

Light And Darkness

John 3:18-36

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We're in John 3, and John 3 is the great story of Nicodemus, the Pharisee, who came to Jesus by night. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again. The central theme and topic of John 3 is the spiritual rebirth. John 3 is all about how we can be reborn by faith in Jesus Christ.

I want to back up a few verses. We're actually going to start tonight in John 3:18, but I want to back up into verse 14 and get a running start on verse 18, covering a few verses that we had last week. By the way, verses 14-21 is about the new birth having come to us through faith. If you were outlining this section, Jesus just talked to Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth, the nature of the new birth, and then now he's telling us that we have to be born of the Spirit, but we have to be born through faith in Jesus Christ.

Back up to verse 14. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," some of you have red letter Bibles, but there's actually a little discussion as to where the words of Jesus stop and the words of the apostle John start. I think that actually the words of Jesus perhaps stop at verse 15 and the words of the apostle start at verse 17. Now, either way, it doesn't matter. I read today about all the different arguments, pro and con, but the bottom line is all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, so whether they are the words of Jesus or the words of the apostle, they are given by inspiration of God and we know that that is the word of God. I believe that Jesus is still speaking to Nicodemus when Nicodemus says, 'How can these things be?' in response to the rebirth. How can I be born again? Verse 14, "And as Moses," and I pointed out that Jesus believed in Moses, "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

This story of Moses lifting up the serpent was an answer to Nicodemus', "How am I born again?" Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," that story is taken from the book of Numbers 21. We looked at that last Wednesday night where the children of Israel were being bitten by snakes as a judgment from God and cried out to the Lord; and Moses was instructed by the Lord to take brass and to make a serpent, to put it on a pole, and erect it there on the camp of Israel. Whoever had been bitten by a snake, instead of dying, if they looked in faith to that serpent, they would be healed. Now, that seems like quite a bizarre set up, doesn't it? All you have to do is look at that serpent and you're going to be healed.

Now, I failed to mention last week, and I had a couple of questions that I wanted to address; that is, some say the serpent is a symbol of sin, which I think is true, but it also represents satan. Now, when the serpent was lifted up on the pole, it was a type or picture not of Jesus Christ but of satan being judged by Jesus Christ on the cross; so as the serpent was lifted up, "...even so must the Son of man be lifted up," he's talking about His crucifixion or His death, and

when Jesus died on the cross the Bible tells us that He spoiled principalities and powers. That word in Colossians “spoiled” means He divested satan of his power. Remember way back in the Old Testament book of Genesis, right after man had sinned (when Adam and Eve sinned) in the garden, God promised the Redeemer the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. It’s a picture of what God did at the cross—He destroyed satan’s power—so those who look to Jesus by faith and believe in Him—the theme of John’s gospel, belief—are born again, they are saved, they are forgiven, and they become the children of God. Now, you don’t have to be real smart to just look. You don’t have to have a great education just to look, anyone of any age can look, anyone of any color can look, and anyone of any social background can just look; so God has provided salvation so that it’s accessible to anyone. It’s not just accessible to a certain race or to a certain religious group or to people that are of a certain intelligence or a certain ability, you don’t have to have money just to look and to live.

You’ve heard about the great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when he was just a teenager, actually the year was 1850. It was January 6 on a cold winter morning. He was on his way to church and a blizzard had set in and prevented him from going to his normal church, so he was steered to a closer church that was a Methodist church. The preacher couldn’t show up to preach that morning, so one of the lay preachers got up and just filled the pulpit. His text was Isaiah 45:22 where it says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Well, this guy’s the lay preacher and just found out that morning he had to preach, so his sermon wasn’t that eloquent. He just opened and read the passage and started exhorting the people to look to Jesus, “Look to Jesus and be saved.” Then he saw Spurgeon sitting back in the corner of the church and actually pointed at him and addressed him. He said, “Young man, you look miserable.” Can you imagine if I were to do that? “You, right there, third pew right there. You look miserable. You need to get saved.” He singled Spurgeon out and said, “Look unto Jesus and be saved.” That young teenage boy, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, actually looked to Jesus by faith that night and was born again. He became what is known today as the prince of preachers. He was just an amazing pastor that was used so wonderfully by God. It was just a simple message of just looking by faith.

You have this doctrine of the rebirth or regeneration or given new life, and we talked about that’s what a Christian is. He’s born again. How is a person born again? Coming as a sinner, bitten by sin—all of us have sinned, all of us have come short of the glory of God; there is no one righteous, no not one—and when we look in belief and trust in Jesus, who died on the cross and defeated the devil and sin and rose from the dead and defeated death, then we are born again of the Holy Spirit and we have new life. Jesus is not so much symbolized as a serpent, but He is there defeating the devil. I told you the metal brass is the metal of judgment, so satan is defeated at the cross for those who look in faith and believe in Jesus Christ.

Then, it goes right into verse 15, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Now, I can’t be sure, I can’t be dogmatic, and it doesn’t really matter, but it would seem that in verses 16-21 that we have the apostle John saying, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is the gospel of belief. John says, “But these are written, that ye might

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

I said last week, I wanted to go back to John 3:16, and we could actually spend a few weeks just on this one verse. I’m convinced that this is the greatest verse in the Bible. I’m convinced that this one verse actually is the Bible in miniature. It was called that by Martin Luther, the Bible in miniature. I remember one time I was at In-N-Out (one of my favorite places to hang out) out on the patio. I was alone eating a hamburger, and this group of businessmen was sitting at a table next to me. One of them held up their cup and said, “John 3:16. I wonder what that is?” I’m sitting right next to them. I’m thinking, This is just too good. I can’t keep my mouth shut. I said, “Hark!” No, I didn’t say, “Hark.” I said, “Hey, I know what it is! You want me to tell it to you?” They said, “Yeah.” So I stood up and quoted John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life.” You should’ve seen the look on their faces. “Who is this guy, a preacher or something?” I couldn’t just quote the verse, so I started to break down the text and kind of explain it all to them. They’re like, “Yeah, okay, preacher boy, we just want to get back to our hamburgers,” you know, “leave us alone.” I remembered what an awesome opportunity that was.

I want to take what I call the greatest verse in the Bible, the Bible in miniature, and I want to break it into eight little sections. We’ll get through this tonight, and we’ll get through the passage. I want you to see it. There are a lot of different ways you can break it down. First, we see the Giver of this great Gift, “For God.” That indicates something that is so very important, that salvation is of the Lord, that salvation comes from God, and that it is a work of God. No one can take credit for being saved—we do the sinning, He does the saving—and this marvelous plan of salvation was divinely designed and thought of by God. It’s something that started in eternity past in the heart of God. This is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is the Giver. I want you to notice the motive for the Gift, “...so loved,” not just loved, but “so loved.” I know you probably heard it, that the word “loved” here is the Greek word *agape* or *agapao*. It’s not the words *eros*, *phileo*, or *storge*. Our English word “love” is just love, and we use it in a broad spectrum from, “I love my wife,” to “I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches,” which, by the way, are awesome; so is my wife, by the way, much more awesome than peanut butter and jelly.

In John 3:16, the word for love is the word *agapao* or *agape*, which means a sacrificial, self-denying, giving love. It’s basically a love that has the object loved in view, so it’s a giving love. It doesn’t need anything in return, it just continues to give. Husbands are exhorted in Ephesians 5, “...love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,” it’s the word *agapao*. The same love that God had in giving His Son is the love that a husband is to have for his wife, *agape* your wife as Christ loved the church. It’s a giving love, so a great Giver and a great motive.

Thirdly, notice the object of His love, “the world.” That’s a simple word, but there’s some important truths behind it. What does the word “world” mean? I believe that this word “world” refers to the world of mankind. There’s a raging debate within Christianity between what are called the Calvinist and the Arminianist. They are basically divided over whether or not the

death of Jesus Christ was limited only for the elect—those who are chosen—or it is open and available to anyone—whenever will believe. We're going to get to whosoever in just a moment. Those who hold that the death of Christ was limited and not for the unbeliever but just for the elect, like to interpret this word "world" being the world of the elect, the world of the chosen. I reject that interpretation. I believe that the world here means the world. It's not just the elect world, and there's a lot of verses, "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" Jesus wept over Jerusalem, "...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

This world here is referring to everyone. Guess who Jesus died for? The world. He died for everyone—every race, every creed, every color. I grew up in church as a little boy and learned the story: Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red, yellow, black, and white, they are precious in His sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world. What a beautiful song that is. To say that God doesn't love everyone, that God only loves the elect, I think is a misinterpretation of this marvelous passage here. I believe that the word "world" there refers to the entire human race. There is no limit to the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Now, it will not be appropriated by all—only those who believe will be saved—and we'll see that clearly in the passage tonight.

The Giver is God. The motive is love. The object is the world, but notice the Gift—how marvelous that is—His only begotten Son. I think it's important to understand that this word "begotten" here does not convey the idea that Jesus had a start or a beginning. It has the idea of uniqueness. It doesn't mean time, it means position. It doesn't have anything to do with that Jesus Christ was began by God the Father or that He began in Bethlehem. It has everything to do with His priority and His superiority. He's the unique. It seems kind of simple, but years ago, just in an English dictionary, I think it was the Webster's Dictionary, I looked up the word "unique," and I've never forgotten it: one of a kind, having no equal. I love that! Look up the word "unique." Jesus is unique—one of a kind, having no equal. There's no one like Jesus. Amen? So, God had only one Son, that's the second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ; and that was the Gift that He had given, the Son of God. He came into the world through the womb of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death and was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven, and He lives to forgive our sins.

Notice fifthly, the recipients, "...whosoever," this goes with the world. Jesus died for the world, and who can receive this Gift? Whosoever. We used to sing another song, Whosoever surely meaneth me. Whosoever means anyone. Whosoever means whosoever. There's no one too sinful. There's no one too far from God. God will forgive anyone who comes. If you turn to God and cry out to God, He's not going to say, "Sorry, you're not elect. Sorry, you're not chosen." You'll find out that He will forgive you—whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Notice how we receive the Gift, believe in Him. I can't tell you how important that is and what a main theme that is in the Bible. How are you born again? That's the theme of this section of John, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." You are

saved by faith. We're saved by grace through faith, "and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." We're not saved by works. We're not saved by religion. We're not saved by our good deeds. We're not saved by our good life. We're saved by trusting Jesus. Just as that serpent of brass was put on a pole, and they didn't have to work, they didn't have to do anything, all they had to do was look and believe; so we look to Jesus by faith and our sins can be forgiven. When you think about that, you think, Why wouldn't anyone want to look? Why wouldn't anyone want to just turn to Jesus and be saved? We're going to see that there are those who hate the light and don't want their deeds exposed, so they refuse to come to the light for moral, not intellectual, reasons.

Salvation is by faith, and what does it mean to believe? It means to trust in Him. It means to put your faith in Him. It means to put your weight in Him. Let me tell you something about faith—it's simple but simply profound—the important thing about faith is the object it's placed in. You're sitting on a pew right now in faith that the pew will hold you. You drove to church tonight in a car in faith that the steering wheel would turn the car or that when you put your foot on the brakes, the brakes will stop. You get in an elevator by faith—that's a scary thought—how do you know the cable is not worn out? A really scary thought is to get in an airplane. I remember the first time I ever flew in an airplane. It was long before 911, and we're leveling off at 30,000 feet and the pilot walked by. Remember when the pilot used to put it in autopilot and go meet the passengers and hang out with them? That is like, "Wow!" I'm thinking, You want me to go fly it or something? I mean, who's flying the plane? That guy that sabotaged the plane the other day, you know, you think, Man. How do you know that someone hasn't sabotaged the plane? How do you know the wings won't fall off or the motor won't blow up or you won't hit a bird. I mean, think about that. If a plane hits a bird, you're all dead or something. You're putting your faith in that airplane—I just thought I'd encourage you all tonight. You're going to go home and not want to do anything.

You go to a restaurant and order food, and it comes from the backroom, by faith. You don't know what's in that stuff. You don't know what they put in that stuff. You open a can of beans that's been sitting on the shelf for 20 years. You eat a bag of chips, by faith. You go to McDonald's, by faith. I always claim the promise: If you eat any deadly thing, it shall not harm you, but we do faith in so many areas. That's simply what it means to believe in Jesus Christ, and He is trustworthy. He came from heaven, He lived a sinless life, He died on the cross, He rose from the dead, He's worthy of our faith. You're not trusting in, "I'm a good person," or "I've been baptized," or "I go to church," or "I'm an American," or "I'm of this race," or "this religion," you're trusting in the fact that you put your faith or trust in Jesus Christ. He alone can save you.

Seventhly, notice in John 3:16, the results, "...should not perish, but have everlasting life." Isn't that great? You know what happens once you put your faith in Jesus Christ? You're not going to go to hell. You won't perish. You will die physically, but you will live eternally and you shall "have eternal life," or everlasting life. Let me make another important distinction. "Everlasting life" isn't just and it isn't primarily, length of life, it's quality. It's not quantity, it's quality. When we hear the words "everlasting life," we basically think we're just going to live forever. Everyone lives forever, but there's only those who are born again that have a new quality of life, a new

dimension of life. If you've never understood that, you've gotta grasp that. The moment you are born again, you're not only going to live forever, but you're going to live with the life of God in your soul. Remember I told you that a Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul, so what you have is eternal life. It's a present possession. You have a new quality of life. It's so very important.

Lastly, I'd like to spend more time on these, but eighthly, we have the assurance, and I had to throw this in, "...not perish, but have everlasting life." Every word, every phrase has all kinds of theological implications. "...not perish, but have everlasting life," put alongside that Romans 8:1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." When you get to verse 18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned," so the negative is, you're not going to perish; the positive is that you have everlasting life. Before I leave verse 16, let me say one more thing, that is, you have everlasting life. It may sound simple, and you may not agree with me, okay?, but I'm old enough and been around long enough that I don't really worry about who agrees with or doesn't agree with me. I'm not here for a popularity contest. If you have everlasting life and it's your present possession and it's a new quality as well as quantity, then you can never be lost because if you're lost, then you didn't have everlasting life. What you have is a new quality and quantity of life. You will live forever in the presence of God. I believe that John 3:16 is one of the great passages on the doctrine of assurance, that if you've been born again, that you have everlasting life, that you are a child of God and you can rest assured that your name is written down in heaven, and that you will have eternal life because you have already possessed it when you're born again.

Notice why God did not send His Son, verse 17, "...to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." I won't tarry on that. We'll talk about that concept in just a moment, but God didn't send Jesus in the world so that people could go to hell. God sent Jesus into the world because people were going to hell, and He wanted to rescue them. Salvation is a rescue mission. Sometimes people get the idea that when you share Christ with them, "You're condemning me and telling me I'm going to hell," "No, you are going to hell, and I want you to be rescued. You're sinking, and I'm throwing you a life preserver. Whether I do that or not, it doesn't matter, you're going to hell. You're going to perish." He didn't send His Son "into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." If you reject Jesus Christ, and that's going to be the theme running all the way to the end of the chapter, then you are lost and condemned and you cannot be saved.

Verse 18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." This is why I said this section deals with how to be born again. It's all about faith, "...believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." One of the reasons why scholars believe that beginning in verse 16, and clearly when you get down to verses 18-21, that we're reading the words of the apostle John is that it goes into the past tense, that they "loved," past tense, "darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." If Jesus were still talking to Nicodemus, He would say, "They love darkness, their deeds are evil," so it's put in

the past tense; and John's common theme in his gospel is the idea of light and darkness.

He didn't come to condemn the world, He came to save the world; and whoever "believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name," the Person, "of the only begotten Son of God." Notice in verse 19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because," there's the reason, "their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth," that is, practices truth by believing in Jesus Christ, "cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

A lot of times we wonder, as I said a moment ago, Why wouldn't everyone want to believe in Jesus Christ? Why wouldn't they want to be saved? Why wouldn't they want eternal life? Why wouldn't they trust Jesus as their Savior? I think that this passage sheds some light on that. It's because "...men loved darkness rather than light." Why do they love darkness rather than light? "...because their deeds were evil." It's like bugs, they don't like the light. You turn over a log, you're hiking through the woods, and the bugs run under the log, right? Sinners are like bugs, they run from the light. You know, I believe that most people (and I can almost say all people) don't reject Jesus Christ for intellectual reasons, they reject Jesus Christ for moral reasons. They don't want to give up their sin. They don't want to give up the thrown of their own life, "I'm master of my fate. I'm captain of my own ship. No one is going to tell me—not even God's going to tell me—how to live my life." And, there are sins that we don't want to expose. When you share the gospel with some people, they get all upset, "You're telling me I'm a sinner?" They get mad. They get angry. But they really love the darkness rather than the light, and the reason is because their deeds are evil. That's the reason why people reject Jesus Christ.

Notice that, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth," that is, puts his faith or trust in Jesus Christ, "cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," it's a work of God. Nowhere in this whole story of Jesus and Nicodemus do we read about Nicodemus praying and trusting Jesus or repenting or believing. We know from the rest of the New Testament that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ. In the passage the focus isn't on Nicodemus and whether he believes or whether he rejects, the focus is universal. It is a universal gospel with the focus on either light or darkness, either faith in Christ or you reject Christ, either you believe Christ or you don't believe in Christ, either you're under condemnation because you reject Jesus or you are forgiven of your sin and there's no condemnation, you have everlasting life. Those are the two contrasts.

We move to verses 22-36. What we have here is a change in the text. The scene moves from Jerusalem to the region of Judea, particularly Jesus goes down by the Jordan River to baptize, the witness in Judea by John the Baptist. Verses 22-26 are the circumstances that led to John's witness. In the closing of this chapter, we actually come back to John the Baptist and the witness that John the Baptist had about Jesus Christ. "After these things," what things?

The interview of Nicodemus with Jesus in Jerusalem, “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 Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. 24 For John was not yet cast into prison.” This is John the Baptist. He hasn’t been arrested. He hasn’t been put in prison. The ministry of John, baptizing and calling people to repentance, and the ministry of Jesus were actually paralleling each other right now. This is the early ministry of Christ. It’s called the Judean ministry, where John’s ministry and Jesus’ ministry are overlapping, and they are both preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and Jesus’ disciples are doing the baptism.

Verse 25, “Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples,” this is John the Baptist, the followers of John, “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.” Jesus has moved from the city of Jerusalem up north in the region of Judea. He’s down by the Jordan River, and it says that they were baptizing. Now, just a footnote, when you get to John 4:2 (next week, Lord willing. We should finish this chapter tonight), Jesus wasn’t actually baptizing, His disciples were baptizing. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus actually baptized no one. This baptism wasn’t a Christian baptism, it was much the same message and baptism of John—just repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was just preparatory for the Messiah, who He happened to be. He wasn’t baptizing (John 4:2), His disciples were doing the baptizing down by the Jordan River.

Where is Aenon and Salim? We don’t know for sure, but they were north of where John was baptizing in the Jordan River. Now, you’ve got to familiarize yourself with the layout of the land, the geography of the land. From north to south runs the Jordan River, from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south, right down the Jordan Valley between, modern Israel today and the west bank and Jordan. You have the Jordan River that runs down the center of the land. Jesus is up kind of in the central part; and John, it’s believed, is probably south of Him baptizing further down by the Dead Sea. It says (verse 23), “...because there was much water there,” so he came there to baptize. John the Baptist was at the northern area, and Jesus was at the south (I had it criss-crossed).

The word “Aenon” actually means springs, so some have tried to identify where maybe there’s some springs there that they were baptizing in, but we don’t know exactly what this spot was on the Jordan River. “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.” In the Old Testament the Jews had all these purification rites. They always had to have their synagogues by a river, and it had to be running water. Today, when you go to Israel and you’re in a hotel, the restaurants have this stage area where all the Jews can do their washing and cleansing. They have to have the water to do their washings and cleansing, so there was a dispute going on.

Now it seems as though in verse 25, that the Jews, some have, “a Jew,” would be a reference to the spiritual leaders, the Pharisees, maybe the scribes, maybe the priests, but it was the leader of the Jewish people. They came and wanted to have a theological debate with the disciples of

John. A good guess as to what they were trying to do was to create a rift between John the Baptist and Jesus because they were both drawing large crowds. Crowds were leaving John and going to Jesus, but the Jewish authorities were a little concerned about the numbers of Jews that were following these two itinerant preachers. They wanted to get them arguing, jealous, and in a debate, so they go to John and his disciples and start discussing. The theological discussion led to the idea that more people are going to Jesus to be baptized than they are to John, "...all men come to him." They're trying to get John to be jealous. They're trying to get John the Baptist jealous that people are leaving his church and going to Jesus' church.

You know, there's some real important application for us that serve the Lord, that we should never be jealous of others who are being used by God. Now, it may seem funny, but it happens in the church. We see somebody being used by God, and maybe we want to be used by God, and we're not used by God the way they're being used, and we get kind of jealous, "Well gee, God, I pray more than them, and my Bible's bigger than theirs. I raise my hands higher," you know, "I'm more spiritual than they are. Why aren't You using me? I've been a Christian longer than they have," and "I've been a better person than them." We get jealous. Jealousy in the ministry, even among pastors, can be a very dangerous and detrimental thing.

It's interesting that Moses was attacked in this area. All of the great men that God used often faced this same kind of attack where they were compared to others. Moses, Paul, 1 Corinthians 3, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas." They were dividing over pastors, and we do this today. People have their little favorite pastors and get in all their little groups, but notice he says, "They're all going to Jesus to be baptized."

This second section, verses 27-30, is John's testimony about himself, and it's marvelous. There's some important principles we learn about ministry. "John answered and said," you want me to be jealous that people are leaving me to go be baptized by Jesus? "A man can receive nothing, except it be given to him from heaven." Don't forget that. God is the One who gives positions and gifts and opens doors of opportunity. God's the One that gifts individuals, God is the One that places individuals, and God is the One that gives opportunity to individuals. That is such an important verse for everyone of us as servants of the Lord, to remember that no one can receive anything, "except it be given him from heaven." Positions are given by divine appointment. It's the work of God, so this was his conviction.

Then, notice verse 28, "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him." John says, "Didn't you hear what I said? Haven't you heard my message? I'm not the Christ. I came just to bear witness to Him. I'm one who is going before Him." In verse 29, John gives an illustration for them, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom," we would call it the best man, "which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." John gives an analogy here: The bridegroom has the bride and the friend of the bridegroom, the best man, he just makes sure the two come together, he facilitates the wedding, and he rejoices that the two have come together. Jesus is the Bridegroom, the church, obviously, is the bride,

and John is actually the best man and just brings the two together. John basically says, "When I hear His voice, I rejoice. I'm glad."

Do you know it's interesting that before John the Baptist was even born, in Luke 1:44, that while he was still in the womb of his mother, Elisabeth, what did he do when Mary came and greeted his mother? He jumped for joy. He's still jumping for joy. He wasn't even born yet, he's in the womb, and the Messiah comes to him, they're both still in the womb, and he starts getting all Pentecostal in the womb jumping up and down, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Even Elisabeth, "The babe leaped in my womb for joy." John says, "I'm just the best man. I'm just pointing the bridegroom to the bride, and the bride and groom are the focus."

You know, how unbecoming would it be in a wedding if the best man got jealous and envious about the groom getting the bride saying, "I want the bride." That wouldn't be good, would it? That would be the ultimate bad thing. You know, there's a story in the Old Testament where Samson had a Philistine wife lined up for him and through some different circumstances, his best man, another Philistine, took his bride. He wasn't happy. You don't mess with Samson, too, by the way. This is not the way it works. When you are a best man or a maid of honor, you're not supposed to be sitting there all mad like, "I wanted to marry him," or "I wanted to marry her. That should be me, that shouldn't be them. I'm better than they are." It's like, "Dude, get your act together." You're supposed to be rejoicing for them. Whenever you go to a wedding, don't you rejoice for this couple instead of being jealous or envious or "That should be me?" John says, "Look, I'm just the best man. I'm just pointing the groom to the bride. Hey, it's a joyous opportunity to just be glad and to be celebrating." How important that is. "I'm glad that I hear the bridegroom's voice."

We have one more verse, verse 30. It says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." In verse 27, you have a conviction; in verse 29, you have an illustration; and in verse 30, you have a commitment, "He must increase, but I must decrease." In John 3, you have three "musts." You have the "must" of the sinner in verse 7, "Ye must be born again;" you have the "must" of the Savior in verse 14, the Savior "...must be lifted up," and He will draw all men to Him; and the "must" of the servant, verse 30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." I think that this should be our motive and philosophy in all ministry. It's not about us, it's about Jesus. Amen? It's about all glory and all honor and all praise being directed to Jesus Christ, how He came from heaven, verse 31.

Again, beginning in verse 31, it would seem as though we actually have not John the Baptist speaking, but John the apostle, "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." John the apostle is talking about Jesus Christ, so it's his testimony to Jesus. He is above all. He mentions it twice in verse 31. "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.”

This chapter closes with the words of the apostle John coming back to the theme of his gospel, believing or not believing, coming to the light through faith or rejecting the light and going into darkness. Notice it says some important things about Jesus. First, in verse 31, that He is of divine origin, “He that cometh from above is above all.” Jesus came from heaven. It’s interesting, too, He didn’t get called from heaven, He came from heaven. He was in heaven through all eternity. He’s always been in heaven. There was never a time Jesus was not in heaven, so Jesus came from heaven. He’s of divine origin, and it says there, “...he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all,” which indicates His superiority. Secondly, in verse 32, notice that Jesus is of divine authority, “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.” Jesus is speaking from firsthand experience.

There’s a lot of people that claim they come from God, claim they have a message or a word from God, claim they’re a profit from God or they came from heaven and they’re representing God, but Jesus is unique. He is the only One sent by God the Father, came voluntarily from heaven out of eternity past. In verse 32, “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth,” so Jesus’ divine authority, “and no man receiveth his testimony. 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true,” those who believe in Jesus Christ, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God,” so Jesus came as the Word, and He came as the Word of God, and I’m going to read from Hebrews in just a second in closing chapter one. It’s talking about Jesus coming with His divine origin, with His divine authority, and speaking the things of God from heaven.

Verse 35, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,” so it speaks of Jesus’ universal authority—all things are in His hands. Here’s the conclusion, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” you see the repetition in the theme in John 3 and in John’s gospel, “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.” What you need to understand is, again, Jesus didn’t come to condemn the world, “but that the world through him might be saved.” A man apart from Christ is already condemned, so it’s a rescue mission. Jesus didn’t come to condemn us, He came to save us. The issue is faith in Jesus. What you do with Jesus Christ determines your eternity. It determines the quality of your life right now, and it determines where you spend eternity—in heaven or hell. If you don’t know Jesus Christ, then you don’t know God. If you’re wrong about Jesus, you’re wrong about God. If you reject Jesus Christ, you reject God, you don’t have any hope; but if you trust in and believe in Jesus, then you have spiritual life, you have everlasting life, you become a child of God, you’re forgiven of your sins, and you have the hope of heaven.

If you can turn there real quickly (I promise I won’t tarry on it), turn to Hebrews 1:1-3. They summarize a lot of what we just covered tonight, “God, who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,” so God spoke through the prophets in different times, different ways, but

now God is speaking. How is He speaking? He's speaking in, by, and through His Son. What this says in Hebrews 1:2 is that God's last word to man is the Person of Jesus Christ. It's in Christ. God is speaking in Christ. If you reject that message, you're rejecting God the Father and His Word. So, speaking by Him, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," basically, the Hebrews passage is telling us that Jesus Christ is God's last word to man, and that's what John 3 is all about. Either you believe Him or you reject Him. He came from heaven, and He speaks to things of God because He is God. You need to believe that and find salvation, new life, or you reject that and you find condemnation. Let's pray.