

## The Gospel of John – Christ's Increase

Today we're going to continue this series by looking at John 3:22-36. This scripture says:

- (22) After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.
- (23) And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.
- (24) For John was not yet cast into prison.
- (25) Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.
- (26) And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.
- (27) John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.
- (28) Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.
- (29) He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.
- (30) He must increase, but I *must* decrease.
- (31) He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.
- (32) And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.
- (33) He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.
- (34) For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.
- (35) The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
- (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

We have here a case that is often played out in churches today – a church sees another church doing well and automatically starts finding fault. In the eyes of John's disciples Christ was taking away from them, and they didn't like it one bit. John, though, was very wise in the way he approached the situation. He didn't ridicule them for recognizing that Christ's ministry was growing while his was shrinking. On the contrary he gave credence to Christ's ministry. He could have said, “well, you know Jesus is a miracle worker, and that's why they follow him.” It would have actually been the truth as we'll see later on in this book. That's what I see played out often today. A church that is not prospering will look for faults in other churches rather than for faults in themselves. In my opinion you can have a Biblically sound church that isn't prospering because they're not examining themselves on a regular basis but rather others. I see this often in fundamental churches. There's absolutely no reason that a fundamental church can't grow today.

For John this wasn't the case, though. His ministry was a limited one – he was pointing people to Jesus. Jesus, then, would establish the Church.

John, though, recognized the need to rejoice in the success of others. I find it troubling that churches sometimes seem to get jealous when people are being saved in other churches. We should be rejoicing that people are being saved. When we're divided against ourselves Satan has his heyday.

John also stated some pretty hard things to understand here. First he said that no man can receive the testimony of Christ, then he talks about those who receive his testimony. Which way is it? Does this mean that we have no choice in the matter? God forbid! Yea, it is God's will that none should perish but that all should have everlasting life. However, it's also God's will that we of our own free will choose to follow him. This is what it was all about in the Garden of Eden. God could have put Adam and Eve in the Garden without the temptation of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He put it there because He wanted them to willingly show obedience to Him. It is ultimately, though, God that saves. Man can't do it on his own. We can't will ourselves to Heaven. It takes believing in the blood that was given on the cross at Calvary as sufficient to pay the penalty for your sins. Going a little further, though, you're not going to be saved except the Spirit draws. If you're unsaved today I pray that the Spirit is tugging at your heart, convicting and convincing you of your sins, and that you'll repent and believe upon Him for the salvation of your soul.

This really was what the message of John's ministry was about – pointing people to Jesus Christ as being sufficient for the salvation of their souls. John wasn't sufficient. He could be a mouthpiece, just as men today can be a mouthpiece, but he was not God. It is only through Jesus Christ that salvation is obtained. Unfortunately there were those who didn't understand John's message and continued his teaching even unto this day – pointing to Christ but not recognizing that it's through faith in Jesus that salvation is obtained. You see, in Acts 19:1-4 Paul encounters some who had been misled by those who were teaching John's baptism incorrectly. This Scripture says:

- (1) And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- (2) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- (3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- (4) Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

So you see, it wasn't water baptism that saved – it was belief on Jesus Christ.

If you have questions today about your own salvation, or about anything in this lesson or anything that you've found on this site please feel free to contact me at [john@intotheword.org](mailto:john@intotheword.org).

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich