



John the Baptist on Jesus

John 3:22-36

Notes: The *Life Application Commentary* was used as a reference in developing this Bible Study. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

3:22-23 – Who was baptizing and where were they?

Jesus' disciples were baptizing in Judea while John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon near Salim which was probably northern Samaria. We know that Jesus Himself did not baptize because of John 4:2.

Do you think there was a difference between the baptism of John and that of Jesus' disciples?

We know that John's baptism prepared the way for people to come to the Messiah so it is reasonable to assume that the baptism of Jesus' disciples was the same: repenting of their sins in preparation for receiving the Messiah into their lives and entering into His kingdom.

3:24 – When were these baptisms taking place?

These baptisms took place early in the ministry of Jesus prior to John the Baptist being thrown into prison.

3:25 – What dispute came up?

The disciples of John were disgruntled over more people going to Jesus to be baptized than to John. This is similar to the encounter Jesus had with the chief priests and scribes when they challenged Jesus' authority to teach:

Luke 20:3-8

3 But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and answer Me:

4 "The baptism of John-- was it from heaven or from men?"

5 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?'

6 "But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet."

7 So they answered that they did not know where it was from.

8 And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

These priests would not allow themselves to admit what they knew to be the truth because it was counter to their personal agenda.

How did the Jews in general view purification?

The Jews pursued purification from their sins through the sacrifices and washings prescribed by the Mosaic Law.

What was the problem with the view most Jews had of purification?

The Jews had come to believe that purification was a matter of human effort. The Ceremonial Law had become a ritual that did not require humility before God.

What do you think the Jewish religious leaders thought of John's preaching the need for simple repentance requiring public baptism?

The Jewish religious leaders no-doubt dismissed John's teaching as being an unacceptable form of purification. John was boldly challenging the religiosity of the times and that was an affront to the authority of the Jewish religious leaders.

What did the fact that John's message was well received tell us about the Jewish religious system?

The people saw through the superficial ritual and were hungry for an inner purity that could not be provided by ceremonial washing.

How do people today have a spiritual life without reality?

People who believed they are saved because they go to church, attend Bible studies, or do religious service are essentially in league with the Jewish religious leaders. This is a salvation by works... the proper motivation is to work because we are saved, not to work to be saved.

3:26 – What did John's disciples grumble about?

Their competitive spirit was seen in their grumbling about people leaving John to go to Jesus.

What was the problem with the disciples of John?

The disciples of John were caught up in their movement and had lost sight of their mission. They should not have been dismayed over people going to Jesus, they were supposed to. John had identified Jesus as the Messiah, his disciples were either not listening or refused to believe.

Why did John the Baptist continue to baptize after Jesus came on the scene?

God had given John his work, he still had a mission to point people to Christ.

How could the competitiveness demonstrated by the disciples of John become a problem in the church today?

1. We need to be on our guard not to forget the primary focus of our ministry: to exalt Christ and point people to Him.
2. We need to remember that others have the same commission that we do.
3. We need to be careful not to let our pride damage the mission God has called us to.
4. We should recognize that envy or bitter comparisons make us ineffective.

3:27 – How did John explain why the followers of Jesus were growing while his were shrinking?

John knew his place in God’s plan and knew where to give glory where glory was due – this was the work of God!

How should we respond when we hear someone is being effective as a servant of Christ?

We should respond the same way as John and give them an exuberant endorsement.

Is success the mark of God’s blessing or approval?

No, this would limit God to fulfilling our expectations of success. God calls us to be successful where we are within the constraints that we have. We are not called to carry out someone else’s plan but should focus on what God has called us to do through His Word. Trying to live up to the expectations of our neighbors or our culture will doom us to failure.

3:28 – Why did John have to keep reiterating that he was not the Messiah?

John needed to reinforce the distinctions between himself, a prophet, and the Messiah who was God’s Anointed who would save believers.

3:29 – What metaphor did John employ to depict how he saw his relationship with the Messiah?

John referred to himself as the bridegroom’s friend, or in today’s vernacular, the best man. Thus all the attention should be paid to the Bridegroom and His bride.

Where do you think John got this metaphor of the bridegroom, bride, and best man from?

In the Old Testament, God was referred to as a bridegroom and His people His bride... for example:

Isaiah 62:5 - For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Where else do we find the use of the analogy of God being the bridegroom?

Jesus referred to Himself as the bridegroom and used this analogy to explain why His followers were so joyful:

Matthew 9:15 - And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Jesus used this analogy in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins to admonish us to be ready for His return (Matthew 25). Paul used this illustration to help us better understand the relationship of the church to God:

2 Corinthians 11:2 - For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

The book of Revelation uses this analogy to describe the celebration we’ll have in Heaven when the church is united with the Lord:

Revelation 19:7 - "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Why did God use the bridegroom analogy?

God used this metaphor to express anger and disappointment over His people rebelling against Him and to show His longsuffering and faithful love.

3:30 – How did John reveal his similarity to Jesus in this verse?

John’s willingness to decrease for the cause of Christ demonstrated his unusual humility.

What is the difference between a false humility and the healthy humility modeled by John?

John was not saying he was nothing but identified himself in relation to the most important person in his life. The more Jesus was recognized, the more John could enjoy his own success.

How should we have the proper attitude of humility in our own lives?

We need to be persistent in doing what God has called us to do being realistic about what we can and can not do and see ourselves in relation to God’s greatness.

3:31 – What does this verse tell us about who John believed Jesus was?

This verse revealed John’s belief that Jesus was God because He came from heaven and this gave Him preeminence over him.

What other distinction did John make between himself and Jesus?

John recognized that he was a man of the earth that could only speak of earthly things whereas Jesus was uniquely qualified to speak of heaven.

Why is there redundancy in this verse: “He who comes from above is above all... He who comes from heaven is above all?”

The repetition is worshipful but the minor change does give us cause to look at this more closely: His being from above indicates His divine nature and His being from heaven shows that He is timeless, being outside the confines of time and thus has always existed.

3:32 – What did Jesus testify about?

Since John was from the earth, he could only speak of earthly things but Jesus was from above so He could speak of spiritual things... Jesus spoke about what He heard from the Father:

John 8:28 - Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.

What does it mean that no one receives the testimony of Jesus?

No one accepted all that Jesus had to say during His ministry. The people expected the Messiah to be a political deliverer like Moses so they did not receive His testimony. And the disciples were surprised at His resurrection despite Jesus teaching them about it. It wasn't until Pentecost that the disciples finally understood the testimony of Jesus due to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

3:33 – What did those who did receive the testimony of Jesus come to believe?

When people did receive the testimony of Jesus, they certified that God was true and the Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah.

What does it mean that “they certified that God is true?”

Those that received the testimony of Jesus tested it and found it to be true. Everything Jesus said was consistent with the prior revelation God had given us of Himself in the Old Testament. Also everything Scripture told about the coming of the Messiah was found in Jesus.

3:34 – Who does Jesus speak for?

Jesus is the One God has sent and He speaks the words of God.

How was Jesus able to speak the words of God?

Jesus always had the presence of the Holy Spirit so He was always in touch with the Father despite His being limited by a mortal human body.

What does it mean that God does not give the Spirit by measure?

Some believe that there is an anointing or filling of the Holy Spirit that occurs after they've been baptized in the Holy

Spirit. Those who believe this generally believe that this second phase of receiving the Holy Spirit is manifest with the ability to speak in tongues or other miraculous signs. But Jesus says here that when a person has the presence of the Holy Spirit, that there is no partial presence, it is all or none. No the Bible does speak of filling of the Holy Spirit but this speaks of our responsiveness to the Holy Spirit.

3:35 – What authority does Jesus have on earth?

The Father gave Jesus all authority on the earth.

How could Satan offer Jesus all the kingdoms of the world per Matthew 4:8?

Jesus acknowledged that Satan was the, “*ruler of this world*” in John 14:30 and 16:11 but this is a temporary thing. Jesus voluntarily limited Himself so that He could perform His mission to pay the penalty for our sins (Philippians 2:5-8). Satan had wanted Jesus to break from God's plan and timing.

3:36 – Do believers need to wait until the judgment to see if they have eternal life?

No, he who believes in the Son, has, as in present ownership, eternal life.

How is it that eternal life begins as the moment you believe in Jesus?

As we saw during our study of being born-again, our spirit is resurrected at that time. From God, perspective, who sees us from outside the confines of time, we are with Him in eternity.

What does it mean to not believe the Son?

The person who does not believe rejects the testimony of Jesus and disobeys God.

Why is it so important to understand who Jesus is?

When we understand who Jesus is, we are compelled to believe what He said. If we accept Jesus as only a prophet or teacher, we actually are rejecting His teaching because He clearly claimed to be God Himself.

What happens to non-believers?

Non-believers will not experience eternal life and will endure God's wrath.

What is God's Wrath?

Wrath is another word for anger. God will be angry with them and so they will suffer punishment as a result.

Since God punishes unbelievers, does that mean that God is cruel?

No, God is righteous and just. Those who spend their lives rejecting their Creator and not giving any thought to eternity will face the consequences.