

John 3

John 3:1-2 Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews...came to Jesus by night

John Taylor

"I see sometimes a disposition to try to ignore some of the laws which God has introduced...People want to slip round a corner, or creep out in some way. There is something very creepy about it. There was a man in former times we are told, came to Jesus by night. His name was Nicodemus. He was one of those persons who did not like the daylight. I have known some people who would want to be baptized in the evening, or get into some corner that they might not be seen. Well, there is not much to such folks. Jesus was very unpopular...in His day. Nicodemus was a prominent man among the Jews, and he thought it might injure his reputation if he was seen visiting that Nazarene, to get instruction from Him, so he crawled in at night. Jesus talked quite plainly to him, as you can read for yourselves; but we find some folks of a similar kind now creeping around. They have not the manhood to stand true to their colors and to their God." (*Journal of Discourses*, 25: 310.)

John 3:3 Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God

Jesus' answer seems to have been given in response to an unrecorded question. We may wonder if Nicodemus first asked, "Rabbi, what must a man do in order to see the kingdom of God?" Christ responded that he must be born again, but there are two equally correct interpretations of Christ's response. The first is that one must be baptized in order to enter the celestial kingdom. The second is that one must be born again in order to recognize the kingdom of God on earth. Christ preached, 'the kingdom of God is at hand' (Mark 1:15), but there were few who saw it. "Some have a certain spiritual awakening which makes it possible for them to 'see' the kingdom of God-that is, recognize that the gospel has been restored and the true Church has been reestablished on the earth. Then, if they are 'born of the water and of the Spirit,' they are able to enter the Church; and, if they endure to the end, they can enter into their rest in God's kingdom." (Glenn L. Pearson and Reid E. Bankhead, *Building Faith with the Book of Mormon*[Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], 107.)

Joseph Smith

"It is one thing to see the kingdom of God, and another thing to enter into it. We must have a change of heart to see the kingdom of God, and subscribe the articles of adoption to enter therein." (Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. 6:58)

Joseph F. Smith

"The Savior said to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' and that is true today. A man must be born from ignorance into truth, today, before he can expect to see any difference between a Latter-day Saint and another not of the faith. If he is not so born, he is more blind than the one whom Christ healed, for having eyes he sees not, and having ears, hears not.

"Is there any difference between the baptized and the unbaptized man? All the difference in the world, I tell you, but it is only discernible through the Spirit. It is a vast difference too great for one not in possession of the Spirit to comprehend. Take two men, they may be equals in point of goodness, they may be equally moral, charitable, honest and just, but one is baptized and the other is not. There is a mighty difference between them, for one is the son of God redeemed by compliance with his laws, and the other remains in darkness." (*Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, compiled by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], 97.)

Abraham O. Woodruff

"Notwithstanding the kingdom of God was established by the Redeemer Himself, His enemies could not see it because they had not been 'born again.' It was right among them, yet they were not able to perceive it. The same may be said in regard to the work which the Lord has established in this day. Notwithstanding the Church and kingdom of God is among the people, they see it not, they comprehend it not, because they have not been 'born again.' According to the words of the Savior, they cannot see the kingdom of God unless they are born again; consequently they do not recognize the fact that the Church of Christ is upon the earth, and the kingdom of God is here in embryo, because they will not receive the light which has come into the world, for they love the darkness of the world better than the light of the Lord." (*Conference Report, April 1904, Overflow Meeting 97.*)

John 3:5 Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God

The Mormon hopes for a place in the celestial kingdom. The Christian hopes to be saved in Heaven. The Muslim aspires to a place called Paradise. The Buddhist and Hindu yearn for Nirvana, but none of them will enter the kingdom of God except they are 'born of the water and of the Spirit.'

Joseph Smith

"This eternal truth settles the question of all men's religion. A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God, without being born of water and the Spirit. He may receive a glory like unto the moon, (i.e. of which the light of the moon is typical), or a star, (i.e. of which the light of the stars is typical), but he can never come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, unless he becomes as a little child, and is taught by the Spirit of God." (*History of the Church* 1:283.)

Brigham Young

"A man must be born again before he can see the kingdom of God; and must be born of water and of the Spirit, before he can enter therein.

"It may be asked whether any person can be saved, except those who are baptized. Yes, all the inhabitants of the earth will be saved, except those that sin against the Holy Ghost. Will they come into the presence of the Father and the Son? Not unless they are baptized for the remission of sins, and live faithfully in the observance of the words of life, all the rest of their days." (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 9: 315.)

George F. Richards

"There are many people today who do not understand this 'birth,' but we have an explanation in the vision of Moses contained in the Pearl of Great Price, which makes plain the meaning of this Scripture. For the benefit of those who have not understood it let me read a few paragraphs:

'Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children saying:

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.' (Moses 6:58-60)

"...God has never authorized any other kind of baptism...And baptism by water is not complete until the individual has been baptized by fire, or the Holy Ghost, or, in other words, has had hands laid upon his head for confirmation to membership in the Church of Christ and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost." (*Conference Report, October 1934, Afternoon Meeting 73.*)

Joseph Smith

"You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half-that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 314*)

George Q. Cannon

"...a large class of people have come to the conclusion that unless a man is born again, or, as they term it, experience a change of heart, he is consigned to endless misery; and there are those who believe that all the heathen who have died in ignorance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are thus punished, and, in fact, there are those who profess to have faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, who believe that in hell, that place of torment from which they declare there is no escape, there are infants by scores, and hundreds and thousands, and I may say by millions, enduring inconceivable and endless torment because they have died before receiving the ordinances which they consider necessary to salvation." (*Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 14: 311.*)

Brigham Young

"Did Jesus say, 'Except a man is born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God?' Yes, all Christians will admit that. Then do you think there was one plan of salvation for Nicodemus and another for you and me? It is all folly for any person to expect any such thing! Come with the sword of the Spirit! Let the whole world of Christendom come with their arguments and Scriptures, and let us argue these things together! Let us lay them before the people and see who is right and who is wrong.

"Let me say to you, if it is true that no man can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and of the Spirit, God must provide a plan by which those who have died ignorant of the Gospel may have the privilege of doing so, or he would appear to be a partial being. Has He provided that way? He has. The Christian world have taught, preached, contemplated, meditated, sung about and prayed for the Millennium. What are you going to do during that period, Christians? Do you know what the Millennium is for, and what work will have to be done during that period? Suppose the Christian world were now one in heart, faith, sentiment and works, so that the Lord could commence the Millennium in power and glory, do you know what would be done? Would you sit and sing yourselves away to everlasting bliss? No, I reckon not. I think there is a work to be done then which the whole world seems determined we shall not do. What is it? To build temples. We never yet commenced to lay the foundation of a temple but what all hell was in arms against us. That is the difficulty now: we have commenced the foundation of this temple. What are we going to do in these temples? Anything to be done there? Yes, and we will not wait for the Millennium and the fullness of the glory of God on the earth; we will commence, as soon as we have a temple, and work for the salvation of our forefathers." (*Journal of Discourses*, Apr. 24, 1870, vol. 13: 329 - 330.)

John 3:6 that which is born of the Spirit is spirit

Ezra Taft Benson

"When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to be changed. 'No man,' said **President David O. McKay**, 'can sincerely resolve to apply to his daily life the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth without sensing a change in his own nature. The phrase 'born again' has a deeper significance than many people attach to it. This changed feeling may be indescribable, but it is real.' (CR April 1962, p. 7.)

"Can human hearts be changed? Why, of course! It happens every day in the great missionary work of the Church. It is one of the most widespread of Christ's modern miracles. If it hasn't happened to you-it should.

"Our Lord told Nicodemus that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). Of these words **President Spencer W. Kimball** said, 'This is the simple total answer to the weightiest of all questions.... To gain eternal life there must be a rebirth, a transformation.' (CR April 1958, p. 14.)

"President McKay said that Christ called for 'an entire revolution' of Nicodemus's 'inner man.' 'His manner of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to spiritual things would have to undergo a fundamental and permanent change.' (CR April 1960, p. 26.)" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 77.)

Elder Samuel O. Bennion

"In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we find a newness of life, as it was in the days of the Master. Men and women come into a new way of thinking. I have talked to hundreds of people who have been baptized into the Church, who had thought, before they came into the Church, that they were worshiping God, and that they were doing the things that were right. But they had no knowledge of God. They had never been taught that the Lord knew them before they were born...It had never occurred to them that there was a real birth of the Spirit before the foundation of the earth was laid. They had never comprehended the fact that our Eternal Father is a personal being, and that we are made in his image, and that we are like him in form. It had never occurred to them that there was such a thing as the preaching of the Gospel to those that are dead, or that there is an eternity of the marriage covenant...There was no light, so far as the word of God was concerned, that had come into their lives.

"But after an investigation of these principles of the Gospel, after they had become acquainted with the plan of God, in part, and had received baptism by water, by immersion, for the remission of their sins, and had received the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost...they came into a new world of thinking and worshiping. Men and women have testified to me by the hundreds that they could no more go back into their old way of living, or their former belief or understanding, than they could go back to yesterday. They were born again, born of the water and born of the Spirit,

into a newness of life, into a great world of activity, into an influence that came direct from God, our Father. And they felt it, no matter where they lived. In all the nations of the earth are men found who bear this testimony." (*Conference Report, October 1937, Afternoon Meeting 82.*)

John 3:8 the wind bloweth where it listeth...so is every one that is born of the Spirit

This verse has been misunderstood, in part, because of the grammatical construction. The Savior doesn't mean to say that those mortals who are born again will float around like the wind without anyone else knowing where they are coming from or where they are going. Rather, he is explaining to one unversed in the Spirit, i.e. Nicodemus, what the Spirit feels like. He says, 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (v. 6)-meaning the individual has made the transition from carnal to spiritual-that they are sensitive to spiritual workings which are imperceptible to those only 'born of the flesh.' What example does he use to explain what the Spirit feels like to one who has never experienced it?

If Nicodemus were to hear the wind, he could feel it and know it was real without seeing it. The influence of the wind would come not according to the will of Nicodemus but according to the will of God. There is no way that Nicodemus could deny the reality of the wind. It may be invisible, but it is not imperceptible for it can be both heard and felt. Interestingly, Nicodemus might find that the more time he spends in a windy environment, the more sensitive he would become to even the most gentle of breezes. The analogy could not be clearer. Therefore, when the Lord says, 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit,' he is describing what it feels like to be baptized by the Spirit or to subsequently feel the workings of the Spirit. Those born again can feel the Spirit as easily as Nicodemus can feel the blowing of the wind. Furthermore, they could no more deny the reality of the Spirit than Nicodemus could deny the wind while it blows him flat on his face.

Spencer W. Kimball

"He who has a testimony does not know exactly of what it is made, or where it came from. He cannot measure it. He cannot weigh it. He cannot count it. He can only feel it. That is the testimony, and it is like a breeze or the dew. We were in Upper Galilee the other day...It is a warm day. You stand perspiring in the warmth and all at once there is a little cooling wind or breeze. You feel it, a pleasant cooling sensation. You do not know from where it comes, but all at once you are cooled and refreshed and that is

like the Spirit when a man is born again. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' (John 3:8.) "*(The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, edited by Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 67.)*

John 3:10 Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Spencer W. Kimball

"Eternal life is the greatest gift. To obtain it is not easy. The price is high.

"Nicodemus of old inquired the price. The answer perplexed him. Let us interview that good man who came so near and yet evidently missed the mark.

"Your name is Nicodemus? You are a member of the powerful sect of the Pharisees? You are a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin? You knew the person from Nazareth called Jesus Christ? You heard his sermons and witnessed his miracles? You looked into his eyes and heard his voice?

"You are a good man, Nicodemus, honorable and just, for you will yet defend our Lord before your colleagues, asking he be not condemned without a hearing. You are also generous, for you will yet bring one hundred weight of aloes and myrrh to his burial. You have at least some faith, but have you courage enough to face criticism? You are identified as one who came under cover of darkness. In your senatorial seat you and your colleagues have impressive powers, making laws and controlling destinies.

"...You are well versed in the law, Nicodemus, but what of the gospel? To gain eternal life there must be a rebirth, a transformation, and an unburdening self of pride, weaknesses, and prejudice. You must begin as a little child, clean, teachable. You seem not to understand...Is it so complex? Are you afraid of what your brother Pharisees may think of you, fearful of losing your exalted place in the Sanhedrin? Or, do you not see? Certainly a little glimpse has been given you. You acknowledged the miracle worker must be sent from God, but the curtain so slightly opened will close again if you do not act upon the new knowledge being offered you.

"You are highly educated, my good man. Many sit at your feet to learn. Does your superior training blind you? Must a prophet or a God be

measured in the test tubes of a physical laboratory? Can you not accept anything you cannot prove by the rules of the schools in which you studied?

"You are not accepting it. The Lord is postulating again the necessary requirements: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

"That total answer came in one sentence of thirteen small words. You are wondering, weighing, Mr. Rationalizer. You seem impressed, but you are bound. How much you do not realize! Did you expect it in eloquent, impressive words? Is it frustrating in its simplicity? You are rationalizing, Sir. You cannot weigh this on the scales of your secular knowledge and training. They are too crude, mundane. You need finer mechanism.

'...Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'(John 3:5-8.)

"How beautiful-how forceful-how positive! Is there excuse to question, to hesitate, to reject? O Nicodemus, this moment of crisis cannot last long. You are on a perilous summit. Your decision can mean the difference between exaltation and a deprivation greater than you know. You had a spark of desire. Why did you extinguish it?

"What made you refer to our Master as 'a teacher come from God'? Do you not believe in prophets? Have you not all your life waited for a Redeemer? After all his sermons, testimonies, and miracles, is he still only an inspired teacher to you? Could he not be the long-awaited Christ? Have you tried to believe and accept, or are you bound down with fetters of tradition, chains of materialism, and handcuffs of losable prestige? O timid one, awaken, exert yourself, draw back the curtains your training and background have hung over the windows of your soul! You are speaking to no ordinary man, no common philosopher, no mere prophet. You are in the presence of the real Messiah, the great physician, the master psychiatrist, the very Christ. You are questioning the maker of heaven and earth, the Son of God.

"Open the curtains, my skeptic brother. Rid yourself of your intellectual conservatism. This is a crucial moment. You are being offered a gift priceless beyond your imagination. Will you let it pass? Talking with Christ,

you should be awed to a tremble, quaking in shoeless feet on such holy ground, and on your knees in reverent humility. This is your Lord, your Savior, your Redeemer. Can't you understand, O ye of little faith? Can't you feel his love and kindness and see the sadness and disappointment in those penetrating eyes as he notes your withdrawal? He is saying:

"9299Set aside your pride and arrogance. Cast from you all worldly burdens. Repent of your transgressions, purify your hands, and mind, and heart, believe that I am the bread of life, the waters from the pure spring. Accept me and my gospel; go down into the waters in proper baptism." (*Conference Report, April 1958, First Day-Morning Meeting 14.*)

John 3:12 how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

LeGrand Richards

"I have always thought that the heavenly things that Jesus spoke of were these wonderful blessings that we receive in the temples of the Lord, and I thank the Lord that temples are reaching out to our people in these far-off lands." (*Conference Report, October 1959, Afternoon Meeting 35.*)

John 3:14 as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up

Neal A. Maxwell

"Augmenting the verses in the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon and the other books of modern scripture provide helpful elaboration that aids us not only in understanding more of what happened anciently, but also why, and its significance for us. Note how the writings of Moses and John in the following verses are clarified by the words of Nephi and Alma:

'And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.
And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.'(Num. 21:6, 8-9.)

'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-15.)

'And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod; for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.' (1 Nephi 17:41.)

'Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live.'(Alma 33:19.)

"Divinely deliberate and serious symbolism is involved. Without this needed elaboration, the Old Testament episode of the fiery serpents does not give us a fulness of spiritual insight that can clearly be 'for our profit and learning.' (1 Nephi 19:23.) The symbolic emphasis in this episode is upon both the necessity and the simpleness of the way of the Lord Jesus. Ironically, in Moses' time many perished anyway. The promise for the future is as follows: 'And as many as should look upon that serpent should live, even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal.' (Helaman 8:15. See also 1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 37:46.)

"Thus, now we have the verified and amplified analogy, thanks to the precious and plain things given to us in 'these last records.'

"The whole episode points toward the need to look upon Jesus Christ as our Lord, likewise a simple but unwaivable requirement. How plain and precious in any age! Yet believing in Jesus is sometimes regarded as foolishness. One can imagine the scoffing comments of some in Moses' time concerning the illogicality and foolishness of looking upon a brass pole

in order to be healed and saved." (*Plain and Precious Things* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], 21.)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son

When Nephi saw the vision of the tree of life, he wanted to know the meaning of the tree of life. His explanation came in the form of a vision—he was shown the birth of the Savior. Then the angel said: 'Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?' Now Nephi knew! He had been shown the greatest expression of God's love for his children, and he replied, 'yea, it is the love of God' (1 Ne. 11:8-22). When we think of the loving acts of a kind Heavenly Father, we think of our creation as spirit children, we think of the creation of the earth, we think of the privilege of coming to earth, and we think of the great plan of happiness. Yet none of these beautiful gifts caused the Father any personal pain. But the gift of his Only Begotten was another story. To see him mistreated, spit upon, scourged, and suffering in Gethsemane must have been an almost unbearable sacrifice. Such was the love of God for the world!

Jeffrey R. Holland

"I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct must have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark." ("The Hands of the Fathers," *Ensign*, May 1999, 14-15)

Melvin J. Ballard

"I love to contemplate what it cost our Father in heaven to give us the gift of his Beloved Son, that worthy Son of our Father...I think as I read the story of Abraham's sacrifices of his son Isaac that our Father is trying to tell us what it cost him to give his Son as a gift to the world. You remember the story of how Abraham's son came after long years of waiting and was looked upon by his worthy sire, Abraham, as more precious than all his

other possessions; yet, in the midst of his rejoicing, Abraham was told to take this only son and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord. He responded. Can you feel what was in the heart of Abraham on that occasion? You love your son just as Abraham did; perhaps not quite so much, because of the peculiar circumstances, but what do you think was in his heart when he started away from Mother Sarah, and they bade her goodbye? What do you think was in his heart when he saw Isaac bidding farewell to his mother to take that three days' journey to the appointed place where the sacrifice was to be made? I imagine it was about all Father Abraham could do to keep from showing his great grief and sorrow at that parting, but he and his son trudged along three days toward the appointed place...They ascended the mountain, gathered the stones together, and placed the fagots upon them. Then Isaac was bound, hand and foot, kneeling upon the altar. I presume Abraham, like a true father, must have given his son his farewell kiss, his blessing, his love, and his soul must have been drawn out in that hour of agony toward his son who was to die by the hand of his own father. Every step proceeded until the cold steel was drawn, and the hand raised that was to strike the blow to let out the life's blood when the angel of the Lord said: 'It is enough.'

"Our Father in heaven went through all that and more, for in his case the hand was not stayed. He loved his Son, Jesus Christ, better than Abraham ever loved Isaac, for our Father had with him his Son, our Redeemer, in the eternal worlds, faithful and true for ages, standing in a place of trust and honor, and the Father loved him dearly, and yet he allowed this well-beloved Son to descend from his place of glory and honor, where millions did him homage, down to the earth, a condescension that is not within the power of man to conceive. He came to receive the insult, the abuse, and the crown of thorns. God heard the cry of his Son in that moment of great grief and agony, in the garden when, it is said, the pores of his body opened and drops of blood stood upon him, and he cried out: 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.'

"I ask you, what father and mother could stand by and listen to the cry of their children in distress, in this world, and not render aid and assistance? I have heard of mothers throwing themselves into raging streams when they could not swim a stroke to save their drowning children, rushing into burning buildings, to rescue those whom they loved.

"We cannot stand by and listen to those cries without its touching our hearts. The Lord has not given us the power to save our own. He has given us faith, and we submit to the inevitable, but he had the power to save, and

he loved his Son, and he could have saved him. He might have rescued him from the insult of the crowds. He might have rescued him when the crown of thorns was placed upon his head. He might have rescued him when the Son, hanging between the two thieves, was mocked with, 'Save thyself, and come down from the cross. He saved others; himself he cannot save.' He listened to all this. He saw that Son condemned; he saw him drag the cross through the streets of Jerusalem and faint under its load. He saw that Son finally upon Calvary; he saw his body stretched out upon the wooden cross; he saw the cruel nails driven through hands and feet, and the blows that broke the skin, tore the flesh, and let out the life's blood of his Son. He looked upon that.

"In the case of our Father, the knife was not stayed, but it fell, and the life's blood of his Beloved Son went out. His Father looked on with great grief and agony over his Beloved Son, until there seems to have come a moment when even our Savior cried out in despair: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

"In that hour I think I can see our dear Father behind the veil looking upon these dying struggles until even he could not endure it any longer; and, like the mother who bids farewell to her dying child, has to be taken out of the room, so as not to look upon the last struggles, so he bowed his head, and hid in some part of his universe, his great heart almost breaking for the love that he had for his Son. Oh, in that moment when he might have saved his Son. I thank him and praise him that he did not fail us, for he had not only the love of his Son in mind, but he also had love for us. I rejoice that he did not interfere, and that his love for us made it possible for him to endure to look upon the sufferings of his Son and give him finally to us, our Savior and our Redeemer. Without him, without his sacrifice, we would have remained, and we would never have come glorified into his presence. And so this is what it cost, in part, for our Father in Heaven to give the gift of his Son unto men." (*Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin J. Ballard* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1949], 151-155.)

John 3:19 this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light

Joseph Fielding Smith

"It is a very strange thing, but verily true, that almost any false doctrine, philosophy or hypothesis, will be readily received. Charlatans and false religious leaders seemingly have little trouble to gain a following and

become popular, but the truth has had to fight its way through the most severe opposition. It is now (1954), nearly 134 years since the Prophet Joseph Smith had a visitation from the Father and the Son. The pronouncement of this visitation brought ridicule, persecution, lying reports that have persisted to this day. Nearly every missionary who has declared the message of the restored Gospel, has had to face bitter opposition and enemies of the truth have gnashed their teeth in bitter denunciation of them. But, with a little thought every intelligent man could testify that false faiths and doctrines that have come into circulation within the past 134 years have existed without serious opposition. The same is true of philosophies and scientific theories. The only sure way to know the truth and have the gift of discernment and be able to distinguish between truth and error is by following the admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then we will know the truth which will make us free from error...The great trouble with so many members of the Church is that they do not live in strict accordance with divine law, therefore they have not freed themselves from darkness, and they are unable to distinguish the truths from heaven from the theories and doctrines of men." (*Man, His Origin and Destiny* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], 7 - 8.)

John 3:22 there he tarried with them, and baptized

"Did Jesus Personally Perform Baptisms?"

"In the King James Version John 3:22 we read that Jesus came with his disciples into the land of Judea, 'and there he tarried with them, and baptized.' The passage seems to say that Jesus himself performed some of the baptisms. However, a little later we find: 'When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee' (John 4:1-3).

"This passage denies that Jesus performed baptisms himself, contradicting the passage in John 3. The matter is resolved by the Prophet's translation, which brings into harmony the various statements about Jesus performing baptisms: 'When therefore the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, they sought more diligently some means that they might put him to death; for many received John as a prophet, but they believed not on Jesus. Now the Lord knew this, though he himself baptized not so many as his disciples; for he suffered them for an example, preferring one another. And he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.' ([Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible]. The Holy Scriptures:

Inspired Version. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1970 John 4:1-5.)

"Not only does the Joseph Smith Translation clearly state that Jesus performed baptisms (see also [Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible]. The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version. Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1970 Mark 1:6 and John 1:28) but it also explains why Jesus left the area. The King James Version leaves us dangling because it mentions the Pharisees but doesn't say what they have to do with the story. The Joseph Smith Translation explains that they wanted to kill Jesus because of his popularity, and therefore he left Judea and went into Galilee." (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 191-192.)

John 3:23 John also was baptizing...because there was much water there

Orson F. Whitney

"'Born of water' means to come out of the water, and coming out of the water, presupposes going into the water. This is why we are baptized by immersion, which means sinking, dipping, burying, plunging. Immersion is the only mode of baptism that symbolizes a birth. Jesus was baptized by immersion. He must have gone down into the water, for when he was baptized he 'went up straightway out of the water' (Matt. 3:16). When Philip baptized the Eunuch, 'they went down both into the water.' John baptized 'in Anon, near to Salim, because there was much water there,' a proof presumptive of baptism by immersion, that being the only mode requiring 'much water' for its performance." (*Gospel Themes*, 58.)

LeGrand Richards

"It requires a considerable stretch of the imagination to think Jesus would go to John at the River Jordan and then go down into the river, only to have a little water sprinkled or poured upon his head. 'When he was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water.' He could not come up out of the water unless he had been *in* the water, and he would not have gone into the water to be sprinkled or poured. He had to go into the water to be immersed or baptized. What does the word *baptize* mean? Taken from the Greek *bapto* or *baptizo*, it means to dip or to immerse. In discussing the principle of baptism, Jesus and his apostles could just as easily have referred to sprinkling or pouring if that had been satisfactory, but they did not. Not a little water but 'much water' was needed for the ordinance of

baptism: 'And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.' (John 3:23.)

"John could have found sufficient water for sprinkling or pouring almost anywhere. He could have gone to those desiring baptism, but they came to locations he selected 'because there was much water there' where he could really baptize or immerse them." (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 101)

John 3:26 Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan...the same baptizeth, and all men come to him

The carnal virtues include prestige, power, social standing, and personal preeminence. If John placed any value on these mortal virtues he may have been upset at Jesus' early success. John's disciples asked him, in effect, "Aren't you jealous of this new prophet? You are the greatest prophet we have ever had and this character is stealing your disciples!" It was the same concern about preeminence which prompted the following question of the Master, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.' (Lu. 9:49-50)

The same jealous spirit is sometimes manifest among the saints when positions and callings are coveted. But John teaches us how to respond to this situation. When another has been called before us, we should act as the friend of the bridegroom, rejoicing greatly in the success of our neighbor. "Each week in the wards and branches, stakes and districts throughout the world, someone is released from a Church calling and another is sustained to that position. With very few exceptions, that transfer of responsibility occurs without creating a ripple of any kind in the work of the kingdom...**President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: 'There is a principle followed in the Church of rotating responsibilities. Inherent in a call to serve is a release, to be expected and welcomed after service well performed.' None of us should ever think we 'own' a Church calling. We are the stewards of that calling for a time, and, then we will be released from it." (Mantle of Responsibility , *LDS Church News*, 1997, 05/03/97 .)

James E. Talmage

"John's supporters were concerned at the success of One whom they regarded in some measure as a rival to their beloved teacher...John's reply to his ardent followers constitutes a sublime instance of self-abnegation....In such a reply, under the existent conditions, is to be found the spirit of true greatness, and of a humility that could rest only on a conviction of divine assurance to the Baptist as to himself and the Christ. In more than one sense was John great among all who are born of women. He had entered upon his work when sent of God so to do; he realized that his work had been in a measure superseded, and he patiently awaited his release, in the meantime continuing in the ministry, directing souls to his Master. The beginning of the end was near. He was soon seized and thrown into a dungeon; where, as shall be shown, he was beheaded to sate the vengeance of a corrupt woman whose sins he had boldly denounced." (*Jesus the Christ*, 164-165)

John 3:34-35 God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father...hath given all things into his hand

Even Apostles and Prophets are not given a full measure of the Spirit of God. To all of us, the Spirit is given in portions depending on our stewardship and faithfulness. Elisha understood this and requested an extra portion of the Spirit when he was called to replace Elijah, 'And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.' (2 Kings 2:9). In contrast to even the greatest prophets, Jesus received the Spirit in full measure for the Father had 'given all things into his hand,' in that 'he received all power, both in heaven and on earth' (DC 93:17).

Elder Erastus Rest

"[The Spirit] is measured out to you and me in the providence of the Lord; but for him there was a storehouse to draw upon, as it were, without measure. He could continue to heal the sick and raise the dead and perform great and marvelous things, and yet the supply of vitality was not in the least abated." (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 21: 26.)