

John 3:22-36

The good news of salvation has been made clear to all people who hear its message. It is void of religious verbiage that makes it difficult to grasp. It is simple enough that a child can understand it, yet it is profound enough to cause the scholar to attempt to plumb its depths. Jesus gives two earthly analogies in John 3 and even in that those who are unregenerate find it to be foolish. The fact is unless the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind of a person, they cannot comprehend the good news of salvation because it is heavenly and not earthly — meaning, its origin and source is from above, not on the earth.

The Bible teaches all true believers that we are representatives of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus said, “**...and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth**” (**Acts 1:8b**). Paul admonished the church at Corinth, “**...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us...**” (**2 Corinthians 5:20a**). Paul complimented the church at Thessalonica on their obedience to these commands, “**For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything**” (**1 Thessalonians 1:8**). Nowhere in these verses are believers to make converts. We are “**...witnesses...**” “**...ambassadors...**” — from our mouths we communicate the “**...word of the Lord...**” and our lives demonstrate the power of God in salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

In **John 3:22-36**, his last recorded message, John the Baptist makes the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ clear as well. The transition from John to Jesus symbolizes the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant —it represents the transition from the ministry of John the Baptist to the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The ministry of Jesus Christ the Messiah in His first coming is the inauguration and teaching of the new covenant ending in His once for all final blood sacrifice at the cross. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, understood the significance of the coming Messiah’s relation to the new covenant, as he made clear in his Spirit-filled prophecy. (**cf. Luke 1:67-79**)

As a priest who knew the Scripture, Zacharias understood the Messiah was coming to fulfill the promises of the new covenant. He was saying that all the promises to David (v.69) and Abraham (v.73) depended on the arrival of the Messiah (vv.77-79). This whole prophecy is based on Old Testament texts regarding the Davidic, Abrahamic, and new covenants. (*Isaiah 60:1-5, 19-21; 61:1-2, 10; 62:11-12*)

John the Baptist was the last prophet under the old covenant. Up to this point, John had enjoyed tremendous popularity while Jesus remained in obscurity. Although Jesus’ miracle

at Cana and His cleansing of the Temple had created quite a sensation, He only had a few followers — but that was about to change.

Now Jesus' ministry was gaining momentum, so the followers of John were concerned people would now leave their teacher and follow Jesus (**vv.25-27**). They felt they needed to tell John about it, but John's response is classic John the Baptist. He reminds them of his mission and his call. Then he gives a clear teaching on Jesus' identity and in so doing, expresses the Gospel with precise clarity.

### John the Baptist's Last Testimony

#### **John the Baptist knew his call and purpose. (vv. 27-30)**

John the Baptist never lost sight of what he was called to do, and who he was called to be. Even in the midst of his tremendous popularity, his vision of what God had called him to be and do was crystal clear — he never allowed the accolades of man to distract him from his purpose. His mind and heart were set on one thing: announcing the arrival of the Messiah.

John the Baptist illustrated his subservient role using a familiar imagery of a wedding. He spoke of his role as that of the **“...friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice...”** Having brought him the bride, the faithful friend of the bridegroom rejoices hearing the bridegroom express joy over the bride — **“...So this joy of mine has been made full.” (v.29b)** John was satisfied that he had to opportunity to point people to Jesus.

The humility of John the Baptist reveals the heart of a man devoted to God in all areas. He was a man who saw himself as God saw him; He was not so insecure that he had to make everything about him. **Leon Morris** comments: **“It is not particularly easy in this world to gather followers about one for a serious purpose. But when they are gathered it is infinitely harder to detach them, and firmly insist that they go after another. It is the measure of John's greatness that he did just that.”** (*The New International Commentary; The Gospel According to John, Leon Morris*)

In his last recorded speech in this gospel, John lists five things for his disciples — and by extension, everyone — to accept about the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ and His Gospel:

#### *1) Jesus' heavenly origin (v.31)*

The Greek adverb *another* **“from above”** is the same word translated, **“born again”** (3:3, 7) where it speaks to the heavenly origin of the new birth. Here it refers to Christ as the One **“...who come from above is above all...”** John simply communicates his **earthly** status as secondary and subservient to that of Christ who is sovereign over all.

2) *Jesus knew heavenly truth and spoke heavenly truth (v.32)*

Every word that proceeded from Christ was absolute truth. It is only through Him that we can know truth. The author of the book of Hebrews expressed this fact: ***“God, after He spoke long ago the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)***

Like the Old Testament prophets, including John the Baptist, ***“...and no one receives His testimony.”*** John echoed the words Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the rejection of truth by the religious leaders, the nation as a whole, and most people worldwide. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about this fact as well, ***“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)*** This is true because of the fact that unbelievers are spiritually dead (*Ephesians 2:1*). Until the Holy Spirit enlightens the heart and mind of an unbeliever, they will consistently reject the testimony of Jesus.

3) *Jesus’ teaching always agreed with God’s truth (v.33)*

Although the majority of people rejected Jesus’ message, not everyone did — not everyone does — and not everyone will. In the ancient world, someone ***“...set their seal...”*** to something (often with a signet ring) as a sign of complete acceptance and approval. When people accept Christ, they certify their belief that ***“...God is true.”*** To reject Christ is to call God a liar and to perish eternally. Jesus said, ***“...He who sent me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” (John 8:26b)***

4) *Jesus experienced the power of the Holy Spirit without limitation (v.34)*

The Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist were all filled with the Holy Spirit when they spoke, but the Spirit’s power was always limited because they were sinful men. But Jesus, different by not having a sin nature — thus not having the capacity to choose sin in any way — always had the Spirit’s power in full measure since He (Christ) is God. Paul wrote to the Colossian church concerning Jesus: ***“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:9)***

5) *Jesus received all authority from the Father. (v.35)*

John’s affirmation of Jesus’ absolute authority demonstrated his humble attitude, even as his heralding ministry faded into the background. Having fulfilled his mission, John would soon be imprisoned by Herod and beheaded.

Before he faded from the scene, John the Baptist gave an invitation and a warning that give the pinnacle message of his ministry: ***“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.”*** (v.36)

The truth of salvation is that one ***“...who believes in the Son has eternal life...”*** as a present possession, not just a future hope. But the one ***“...who does not obey the Son will not see life...”*** The one is juxtaposed to the other — belief and disobedience. The New Testament teaches that belief in the gospel is obedience to God, an essential element of saving faith. (*Acts 6:7; Romans 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 2:4; 4:17*)

Those who reject Christ, the fearful reality is the ***“...wrath of God abides on him...”*** Just as eternal life is the present possession of believers, so also is condemnation the present condition of unbelievers. Jesus came to save sinners from this eternal wrath, and for all who believe in Him, they are saved from eternal punishment.

cd.TCT.72218

#### **NOTES:**