

(referring to more than Nicodemus alone).

A^{SN} Obviously *earthly things* and *heavenly things* are in contrast, but what is the contrast? What are *earthly things* which Jesus has just spoken to Nicodemus? And through him to others—is this not the first instance of the plural pronoun, see v. 7, *you must all*. Since Nicodemus began with a plural (*we know*, v. 2) Jesus continues it, and through Nicodemus addresses a broader audience. It makes most sense to take this as a reference to the things Jesus has just said (and the things he is about to say, vv. 13–15). If this is the case (and it seems the most natural explanation) then *earthly things* are not necessarily strictly *physical* things, but are so called because they take place on earth, in contrast to things like v. 16, which take place in heaven. Some have added the suggestion that the things are called *earthly* because physical analogies (birth, wind, water) are used to describe them. This is possible, but it seems more probable that Jesus calls these things *earthly* because they happen on earth (even though they are spiritual things). In the context, taking *earthly things* as referring to the words Jesus has just spoken fits with the fact that Nicodemus did not believe. And he would not after hearing *heavenly things* either, unless he first believed in the *earthly things*—which included the necessity of a regenerating work from above, by the Holy Spirit.

B^{TN} Grk “And no one.”

C^{SN} The verb *ascended* is a perfect tense in Greek (ἀναβέβηκεν, *anabēbēken*) which seems to look at a past, completed event. (This is not as much of a problem for those who take Jesus’ words to end at v. 12, and these words to be a comment by the author, looking back on Jesus’ ascension.) As a saying of Jesus, these words are a bit harder to explain. Note, however, the lexical similarities with 1:1: “ascending,” “descending,” and “son of man.” Here, though, the ascent and descent is accomplished by the Son himself, not the angels as in 1:51. There is no need to limit this saying to Jesus’ ascent following the resurrection, however; the point of the Jacob story (Gen 28), which seems to be the background for 1:51, is the freedom of communication and relationship between God and men (a major theme of John’s Gospel). This communication comes through the angels in Gen 28 (and John 1:51), but here (most appropriately) it comes directly through the *Son of Man*. Although Jesus could be referring to a prior ascent, after an appearance as the preincarnate Son of Man, more likely he is simply pointing out that no one from earth has ever gone up to heaven and come down again. The Son, who has come down from heaven, is the only one who has been ‘up’ there. In both Jewish intertestamental literature and later rabbinic accounts, Moses is portrayed as ascending to heaven to receive the Torah and descending to distribute

don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?^{A 13} No one^B has ascended^C into heaven except the one who descended from heaven—the Son of Man.^{D 14} Just as^E Moses lifted up the serpent^F in the wilderness,^G so must the Son of Man be lifted up,^{H 15} so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.^{I 1}

¹⁶ For this is the way^J God loved the world: He gave his one

it to men (e.g., *Targum Ps* 68:19.) In contrast to these Jewish legends, the Son is the only one who has ever made the ascent and descent.

D^{TC} Most witnesses, including a few very significant ones (A¹³ Ψ 050 f¹³ 301 latt sy^{C-P}), have at the end of this verse “the one who is in heaven” (ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, *ho ὄn en tō ouranō*). A few others have variations on this phrase, such as “who was in heaven” (e sy), or “the one who is from heaven” (0141 sy³). The witnesses normally considered the best, along with several others, lack the phrase in its entirety (P⁶⁶75 κ B L T W⁵ 083 086 33 1241 co). On the one hand, if the reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is authentic it may suggest that while Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus he spoke of himself as in heaven even while he was on earth. If that is the case, one could see why variations from this hard saying arose: “who was in heaven,” “the one who is from heaven,” and omission of the clause. At the same time, such a saying could be interpreted (though with difficulty) as part of the narrator’s comments rather than Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus, alleviating the problem. And if v. 13 was viewed in early times as the evangelist’s statement, “the one who is in heaven” could have crept into the text through a marginal note. Other internal evidence suggests that this saying may be authentic. The adjectival participle, ὁ ὢν, is used in the Fourth Gospel more than any other NT book (though the Apocalypse comes in a close second), and frequently with reference to Jesus (1:18; 6:46; 8:47). It may be looking back to the LXX of Exod 3:14 (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν). Especially since this exact construction is not necessary to communicate the location of the Son of Man, its presence in many witnesses here may suggest authenticity. Further, John uses the singular of οὐρανός (*ouranos*, “heaven”) in all 18 instances of the word in this Gospel, and all but twice with the article (only 1:32 and 6:58 are anarthrous, and even in the latter there is significant testimony to the article). At the same time, the witnesses that lack this clause are very weighty and must not be discounted. Generally speaking, if other factors are equal, the reading of such mss should be preferred. And internally, it could be argued that ὁ ὢν is the most concise way to speak of the Son of Man in heaven *at that time* (without the participle the point would be more ambiguous). Further, the articular singular οὐρανός is already used twice in this verse, thus sufficiently prompting scribes to add the same in the longer reading. This combination of factors suggests that ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is not a genuine Johannism. Further intrinsic evidence against the longer reading relates to the evangelist’s purposes: If he intended v. 13 to be

his own comments rather than Jesus’ statement, his switch back to Jesus’ words in v. 14 (for the lifting up of the Son of Man is still seen as in the future) seems inexplicable. The reading “who is in heaven” thus seems to be too hard. All things considered, as intriguing as the longer reading is, it seems almost surely to have been a marginal gloss added inadvertently to the text in the process of transmission. For an argument in favor of the longer reading, see David Alan Black, “The Text of John 3:13,” *GTJ* 6 (1985): 49–66.

S^{NE} See the note on the title *Son of Man* in 1:51.

E^{TN} Grk “And just as.”

F^{SN} Or *the snake*, referring to the bronze serpent mentioned in Num 21:9.

G^{SN} An allusion to Num 21:5–9.

H^{SN} *So must the Son of Man be lifted up*. This is ultimately a prediction of Jesus’ crucifixion. Nicodemus could not have understood this, but John’s readers, the audience to whom the Gospel is addressed, certainly could have (compare the wording of John 12:32). In John, being *lifted up* refers to one continuous action of ascent, beginning with the cross but ending at the right hand of the Father. Step 1 is Jesus’ death; step 2 is his resurrection; and step 3 is the ascension back to heaven. It is the upward swing of the “pendulum” which began with the incarnation, the descent of the Word become flesh from heaven to earth (cf. Paul in Phil 2:5–11). See also the note on the title *Son of Man* in 1:51.

I^{TN} This is the first use of the term ζῶην αἰώνιον (*zōēn aiōnion*) in the Gospel, although ζῶη (*zōē*) in chap. 1 is to be understood in the same way without the qualifying αἰώνιος (*aiōnios*).

S^N Some interpreters extend the quotation of Jesus’ words through v. 21.

J^{TN} Or “this is how much”; or “in this way.” The Greek adverb οὕτως (*houtōs*) can refer (1) to the *degree* to which God loved the world, that is, to such an *extent* or *so much* that he gave his own Son (see R. E. Brown, *John* [AB], 1:133–34; D. A. Carson, *John*, 204) or (2) simply to the *manner* in which God loved the world, i.e., by sending his own son (see R. H. Gundry and R. W. Howell, “The Sense and Syntax of John 3:14–17 with Special Reference to the Use of Οὕτως...ὥστε in John 3:16,” *NovT* 41 [1999]: 24–39). Though the term more frequently refers to the manner in which something is done (see BDAG 741–42 s.v. οὕτως/οὕτως), the following clause involving ὥστε (*hōste*) plus the indicative (which stresses actual, but [usually] unexpected result) emphasizes the greatness of the gift God has given. With this in mind, then, it is likely (3) that John is emphasizing both the *degree* to which God loved the world as well as the *manner* in which He chose to express that love. This is in keeping with John’s style of using double entendre or double meaning. Thus, the focus of the Greek construction here is on the *nature* of God’s love, addressing its mode, intensity, and extent.

A^{TN} Although this word is often translated “only begotten,” such a translation is misleading, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an only child (a son [Luke 7:12; 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something unique (only one of its kind) such as the mythological Phoenix (1 Clement 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of Isaac (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, *Ant.* 1.13 [1.222]) who was not Abraham’s only son, but was one-of-a-kind because he was the child of the promise. Thus the word means “one-of-a-kind” and is reserved for Jesus in the Johannine literature of the NT. While all Christians are children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ, *tekna theou*), Jesus is God’s Son in a unique, one-of-a-kind sense. The word is used in this way in all its uses in the Gospel of John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18).

B^{TN} In John the word ἀπόλλυμι (*apollumi*) can mean either (1) to be lost (2) to perish or be destroyed, depending on the context.

C^{SN} The alternatives presented are only two (again, it is typical of Johannine thought for this to be presented in terms of polar opposites): *perish* or *have eternal life*.

D^{SN} That is, “to judge the world to be guilty and liable to punishment.”

E^{TN} Grk “judged.”

F^{TN} Grk “judged.”

G^{TN} See the note on the term “one and only” in 3:16.

H^{TN} Or “this is the reason for God judging,” or “this is how judgment works.”

I^{TN} Grk “and men,” but in a generic sense, referring to people of both genders (as “everyone” in v. 20 makes clear).

J^{SN} *John* 3:16–21 provides an introduction to the (so-called) “realized” eschatology of the Fourth Gospel: Judgment has come; eternal life may be possessed now, in the present life, as well as in the future. The terminology “realized eschatology” was originally coined by E. Haenchen and used by J. Jeremias in discussion with C. H. Dodd, but is now characteristically used to describe Dodd’s own formulation. See L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:54, note 10, and R. E. Brown (*John* [AB], 1:cxvii–cxviii) for further discussion. Especially important to note is the element of choice portrayed in John’s Gospel. As Brown observes, “if there is a twofold reaction to Jesus in John’s Gospel, it should be emphasized that that reaction is very much dependent on a person’s choice,

and only^A Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish^B but have eternal life.^{C 17} For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,^D but that the world should be saved through him.¹⁸ The one who believes in him is not condemned.^E The one who does not believe has been condemned^F already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only^G Son of God.¹⁹ Now this is the basis for judging:^H that the light has come into the world and people^I loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.²⁰ For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed.²¹ But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.¹

Further Testimony about Jesus by John the Baptist

²² After this,^K Jesus and his disciples came into Judean territory, and there he spent time with them and was baptizing.²³ John^L was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim,^M because water was plentiful there, and people were coming^N to him^O and being baptized.²⁴ (For John had not yet been thrown into prison.)^P

²⁵ Now a dispute came about between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew^Q concerning ceremonial washing.^R

²⁶ So they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, the one who

a choice that is influenced by his way of life, whether his deeds are wicked or are done in God (John 3:20–21). Thus, there is nodeterminism in John as there seems to be in some of the passages of the Qumran scrolls” (*John* [AB], 1:148). Only when one looks beneath the surface does one find statements like “no one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44).

K^{TN} This section is related loosely to the preceding by μετὰ ταῦτα (*meta tauta*). This constitutes an indefinite temporal reference; the intervening time is not specified.

L^{SN} *John* refers to John the Baptist.

M^{TN} The precise locations of Αἰνών (*Ainōn*) and Σαλείμ (*Saleim*) are unknown. Three possibilities are suggested: (1) In Perea, which is in Transjordan (cf. 1:28). Perea is just across the river from Judea. (2) In the northern Jordan Valley, on the west bank some 8 miles [13 km] south of Scythopolis. But with the Jordan River so close, the reference to abundant water (3:23) seems superfluous. (3) Thus Samaria has been suggested. 4 miles (6.6 km) east of Shechem is a town called Salim, and 8 miles (13 km) northeast of Salim lies modern Ainun. In the general vicinity are many springs. Because of the meanings of the names (Αἰνών = “springs” in Aramaic and Σαλείμ = Salem, “peace”) some have attempted to allegorize here that John the Baptist is *near* salvation. Obviously there is no need for this. It is far more probable that the author has in mind real places, even if their locations cannot be determined with certainty.

N^{TN} Or “people were continually coming.”

O^{TN} The words “to him” are not in the Greek text, but are implied.

P^{SN} This is a parenthetical note by the author.

Q^{TC} Was this dispute between the Baptist’s disciples and an individual Judean (Ἰουδαίου, *Ioudaiou*) or representatives of the Jewish authorities (Ἰουδαίων, *Ioudaion*)? There is good external support for the plural Ἰουδαίων (P⁶⁶ κ* Θ f¹³ 565 al latt), but the external evidence for the singular Ἰουδαίου is slightly stronger (P⁷⁵ κ A B L Ψ 33 1241 the majority of Byzantine minuscules and others).

T^N Or “a certain Judean.” Here BDAG 478 s.v. Ἰουδαίος 2.a states, “Judean (with respect to birth, nationality, or cult).” If the emphasis is simply on the individual’s origin, “Judean” would be preferable since it designates a nationality or place of origin. However, the men-

tion of ceremonial washing in the context suggests the dispute was religious in nature, so “Jew” has been retained in the translation here.

R^{TN} Or “ceremonial cleansing,” or “purification.”

S^N What was the controversy concerning ceremonial washing? It is not clear. Some have suggested that it was over the relative merits of the baptism of Jesus and John. But what about the ceremonial nature of the washing? There are so many unanswered questions here that even R. E. Brown (who does not usually resort to dislocations in the text as a solution to difficulties) proposes that this dialogue originally took place immediately after 1:19–34 and before the wedding at Cana. (Why else the puzzled hostility of the disciples over the crowds coming to Jesus?) Also, the synoptics imply John was imprisoned before Jesus began his Galilean ministry. At any rate, there is no reason to rearrange the material here—it occurs in this place for a very good reason. As far as the author is concerned, it serves as a further continuation of the point made to Nicodemus, that is, the necessity of being born “from above” (3:3). Note that John the Baptist describes Jesus as “the one who comes from heaven” in 3:31 (ἀνωθεν [*anōthen*], the same word as in 3:3). There is another lexical tie to preceding material: The subject of the dispute, *ceremonial washing* (3:25), calls to mind the six stone jars of water changed to wine at the wedding feast in 2:6, put there for “Jewish ceremonial washing.” This section ultimately culminates and concludes ideas begun in chap. 2 and continued in chap. 3. Although the author does not supply details, one scenario would be this: The disciples of John, perplexed after this disagreement with an individual Jew (or with the Jewish authorities), came to John and asked about