**Lesson 5 John 3:22-36 Bible Study Commentary And Inductive Questions**

**Outline**

I. Baptisms (3:22-25)  
  A. Jesus is baptizing (22)  
  B. John is baptizing (23-24)  
  C. John’s disciples were involved (25)  
II. Christ must increase. John must decrease. (26-30)  
  A. John is questioned about Jesus (26)  
 B. John says that Jesus authority comes from God (27)  
  C. John repeats the fact that he is not the Messiah (28)  
  D. John rejoices that that the Messiah has come (29-30)  
III. Brief “theology” of Jesus (31-36)  
  A. Jesus has all authority (31)  
  B. People will reject His teachings (32)  
  C. God is true (33)  
  D. Jesus speaks the true words from God (34)  
  E. Jesus’ authority is derived from the Father, who loves Him (35)  
  F. Consequences of belief in or rejection of Christ (36)

**Discussion Questions**

* Verse 22 says, “after these things”. After what things?
* Was Jesus actually baptizing?
* What did the baptism of John and the early baptisms of Jesus’ ministry mean?
* Why was John baptizing in that area? What makes this an interesting commentary on his ministry?
* Why was John thrown into prison?
* Who is the one being referred to in verse 26?
* What event is referred to in verse 26?
* What does verse 27 mean?
* What is impressive about John’s attitude concerning Jesus’ rising popularity?
* How might we respond to this kind of thing?
* In verse 29 who are the “bride”, “bridegroom”, and “friend of the bridegroom”?
* How does verse 30 fit in with John’s ministry?
* Explain the basic points of John’s “discourse” on Jesus.
* What does it mean that “no one” received his testimony?
* What relationship is clearly seen in those verses?
* What one decision will determine our eternal destiny?
* What can we learn from these verses?
* What do we learn about ministry?
* What do we learn about Jesus?
* What can we learn from John’s example?

**Word meanings** –

Baptism – In Greek the word is “baptizo”. It specifically conveys the idea of submersion/immersion or “fully wet”.

Decrease – “Elattoo”, to “lessen” as in rank.

Increase – “Auzano”, enlarge or grow.

**Cross-references** –

Luke 3:3 – John baptized a baptism of repentance and remission of sins.

Matthew 3:6 – John’s baptism was accompanied by confession.

John 4:2 – Jesus’ disciples were baptizing, not he himself.

Luke 3:16 – Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. John’s was with water.

John 1:29-35 – John testified about Jesus.

Matthew 14:3-12 – Story of John’s arrest and murder.

Luke 9:49-50 – Jesus told the disciples not to disturb a man who was casting out demons in his name saying that if he wasn’t against them he was for them.

1 Corinthians 3:4-9 – Neither Paul or Apollos are important. Both of them were merely workers for God. God is important.

Philippians 2:5-11 – Everything is under Jesus. Jesus is over all things.

Hebrews 2:8 – He has put all things in subjection under His feet.

**I. Baptisms (22-25)**

**Verse By Verse Commentary**

John’s baptism was done by immersion in water. He baptized with water, not the Holy

Spirit (Luke 3:16). His baptism was a two-fold symbol. John was not the first to baptize. The Jews and other nations/religions at times used it to initiate people into their group. It was a mark of identification. John’s baptism was a mark of identification, not into the Pharisaic religious order, but of true belief in the coming Messiah (John was the forerunner). Secondly, in Luke 3:3 we see that his baptism was for the repentance of sins. It was a sign of repentance and the cleansing that would come from God for those who repent. Purification was very important to the Jews and this was often done with water. So John’s baptism can be described as a ceremonial symbol of purification for those who repent of their sins and a mark of identification for the those who believed the Messiah was coming and desired to follow Him. This was a transitional baptism between the forms sometimes practiced during that time in history and Christian baptism after faith in Christ, which would be commanded at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry (Matthew 28:19-20). The disciples of Jesus were also performing baptisms, probably very similar in meaning to those of John. Jesus hadn’t died or risen yet and the Holy Spirit hadn’t started indwelling believers yet, so it is probably that those baptisms also stood for repentance and a mark of identification as a follower of Christ.

The word baptism means to immerse or submerge. Also this is how John’s and Jesus’ ministries were performing baptisms. Notice that John chose a place to baptize because there was “much water there”. This would not be necessary if he was sprinkling. While the main point of this passage is not to teach immersion it does show that is the way it was done. Why would we change it?

We can also learn more about Jesus’ method of discipleship. He and His disciples were doing ministry (they were doing the baptisms, see John 4:2), but Jesus didn’t ignore them. He was “spending time with them” (this comes before the mention of baptism). This phrase encapsulates Jesus’ ministry to the twelve. He didn’t just write lessons for them to study. He spent time with them. This allowed Him to see their life and observe their actions. He could correct practical problems. He could use real situations, problems, and events to teach them. Faith is not theoretical or abstract. It is solid and real and to be practiced in everyday situations. I confess that at times I have just taught lessons at Bible study and think that that is enough. It is not. Just teaching lessons is not enough. I want and need to spend time with people so that I can help them learn through real situations and deal with real problems. If you desire to make disciples remember too that you need to spend time with them, not just teach them.

**II. Christ must increase. John must decrease. (26-30)**

**Verse by Verse Commentary**

John’s disciples appear to be fiercely loyal. They were worried because Jesus was growing so popular, even more than John. More and more people were following Jesus and His ministry and fewer people were going out to John. They are telling the situation to John to see what needed to be done about it. What might they have expected John to answer? Perhaps they thought John would say “Oh, no! We need to get out there and start inviting more people. Go out and try to share with people about the benefits of our ministry so that they will come here.” Or “We don’t have enough appeal to the common man. Next meeting let’s bring out some drums and have a couple of singers. That oughta get there attention!” or “It seems like few people are loyal to us anymore. Let’s just stop.”

But John didn’t say any of those things. Not only was he not concerned or worried, but he endorsed Jesus’ ministry (it is rare to see a preacher endorse someone else’s ministry, see Scott). Firstly, he said that if so many people were following Jesus evidently it must come from God. In other words, “his authority comes from God and I am not going to fight against it”. Secondly, he once again said that he wasn’t the Christ. He didn’t want to mislead or trick people or cause anyone to think he was something he wasn’t. His goal wasn’t to gather attention or followers or appear important. Thirdly, he said he was sent before Christ. He was a forerunner, a messenger. His goal was not to stop the people from going to Jesus, but to push them to Jesus! Fourthly, he was excited and joyful to hear the news! Fifthly, he admitted the necessity that this transition from him to Jesus continue.

[John the Baptist](https://studyandobey.com/character-studies/john-the-baptist-character-study/) is a great example for us. He didn’t do ministry to get attention or power. He didn’t do ministry to feel important. He didn’t do ministry because he liked to lead or wanted people to follow him. He had no selfish motivation. He did ministry in order to point people to Christ. This was his motivation. It wasn’t about him. It was about Christ. All the glory was for God. John was so humble and gracious. He was a true servant, willing to serve in the background without getting recognition. Also He didn’t quit just because others were more successful or popular.

What a great example this is for us! So often people have wrong motivations for ministry. Many do it to feel important or get attention, but this is a very bad motivation. We need to examine our heart and question why we share the gospel and do ministry. If we find ourselves getting jealous of people who “take ourstudents” or upset because the ones we teach go to another church/study/fellowship/pastor/counselor etc. then our motivation is wrong and we need to confess it to Christ.

One might say, “Well, John was giving way to Jesus. If Jesus comes I will let Him take over ministry, but I won’t give in to anybody else!” This person needs to look at Jesus! Jesus Himself was happy when others were ministering though not part of his group (Luke 9:49-50). Paul also didn’t want people to think they belonged to him or Apollos, but that only God was important (1 Corinthians 3:4-9).

If our friends or students go to a cult or bad church/fellowship etc, then it is reasonable to talk with them and encourage them not to go. But if it has sound doctrine and it is good for their overall spiritual growth do not discourage them, but encourage them! Whatever helps people to grow closer to God and expand His kingdom is good. Do not find yourself working against other believers or being jealous of them. Do the work that God has given you to do without attention or loyalty or thanks. Point people to God. It is not about you or me.

**III. Brief “theology” of Jesus (31-36)**

**Commentary**

From John 3:13 we see that Jesus descended from heaven. He came from heaven as the Son of God who has always existed. If he was merely a human, he wouldn’t have any special authority. But He did have special authority and is over everything because He came down from heaven, and not just any position in heaven, but from the highest position, from the very throne. So in verse 31 John is arguing for Jesus’ authority by saying that He came from heaven and that is why He has authority.

Verse 32 can also be cross-referenced with 3:11. In that verse Jesus says He teaches what He knows and sees. In verse 11 Jesus said they didn’t accept it and in verse 32 John says that they didn’t accept it. When John says “no one” it is most likely a form of hyperbole or exaggeration in order to make the point that not “all” go to him, but very few will actually receive him. The Jews generally rejected Jesus as the Messiah, especially during His life. Even the crowds who supposedly accepted Him were clamoring for His crucifixion. Even the disciples mostly ran away. This would be kind of like saying, “all politicians are liars” or “he never cleans his room”. It really is a strong way to say, “most politicians are liars” or “he rarely cleans his room”.

In verse 33 John equates Jesus’ teaching with God’s. If someone accepts Jesus teaching it is the same as accepting God’s. The two are one and the same. Jesus Himself said many times that He and the Father are one and rejecting Him was the same as rejecting the Father (John 10:30).

In verses 34-35 we see that Jesus speaks the truth, was sent by God, pours out His Spirit generously, is loved by God, and has complete authority. All of these things are directly tied to His relationship with God the Father. Sent by God, speaking the words of God, loved by God, given all things by Him.

A great part about this for us is if we believe in Christ we will have many of the same blessings that He does, chief and foremost of this is that we will be recipients of the love of God.

Also we can see here a test to see if one really comes from God. Do they speak the true words of God? If somebody doesn’t speak the true words of God they are not from God. It doesn’t matter how many “great” things a person does or what kind of “wonderful” influence they have. If they don’t teach the truth (I’m not talking about extreme fine points of doctrine that godly scholars disagree on) they are not from God. Evaluate what people say. See 1 John 4:1. Do not believe every spirit, but test them.

Finally, we come to the crux of the message. John lays out the consequences of a person’s decision regarding Christ. It is not a small matter, but is the central deciding point in their eternal destiny. He doesn’t beat around the bush or speak ambiguously. The person who believes in Christ will receive eternal life. The person who doesn’t receives the wrath of God. Both of these are promised in the present tense. God will immediately give eternal life to the believer. It is something that we can have right now on this earth. At the same time this shows that God’s wrath is on and remains on the unbeliever. This doesn’t only refer to hell, but also the life on earth of the unbeliever. Of course this can be changed anytime if a person has faith in Christ. You don’t want to find yourself with God’s wrath on you! It is not a pleasant place to be!

So John’s points are these.

1. Jesus’ authority is from heaven, where He came from.
2. He teaches what He knows to be true, but few accept it.
3. He teaches truth from God and with equal authority.
4. He generously pours out the Spirit.
5. The Father loves Him.
6. Jesus is supreme over Creation.
7. Belief in Jesus will bring life. Rejection of Jesus will bring wrath.

**Key Lessons from John 3:22-36** –

1. A necessary aspect of any ministry is to *spend time with* the people you are ministering to. An hour or two in a cut-and-dried Bible study is not enough to really reach their life no matter how good you are at teaching. Jesus taught lessons to a lot of people, but the people He impacted the most He spent a lot of quality time with.
2. Whatever we do, ministry, sports, chatting, or anything else, we must be focused on the glory of God. We must be humble and willing to take backstage. We must have the attitude that we must decrease and God must increase. We should not seek attention or importance from doing ministry. We should not consider some students to be “ours” or get offended if others are teaching more or “better” ones. Instead of working against others we should work with them and use our gifts together to bring as many people into Christ’s kingdom as possible. John the Baptist is a great example in this.
3. Jesus came from God. His authority is from God. He spoke the true words of God. Jesus is not just a good man or even a good prophet. He is God and speaks divine truth. Few in the world will accept Him. Will you? (Keep in mind that “belief” doesn’t just mean intellectual assent or initial excitement. Many people supposedly believed in Jesus, but turned away later.)

**Leave a Comment –**Share your observations on this John 3:22-36 Bible study below. We would love to hear from you!