

Further Testimony from John the Baptist

John 3:22-36

John 3:22-36 - *“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. ²⁴ For John had not yet been thrown into prison.*

²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!”

²⁷ John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ ²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. ³¹ He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. ³³ He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. ³⁴ For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Background Notes

“After these things, Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea.” After what things? After His conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord and his disciples moved out of Jerusalem into other parts of Judea, prior to the Lord’s great Galilean ministry.

John the Baptist had not yet been thrown into prison. Two baptism ministries were going on at this time. John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim. We don’t know where this place was, but possibly it was closer to the central part of the land, because verse 23 says there was “much water” there. John’s baptism was not “Christian baptism.” It was a “baptism unto repentance” that prepared the people for the coming kingdom of God.

Meanwhile the Lord and His disciples were involved in a ministry of baptism as well. John 4:1-2 makes it clear that the Lord Himself didn’t baptize anyone: *“the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples.”* Again, this was not Christian baptism. Christian baptism was instituted after the Lord’s resurrection. So this baptism was the similar to John’s baptism, a testimony of repentance, preparing the people for the kingdom of God.

What was involved in the dispute about purification that arose between John's disciples and some Jews (some translations say a Jew). These Jews were probably from an ultra-orthodox sect like the Essenes. The Essenes practiced frequent ceremonial immersions for purification. The dispute probably arose because their baptism was a different form than John's baptism.

John the Baptist's disciples became somewhat upset (v26), and in essence they reported to John that Jesus was "stealing the show"! "John, you know that Jesus that you baptized? Now everyone is going to **Him** to be baptized! They aren't coming to us anymore!"

It was at this point that John the Baptist gave his wonderful testimony to the supremacy of Jesus Christ: "**He must increase, but I must decrease**" (v30). John acknowledged that his role was a support role - and he was content with that position!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. People who don't believe the words of Jesus don't believe in the God of the Bible.

A lot of people today say that they believe in God, but they disagree with some of the things that Jesus said. They say they believe in God, but they can't believe in the eternal hell that Jesus talked about. They say they believe in God, but they can't agree that man is basically a sinner by nature, as Jesus taught. They say they believe in God, but they certainly can't accept the idea that Jesus is the only way of salvation, as Jesus Himself taught.

Well, these people may believe in some kind of "God" - but they don't believe in the God of the Bible! Look again at what John the Baptist said about the words of Jesus: "*He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand*"(v31-35).

In other words, John the Baptist said: I'm only from the earth – I'm speaking earthly things. Jesus is from above! He came from heaven! He is supreme, and He is telling us things that are straight from heaven. He's telling us the words of God. "*He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.*" He is the beloved Son of God, and the Father shares everything with the Son.

"*He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true*" (v33). If you believe Jesus' words, you agree with God, the one true God, the God of the Bible. To put it another way, if you don't believe Jesus' words, you don't agree with God. You don't agree with the God of the Bible. Your "God" is another God. Your "God" is a God of your own imagination.

People who won't believe the words of Jesus don't believe in the God of the Bible. In John 8, when some Pharisees came to Jesus they claimed, "We believe in God! We are of our father Abraham!" Do you remember what Jesus said to them? If you don't accept Me, **you don't believe in God!** "*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*"

That is very striking! Jesus was not talking to pagans - He was talking to the most orthodox of Jews! People who don't believe the words of Jesus don't believe in the God of the Bible.

2. The wrath of God abides on the unbeliever.

"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"(v36). He who believes in the Son has everlasting life – that's the good news! And by the way, the person who believes starts to have everlasting life **right away!**

But "*he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*" That's the sad news. The wrath, the judgment, of God abides on those who do not trust Christ. Notice - it doesn't say that the wrath of God will "start to abide" on that person when he rejects Jesus, or that God's wrath will judge that person when he or she dies. No, it says the wrath of God is **already** abiding upon that person. The same truth is taught back in verse 18: "*He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" The person who refuses to believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God.

Here's an illustration. Think of a huge dam that's holding back a vast amount of water, and it's only a matter of time before the dam will break. In the illustration, label that stored-up water "The Wrath of God." Meanwhile, people are living below the dam. They don't realize the danger, but we're trying to warn them to leave their homes, get to higher ground, get to safety, because it's only a matter of time before this dam is going to break and they will perish. They are already abiding beneath the water behind the dam. The waters are already abiding above them. In order to be saved, they must believe the warning message - and they must take action!

Like the floodwaters behind the dam, the wrath of God already abides over those who don't believe. Escape from the wrath of God is available, but unbelievers must do something. To be saved from that wrath, they must believe the message of salvation and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. The wrath of God abides on the unbeliever.

Practical Applications

1. What do you have that you did not receive?

1 Corinthians 4:7: *“For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”* This is essentially what John the Baptist said: *“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven”* (v27).

John the Baptist recognized that he had been given the role of forerunner to the Messiah, and he was content with that role. Are you satisfied with what God has given to you? John the Baptist was content with the work God had assigned to him, because he knew that was God's will.

Everything that we have has been given to us. We can't take credit for one single thing that we've been given - that's what the Scripture is saying. So why are we proud of ourselves? Why do we boast? Why do we think so highly of ourselves? If you have a good head on your shoulders, why are you so proud of your intelligence? You didn't create it – it's God-given! Or if you're a good athlete, why do you strut around, taking credit for your success? God gave you that athletic ability!

In fact, **everything** we have has been given to us! Why is that truth is so hard for us to learn? John the Baptist practiced this truth; he accepted what God had given him. He wasn't jealous of those who had a different role, and he didn't boast about the special role he had.

What about us? What do you have that you didn't receive?

2. Do you know the secret of joy?

John the Baptist did! He knew that the secret of joy is found in submitting to the will of God. Look at verse 29: *“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.”* In this wedding illustration, even though John was only the “best man” and Jesus was “the groom,” John the Baptist's joy was full, because the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, was rightfully recognized. And John rejoiced that he had a role in proclaiming Jesus as Messiah.

It didn't matter to John that Jesus' ministry was growing larger and John's ministry was shrinking. It didn't matter to John that he was no longer in the spotlight, or that the crowds were now following Jesus. For John, it was *“he must increase, I must decrease.”*

John had joy! He knew the secret! . He **accepted the will of God** for his life. He **submitted to the will of God** for his life. He **adjusted to the will of God** for his life. That's the secret of joy! Do you know the secret of joy?