

John the Baptist's Testimony about Jesus

John 3:22–36

20 July 2014

- I. Introduction
 - A. In this passage, we are going to witness an episode which will require John the Baptist to comment upon Jesus.
 - B. His testimony is included in this gospel to give us a full picture of who Jesus is.

- II. Setting—Jesus's public ministry is expanding (John 3:22–24)
 - A. His first miracle (John 2) followed additional signs (John 2:23)
 - B. Cleansing the Temple (John 2)
 - C. Interaction with religious leaders such as Nicodemus (John 3)
 - D. Now at this point many people are aware of who he is, and his disciples are baptizing many new followers in Jesus's name.

- III. The Conflict—A Dispute About Washing (3:25–26)
 - A. Confusion about John's practice of baptism and Jewish water purification rites:

"An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing" (John 3:25)

 1. The Jews had practiced ritual bathing in water for religious purification for centuries (remember the stone water pots in John 2).
 2. But baptism was a new practice in this context and was, therefore, open to misunderstanding.
 3. What does it mean to baptize someone or to be baptized? It simply means to immerse someone in water (that's why John was in a place with plenty of water 3:23).
 4. What (if any) was the difference between the baptism of John and that of Jesus?
 - a. People were baptized by John to indicate repentance from their sin in preparation for the coming Messiah.

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matt 3:11)
 - b. People were baptized in Jesus name to indicate that they were now his followers and that they acknowledged him as the Messiah.

- c. We should recognize that since John’s ministry anticipated the coming of Jesus, it had a natural “expiration date” attached to it.
- B. However, in this passage, there is an emphasis on what everyone sees as an emerging conflict between the ministries of John and of Jesus; John had been baptizing and now Jesus is baptizing and seems to be drawing away John’s followers.

They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.” (Jn 3:26)

IV. John the Baptist’s Testimony of Jesus (3:27–36)

- A. John humbly defers to the Messiah (vv. 27–28).
 - 1. Everything we have, including our station in life, comes from heaven—from God.
 - 2. John is emphatic that it is not he who is the Messiah.

To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ (v. 28)

- B. John illustrates his role with the picture of a wedding party.

“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.” (v. 29)

- C. John acknowledges his subordinate role to Jesus.

“He must become greater; I must become less.” (v. 30)

We may ask why this is so, that it is necessary for John’s ministry to be eclipsed by Jesus? John, the writer of this gospel (not John the Baptist), tells us why in the next paragraph.

V. Reflections on the Son of God from the gospel writer (vv. 31–36)

- A. Jesus has a divine origin (v. 31)

31 The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

He is from above—from Heaven where God dwells. John, on the other hand, is from the earth and is encumbered with the limitations of being a creature. The fact that Jesus is from Heaven indicates his superiority over all; he is not a creature like we are.

B. Jesus has a divine testimony (vv. 32–34)

1. His testimony is first-hand (v. 32a)

Jesus testifies to what he has seen and heard *in heaven*.

*“He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.”
(v. 32)*

“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.” (John 3:13)

2. His testimony is often rejected (v. 32b)

John points out how few people accept as true what Jesus said. Jesus himself made a similar observation earlier:

“Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.” (John 3:11)

3. His testimony is truthful (vv. 33–34)

33 Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. 34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

*“Jesus so completely says and does all that God says and does, and only what God says and does (e.g. 5:19–30; 6:37–40; 8:29), that to believe Jesus is to believe God. Conversely, not to believe Jesus is to call God a liar (cf. 12:44–50; 1 Jn. 5:10).” (Don Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 213)*

In the Old Testament, the prophets who spoke on behalf of God were given the ministry of the Spirit according to their need. But upon Jesus, John says, God gave the Spirit without measure.

C. Jesus is the divine Son of God (vv. 35–36)

35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

1. He enjoys a special father-son relationship with God.
2. He has been given authority from his Father.
3. How you and I respond to Jesus determines our relationship with God the Father.

VI. Thoughts for Personal Application

This paragraph concludes with a powerful promise as well as a sober warning.

A. The Promise: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (v. 36a)

If you have accepted as true what Jesus says and have placed your whole confidence in him, then you can be certain that you possess eternal life.

1. Eternal life means that physical death for you is no longer the door to judgment.
2. Eternal life means a restored relationship between you and God now and in eternity.
3. Fear is replaced by confidence in God and certainty of his love and care for you.

B. The Warning: "Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them" (v. 36b)

Maybe you are asking, how is it fair for God to be angry with me if I choose not to believe Jesus?

1. The answer goes back to a proper understanding of who Jesus is, to the inseparable relationship between him and the Father.
2. Because Jesus is God's Son and has been given God's authority, rejecting him is the same as rejecting God the Father.

C. Come to Jesus to find eternal life. Jesus is the only way to God, so come to him with your whole confidence.