

# The Gospel of John

## Chapter 3:22-36

*January 26, 1997*

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**
  - Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
  - Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
  - Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- **Review & Introduction**

We saw last week that Jesus plainly taught that it was the immeasurable love of God that brought Christ into the world and allowed Him to die on a cross. Belief is the mark that differentiates those who are saved by the work of Christ and those who will experience the wrath of God.

This week concludes chapter three with a dispute which arises over the waning fame of John as the multitudes begin following Christ.

- **Exposition**

### **John 3:22-36**

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

- Jesus and His disciples baptized many of His followers in the region of Judea while John and his followers baptized many in the region North of Judea. It is rather curious to notice that Jesus is baptizing His followers. Although later in chapter 4:1, John specifically states that Jesus Himself did not baptize but His followers did. Clearly though, Jesus was present and He affirmed the baptisms. As we recall that the first followers of Jesus were actually followers of John, these disciples simply carried out the baptisms which they had embraced while following John. The baptisms by the followers of Jesus were much like the baptisms of John in that these baptisms were those of repentance, purification and preparation for the coming of the kingdom of God.

*25 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.<sup>26</sup> 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!"*

- The Greek grammar of the first verse indicates that the dispute arose between a specific Jew rather than all of the Jews. There are a number of options as to what the specific dispute was over. The followers of John were probably informed by the Jew(s) of the fact that the multitudes were following Jesus down in Judea and that He was baptizing just like John was. His followers probably attempted to refute Jesus' authority to do these things because he was not of the Levitical priesthood like John was.
- It becomes evident that the followers of John did not fully understand what his ministry was all about. They become jealous for the fame of their leader when they see that the multitudes are turning and following Jesus and not John. John's followers are lead by their fondness of John rather than their theology. If they had fully understood the message of their leader they probably should have been following Jesus too.

*27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven."<sup>28</sup> "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'<sup>29</sup> "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.<sup>30</sup> "He must increase, but I must decrease.*

- John's first response is to establish two primary points with regard to the relative ministries of Christ and himself. The first is that his ministry is one given to him by God and, as such, he could not complain about its fruitfulness or its objectives. In addition, John defends that Christ's ministry is from God and not one that He devised apart from the providence of heaven.
- John reminds these misguided followers that he had plainly declared that he was not the Christ and that Jesus was the Christ. John was the shadow and Jesus was the reality. Once the reality appears, it is greater than the shadow.
- John uses a marriage analogy to depict his relationship to Christ and indirectly the relationship between Christ and the Bride. Notice that John clearly states that he is not the bridegroom but Christ is. John is the "best man" or "friend of the groom". Although the friend rejoices with the joy of the groom, the friend has no relationship with the bride except as a

friendly observer.

- Who exactly is the bride? Consider Revelation 21:1-13 and we will see that the Bride, the wife of the Lamb is the New Jerusalem. What exactly is the New Jerusalem? In Hebrews 12:18-24 we see the New Jerusalem described as the "church of the firstborn who are registered in Heaven" and in Galatians 4:21-31 we see that the heavenly Jerusalem is composed of those who are of the covenant resembled by Sarah, not Hagar, that is, those who are freed from the bondage of their sin. Therefore we see that the Bride of the Lamb is the New Jerusalem which is the Church.

**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.<sup>32</sup> "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.<sup>33</sup> "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.**

- Although John was a righteous man and discharged his ministry well, he knew that Jesus was the Son of God and as such, was clearly greater than he. The message that John proclaimed was given to him by God. In contrast, Christ's message was a testimony to the things He has seen, heard and experienced because this was the Son of God descended from heaven. John is rebuking his followers for not following and receiving the testimony of Christ. Their loyalty to him was a rejection of the message of Christ and a testimony that God is a liar. Therefore, they should not quibble about the relative popularity of John and Jesus and they should go and worship Christ.
- In a similar way, we testify today of the Lordship of Christ and His authority not ours. We need no authority to validate this message other than the Word which has already had its authority validated. Our mission is to point people to Christ, His work on the cross and to His resurrection from the dead (all according to the Scriptures) not to point them to us.

**34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.<sup>35</sup> "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.<sup>36</sup> "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." NKJV**

- John the Baptist has his theology very clear at this point. Jesus was sent by the Father and speaks the very words of God. This is different from John who, although he had a heavenly message, did not carry the same authority that Christ did.
- God does not give the Spirit by measure; either someone has the Spirit of God dwelling in them or they don't. You can't be low on the Spirit and need to be refilled. The Spirit of God is not a power like electricity or like a fluid that can leak out. The Spirit is a *person*. Either He dwells in you permanently because you have been sealed by Him or he does not dwell in you.