



Carl Bloch, "Samaritan Woman at the Well"

Dialogues and Discourses of Jesus

THE WORD MADE FLESH: JESUS CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Eric D. Huntsman, Education Week 2018

I'm Trying to Be Like Jesus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W5L8W6k6Q>
 I Know My Savior Loves Me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W5L8W6k6Q>

Divine Language?

- The “semi poetic” nature of divine speech
 - Jesus speaks differently than other characters, signaling that the words of “the Word” have peculiar power
- Johannine misunderstanding
 - Gives the source or author a chance to have Jesus restate his teachings
 - The things of the spirit can only be understood by the spirit

Seven Dialogues and Discourses in John

- **The New Birth (3:1-15)**
- **The Water of Life (4:7-26)**
- **The Divine Son (5:17-47)**
- The Bread of Life (6:35-58)
- **The Life-Giving Spirit (7:16-52)**
- The Light of the World (8:12-59)
- The Good Shepherd (10:1-18)

- Also, the Farewell Discourses (14:1-16:33), the Intercessory Prayer (17:1-26), and the final dialogue with Peter (21:15-19)

Nicodemus, “How Can These Things Be?”

- Nicodemus is an intriguing character who appears three times in the Gospel of John
 - Seemingly confused by his first encounter with the Lord (John 3:1-15)
 - Comes forward a fair hearing for Jesus, but his tentative efforts falter in the face of the opposition of his peers (John 7:45-53)
 - Comes forward again after Jesus’ crucifixion and joins Joseph of Arimathaea in giving the Lord an honorable burial, at last recognizing Jesus as the promised king of Israel (John 19:38-42)
- Unlike the first disciples, who responded to the witness of others and then set out clearly on a path of discipleship, or the women, who appear in the narrative already as resolute followers, **Nicodemus represents a different, more difficult path to belief**
 - *Sometimes we have a desire to believe, but our questions take us along a different path than others travel*
 - though our path may be different than others follow, when we come to know Jesus for ourselves, *our discipleship can be no less genuine—and in the end, no less saving as long as we still come to Christ*

Nicodemus as a Type

- Because Nicodemus is such a historically-anchored figure, we can miss his role as a type
 - John introduces Nicodemus as “a **man** of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus” (John 3:1), he may be generalizing his experience
 - In the previous passage, John note that after the temple incident, “Jesus did not commit,” or entrust, “himself unto them, because he knew all **men** . . . for he knew what was in **man**” (John 2:24–25, emphasis added)
- The earlier Jews had begun to believe in Jesus because of the “miracles” (Greek, *sēmeia*; literally, “signs”) that he was performing (John 2:23)
 - “The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: **for no man can do these miracles [Greek, *sēmeia*] that thou doest, except God be with him**” (John 3:2).
 - Different “signs” and motivations may bring us initially to Christ . . .

Misunderstanding Jesus



John La Farge, *Visit of Nicodemus to Christ* (1880)

- Despite Nicodemus’ education and his nascent faith in Jesus, he repeatedly misunderstood what Jesus tried to teach him
 - illustrates that it is impossible to understand the things of God without the Spirit
- Coming by night = being “in the dark?”
- Dialogue on the New Birth
 - **Being born again/anew/from above** (*anōthen*)
 - **water** and **spirit**—different interpretations of the new birth, including “watery-spirit”
- The promised sign
 - **The Son “being lifted up”** (Num. 21:9; cf. 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19; Helaman 8:14–6)
 - **“For God so loved the world . . .”**

Hesitant Belief (John 7:45-53)



Without a firm conviction, Nicodemus flags in his support of Jesus, representing those of us who, not yet having a firm testimony of Christ, may be hesitant in our own belief.

- Often we accept the basic facts about Jesus in a general way, and we may continue as members of the Church out of tradition, family loyalty, and convenience. However, when strong opposition rises or arguments emerge against what we think or simply hope is true, we may falter. Still, the story of Nicodemus is not over yet, nor is it for any of us in those moments when we might hesitate in our belief.

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Honoring Jesus at His Burial (John 19:38-40)



- Having previously only come to Jesus at night or having hesitantly spoken for him in closed council, Nicodemus now comes out in the open in his acceptance of Jesus as the true King of Israel
- The reason for this change seems to be that Nicodemus at last saw in Jesus' crucifixion what he meant when he spoke of being lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness (see John 3:14-15).

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Judith Mehr, "Moses and the Brass Serpent"; Tissot, "Jesus Carried to the Tomb"

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The Challenges of Different Kinds of Faith

- **The example of Nicodemus reminds us that we must be careful about judging the spiritual journeys of other people**
 - Sometimes we can be too quick to judge the faith of others, faulting them for questioning or perhaps insisting that people testify that they “know” when sometimes what is important is just believing or having the desire to believe (see Alma 32:26–27)
- Some of us are blessed with **simple, unquestioning faith**
 - That is a great gift, especially *if it does not lead to being critical of others who are more questioning or who take longer to come to similar conclusions*
- **Those who by nature need to question almost everything** may seem to be in a constant state of mental or emotional tension to those of more simple faith
 - Yet what Terryll and Fiona Givens call “the crucible of doubt” *can also lead to a mature, deep faith that is accompanied by rich empathy for the questioning of others*

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A Personal Experience

- Thailand Bangkok Mission, 1985–86



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A Personal Experience



- “Letting my concerns grow unchecked, I even began to question my entire testimony . . .”

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A Personal Experience



- “Letting my concerns grow unchecked, I even began to question my entire testimony . . .”
- My mission president shared a scripture that has since become a touchstone for me when I find myself in similar situations: “**But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God**” (2 Nephi 9:29)
 - Like Nicodemus, I needed to realize that some things could only be learned from the spirit, and like that teacher of old, ***I needed to center my faith solely in Christ and his atonement***

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The Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4:4-42)



- John 4:7-14, “There cometh **a woman of Samaria to draw water**
 - Jews and Samaritans
 - Men and women
 - Questionable lifestyle
 - 5 husbands (previous gods of Samaritans), living with a man but not in a covenant relationship (Samaritan devotion to YHWH?)
- **Symbolism of Living Water** (cf. 1 Nephi 11:24-25)
 - **Living water**
 - Water must be drawn from a well or cistern, this water **“springs up to eternal life [zōēn aiōnion]”**
- **Like the new wine at Cana and the new birth discussed with Nicodemus, Jesus tells the Samaritan Woman about new worship—spirit-filled worship focused on him**

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Cisterns vs. Living Water



Top: Water in a cistern at Maresha; upper right: water “from a rock” at Dan spring; lower right: head of Jordan at Dan

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Women as Witnesses

- Two of the most prominent female disciples in the Gospel of John appear in the narrative with already-established relationships with the Lord
 - **Mother of Jesus:** Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and at the Crucifixion (John 19:25-27)
 - **Mary Magdalene:** the Crucifixion (John 19:25-27) and the Empty Tomb (John 20:1-3, 11-18)
 - contrasts with the first disciples, who each receive the witness of another and then begin following Jesus
- The importance of their testimonies is ***striking given the time and culture in which they lived, when the witness of a woman was not even admissible in court***
- Already strong witnesses of him, motivating others to believe and then act in faith
 - ***Their examples show us the importance of every person's discipleship—regardless of sex, ethnicity, economic status, or other background—and encourage us to learn from and be led by such women of faith today***



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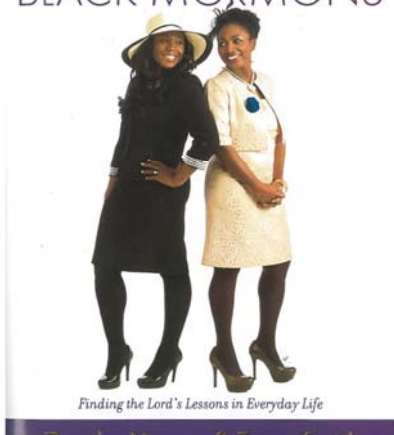
Learning from Women Who Know

- The mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene serve as models for us of women who gained a sure knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, that he can work miracles in our lives, that he died for us, and that he rose triumphant from the tomb
- The apostle Paul spoke of this kind of testimony when he wrote to Timothy of “the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice” (2 Timothy 1:5)

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DIARY OF *Two Mad* BLACK MORMONS



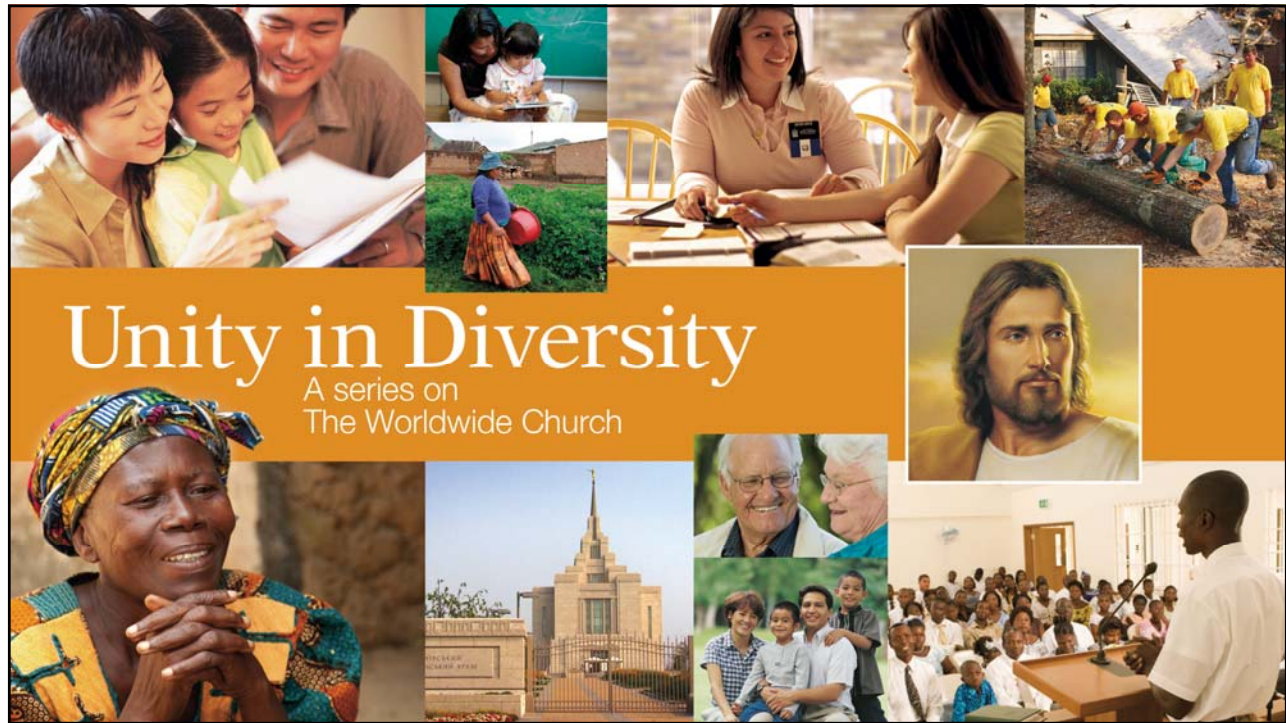
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Embracing Those Who Are Different



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Discourse on the Divine Son (John 5:17–47)

• **Breaking the Sabbath**

- “The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.” (5:10)
- “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.” (5:16)

• **Christ and the Father (5:17–21)**

- “*My Father worketh hitherto*, and *I work*” (5:17), equating the earlier work of creation with his current work of healing and salvation
- “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: *for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise*” (5:19); cf. King Follett Discourse

• **Christ as Judge (5:22–23)**

• **Christ and Life (5:24–29)**

- **Realized eschatology:** “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (5:24)
- **Future eschatology:** “. . . for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (5:28–29; cf. revelation of D&C 76)

Feast of Tabernacles



- **Sukkôt: “booths, tabernacles, or temporary shelters”**
 - Commemorated the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the wilderness
 - **One of the three pilgrimage festivals, during Sukkot worshipers filled Jerusalem**
 - modern observant Jews still live, eat, and study in a *sukkah* during this festival
- **Later also celebrated as an autumn harvest festival**
 - Celebrated by waving palm, willow and leafy branches together with a citrus fruit
 - **The time when the king was anointed, some of its imagery will be adopted for Jesus' triumphal entry**
 - Sukkot at the Western Wall in Jerusalem:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOTxfETVsmo&feature=player_detailpage
- Second Temple Sukkot rituals of **pouring water** and **lighting lights** set the context for **Christ's discourses on His being the source of living waters and light**
 - See Andy Skinner's discussion at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYWTReAN87w>

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Tabernacles and Water



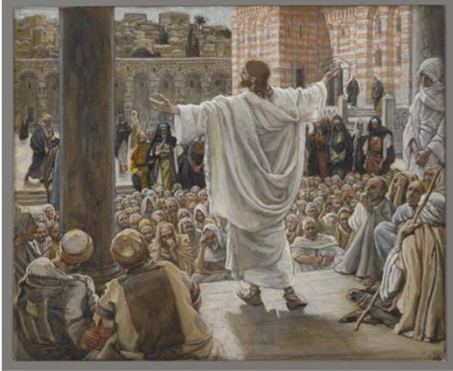
- Sukkot had become a festival in which prayers were offered for winter rains
- Water from the spring of Gihon was drawn and poured on the altar

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Discourse on the Life-Giving Spirit (John 7:14-44)



- John 7:37-38, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ***If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*** He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, ***out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.***”
 - While the Jews were praying to *YHWH* for water, **the Incarnate Word was standing right there offering them living water!**
 - **Messianic flow of healing and life-giving water** (Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:11; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:8; JST John 7:39 and the Spirit promised to those who believe in Christ)
- “**Out of his belly (*koilia*) shall flow rivers of living water.**”
 - “From **his heart (*koilia*)** shall flow streams of living water” (NJB)
 - “Out of **the believer’s heart (*koilia*)** shall flow rivers of living water” (NRSV)
 - *Koilia* = belly = heart = womb! **As a woman gives birth to a child, so Jesus gives new birth to the believer**

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Jesus and “Spirit”

- “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for <the Holy Ghost> [*oupō gar ēn pneuma*] was not yet <given> because that **Jesus was not yet glorified.**” (John 7:39)
 - The Greek text *oupō gar ēn pneuma*, literally rendered, simply states, “**there was not yet spirit,**” without specifying that it was the Holy Ghost that was absent or that it was somehow not yet “given.”
 - In John, **Jesus is glorified through his saving death and resurrection**
- **The water flowing from Jesus (and later the believer) represents life-giving spirit?**
 - “After the resurrection from the dead our bodies will be **spiritual bodies**, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones, but they will not be blood bodies, they will no longer be quickened by blood **but quickened by the spirit which is eternal** and **they shall become immortal and shall never die.** . . .” (Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, April 1917, 63.)

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Jesus' Divine and Mortal Inheritance

From the Discourse on the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–21)

- “... **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**” (John 10:10)
- “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.** This commandment have I received of my Father. (John 10:17–18)
- Jesus' death in John: “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.** (John 19:30)