



JOHN 2–3

JESUS' 1ST MIRACLE AND 1ST DISCOURSE ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

Book of Mormon Additions

In the Book of Mormon, we find common doctrines and principles that are taught in John 2 and 3. For example, the discussion on being born again in John 3:3–5, is found in an expanded view in Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49, and Alma 7:14. As you compare these verses on being “born again,” side by side, you can see the extra depth and insight found in the Book of Mormon passages. The same is true on similar themes such as purify, cleanse, and baptize.

Overview

John’s Gospel includes seven miracles and seven discourses. The first miracle is found in chapter 2, the wedding at Cana. And the first discourse is found in chapter 3, with Nicodemus in Jerusalem.¹

Repeatedly in John’s Gospel, the miracles and sermons are used to show how Jesus replaced a Jewish custom with a higher law. We see that in the first miracle at a wedding in Cana. He uses the miracle to demonstrate the fulfillment of the mosaic purification with Jesus’ atoning sacrifice (John 2:11; 4:46). He teaches the difference between the lower law and higher law in His conversation with Nicodemus on being born from on high. He denounces the corrupted use of the temple by cleansing it.

Repeatedly, John’s Gospel attacks false traditions in favor of *restoring* a holier way

I.

MIRACLE OF WATER CHANGED TO WINE AT THE WEDDING IN CANA

John 2:1–12



The Marriage Feast at Cana by Juan de Flandes. Image via Metropolitan Museum of Art

John carefully highlights Jesus’ first “miracle” (KJV) or “sign” (most modern translations) to symbolically teach a higher meaning of purification, and foreshadow the cleansing power of His blood. The first miracle also parallels the first miracle performed by Moses at Pharaoh’s court—turning the water to blood (Exodus 4:9; 7:17–21).

Cana

Cana of Galilee is connected to three points in the New Testament, the first two of the seven miracles mentioned in John’s Gospel—the wedding at Cana and the healing of a royal official’s son (John 2:1; 4:46)—and the hometown of Nathanael (John 21:2). The most likely location is the rocky ruins of *Khirbet Qana*, nestled in the middle of Galilee, about ten miles north of Nazareth.

Text

John 2:1 “third day”: John emphasizes *days* throughout His Gospel. If all the “*days*” are added up from chapter one, this is the seventh day—again harkening to the creation theme. But these numbers are probably used for symbolism rather than for literal calendaring—they are not 24-hour days for sure (i.e. travel time for about 60–100 miles to Galilee appears to be given only one day 1:43). The “third day” may refer to the third highlighted day (1: John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, 2: Jesus calling apostles, and now 3: he first miracle, see John 1:29; 35; 43), or two days after the call of Philip in Galilee (John 1:43). Figuratively, the “third day” brings to mind the promise of the *resurrection* after Jesus’ body lay three days in the tomb (also Jonah’s third day in the whale, Matt 12:39; 16:4). John emphasizes numbers symbolically across all his writings.² This is important because the miracle of the red wine symbolizes Jesus’ atoning blood.

John 2:2 “invited to the marriage”: Jesus’ family, as well as His newly called disciples, appear to be actively involved in the wedding celebration. Jews at the time of the New Testament honored marriage as a religious duty to fulfill God’s commandment given in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:20, 24). Marriages were arranged by the father or guardian when their children were young. Ideally, a Jewish man married between 15 and 20 years old and a Jewish girl married between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Their marriage ceremony took place in two stages—betrothal and wedding—usually a year apart.³ Typically, both ceremonies were performed with witnesses, under a wedding tent or “canopy /*chuppah*,” at the groom’s parent’s home.⁴ If the families had the means, a weeklong feast followed the final ceremony. Family and friends gathered for a reunion and feasting.⁵

John 2:3 “they have no wine”: In the ancient world, extending proper hospitality to guests was a serious obligation. Running short of wine could even end in a lawsuit.⁶ A wise hostess held back food and drink for later. As Mary was worried about the wine, she was probably a close relative or friend of someone in the wedding party. Mary’s comment, “they have no wine” was used by John, as a leading tone, to symbolically highlight the bareness of Judaism.



The Virgin in Prayer by Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 2:4 “woman”: Throughout his Gospel, John never uses his own name, nor the name of Jesus’ mother, Mary. He also lives in a culture where they do not mention the name of God. John refers to Mary twice as the “mother of Jesus” (2:1–2; on the cross 19:25–26). Both times he addressed her by the title, “woman.” The JST foot note shows love and respect. In Greek it is a polite way of addressing a woman or wife—but strange for a son. Have you noticed all the creation themes in John’s early Gospel? Perhaps using “woman” harkens to the creation of Eve from Genesis 2:22²³. Look at a summary of John’s ties to the creation:⁷

1. Prologue begins, “in the beginning.”
2. Light and darkness creation themes are introduced.
3. The Spirit descends and remains on Jesus just as the Spirit of God moved upon the waters and breathed life into man.
4. The seventh day is important as the day that “woman” was created (Gen 2:24). God tells her in Eden that her seed will crush the serpent (Gen 3:20). Mary is the woman of Eve’s promise (the name Eve is *life* in Hebrew). By calling Mary “woman,” John may be recalling the promise in Gen 3:15; or a second Eve.⁸
5. From day one of Christ’s ministry (his baptism) until the seventh day when he performs His first miracle in Cana, we see the emergence of a new or second Adam (Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 15:45).

“My hour” When Mary asks for help, she thinks it is for the wedding. But Jesus’ response shows that He is on a higher plane; He says, “my hour is not yet come.” Is Jesus not ready to start His mission with a public miracle? (Priests could start functioning in their calling at 30, which also was the Jewish age of “arriving.”) OR did Jesus refer to the time when He will reveal the symbol of His wine—the offering of His blood? Combining Jesus’ words with what happens—He provides wine from purification pots—it appears that He refers to a new wine, even His blood, as a miraculous sign of His future purification and glory.

John 2:5 “Do whatever he tells you.”: In reply to Mary’s innocent and faith-filled request, Jesus provided a miracle that is actually a *sign* of His mission. Mary’s reply, showed her faith—her directions become the model for all disciples: do everything He asks. She also shows her preeminent position at the wedding by directing the servants. (In Greek the word *servant* and *slave* are the same. One-third of the Roman Empire was made up by servants/slaves.⁹)

John 2:6 “six water pots of stone...[for] purifying”: John brings our attention to the fact that the stone pots were specifically used in Jewish purification for ceremonial washings. (Leviticus 11:29–38, explains that purification required *stone* pots, rather than clay pots which were unclean.) John emphasized the number six, too. In contrast to seven, John uses six to represent incomplete or not perfect (i.e. Rev 13:18). The symbolism points to the Mosaic ritual cleaning as incomplete, or not whole/perfect. Later Jesus taught that lasting purification comes through His blood, which He connects symbolically with wine at the Last Supper (John 6:54; Matt 26:27–28).

“Two or three firkins apiece”: A firkin holds 10.8 gallons of water, so each pot held 22 to 33 gallons. All six pots could hold 132–198 gallons of water—enough for the wedding, plus a year’s supply gift for the couple!



Image of ancient ceramic amphorae. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 2:7 “to the brim”: This foreshadows Jesus’ blood which is completely available to all. I love the image of filling our vessels, or lives, *completely* with the Lord’s directions, and likewise, His atonement. To make His future blood/wine to purify all, His atoning sacrifice also required taking Him to the brim of His Divine capacity (Luke 22:42).

John 2:8–10 “the good wine until now”: Prophets foretold of an abundance of wine in Messianic days (Amos 9:13–15; Genesis 27:27–28, 49:10–11; Proverbs 9:4–5). When Jesus miraculously made wine, John connected it to Messianic prophecies. The six, incomplete, Jewish purification pots, were not enough for complete cleansing. Jesus’ miracle demonstrated a missing ingredient needed for purification:

His atoning sacrifice or blood. His higher law of purifying through His sacrifice, will soon replace the Mosaic lower law of purification through washings. Jesus used wine as the symbol of His blood for His at-one-ment in John 6:56. Also, just before Jesus’ last Passover, the other Gospels introduce the sacrament to use wine in remembrance of Jesus’ blood. Interestingly, this miracle is just before Passover as well (perhaps this is why John 2:13 mentions it). Irenaeus (ca. AD 120–200) referred to a tradition that when the Messiah comes, He will heal the earth of the curse and it will yield ten-thousand-fold.¹⁰ John saw this miracle as fulfilling a *sign* of Jesus’ Messiahship.

John 2:11 He “manifested forth his glory”: Jesus proclaimed His mission and His disciples believed. This first miracle represents the futility of *self*-purification. We need the Savior’s atoning blood—which was shed in Gethsemane and on the cross. On a different level, when Jesus enters our lives, we are changed and purified into something better.

John 2:12 “his brethren, and his disciples”: Jesus and His family and disciples leave Cana and traveled about 20 to 30 miles to the north coast of the sea of Galilee. This verse mentions Jesus’ half-brothers. Mark 6:3 and Matt 13:55, list Jesus’ siblings: James, Joses, Juda, Simon and sisters. Sadly, John 7:5, tells us that Jesus’ brothers did not initially believe in Him. (This may explain why Jesus asked John the Apostle to take care of Jesus’ mother rather than one of her other four sons.) Though, we know that Jesus’ half-brother, James the evangelist, later gained a witness of Jesus’ divinity, as he wrote the Epistle of James.



II.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

John 2:13–22

The author, John, moves the scene from Cana to Jerusalem where Jesus continues teaching higher meanings of purification. He attacks those using the temple for profit as He purifies it for holier uses.

Timing

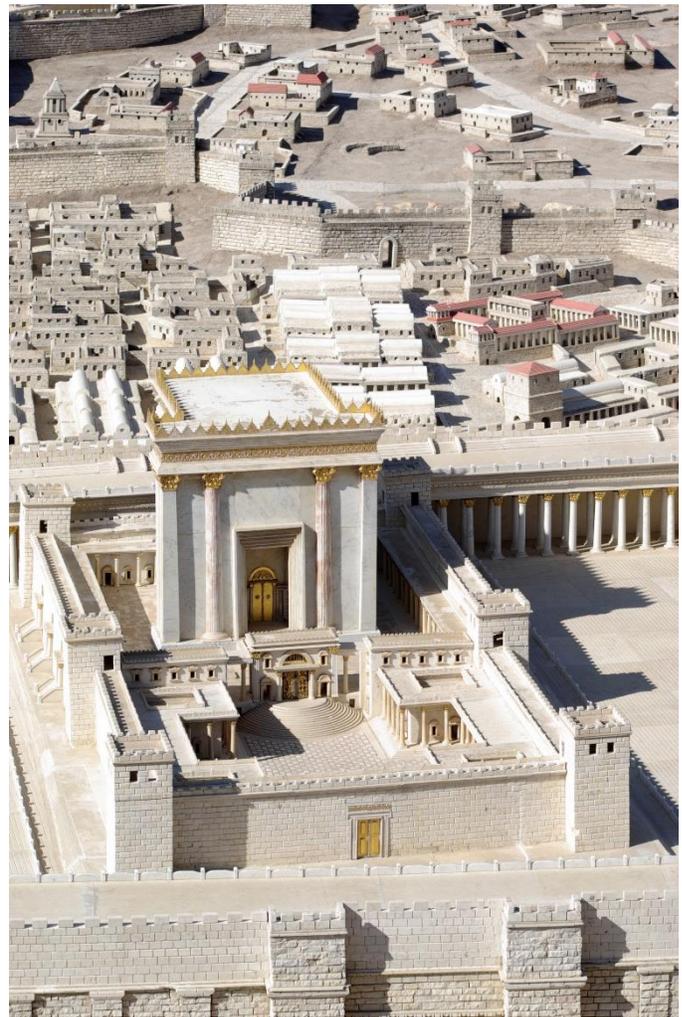
John's Gospel mentions three Passovers during Jesus' adult ministry—thus providing evidence for a three-year mortal ministry. On the other hand, the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are organized geographically rather than chronologically. After Jesus' baptism, the setting moves to Galilee and everything happening in Galilee is placed together. At the end of Jesus' life, the setting moves to Jerusalem and telescopes everything together into Jesus' last week. This is helpful as we look at Jesus cleansing the temple. No Gospel mentions it happened twice. It only happened once, and John's timing is probably more accurate.

By highlighting the baptism in close proximity to the cleansing of the temple, John's Gospel echoes the prophecy found in Malachi 3:1

I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Jewish Pilgrimages to Jerusalem

The Law of Moses called for three annual feasts where Israelites came to the temple or tabernacle to worship. By the time of the New Testament 1,400 years later, the pilgrimages still brought Israelites across the Roman world to Jerusalem to celebrate the three feasts at their temple. The most important of the three feasts was, Passover in the spring. It was followed Pentecost, fifty days later, and the Feast of the Tabernacles of Booths in the autumn.



Model of Jerusalem, Herod's Temple. Photograph by Berthold Werner via Wikimedia Commons.

Passover Traditions at the Time of Christ:

1. One month before Passover, preparations began with bridge and road repairs, painting sepulchers white (Matt. 23:27), the testing draught to women suspected of adultery, burning of the red heifer, boring slave's ears. Two weeks before flocks were tithed and the Temple treasury opened. One day before, homemakers cleaned out all "leaven" from their homes (1 Corinthians 5:7).
2. Every male Israelite physically able to walk up Mount Moriah, and who lived within 15 miles, was required come to the temple for the Passover. Those living farther away, needed to come at least once a year.
3. Thousands of pilgrims came for the feast week (including all 24 courses of priests). Estimating the numbers is tricky. The city of Jerusalem soared from an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 to a hundred times that size. Josephus' numbers sound exaggerated by claiming 2-3 million came to the feast. He calculated 256,500 kidneys (one from each sacrificed lamb), for ten people per/lamb. Sacrifices took place on the temple mount. Herod doubled the size to 35 acres, and made it the most magnificent temple complex in the Greco-

Roman world. Grand as it was, the fiery Spirit did not reside there and the Holy of Holies no longer housed the ark and the covenant.

4. Israelites appeared before the Lord in His Temple with three offerings: a non-consecrated animal, one for joy, and one for peace.

Text

John 2:13 “up”: Note that you always go “up” to Jerusalem no matter where you are, because it is a *holy place*. The *Mishnah* outlined “ten degrees of holiness” building up to their most sacred space, the temple.¹¹

The land of Israel is holier than all other lands...

The cities that are surrounded with walls are holier than it...

Within the wall of Jerusalem is holier than they ...The Temple Mount is holier than it...

The rampart is holier than it...

The Court of the Women is holier than it...

The Court of Israel is holier than it...

The Court of the Priests is holier than it...

[The space] between the porch and the altar is holier than it...

The sanctuary [or Holy Place] is holier than it...

The Holy of Holies is holier than them all.

John 2:14 “changers of money”: The “court of the gentiles” made up the majority of the 35 acres of the Temple mount. Israelites as well as Gentiles were allowed to visit (similar to Salt Lake City’s Temple Square). The celebrants could purchase the animals necessary for their Pascal lamb and change their money for the temple coin. The temple currency was a Tyrian half-shekel. All financial transactions in the temple had to be in the “Tyrian” currency. The money-changers were allowed a substantial discount. The Tyrian was also used to pay the annual temple tax, sin offerings, vows, purification, etc. The money-changers positioned themselves outside in the court of the gentiles.

John 2:15–16 “a scourge”: is a whip made out of cords. Jesus’ purging the temple was a sign of the Messianic purification (later His body/temple is also scourged). Isaiah 56:7 prophesied that the temple would be cleaned at the Lord’s coming. Jeremiah 7:11–14 told the Israelites that impurity would destroy the value of their temple. Malachi 3:1, Zechariah 14:20–21, and Daniel 8:14 all point to this too. The crowd’s submission witnessed their guilt.

John 2:17 “thy house”: The disciples remember Psalm 69:10. The Jews held the temple at the very center of their worship, but they missed its message, which was to prepare them as a school master to recognize Jesus as their

Messiah. At the time of Moses and Solomon, the glorious fiery pillar over the tabernacle/temple represented the presence of God, but now they overlooked their Creator and Redeemer who dwelt among them.

John 2:18 “*sign*”: Interestingly, the Jewish pilgrims did not condemn what Jesus had done, they only questioned if this was the *sign* of the Messiah. Even the apocryphal book of Tobit prophesies of the future cleansing.¹²



The Cleansing of the Temple by Giuseppe Passeri. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 2:19 “*three days*”: Jesus consistently answers questions in a way to make His audience stretch. He tries to teach them, to help them grow, and to raise them to a higher plane. The Greek word for “temple” denotes less of the sanctuary (just the Holy Place and Holy of Holies) and more of His body. This is Jesus’ first public mention of His death and resurrection in John. “It was at this moment in this place, to these people that he revealed His calling and early mission and foretold the events that would culminate in the freedom of all mankind from death and sin. The most momentous message in all time, and it fell on deaf ears.”¹³ Nevertheless, they remember His words.

John 2:19 “*raise it up*”: The temple authorities should have understood His words, “if you destroy...” John illustrates “the temple” as Jesus who will be “raised up.” This had enough of an impact that at His death, they remembered it and asked for a guard to watch the tomb. Herod began expanding Mount Moriah and rebuilding the second temple in 20 BC. It was under construction the entire time of Jesus’ life, and finished in AD 64 (only to be destroyed between AD 68 and 70). If it were 46 years in the making it would be approximately AD 26 at this time. False witnesses at the death trial of Jesus misrepresent Him as having said, “I can destroy the Temple” (Mark 14:58).

John 2:20–21 “*this temple*”: John emphasizes another meaning: the temple is the body of Jesus. He is the connection between heaven and earth, He is the manifestation of the sacrificial lamb (1 Cor 5:7), the holy altar, the cleansing of the brazen sea, the sanctifying blood, the way to the tree of life (represented by the menorah in the Holy Place), and the veil. His throne rests on the mercy seat atop the covenant, as the giver and fulfiller of the Law. After the resurrection, 500+ disciples see His resurrected glorified body as if they walked into the Holy of Holies.

John 2:23 “*many miracles*”: John speaks of the first Passover filled with many miracles, but no specific examples.

John 2:24–25 “*He knew*”: The “sign” of cleansing the temple is marveled at, but not understood yet. John describes Jesus in control as the omniscient creator (JST: “He knew all *things*”), even if His people do not recognize Him.



Christ and Nicodemus by Henry Ossawa Tanner. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

III.

JESUS' FIRST DISCOURSE: NICODEMUS— BORN AGAIN

John 3

Text

John 3:1 “*Nicodemus*” means, “one who will prevail over the people.” John mentions him here and again in at Jesus’ burial (19:39). Nicodemus is a Pharisee, one of the three main divisions or sects of Judaism at the time include:

1. **Essene:** most strict; apocalyptic focus; 150 BC–AD 70; ritual purity, some practiced celibacy; maintained ritual purity; one group near the Dead Sea in Qumran was known for transcribing sacred texts.
2. **Pharisee** or “separate ones,” were the next most strict; supported all 10,000 “*oral laws*” as equal to the 613 written laws in the Torah; they were the most powerful group in Palestine from 200 BC-100AD; numbered around 6,000 men.
3. **Sadducees** or “righteous ones,” focused on the temple. The only scripture they believed was the Torah, and interpreted it literally—rejecting the resurrection and oral laws. They may come from Zadok [Saduc], David’s High Priest.

When John includes, “a ruler of the Jews,” he means that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body. The Sanhedrin leaders consisted of Aaronic priests, Jewish scribes, and the elders. However, King Herod (ca. 73–1 BC) decimated the Sanhedrin to nothing more than a shadowy existence of its earlier fame. The Jews built it back up again, but it functioned only as Rome dictated. Jesus attacked the lack of spiritual discernment within the Jewish leadership—just as he attacked the purification laws and use of the Temple.

John 3:2 “*night*”: John emphasizes the nighttime to evoke images of darkness vs. light (repeated in the prologue), reflecting Nicodemus’s state of spiritual darkness. Nicodemus possibly came at night to protect his leadership responsibilities in the Sanhedrin and reputation. I admire him for wanting to meet face to face, to learn if Jesus were a prophet. The problem became not the protecting cloak of darkness, but his spiritual darkness. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as “Rabbi,” master or teacher, just as Andrew and John did in 1:38., but Nicodemus is not a committed follower yet. In ancient Jewish thought, if a certain Rabbi worked miracles, then it was evidence that God approved his teachings. It appears that Nicodemus acknowledged this. Note too that Nicodemus used “we” as if a plural number were involved in the questioning and he may have represented them (i.e. Joseph of Arimathea).

John 3:3 “*kingdom*”: Jesus answers Nicodemus’s question on a different level than he expected. He came to the Lord with a simple question about Jesus’ divine nature. Jesus answered him with a discourse on how to enter the kingdom. “Knowing the King is the only door to the Kingdom . . . no one can see the kingdoms without first seeing the King and after seeing the King one must acknowledge him, one must commit to serve the King.”¹⁴ Jesus’ answer challenged Nicodemus to receive his own divine witness that Jesus represents God.

“*Born again*”: The phrase, “born again” has a double meaning in Greek: “anew” as well as, “down from above,” or “from the top.” The KJV translators missed the original Greek meaning by following the later the Latin translation by Jerome, giving the reader the understanding from Nicodemus’s flippant answer rather than what Jesus refuted. To say “a man must be born from on high” or from heaven is the higher law in comparison to the lower Law. The symbolism of a rebirth is clear and powerful.

John 3:4 “womb”: Nicodemus only saw the natural impossibility of returning to the womb. He remained tied to the physical level without trying to grasp the higher meaning. Yet Jewish interpretation often required symbolism to comprehend.

John 3:5 “Verily”: is also translated, “truly, thus it is” or “may it be fulfilled, amen.” This begins the first of Jesus’ seven discourses in John’s Gospel. Jesus teaches Nicodemus of the need for a spiritual rebirth. Nicodemus needed Moses 6:59–60, to help:

That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory; For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified.

John 3:6–7 “flesh”: Jesus did not bypass Nicodemus’s confusion, but directly addressed it. Nicodemus missed the point so Jesus tried again to teach him. Jesus knocked down another pillar of Judaism: being a chosen race. By emphasizing rebirth, the importance of a Jew’s natural birth as the chosen people loses significance. To a Jew, being a descendant of Abraham automatically saved them from eternal torture (Luke 16:24). But Jesus corrects this falsehood by teaching that our natural birth is not enough to enter the Kingdom of God. The same idea was taught to another branch of ancient Israelites in Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49 and 7:14. John’s account states that one must be born again, but notice how the D&C goes further to explain the role of the Spirit in the process of rebirth:

JOHN 3:5–8

Except a man be **born of water and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God...Ye must be born again...so is everyone that is **born of the Spirit**.

D&C 5:16

Behold, whosoever *believeth on my words, them will I visit with the manifestation of my **Spirit***, and they shall be **born of me, even of water and of the Spirit** (emphasis added).

Even though both books focus on the promise of the Spirit and call attention to baptism, only D&C 5:16 explains that *belief* fosters the Spirit. The elusiveness in KJV leaves Nicodemus confused, while restored scripture connects applied faith in the words of God with the result of the manifestation of the Spirit.

John 3:8 “wind”: Nicodemus did not understand, so Jesus gave him an example from nature—which again has a double meaning in Greek. *Wind/pneuma* also means “spirit” (both God’s Spirit and the spirit of man). The KJV

translates *pneuma* 111 times as “spirit,” 89 times as “Holy Ghost,” and 26 times as “Spirit of” God. Every other time the word *wind* is used in the KJV Gospels, it is the word *anemos*, or physical tempest. Here the KJV chose the double meaning of *spirit/wind* because Jesus used the double image for the Spirit—something felt and only indirectly seen. Interestingly, the Hebrew word *ruach*, also shares the same multiple meanings, “breath, wind, spirit.” Ezekiel 36:25-26 taught that in Messianic times God would cleanse His people and give them a new spirit.

John 3:9–12 “How”: Nicodemus responded without understanding Jesus’ witness. Nicodemus (and we) need higher or heavenly thinking. “God, not man, determines the spiritual condition of each individual and must ratify any ordinance.”¹⁵

John 3:13 “came down”: From now on, Nicodemus wasn’t involved in Jesus’ monologue. Jesus also revealed the nature of the Father by introducing himself as “Son of Man.” The Father is “Man of Holiness,” the supreme exalted Man (Moses 6:57)



Christ on the Cross by Carl Heinrich Bloch. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 3:14–15 “lifted up”: Jesus again used a double meaning. “Lifted up” refers to on the cross and into heaven (He uses “Son of Man being lifted up” three times). Jesus alluded to the familiar story when the children of Israel looked at the brazen serpent on the staff to be saved from the poisonous serpents. The stories from the Exodus cycle and Moses’ prophetic life foreshadow Christ’s mission. Paul uses the same themes in 1 Corinthians 10:1–6 and Hebrews 8:14–15).

John 3:16–17 “for God so loved the world”: This is the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Incorporating this message makes mortality meaningful. This is the plan of salvation. God is a God of love. The Greek word “condemnation” is the same word for “judgment, separate, etc.” Jesus will judge and will separate, but that is not *why* he came; His mission is to save.

John 3:18 “Believe”: The JST adds power to the perspective that the mission of Christ was taught from the beginning.

John 3:19–20 “Light and darkness”: also represents good and evil, ignorance and intelligence. Jesus returns to the creation imagery to understand life. The darkness ignores the light (see symbolism in D&C 88:49).

John 3:21 “*truth*”: JST changes “doeth truth” to “loveth truth.” The JST further explains how we “love” truth: “he who obeyeth the truth, the works which he doeth they are of God.”

IV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S (JBPST) LAST WITNESS

John 3:22–36



Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness by Jose Leonardo. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 3:22–24 “*baptizing*”: Only the Gospel of John says that Jesus and disciples baptized in southern Israel simultaneous to John the Baptist’s mission (which disagrees with the Luke 3:19–20 timing of John the Baptist’s imprisonment after Jesus’ baptism).

John 3:25–27 “*bear me witness*”: In response to John the Baptist’s followers’ complaints, he offers one last witness (vs. 28–29) of Jesus as the Messiah. As possibly a previous disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:37), John the Beloved alone includes this. John 4:2 states that Jesus’ disciples baptized others, not the Lord, but the JST corrects this to include Jesus.

John 3:28–30 “*the friend*”: John the Baptist bore testimony in humility and self-abasement. He explained himself by using the Old Testament bridal imagery where God’s people become His bride (Hosea 2:19). “In Jewish weddings, the bridegroom came with his friends to the bride’s house to take her to his home. His best friend had been standing guard at the bride’s house to make sure that no one entered before he came. As the friend, the Baptist [heard] the bridegroom coming to claim Israel his bride, and

rejoiced that he [could] withdraw into the background.”¹⁶ A Judean custom referred to the wedding’s master of ceremonies as the “friend of the bridegroom.”

John 3:31 “above all”: These ending verses sound as if John the Baptist were directly speaking—but, in reality, they are echoes from Jesus’ discourse.

John 3:32 “receive”: The JST changes “no man” receiveth His testimony to “few men” receive His testimony.

John 3:34 “dwell”: Believers can receive a portion of the Spirit, but the JST adds that “the fulness” of the Spirit dwelt within Jesus during His mortal mission.

John 3:35–36 “All things”: are given into Jesus’ hands from His Father as a sign of love. The JST and D&C, expand this to touch on different degrees of glory in the resurrection. The fullness of the Father is given to those who receive their exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom. The glory or presence of the Son is given to those in the Terrestrial Kingdom, and the glory or presence of the Spirit to those in the Telestial Kingdom (D&C 76:50–81). ❖

Header Image: *Interview between Jesus and Nicodemus* by James Tissot.

ENDNOTES

¹ The seven miracles mentioned in John are: 2:1 Wedding at Cana; 4:46 Official’s son; 5:1 Healing paralytic; 6:1 Multiplying loaves; 6:19 Walking on water; 9:1 Healing blind man; 11:1 Raising Lazarus. The seven discourses during His public ministry (i.e. before His last supper) are: 3:3–21 Nicodemus; 4:10–26 Samaritan Woman at the Well; 5:19–47 Jesus’ work is the Father’s work; 6:26–58 Bread of Life; 7:16–29 Know the Doctrine; 8:12–59 Light of the World; 10:1–18 Good Shepherd

² In addition to John uses 7 miracles and 7 discourses, we find seven used to represent complete, wholeness or perfection throughout the book of Revelation, and six in this miracle and combined as 666 as the devil’s number in Rev 13:8.

³ *Mishnah, Ketuboth*, 5:2 “a virgin is granted twelve months wherein to provide for herself.” Also, Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, 186. W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible Series-Matthew* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 7; “the penalty for fornication with one person while betrothed to another was death for both guilty parties.”

⁴ Skolnik, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 13.568–570. One symbol of the wedding tent was a type of tabernacle where the couple came before God to make their covenants.

⁵ Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 178; “There are many stories about rabbis who make feasts for their sons (but almost never for their daughters), often at the home of other rabbis.” For

more details on Jewish weddings at the time see chapter four in Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: GP, 2015).

⁶ Kent Jackson, and Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures vol. 5: The Gospels* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 113.

⁷ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, 1988), 28–29.

⁸ Genesis 3:15 “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head.” Paul refers to Jesus as the “second man / *adam*” (1 Corinthians 15:47).

⁹ Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Bartchy, “Servant” 4.420. Tim G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins, 2003), 183. Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABD–CLI, 1997), 7.548.

¹⁰ Raymond Brown, *Anchor Bible: John* (New Haven, CT: Yale), 105, quoting: Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V. 33:3–4; PG 7:1213–14; “the earth shall yield its fruit ten thousand-fold; each vine shall have 1000 branches; each branch 1000 clusters; each cluster 1000 grapes, and each grape about 120 gallons of wine.

¹¹ *Mishnah, Kelim*, 1:6–9; Parry translation. Although the Jewish Mishnah was compiled by rabbis after the destruction of the Temple (AD 68-70), it records what was said and done at the time of the second temple which overlapped with the NT.

¹² Tobit is an apocryphal book written centuries before Jesus. Tobit 14:5 reads: “But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it.”

¹³ Jackson, and Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures*, 5.191.

¹⁴ Dean Garrett, ed., *New Testament and the Latter-day Saints* (Orem, UT: Randall Book, 1987) 110.

¹⁵ C. Wilfred Griggs, ed., *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies, 1986), 215–40.

¹⁶ Brown, *John: Concise*, 35.