

“The Gospel of John: Knowing Your Place”

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Scripture

John 3:22-36

“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there **He was spending time with them and baptizing**. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized-- for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

25Therefore there arose **a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification**. 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.**" John answered and said, "**A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.**" You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, I am not the Christ, but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' "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**. So, this joy of mine has been made full. **He must increase, but I must decrease.**

31"**He who comes from above is above all**, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. "**For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.**

"The Father loves the Son and **has given all things into His hand**. "**He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

Overview of the Gospels

- **Matthew** -> **Jewish flavor to the writing, portraying Jesus as the Christ and King**
- **Mark** -> **Jesus as the “Son of Man”, really Peter’s Gospel for the Gentiles**
- **Luke** -> **Jesus is Human and the Redeemer of Humanity**
- **John** -> **Jesus is the Divine “Son of God”**

Why Write the Gospel?

Matthew, Mark and Luke’s Gospels were already around. Why another one?

The Purpose for John’s Gospel

John 20:30-31

“Therefore, **many other signs Jesus also performed** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name.”

Many events in John not recorded elsewhere

Jesus Leads in Ministry

John 3:22-24

“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there **He was spending time with them and baptizing**. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized-- for John had not yet been thrown into prison.”

Jesus was **spending time** with His disciples **(he tarried with them – KJV)**

Mark 3:13-14

“And He went up on the mountain and summoned those **whom He Himself wanted**, and they came to Him, and He appointed twelve, **so that they would be with Him** and that He could send them out to preach.”

He desires to spend time with us **while we're here on earth!**

Jeremiah 29:13

“You will seek Me and find Me **when you search for Me with all your heart.**”

James 4:8

“Draw near to God and **He will draw near to you**”

He also desires to spend time with us **after we leave the earth:**

John 14:3

“If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**, that where I am, there you may be also.”

We learn:

“...there **He was spending time with them and baptizing**”

Jesus's Ministry **included baptism?**

Yes, but:

John 4:1-2

“Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (**although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were**)”

People were coming to Jesus, but His disciples were doing the baptism

What was John the Baptist's primary ministry? -> Baptism!

Ut-oh... Competition!

John's Disciples Question Jesus's Ministry

John 3:25-26

"Therefore, there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. 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.**"

"Purification" -> a ritualistic symbolism for a spiritual cleansing

Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born of the water AND the Spirit. That teaching had reached the Jews!

"**He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him**"

- "Hey Pastor, the church down the street has a lot more cars in the parking lot than we do!"
- "We're losing people to another church!"

What do you think about competition in ministry?

Do you compare attendance and wish that more would come to our church?

John the Baptist was part of the old covenant, and Jesus brought in the new covenant.

John was the last Old Testament prophet

What was John's baptism all about?

Luke 3:15-16

"Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "**As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**"

John baptized in water for "the repentance for the forgiveness of sins" – water baptism (Luke 3:3).

- Would have to have multiple baptisms, continually being cleansed from sins (like a sacrifice)

Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit – spiritual baptism – a single, once for all, event with everlasting effect.

Acts 18:24-26

"Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, **being acquainted only with the baptism of John**; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and **explained to him the way of God more accurately.**"

Apollos only knew about the OT but didn't understand the significance of spiritual life.

Apollos was fervent in spirit (lowercase s) but needed to have the indwelling of the Spirit (uppercase S).

Jesus was explaining this to Nicodemus with "you must be born from above" (again) and "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)

John Knows His Place

John 3:27

"John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven."

True ministry is God-ordained and God-focused. It is heaven sent.

God controls the growth and success of the ministry.

Nicodemus agreed with this in principle:

John 3:2

Nicodemus said, "No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" -> Ministry is given by God!

The Twelve were concerned about competition:

Mark 9:38-40

"John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. "For he who is not against us is for us."

Paul taught about competition in ministry:

1 Corinthians 3:5-15

"What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. **I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.** Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but **each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.** For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, **which is Jesus Christ.**

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. **If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss"**

A man's ministry will be tested and evaluated in the end.

"Each man must be careful how he builds upon it" -> this is a note specific to evangelists, pastor-teachers

Ministry may look successful on the earth with lots of attendees, but if he builds on Christ with a bunch of worthless and earthly junk (wood, hay, and straw)

We'll talk a good bit about this concept during our Sunday evening services on Jude and False Teachers.

John 3:28-29

"You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' "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.** So, this joy of mine **has been made full.**"

The best man at the wedding has great joy in what the groom is receiving on his wedding day, a glorious bride!

John, as the friend of the bridegroom, is overjoyed at the bridegroom's arrival.

You remember the beginning of John's life? (Luke 1:41-44; 57-66)

John, in his mother Elizabeth's womb, **leapt for joy** when he heard the Virgin Mary's voice

Now, John again is filled with joy at the end of his ministry -> this is the completion of John's ministry.

How many of you are filled with joy with your personal ministry?

John's life was a secluded and difficult one, yet from beginning to end, he was filled with joy. Great testimony!

John 3:30

"**He must increase, but I must decrease.**"

Increase – *auxano* -> "to grow" as in "a growing authority of a teacher and the number of his adherents"

Decrease – *elato'o* -> "to make less" as in "to decrease in authority and popularity"

Jesus would become a greater ministry focus than John, as John would give his head for his teaching and confrontation of Herod -> Matthew 14:1-12

Matthew 11:11

Jesus said "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there **has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!** Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

John willingly gave way to Jesus's coming ministry -> John was the forerunner and knew his work would fade

John was humble enough to recognize his place in God's kingdom and who the real focus was on!

Jesus Provides More than John

John 3:31

“**He who comes from above is above all**, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

John was born on the earth from the earth -> Jesus was from above – eternally from heaven

There is a superior priority at play here. Jesus’s ministry would be greater than John’s ministry.

John 3:32-35

“What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. **For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.**

"The Father loves the Son and **has given all things into His hand.**

Why was Jesus’s ministry greater than John’s ministry?

- 1) Jesus was from Heaven
- 2) Jesus had first-hand experience of Heaven
- 3) Jesus was aligned perfectly with God the Father
- 4) Jesus brought forth the Spirit
- 5) God the Father gave all things into Jesus’s hands

Isaiah 11:1-5 (The announcement of the Messiah)

“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. **The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him**, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD and **He will delight in the fear of the LORD**, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But **with righteousness He will judge** the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also, righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist.”

The Messiah was promised to be the Righteous Son, perfectly aligned with the Father and the Spirit

The Main Point of John 3

John 3:36

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 3 is about Salvation from the wrath of God to come.

There are five kinds of God’s wrath in the Bible: this wrath is eternal separation from God

The only way to avoid the wrath of God is to come to Jesus in faith, truly believe, and receive the Spirit

Nicodemus (and therefore Israel) didn't understand how to be saved.

I pray that everyone hearing me does.

Prayer

Benediction