



Week 24 Study Questions (4/2/25)
MP3 Bible Study, John 2-4

PZ'S TEXTUAL OBSERVATIONS:

John 2: A very memorable passage and a very out-of-sequence passage here in John 2. The Wedding at Cana is one of Jesus' most famous miracles. Think of the many "water into wine" references you have heard in your life. John calls these miracles "signs" and we will see many of them in his gospel. They are signs that point to Jesus as being the Messiah. Of ecumenical interest is verse 5: "His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'" In a sense, Mary intercedes for the stewards on behalf of Jesus—she is standing between direct communication between them. Interpretations of this verse by our Catholic friends have led to the conclusion that Mary indeed intercedes for Christians in prayer. If we don't feel like we're getting through to Jesus, we can always speak through Mary. Second, you can see a great example of how John is different from the synoptic gospels in chapter 2. Jesus cleanses the temple very early in John. In the synoptics this is one of the final public things Jesus does before his arrest and crucifixion.

John 3: What a first 17 verses here in chapter 3! Perhaps some of the most well-known verses in the entire Bible. Nicodemus is a great name—it is a combination of Nico/Nike, or "champion," and "demos," or "people." So, Nicodemus is literally the "people's champ." Great name 😊. At issue here is what it means to be "born again." And here we have our first example of what I call a "haha" moment in John. There will be many more. A "haha" moment happens when Jesus says something *spiritual* and someone understands him *literally*. Here Jesus tells Nicodemus "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (vs. 3). Nicodemus initial response is "How can one be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" He takes Jesus literally. Haha, his response is funny. Jesus goes onto explain that being born again has to do with being born of "water and the Spirit" (vs. 5). For Lutheran Christians, and many Christians, this means the sacrament of baptism. John 3 suggests that baptism is an inextricable part of the Christian life, no matter when it happens to us. And every day we live in response to our baptism. Every day we live on the promise that "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

John 4: Another memorable story in John . . . the Woman at the Well. By now we will see a pattern in John—he does not necessarily include the same *quantity* of stories about Jesus in his gospel. But, the *quality* of stories is very effective in John. The interactions of Jesus with others are much longer and include much more detail and dialogue than do the stories of Jesus in the synoptic gospels. Samaritans were people of Jewish lineage who stayed behind during the Babylonian captivity and inter-married with Babylonians and Persians. Then, when the Jewish people returned from captivity they looked down on the Samaritans as no longer real Jews. Again, Jesus' mention of "living water" invokes baptism. Another interesting passage is 4:46-54. For all my insistence that the gospel of John is very different from the synoptic gospels, this passage does seem very similar to Jesus' healing the centurion's servant in Matthew 8 and Luke 7.