

John Chapter 3 Second Continued

Verses 22-36: This section constitutes John the Baptist's last testimony in this gospel regarding Christ. As his ministry faded away, Jesus' ministry moved to the forefront. In spite of the fact that John the Baptist received widespread fame in Israel and was generally accepted by the common people of the land as well as those who were social outcasts, his testimony regarding Jesus was rejected. Especially by the leaders of Israel.

John 3:22 "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized."

While the previous episode with Nicodemus took place in Jerusalem (2:23), which was part of Judea, the phrase here means that Jesus went out into the rural areas of that region.

(Chapter 4:2), specifically says that Jesus did not personally baptize but that His disciples carried on this work. In John 4:2, we see that Jesus didn't personally baptize,

John 4:2 "(though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)". Jesus preached and His disciples baptized. These country folk seemed to be more acceptable of Jesus than those of the temple.

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

The exact location of this reference is disputed. The phrase may refer to either Salim near Shechem or Salim that is six miles South of Beth-shean. Both are in the region of Samaria. Aenon is a transliterated Hebrew word meaning "springs", and both these possible sites have plenty of water.

We see here that John the Baptist was still preaching repentance and pointing them to the Savior. Possibly thousands of people were baptized by John, and the fact that abundant water was there would be important.

John did not go and join Jesus' group because that was not what God called him to do. He was to proclaim the coming of Messiah and tell those who didn't know that He was here.

John 3:24 "For John was not yet cast into prison."

This provides another indication that John supplemented the synoptic gospels by providing additional information that helps further understanding of the movements of John the Baptist and Jesus.

In Matthew and Mark, Christ's temptation is followed by John's imprisonment. With this phrase, John the apostle fills in the slot between Jesus' baptism and temptation and the Baptist's imprisonment.

John had spoken boldly about Herod taking his brother's wife, Herodias, as his wife. He went so far as to tell them that they were living in adultery.

John would be cast into prison and lose his head for this accusation.

John 3:25 “Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.”

The town that John was in was probably pretty close to Jerusalem, since this question arose. This ceremonial cleansing with the Jews was very important and this seemed to be what the discussion was about.

Jesus had taught that what went on in the heart was much more important than these washings from without. To receive Jesus, there had to be a change of heart. The spirit of man (within), was what had to be clean. The cleansed heart brought good things to surface.

The Levitical law contained many ordinances to washing the outward flesh. I guess if there was one basic difference in the law and grace, it is the difference in flesh and spirit. Jesus looked on the inside of man. The law looked on the outside.

Washing away your sins with baptism is the baptism of repentance and has to do with the past. The baptism of the Spirit changes man from within.

The real underlying impetus however centered in the concern of John's disciples that Jesus was in competition with him.

This next section of verses 25-36 may be divided into 3 parts which highlight the significance of what was occurring in relationship to John's and Jesus' ministry:

- 1) John the Baptist constituted the end of the old age in (verses 25-29);
- (2) the transition to Jesus' ministry in (verse 30); and
- (3) Jesus' ministry as constituting the beginning of the new age in verses (31-36).

Instead of jealousy, John exhibited humble faithfulness to the superiority of Jesus' persona and ministry.

John 3:26 “And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.”

This is meaning John's disciples came to him. Rabbi is a name of great importance. Jesus was called by this name by those who had great respect for Him. The strange thing to understand here is that John's disciples knew that John spoke of Jesus as Messiah. Why did they not follow Jesus?

Perhaps it was loyalty to John, but John's mission was to open up the way for Jesus the Christ (Messiah). These disciples are disappointed that more people are being baptized by Jesus' disciples.

The potential conflict between John and Jesus was heightened by the fact that both were engaged in ministry in close proximity to one another. Because baptism is mentioned in (verse 22), Jesus may have been close to Jericho near the fords of the Jordan, while John was a short distance North baptizing at Aenon. John's followers were especially disturbed by the fact that so many were flocking to Jesus whereas formerly they had come to John.

John 3:27 “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”

John is telling his disciples here that he has done the job that God gave him to do. He is not supposed to do more. His mission is complete. Ministers of today should look at this. John is not jealous of Jesus. John has done the job that God gave him to do.

This verse emphasizes God's sovereign authority in granting ministry opportunity.

Everyone who has ever been called to do anything for God should do exactly what they are called to do, nothing more and nothing less. We should never compare ourselves with others' calls. Their call is different. We must do what God called us to do and not someone else's job. It may be great or small. Whatever it is, it is our job.

John 3:28 “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.”

John, half-reprimanding his disciples, says “I told you that I was preparing you for the Messiah (Christ)”.

John quickly tells them “I told you from the beginning that I am not Messiah. I was sent as a messenger to tell of Him and to make the road open for everyone to receive Him when He came. You know that is what I said; you are my witness that is all that I said.”

John 3:29 “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

We see here, John giving them an earthly example so that they will understand. The friend here is like the best man at the wedding. He helps prepare for the wedding and gets everything ready for the wedding, but the groom and bride are the main participants.

The friend must step aside when the wedding actually begins. This friend found his greatest joy in watching the ceremony proceed without problems.

We know that this Scripture has a deeper meaning than just the surface. Most likely John was also alluding to Old Testament passages where faithful Israel is depicted as the bride or the Lord (Isa. 62:4-5; Jer. 2:2; Hosea 2:16-20).

The bride is the church; those who receive Jesus as Savior are the bride. Jesus is the bridegroom. John rejoiced because his message was true.

John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."

John is saying "This is the one that I prepared the way for. Now that He is here, I must step aside and let Him take over". John is saying the messenger is not as important as the message. When the message arrives, the messenger's job is done.

In (verses 31:36) John the Baptist gives 5 reasons for Christ's superiority to him:

- (1) Christ had a heavenly origin (verse 31);
- (2) Christ knew what was true by firsthand experience (verse 32);
- (3) Christ's testimony always agreed with God (verse 33);
- (4) Christ experienced the Holy Spirit in an unlimited manner (verse 34);
- (5) Christ was supreme because the Father sovereignty had granted that status to Him (verse 35).

John 3:31-32 "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony."

These verses bring together several of the themes from the entire chapter. From the immediate context, John explained why Jesus the incarnate Word must become greater, i.e., He alone is "from above" (heavenly origin) and therefore "above all."

John says here "I am an earthly body, and all I can tell you about is the earth, but Jesus is the Word who took on flesh. This Jesus can tell you all about heaven, because He has been living in heaven. He (Jesus), is above me. He is my God."

He, Jesus, has firsthand knowledge of heaven, the heavenly beings, and the throne of God. He was there. Jesus does not tell you of things He believes. He tells you of things He knows. He has seen these things with His own eyes, and heard the things He tells you with His own ears.

Men do not believe Him, because they do not know who He is, God the Son. Even though the Scriptures have prophesied His coming for so many years, now that He is here, they do not believe Him.

John could not reveal heaven's counsel like Jesus, the God-Man.

John 3:33 “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”

Those who have received Him, have received the Truth of God. God's promises always come about. Those who believe Jesus Christ of Nazareth is Messiah the Savior have their names written in the Lamb's book of life.

John 3:34 “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

Jesus was completely filled with the Spirit. Every gift of the Spirit was active in Jesus. It tells it the very way it is in Colossians.

Colossians 2:9 “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

God gave the Spirit to the Son without limits.

You see, Jesus was God the Word, who became God the Son. We call Him Jesus because His purpose on the earth was to be our Jehovah Savior.

John 3:35 “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”

In (Matthew 11:27), the Lord Jesus says that all things were given unto Him. John the Baptist heard the voice from heaven say “This is my beloved Son”.

John has heard of the miracles that Jesus has done which was not part of John's ministry as well. He knows who this is.

John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

We read this very same meaning in (Romans 10:9-10). Believeth, as we have said before, has a much deeper meaning than what we see on the surface here. Believeth means continues to believe in the face of all kinds of hardships.

Jesus expresses Himself later in this book of John by saying “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 4:16). We have discussed how the breath of life within us was placed there by God. Believing has to do with being willing to be obedient to God. If we believe, then we will follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

He is Truth, Happiness, Joy, Knowledge, Love, and a million other really good things. How could we be such a fool to turn down all of that by saying we do not believe. It is so simple to truly believe way down deep in our heart and then confess that belief to others.

I want to say one thing here that might not relate too closely, but I believe it is a point. Adam and Eve were in the garden where the Tree of life was. The Tree of life (Jesus), was available to

them. It was in the center of the garden. Had they eaten of the Tree of life (Jesus), they would have lived forever.

They ate around the edge of the garden. They didn't take the trouble to go to the center of the garden. Christians (so called), stop nibbling at the edge of the garden. Make Jesus (the Tree of life), the center of your life and you too, will acquire everlasting life.

This constitutes a fitting climax to the chapter. John the Baptist laid out two alternatives, genuine faith and defiant disobedience, thereby bringing to the forefront the threat of looming judgment. As John faded from the forefront, he offered an invitation to faith in the Son and clearly expressed the ultimate consequence of failure to believe, i.e. "the wrath of God."

John 3 Second Continued Questions

1. What were Jesus and His men doing in the land of Judea?
2. Did Jesus actually baptize?
3. Who was baptizing at Aenon?
4. Why did they choose that spot?
5. In verse 24, we know that what awaits John?
6. What were the questions that arose between Jesus' disciples and John's disciples?
7. Jesus taught that the purifying that was necessary was what?
8. What is the difference between the law and Jesus' teaching?
9. What honorable name did John's disciples call him?
10. What slight exaggeration did John's disciple make?
11. What was John's mission God gave him?
12. Where are the orders given for anyone who is called to the ministry?
13. What did John remind his disciples of in verse 28?
14. Who is the bridegroom symbolic of in verse 29?
15. Who is the bridegroom's friend?
16. Why was John rejoicing that Jesus had the greater number of followers?

17. In verse 30, what does John say about himself and Jesus?
18. Which is more important, the message or the messenger?
19. Who is above all?
20. Why can Jesus tell so well about heavenly things?
21. What have those done who received Jesus' testimony?
22. Who is the only one who ever was filled completely with the Spirit on earth?
23. In Colossians 2:9, what do we learn of Jesus?
24. Who gave all things into Jesus' hands?
25. How did John know that God the Father loved Jesus?
26. He that believeth on the Son hath _____.
27. What abideth on him that believes not?
28. What causes us to be obedient to God?
29. Where was the Tree of Life located in the Garden of Eden?
30. What lesson can we Christians learn from the location of the Tree?