the presence of the Spirit, a reading of the glory of the risen Christ back into the days of his ministry, and an acute sensitivity to the history and struggles of the Johannine community" (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 30; see 27–32).

23. Schnackenburg (1:376) states: "[I]t is highly questionable that the evangelist abandons so boldly the framework of the dialogue, especially as Jesus speaks at once again in the singular in the next verse."

24. E.g., Carson, *John*, 37–40, 58–63, 87–89, 182–182, 198–199, 359–361.

25. E.g., Jesus' reference to his body as a temple (2:18–22) and his promise to provide streams of living water (7:37–39).

26. Proponents of this view include: F. Büchsel (according to Bultmann, *John*, 146, n. 4); Hoskyns, 216 (though he would include John and the disciples as well); Bultmann, *John*, 146; and John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), 376–377.

27. Certainly 5:39's "the scriptures . . . bear witness to me" parallels "Moses . . . wrote of me" (5:46).

28. Proponents of this view include: Temple, *Core*, 99, 106; Godfrey C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 63), ed. William Baird (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983), 89.

29. Notably Brown, *John*, 1:149 (see his list of commentators that would begin the Johannine commentary at v. 13 and others at v. 16). Both the New International Version and the New English Bible continue the words of Jesus through 3:21.

30. See William C. Grese, "'Unless One is Born Again': The Use of a Heavenly Journey in John 3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988):677; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 46, 50. This would have the advantage of easing the difficulty of the famous textual variant of 3:13: after "Son of Man" some manuscripts add "who is in heaven." If the phrase is authentic, it would be hard to understand how Jesus could have spoken it to Nicodemus. As part of the Fourth Evangelist's meditation, however, all of which would be presented from a post-ascension perspective, it makes perfect sense.

31. Unless 3:13–14 are the only exceptions, the term 'Son of Man' does not occur in the Four Gospels except on the lips of Jesus himself (Mark 9:9 is an indirect quotation of Jesus). Outside the gospels, 'Son of Man,' occurs in Stephen's vision of Christ just before his death (Acts 7:56); in Heb. 2:6 (quoting Ps. 8:4); and twice in the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:17; 14:14). See Carson, *John*, 203.

32. The introductory formula, "Truly, I say to you" (ἀμὲν λέγω σοι [or ὑμῖν]) occurs 44 times in the Synoptics, always as a saying of Jesus. Its Johannine form (ἀμὲν ἀμὲν...) occurs in the FG another 25 times, always on the lips of Jesus, unless 3:11 is the one exception. See additional discussion below.

33. Proponents include: Knapp, Hofmann, Luthardt, and Weiss (according to Godet, 385).

34. See Meeks ("Man from Heaven," 48): "The major literary problem of John is its combination of remarkable stylistic unity and thematic coherence with glaringly bad transitions between episodes at many points. The countless displacement, source, and redaction theories that litter the

graveyards of Johannine research are voluble testimony to this difficulty." The theories of Bultmann and Brown are notable examples.

35. Meeks ("Man from Heaven," 48) cites Edmond Leach's analogy of the occasional necessity in electronic communication for redundancy to overcome pervasive interference: the signal is repeated in a variety of ways to ensure that the basic message is understood. In a similar way, he says, communicators of "myths" (in the anthropological sense) must overcome the complexity of the social matrix by repeating the message in a number of different ways. Meeks believes this is what the Fourth Evangelist is doing. Merrill C. Tenney likens John's redundancy to the recurring themes in a symphony, pulled together to their mutual resolution in the climax of the final movement ("Literary Keys to the Fourth Gospel: The Symphonic Structure of John," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120 [1963]:117).

36. As early as 1963, Frank Pack observed, "There is an increasing recognition of [the FG's] Palestinian background, its Old Testament connections, and its Jewish flavor" ("The Gospel of John in the Twentieth Century," *Restoration Quarterly* 7 [1963]:185). Note, for example the many attempts to find chiasmus within the FG (for a survey of attempts see Culpepper, "The Pivot of John's Prologue," *New Testament Studies* 27 [1980]:1–9; see also Jeff Staley, "The Structure of John's Prologue: Its Implications for the Gospel's Narrative Structure," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986):241–265). N. W. Lund was a pioneer in the study of chiasmic structure in the New Testament (*Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1942; reprint: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992). Carson, however, dismisses such theories as mutually exclusive and due to the Fourth Evangelist's "repeated handling of only a few themes" (*John*, 104). Of course, the discovery and study of the Dead Sea Scrolls has greatly influenced scholars to recognize and study the Semitic character of the FG. Frank M. Cross is quoted as saying, "It now turns out... that John has its strongest affinities, not with the Greek world, or Philonic Judaism, but with Palestinian Judaism" (161 in *The Ancient Library of Qumran* [New York, 1958], quoted in 356, n. 20 in "The Dead Sea Scrolls and St. John's Gospel," 321–358 in Morris, *Studies* (see also, James H. Charlesworth, ed., *John and Qumran* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972]).

37. "Word Study Chart: ὕδωρ (Water) in the Johannine Literature," 138–139 in *Interpreting the Gospel of John* (Guides to New Testament Exegesis), (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

38. The occurrences are: 1:26, 31, 33; 2:7, 9 (2x), 3:5, 23; 4:7, 10, 11, 13, 14 (3x), 15, 46; 57; 7:38; 13:5; 19:34. The weak variants occur at 3:8; 5:3; and 5:4.

39. "Water" occurs with "Spirit" in 1:33; 3:5; and 7:38–39. It occurs with "living" or "life" in 4:10, 11, 14; and 7:38–39. This means, of course, that 7:38–39 links all three terms.

40. Granted, most scholars would end the words of John with 3:30, making 3:31–36 a commentary by the Fourth Evangelist. Nevertheless, the two paragraphs are linked together, the smoothness of the transition between the two confirmed by the controversy over who is the speaker of 3:31–36. See Jeffrey Wilson, "The Integrity of John 3:22–36," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10 (1981):34–41.

41. Nicholson, *Descent-Ascent*, 28. This is remarkably similar to Patrick W. Skehan's analysis of Prov. 2, in which vv. 5–19 provide a "table of contents" for chapters 3–7, except 6:1–19 which Skehan and others consider an intrusion (*Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* [Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 1], [Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971], 1 [from the article, "Proverbs 5:15–19 and 6:20–24," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 8 (1946):290–297]). I myself have found a similar passage in Prov. 30, in which vv. 11–16 provide a "table of contents" for vv. 17–31.

42. Bligh, 40–42.

43. Wilson, "Integrity," 37.

44. Wilson, "Integrity," 39. Acts 18:24–26 and 19:1–7 support the tantalizing possibility that as late as 20 years after the resurrection of Christ, perhaps even later, loyal disciples of John in Roman Asia, and perhaps elsewhere. A movement of John's disciples may have fanned out from Palestine in all directions during and shortly after John's ministry, and Christianity, as the "second wave" encountered these "Johnites" only years later. See W. R. Farmer, "John the Baptist," 2:962 in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols., G. A. Buttrick, et al., eds. (New York: Abingdon, 1962).

45. "Pattern in the Fourth Gospel," 230–257 in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 19), D. J. A. Clines, D. M. Gunn, and A. J. Hauser, eds., (Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT, 1982), 235–239. Webster fits them into an overall pattern for chapters 1–12 in which paired pericopes center, one in Jerusalem (J) and the other in the countryside (C), divided into sections by christological statements (c.s.) –1:1–18 (c.s.); 1:19–34 (J) and 1:35–51 (C); 2:1–12 (C) and 2:13–25 (J); 3:1 – 4:4 (J) and 4:4–44 (C); 4:45–54 (C) and 5:1–18 (J); 5:19–47 (c.s.); 6:1–71 (C) and 7:1 – 8:30 (J); 8:31–59 (c.s.); 9:1 – 10:42 (J) and 11:1– 12:22 (C to J); 12:23–50 (c.s.). In the case of 1:19–34, however, this pattern seems forced, for John is "in Judea or addressing men from Jerusalem" (236). Likewise, Webster apparently ignores the change of place in 3:22–23.

46. For an overview of the current state of studies on Jesus' use of amen, see Bruce Chilton, "Amen," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:184–186. The main concern has been whether pre-dominical asseverative use of 'amen' can be proven. Joachim Jeremias has said it is original with Jesus ("Amen," 35–36 in *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971]). Chilton himself has found some Syriac evidence for early use ("'Amen': An Approach through Syriac Gospels," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 69 [1978]:202–211). John Strugnell has found a couple of obscure examples to justify his conclusion that the matter is settled that Jeremias is wrong ("'Amen, I say unto you' in the Sayings of Jesus and in Early Christian Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 67 [1974]:177–190).

47. Temple (*Core*, 103). The occurrences in each category are: "Balanced Teaching": 3:3, 5; [4:21 – 'trust me']; 5:19; 6:26, 32; 8:34; 10:1; 12 [sic, read 12:24]; 13:16, 20, 38; 14:12; "Important Word": 6:47; 8:51, 58; 13:21; "To strengthen argument": 1:51; 3:11; 5:24, 25; 6:53; 10:7; 16:20, 23; 21:18. The first two categories he claims are from the "Narrative-

Discourse Source," the third from "Redactions, Other Sources." His categorization seems somewhat arbitrary, for he only allows four verses into the "important saying" category, relegating even the new birth sayings to the "balanced teaching" group. His redaction theory may have influenced his critical judgment in classifying the double-amen affirmations. At the least it can be stated that his reasons for classifying many of the sayings into one category or another are not self-evident.

48. E.g., J. R. Michaels says that the use of the double-amen formula in 3:11 is hard to place within any of the categories which emerge ("The Johannine Words of Jesus and Christian Prophecy," in *SBL 1975 Seminar Papers*, ed. George MacRae, 2:251).

49. "V. 11, then, [is] marked out as a new and important assertion by the introductory ἄμὴν ἄμὴν" (Ashton, *Understanding*, 376). This is in opposition to Bultmann's opinion: "It is true that v. 11 is unnecessary in the context" (*John*, 146, n. 2).

50. See Matt. 5:33–37; 23:16–23.

51. Norman Geisler, "Johannine Apologetics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (1979):336. Temple (*Core*, 102) suggests that Jesus' saying, "Let your yes be yes and your no, no" (Matt. 5:37) lies behind the double-amen formula. Bernard also refers to Luke 7:26 and 11:51 to establish that ναί ("yes"> is the equivalent of ἄμὴν. Bernard cites Allen, who in his commentary refers to the Talmud (*Tractate Sanhedrin* 36a), which "discusses whether Yes and No are oaths, and decides that they are oaths if repeated twice" (1:66, n. 1). Heinrich Schlier, however, would deny that Matt. 5:33–37 has any connection with the dominical use of the amen formulae ("ἄμὴν," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 1:337; hereafter cited as *TDNT*).

52. Brown, 1:45, 145.

53. Jerome H. Neyrey, "John 1:11—A Debate Over Johannine Epistemology and Christology," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981):115. His analysis has found endorsement by others, e.g., Osburn ("John 3:5–8," 132–137) and to a lesser extent Klyne R. Snodgrass ("That Which is Born from *Pneuma* Is *Pneuma*: Rebirth and Spirit in John 3:5–6," *Covenant Quarterly* 49 [1991]:16).

54. E.g., Ezek. 3:12; 8:3; 11:1; 37:1; 40:1–2; Dan. 8:2; 2 Cor. 12:1–4; Rev. 4:1–2; see Bultmann, *John*, 143–152; Meeks, "Man from Heaven," 52–53; Nicholson, *Descent-Ascent*.

55. Cf., v. 5: κατέλαβεν (in its second meaning of "grasp," "comprehend"); v. 9: φωτίζει ("enlightens"); v. 10: ἔγνων ("knew"); v. 14: ἐθεασάμεθα ("beheld"); v. 18: ἑώρακεν ("seen") and ἐξηγήσατο ("made. . . known").

56. K. James Carl, "Knowing in St John: Background of the Theme," *Indian Theological Studies* 21 (1984):68–182, esp. 78–82. Carl (79) denies that the Fourth Evangelist makes any distinction between γινώσκω (55 occurrences) and οἶδα (86 occurrences), citing 14:7 as an example of merely stylistic variation. The same holds true here in the Nicodemus discourse (οἶδα in vv. 2 and 8, γινώσκω in v. 10, οἶδα in v. 11).

57. "Similarly [i.e., to God's lawsuit with Israel in Isa. 40–55], in the Fourth Gospel God incarnate has a lawsuit with the world.... The idea of witness in John's Gospel is both very prominent and thoroughly judicial" (Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977], 79, 80). See Trites' list of additional judicial terms occurring throughout the FG (80–81).

58. See J. C. Hindley, "Witness in the Fourth Gospel," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 18 (1965): 319–327; Trites, "Chapter 8: The Concept of Witness in the Fourth Gospel," 78–127 in *Witness*; H. Strathmann, "μάρτυς, μαρτυρέω, κ.τ.λ.," in *TDNT*, 4:495–496, 497–499, 499–502; L. Coenen, "Witness, Testimony," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:1044–1046.

59. Occurrences in the FG of not receiving Christ are: 3:11, 32; 5:43; 12:48; and 14:17. Passages about receiving Christ are: 1:12; 3:33; 13:20; and 17:8.

60. Unfortunately, the evidence is inadequate to decide between the two. See Beasley-Murray, "The Antecedents of Christian Baptism," 1–44 in *Baptism*; Derwood Smith, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1982): 63–75.

61. Mark 11:27–33 (par. Matt. 21:23–27; Luke 20:1–8). Note Jesus' Parable of the Two Sons, which immediately follows in Matthew (21:28–32), as well as Luke's editorial note attached to a different pericope (Luke 7:29–30).

62. Certainly, on the other two occasions in which Nicodemus appears, the Fourth Evangelist presents him in a favorable light: defending Jesus before his fellow council members (7:50–52) and assisting with Jesus' burial (19:38–42). In the former case, Nicodemus suffers abuse for defending Jesus; in the latter, he buys 75 pounds of a myrrh/aloes mixture, at great expense.

63. 1 Cor. 12:13, understanding Paul as describing a baptism "in one Spirit," rather than "by one Spirit," that is, with the Spirit as the element into which one is baptized rather than the Agent of the baptism. That this refers to the spiritual aspect of the "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) seems demonstrated by Paul's statement that all of the Corinthian Christians had experienced it. This would not be true if the initiatory rite and baptism in the Spirit were separated into earlier and later events. See Bruner, *Theology of the Spirit*, 291–294; John Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Naperville, IL: InterVarsity, 1964), 26–29; and Robert L. Gibson, *Christian, You Were Baptized in Water and Spirit* (Ft. Worth, TX: Star, 1987). We cannot separate water baptism from baptism in the Spirit. According to Eph. 4:5, there is one baptism. It is an immersion of the body in water and an immersion of the inner being in the Holy Spirit. It is an external bathing and an appeal to God for a cleansing of the heart (see Acts 22:16).

64. Titus 3:5. The two expressions "washing of rebirth" and "renewal of the Holy Spirit" are yoked together because they constitute the compound object of the preposition διὰ.

65. In Gal. 3:26–29, Paul argues that the experience of baptism, universal for Christians of his day, is what makes us God's children in that it clothes us with Christ. His point is that everyone clothed with Christ should

accept everyone else who wears Christ. Paul makes virtually the same argument in 1 Cor. 12:13 and again in Rom. 6:3. His argument for unity to the Corinthians and to the Romans about being dead to sin are both dependent on the experience of baptism being one that all of his audience had experienced. Paul goes on to say, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). In all of these passages, Paul is building on common ground. If the experience were not shared by all of the Christians he addresses, his argument would fall flat.

66. See Rom. 6:1–7 and Col. 2:12–13. The spiritual resurrection these verses describe is made necessary because every person who sins experiences spiritual death (cf. Eph. 2:1, 5; Rom. 7:7–13).

67. John 1:12–13. Of course, baptism has no power to save in and of itself. It is one component of a response process that the Bible describes as "by faith from first to last" (Rom. 1:16). Baptism is a fitting symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in our behalf. In it we die to sin, our old person is buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), and we are raised with him to "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:13; 3:1–17). As G. R. Beasley-Murray eloquently states, "It behoves us accordingly to make much of baptism. It is given as the trysting place of the sinner with his Saviour; he who has met Him there will not despise it. But in the last resort it is only a *place*: the Lord Himself is its glory, as He is its grace. Let the glory then be given to whom it belongs!" (*Baptism*, 305).

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