



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 3:22-36: Further Testimony from John the Baptist

"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? Primarily, it was after the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in the earlier part of John 3. This dialogue took place in Jerusalem, in Judea. Now the Lord was moving out into wider circles in Judea, prior to His great Galilean ministry.

John had not yet been thrown into prison. Two ministries of baptizing were going on at this time. John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim. Possibly this place was near Shechem in the central part of the land, because verse 23 says there was much water there, but we can't be sure. John's baptism was not Christian baptism. It was a "baptism unto repentance," preparing 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."* Here again, this was not Christian baptism. Christian baptism was instituted after the Lord's resurrection. So this baptism was similar to John's baptism, a baptism unto repentance, preparing the people for the kingdom of God.

What was the dispute that arose between John's disciples and some Jews (or some translations say *a Jew*) about purification. This Jew (or Jews) probably were from an ultra-orthodox sect like the Essenes, who practiced ceremonial baptism for purification. It was a different form of baptism than John's, so that's why a dispute arose.

In verse 26 the disciples of John were somewhat upset, and they reported to John that Jesus was "stealing the show"! "John, you know that Jesus that you baptized? Well, 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 as to the supremacy of Jesus Christ: "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (v30). John acknowledged that his role was a supportive 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.

There are a lot of people today who would tell you 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 an 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 it is not the God of the Bible. Look at what John says 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. 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*"(v31-35). In other words, John was saying: I am only from the earth -- I am speaking earthly things. Jesus is from above -- He came from heaven, He is supreme, and He is telling us things straight from heaven. He is telling us the words of God. "*For 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, the Father has told Him everything.

Once again, verse 33, "*He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.*" In other words, if you believe Jesus' words, you agree with God, the true God, the God of the Bible. Or 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 don't believe the words of Jesus don't believe in the God of the Bible. When the Pharisees came to Jesus in John 8, they claimed, "We believe in God! We are of our father Abraham!" Do you know what Jesus said to them? If you don't accept Me, you **don't** believe in God! John 8:44: "*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 orthodox 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 is the good news! And by the way, the person who believes will start to have everlasting life **right now!**

But *"he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* That is the sad news. The wrath of God abides on those who do not trust Christ. Notice that it doesn't say that the wrath of God will "start to abide" on that person when he rejects Jesus -- no, it says the wrath of God **already** abides on 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. 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, and we're trying to warn them to leave their homes, get to higher ground, get to safety; it's only a matter of time before this dam is going to break. They are abiding beneath the waters, the waters are already abiding on them -- they must get out.

In the same way, escape from the wrath of God is available, but unbelievers must do something. They must get out from under that wrath -- because, like the floodwaters, the wrath of God is already abiding over them. 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 said in verse 27: *"A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven."*

John 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 what he was given, 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 have -- so why are we proud? Why do we boast? That's what the Scripture is saying. If you're a good athlete, why are you strutting around? Your athletic ability was given to you by God. If you have a good head on your shoulders, why are you so proud of your intelligence? It was given to you by God.

Everything we have has been given to us! 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 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 was to submit 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. Why? Because the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, was rightfully recognized.

It didn't matter to John that Jesus' ministry was growing and John's was shrinking. It didn't matter to John that he was no longer in the limelight. For John, it was "*he must increase, I must decrease.*"

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