

A. John 2:23-25 – Omniscience; Jesus’ wisdom in action

1. John 2:23 – *Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.* Jesus’ sign miracles were verifying His Messiahship and giving **authority** to His preaching. His miraculous signs resulted in many people believing in Him for their eternal salvation. John 4:45
 - a. John’s Gospel states that **simple** faith in Christ is all that is necessary for salvation. John 1:12 says, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*”
 - b. In Jewish culture, a person’s *name* referred to their essence, or internal character. It spoke of **who** the person was and of their personal significance.
 - c. Believing in the name of Jesus Christ is accepting the biblical testimony about Him. It is believing that He is the Son of God, that He **paid** the penalty for our sins on the cross, and that God the Father verified that payment by raising Him from the dead.
2. John 2:24 – *But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,* Christ did not **entrust** His person and ministry to these believers; He did not invite them to be His disciples, following Him wherever He would go. In fact, Christ was careful about who He called to be His immediate disciples.
 - a. The word *entrust* can mean to put into the **care** of another or to commit something to another’s trust. At that time, Christ was not willing to put the propagation of His message into the hands of these specific believers.
 - b. This verse in no way infers that Jesus doubted the faith of those who had believed in Him. It does show, however, that He **knew** their thoughts and potential and discerned that they were not the ones He was going to put directly into a ministry of preaching and representing Him to the rest of Israel.
 - c. This type of discernment is undoubtedly what made Jesus **choose** certain men to be his disciples, while excluding others. In choosing the 12 disciples most of whom would later become apostles, Jesus specifically committed himself to only 12 of His many disciples, and, in the process, excluded others. Mark 3:13-19
3. John 2:25 – *... and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.* Not only did Jesus not entrust Himself to the people, but He also did not need mankind to **testify** for Him. His own witness, the witness of the Father, and the signs He performed were enough proof to Israel of His Messiahship. John 8:18-19

B. John 3:1-21 – Jesus confronts Nicodemus

1. John 3:1 – *Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.* Nicodemus, a Pharisee who served on the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel, was an important man who trusted his privileged **birth** as an Israelite to make him acceptable to God. He had been taught all his life that all genetic Israelites went to heaven. John 7:45-51
2. John 3:2 – *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”* Jesus’ teaching and **sign** miracles had impressed Nicodemus and many others. Nicodemus acknowledged that Jesus was a gifted teacher sent and empowered by God.
3. John 3:3 – *Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Jesus did not let Nicodemus’ commendation distract Him. Without wasting words, He directly addressed Nicodemus’ real **need**.
 - a. Nicodemus knew Jesus was an extraordinary teacher, but he did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to see and understand the kingdom of God, Nicodemus would have to be **born** again. In his present condition, Nicodemus could not comprehend spiritual truth. 1 Corinthians 2:14
 - b. To be born again means to receive new birth into God’s family. Nicodemus thought his **physical** birth into the lineage of Abraham was his ticket into heaven.
4. John 3:4 – *Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”* Nicodemus response reveals that he thought Jesus was talking about **literal** birth, a literal physical rebirth of some sort.
5. John 3:5 – *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* In order to **enter** the Kingdom, Nicodemus would need the Holy Spirit to give him spiritual life.
 - a. To help Nicodemus understand, Jesus moved from the **known** to the unknown, from the physical to the spiritual, explaining in simple terms how a person could be born again.

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- b. The context here indicates that being born of **water** refers to natural, physical birth when a baby exits the water in the mother's womb and enters the world for the first time. Jesus was not talking to Nicodemus about water baptism as some assume. John 1:13
- c. Jesus was contrasting physical **birth** with spiritual birth. Nicodemus thought his first birth as an Israelite would get him into heaven. Nicodemus needed to understand that his first birth was not enough; he needed a second birth.
6. John 3:6 – “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” Nicodemus would likely have assumed that being a descendant of Abraham (born of the **flesh**) automatically ensured him entrance into the Kingdom. This, of course, was not true. Matthew 3:9
7. John 3:7 – Jesus went on to say, “*Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*” Jesus saw Nicodemus’ amazement and challenged him to **consider** what He was saying.
- a. As is often the case with religious people, when you remove salvation from the realm of human possibilities, there is doubt and confusion, and even **denial** and defiance.
- b. When Jesus said you must be born again, he took away the **ability** of people to save themselves. Just as we do not give ourselves our first birth (physical birth), we cannot give ourselves the second birth (spiritual birth).
8. John 3:8 – “*The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” Jesus used the analogy of **wind** to explain to Nicodemus the concept of spiritual birth. It may be that an evening breeze was blowing as He spoke.
- a. The undeniable force of the invisible wind illustrates well the unseen workings of the Holy Spirit in bringing about spiritual rebirth (regeneration). Even though we cannot **see** the wind or fully understand the physical laws that control it, we do not doubt its existence or power.
- b. Likewise, even though we cannot see the outward effects of a person's birth into the family of God or fully acknowledge the operation of the Holy Spirit in this process, we can know for **certain** that every person who believes in Christ has become born again. Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 5:13
- c. Nicodemus should have readily **believed**.
9. John 3:9 – *Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”* Even though Nicodemus was a religious leader of the Jews, he foolishly questioned the possibility of **spiritual** regeneration. Ezekiel 11:19, 37:14, Joel 2:28-29
10. John 3:10 – *Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?”* Jesus’ exasperated response showed that Nicodemus should have already grasped this **truth** from his studies of the Old Testament. Ezekiel 37:9
11. John 3:11 – “*Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.*” Despite Jesus’ utilization of practical, everyday **examples** like physical birth and the effects of the wind, Nicodemus found it difficult to believe.
12. John 3:12 – “*If I told you earthly things and you do not believe; how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*” Jesus chided Nicodemus’ for his **refusal** to believe.
- a. Sadly, if he did not believe when Jesus spoke using simple, commonsense examples, **how** would he ever believe if Jesus explained the supernatural using spiritual truths?
- b. Notice that Jesus emphasized Nicodemus’ lack of **faith** rather than his lack of understanding. Nicodemus seemingly understood to some degree Jesus’ teaching, but sadly he was not willing to believe.
13. John 3:13 – “*No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.*” Jesus was making a claim to deity in this verse. God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the One who came down from heaven. Jesus Christ is the **only** person who left heaven to be born a man. John 1:18, 3:31, 6:38-42, 8:23; Romans 10:6; Ephesians 4:9
14. John 3:14 – “*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ...*” Here, Jesus referred to the **events** of Numbers 21:5-9, which describe Israel under divine judgement for grumbling about their difficult travels through the wilderness.
- a. John used the phrase “lift up” to refer to Christ being lifted up, as he was brutally hung on the **cross**. John 8:28; 12:32, 34; 2 Corinthians 5:21
- b. When the Israelites grumbled, God sent serpents to attack them so that they began dying. When Moses prayed for the people, God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and stand it up on a **pole**. All who believed Moses, looked up at the pole and were healed.

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- c. The Israelites who were bitten by snakes needed only to **look** at the bronze serpent on the pole to be delivered from death. Numbers 21:8
15. John 3:15 – “... *so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.*” Those among Israel who believed Moses words, looked at the serpent and were instantly healed. This example illustrates how we are saved from sin and given eternal life. All who **look** to Jesus to rescue them from sin are instantly and eternally saved. John 20:31, Acts 16:31, 1 John 2:25
16. John 3:16-21 – There is debate among interpreters whether these verses are John’s commentary on the Lord’s statements or a direct **quote** of Jesus’ words. Either way, these verses are the inspired words of God and can be fully trusted. 2 Timothy 3:16
- a. John 3:16a – “*For God so loved the world...*” The adverb translated *so* HOUTOS in this verse means “in this manner or in accordance with this description.” A literal translation of this phrase might read, “In the following **manner**, God loved the world...”
- b. John 3:16b – “...*that He gave...*” The word *gave* DIDOMI here speaks of God’s **grace** in His provision of salvation through Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21
- c. John 3:16c – “...*His only begotten Son...*” *Son* in this phrase is not the typical word for male child HUIOS nor the general word for offspring TEKNON. This word *Son* MONOGENES is a technical term, meaning only, only begotten, or **unique** offspring. John used this term to describe the uniqueness of Christ in relation to God the Father. Hebrews 5:5
- 1) Born of a virgin, without a human father and with no ties to Adam, Jesus Christ was a **sinless** human being. Hebrews 7:26
 - 2) In one person, Christ is **both** incorrupt human and holy God at the same time. Hebrews 1:1-6
- d. John 3:16d – “...*that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life ...*” The result of God giving His one and only Son is that anyone who believes in Him will not suffer throughout eternity but instead instantly receives eternal **life** as a free gift.
- e. John 3:17 – “*For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him .*” God’s purpose in sending Jesus into the world was not to condemn sinners but to **save** them. God wanted to offer salvation to the world, so Jesus came to make that proposal possible. Acts 2:23, 3:18, 4:28; 1 Peter 1:18-21
- f. John 3:18a – “*He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already...*” As a result of Adam’s **sin**, all Adam’s descendants are sinners and under God’s condemnation. This verse goes on to tell us why. Romans 5:12
- g. John 3:18b – “...*because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God .*” However, since Christ bore the penalty for the sin of the world, there is only one **sin** that sends people to hell. John 16:8-9
- 1) John 16:8 says, “*And He [the Holy Spirit] , when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment .*” Notice here that the word *sin* is singular. Of what sin does the Holy Spirit **convict** sinners?
 - 2) John 16:9 gives the answer. “*Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.*” The great sin of all sins is to not **believe** in the only begotten Son of God. Refusal to do this, results in suffering eternal separation from God.
- h. John 3:19 – “*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.*” Christ came into the world as the true light, but people rejected Him because they did not want their **sins** exposed. John 1:4, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46
- 1) The light produces one of two responses: people either rejoice or they recoil. Those who see their need for salvation, love the **light**; but those who want to continue in their sin, run from the light. 2 Corinthians 2:15-16
 - 2) People will be judged because they rejected Christ, the **Light** of the world.
- i. John 3:20 – “*For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed .*” People who do evil do not want their sin **exposed** because it is convicting. They want to be left alone to do as they please.
- j. John 3:21 – “*But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God .*” Those through whom Christ is living have nothing of which to be ashamed. When their deeds are exposed to the light, they are shown to be the uncorrupted **fruit** of the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-23, Philippians 1:9-11

C. John 3:22-36 – John decreases; Jesus increases

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1. John 3:22 – *After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing* . Jesus went south from Galilee into Judea, where He focused on spending time with His disciples and **baptizing**, although according to John 4:2, Jesus Himself was not actually performing baptisms.
2. John 3:23 – *John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized* . John the Baptist’s message and preaching pointed people to Jesus. Those who **agreed** with John’s message consented to baptism; those who did not agree refused to be baptized. Matthew 3:5-8
3. John 3:24 – *...for John had not yet been thrown into prison*. John was faithful to his calling and ministry all the way until he was cast into **prison**. Luke 7:18-30
4. John 3:25 – *Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification* . God the Holy Spirit did not provide the details of this **dispute**. We know that the religious leaders did not submit to John’s baptism because they were not in agreement with his teachings. Luke 7:30, 33
5. John 3:26 – *And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.”* At this point there was a shift **away** from John the Baptist’s ministry towards Jesus’ ministry. Many in Israel began following Jesus rather than John. John’s disciples were concerned.
6. John 3:27 – *John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven* . God is the one who **gives** each person their gifts and ministry according to what He decides. He is the one who works through us to produce His will in us. We have nothing to boast about. Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 3:7, 4:6-7, 12:4-7; 1 Peter 4:11
7. John 3:28 – *“You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’”* John the Baptist humbly accepted his behind-the-scenes ministry. He recognized that it was God who had **selected** him to prepare a wayward nation for faith in the long-awaited Messiah. It was a necessary, but not glamorous work. John 1:20
8. John 3:29 – *“ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.”* John saw himself as the best man at a **wedding**. Christ, like the groom, was central. John was secondary. As the best man, he rejoiced in the groom’s indelible joy.
9. John 3:30 – John the Baptist boldly declared, *“ He must increase, but I must decrease.”* John knew his ministry was ending. He had done the work God had planned for him to do. Now the spotlight must **shift** exclusively to Jesus Christ. John 17:4, 2 Timothy 4:7
10. John 3:31 – John, the Gospel writer, commented on John the Baptist’s **words**.
 - a. John 3:31a – *“He who comes from above is above all...”* In emphasizing the heavenly **origin** of Jesus Christ, he highlighted Christ’s superiority over John the Baptist or any other man.
 - b. John 3:31b – *“... he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth...”* John the Baptist was simply an **earthly** man, just like all of Adam’s sons; he was not divine. He was not Emmanuel, God with us.
 - c. John 3:31c – *“He who comes from heaven is above all.”* **Jesus** came from heaven. He is God in human flesh. For this reason, John the Baptist joyfully took second place to Him. Isaiah 9:6, Colossians 2:10, 1 Peter 3:22
11. John 3:32 – *“What He [Jesus Christ] has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony .”* Speaking from God’s perspective, Jesus told the **truth**. Sadly, many people today reject the Bible’s testimony about Jesus. Many listeners altogether reject the gospel message. Luke 4:17-19
12. John 3:33 – *“ He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true .”* Jesus spoke the words of God. Anyone who accepted His testimony about what He had seen and heard acknowledged that God is true. Believers habitually recognize and **affirm** the truth because the Holy Spirit shows them what is true. John 8:26, 14:26, 15:26
13. John 3:34a – *“ For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God...”* Jesus, who was sent to earth by God the Father, faithfully spoke God’s **words**. The accuracy of Christ’s words testified to the fact that He was indeed from heaven and was unquestionably God. Matthew 12:18
14. John 3:34b – *“...for He gives the Spirit without measure.”* God the Son, Jesus Christ, spoke God the Father’s words. He had an unlimited **supply** of God the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:1-2 said that the Holy Spirit, the One who is the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear of LORD, would rest on Messiah.
15. John 3:35 – *“ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”* Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice in not only giving up heaven and coming to earth, but more so, in dying for our sins on the cross. God



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is therefore honored to also put everything under the Son's **authority**. Isaiah 53:11, Ephesians 1:22, Philippians 2:5-11, Colossians 2:10

16. John 3:36 – *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* This verse emphasizes once again that salvation comes solely by faith alone in Christ **alone**. To believe the gospel is to obey the Son and to reject Him is rebellion. Jesus declared to Nicodemus, “You must be born again.”

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