

John 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 that thou doest, except God be with him.

Analysis

Nicodemus comes 'by night'—whether from fear, secrecy, or practical scheduling, the symbolism is clear in John's light/darkness motif. He comes from darkness toward the Light. His address 'Rabbi' acknowledges Jesus as teacher despite having no formal training (John 7:15). His confession—'we know that thou art a teacher come from God'—recognizes divine attestation through miracles, yet this is insufficient understanding. Nicodemus knows Jesus is from God but doesn't yet know He IS God.

Historical Context

Coming at night protected Nicodemus's reputation but also enabled extended private conversation. Rabbinic tradition valued nighttime Torah study. The 'we' may indicate others among the Pharisees shared his curiosity. His recognition of Jesus' divine mission based on signs represents genuine but incomplete faith.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What aspects of Jesus do people commonly acknowledge while stopping short of full faith?
2. How does Nicodemus's 'we know' reveal that intellectual acknowledgment isn't the same as saving faith?

Interlinear Text

οὗτος ἐλήλυθας πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν
The same **came** **to** ^{G3588} **Jesus** **by night** **and** **said**
G3778 G2064 G4314 G2424 G3571 G2532 G2036

αὐτοῦ Ῥαββί οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐλήλυθας
him **Rabbi** **we know** **that** **from** **God** **came**
G846 G4461 G1492 G3754 G575 G2316 G2064

διδάσκαλος· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα δύναται
a teacher **no man** **for** **these** ^{G3588} **miracles** **can**
G1320 G3762 G1063 G5023 G4592 G1410

ποιεῖς ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς ἐὰν μὴ ἦ ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτοῦ
do **that** **thou** **do** ^{G1437} ^{G3361} **be** ^{G3588} **God** **with** **him**
G4160 G3739 G4771 G4160 G5600 G2316 G3326 G846

Additional Cross-References

Acts 10:38 (References Jesus): How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

John 5:36 (Parallel theme): But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

Acts 2:22 (References Jesus): Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

John 9:16 (References God): Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Matthew 22:16 (References God): And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

John 12:37 (Parallel theme): But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

John 1:38 (References Jesus): Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

John 7:31 (Parallel theme): And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

Judges 6:27 (Parallel theme): Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.