

## **Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ**

### **John the Baptist Sets the Record Straight**

Last time...God so loved the world

This time..."issues" in the ministry arise and John the Baptist sets the record straight

#### **John 3:22-36**

v22-24 After these things...baptized:

After what things?

1. 1<sup>st</sup> miracle: turning water into wine at marriage feast in Cana
2. Removing all leaven from His Father's house (cleaning the Temple)
3. Many miracles in Jerusalem
4. The world-shattering conversation with Nic about the Kingdom of God

Jesus and His 5 disciples move about 50 miles NE of Jerusalem

to where John the Baptist is faithfully being about his ministry

- calling the people to repentance
- baptizing whosoever would hear and believe
- preparing the nation of her long-awaited, much-anticipated Messiah

The scene is Aenon, near Salim [ map ]

- about 40 miles north of where Jesus was baptized by John
- where there was plenty of water
  - to baptize many people
  - to hydrate many people

So, there are two camps baptizing, one led by Jesus and the other by His forerunner John...parallel ministries, if you will

Notice:

- John the Baptist is still faithfully about his ministry...
  - even though he has already baptized the Messiah
  - he has not been told by God to stop/quit so he has not stopped/quit
- Jesus' ministry has started...but it isn't "full throttle" until John
  - concludes his ministry
  - is imprisoned
- Sometimes God allows His servants to be thrown into prison...even killed by unbelievers

v25-26 There arose a question:

While the “two ministries” (John’s and Jesus’) are

- in close proximity
- “doing the same thing”

something happens deep in the dark hearts of people:

1. The Sadducees and Pharisees question/challenge John’s disciples about their ministry, perhaps sowing seeds of division
  - “Why are you doing this?”
  - “Why are they doing the same thing...and more than you?”
2. John’s disciples complain to John that all the people are going to Jesus instead of to him/them

In both sets of hearts...petty jealousies and territorial protectiveness have stirred up controversy and contention

The jealousy in the hearts of the Jews is not new and it will never go away  
The jealousy in the hearts of John’s disciples...of Jesus’ ministry...  
is a bit more disturbing since John and Jesus are  
“on the same side” so we will focus on them

First, a point of clarification is needed

John 4:1-2

Why was Jesus NOT baptizing?

Ch 2:24-25

1 Cor 1:10-15 (the stench of pride...on a larger scale!!)

Matt 3:11

Nevertheless, the issue facing John’s disciples is not in Jesus’ ministry...  
it is in their own hearts

They believe their ministry is being threatened

They are “comparing and competing” with someone else on the same team

Pastors to this day do this unceasingly...measuring themselves (worth)  
and their ministries by comparing

- noses and nickels
- seats and services and Social Media followings

This carnal, prideful numbers game greatly discouraged me for the  
first several years I went to Pastor’s conferences

The Lord would have to heal my spirit on the drive home

Then He focused me on Him and empowered me to ignore such  
foolishness by fixing my eyes on Him

Pastors to this day must combat this sin of “comparing and competing”  
within their local fellowships

People compete for position and influence

People compare their “worth” in the ministry to that of others

Sourced in pride, this is a cancer to a local body of believers

A church that competes with other churches is a miserable church

A pastor that competes with other pastors is a miserable pastor

A ministry leader who competes with another ministry leader is a  
miserable leader

A missionary that competes with another missionary is a miserable  
missionary

We have parallel ministries

We are not called to compete but to compliment and complete

We are called to help our Bridegroom Jesus do the Father’s business

We do not help Him when we compete with each other

Back to the Jordan River...John hears the hearts of his disciples and nips this  
wrong-thinking in the bud

v27 can receive nothing...given him from heaven:

John the Baptist, Spirit-filled, does not have the same mind as his disciples...  
he has the same mind as Jesus

John the Baptist immediately sets the proper order of things,  
sets the record straight

John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says something very important to  
his disciples (and “bookkeepers” of the Jews)...recorded for all of us

#### 1. Ministry re-orientation

“Their” ministry is not their ministry...they are servants of the Master

“Our” ministry is not our ministry...we are servants of the Master

Who is the Pastor/Shepherd of this body? Jesus Christ

Who is the Teacher? The Holy Spirit

Who is the Worship Leader? The Holy Spirit

Who is the Children’s Ministry Leader? The Holy Spirit

ALL ministries (including your job) belong to the Lord God Almighty...

- He uses Me as long as He sees fit to...He can give this ministry to whomever He wants whenever He wants to
- He uses Michael and the other ministry leaders as long as He sees fit to...He could use someone else tomorrow if He wants to

Therefore, “comparing and competing” by His ministers

- questions God’s wisdom in accomplishing His will
- despises God’s gifts and callings
- is carnal, unseemly, un-Christ-like

2. Contentment...which we all must learn

Phil 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

1 Thes 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

v28-29 bride...bridegroom...friend:

To take the teeth out of the green monster of jealousy of Jesus’ ministry, John

- reminds his disciples that he is not the Messiah and Jesus is (Ch 1:29)...again pointing his disciples to Jesus Christ
- illustrates his relationship to the Messiah Jesus Christ with that of the marriage relationship – one man and one woman (and God has not changed that definition!)
  - Bride...belongs to the Bridegroom forever:  
those who come to Jesus Christ
  - Bridegroom...belongs to the Bride forever:  
Jesus Christ
  - Friend of the Bridegroom...has specific tasks to do up to a specific time:  
John the Baptist
    - is not the headliner/main attraction but is the opener  
preparing the crowd for the headliner
    - sent by the Father of the Bridegroom to do the Father’s  
will, not his own

John, rejoicing not lamenting, tells his disciples

- that the Messiah is here!
- that his life’s work is about done, just as it was supposed to be

Therefore, according to the plan of the Father...

v30 He must increase but I decrease:

John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says another very important thing to his disciples and to all of us

Jesus Christ must increase/grow

- in honor
- in authority
- in visibility
- in influence and impact

John the Baptist...and all of Jesus' ministers to this day...must decrease/lessen

- in honor
- in authority
- in visibility
- in influence and impact

Gal 2:20

Jesus Christ is building His Church (Matt 16:18) and the Kingdom of God  
We are NOT to be empire builders, drawing men unto ourselves

Yet many a pastor is guilty of doing just that...in the name of Jesus

A 3<sup>rd</sup> "must" (no other options)...like in v7 and v14

Methodists think the "must"s are connected

btw...the church in Charleston SC is teaching this very lesson to the entire church in USA – Jesus is increasing and they are decreasing

v31-33 received his testimony...God is true:

John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says a third very important thing to his disciples and to all of us

Whoever receives into their heart the testimony/witness of Jesus Christ believes/pledges that God is true

And the nature and order of things is important to the God of order

1. Above/heaven: He Who is from above/heaven (God, Jesus) is above all

John 8:23

Rom 9:5

Eph 1:21

Christ Who is over all

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come

2. of the earth: he (man) who is of the earth is lowly, earthly

The Heavenly came down to the earthy...yet few of the earth believe the testimony/witness/Word of the Heavenly (just as Jesus said to Nic in v13)  
But...whoever receives into their heart the testimony/witness of Jesus Christ believes/pledges that God is true

SCOTUS has gone on record as declaring that God is not true  
POTUS has also

All who agree with and celebrate the declarations of SCOTUS and POTUS do too  
Every person who does not confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in their heart that God raised Him from the dead do too

v34-36 he that believeth...he that believeth not:

To amplify on why v33 is a better choice for man than v32...

John the Baptist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says a fourth very important thing to his disciples and to all of us

- The Father sent the Son to speak His words –  
to not believe the Son is to not believe the Father

Deut 18:18-19 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.

- The Son is the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col 1:19, Col 2:9)
- The Father loves the Son –  
to not love the Son is to not love the Father
- The Father has given ALL things to the Son (Matt 28:18)
- To believe on the Son is to have everlasting life...forever
- The not believe on the Son is to not have everlasting life but the wrath of God instead...forever

Which is a better choice: to invest the measure of faith God has given us (Rom 12:3) in

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
- Someone/something other than Jesus Christ?

To whom do you trust your eternal soul?

President Obama?

President-wanna-be Hillary/Jeb/Donald/etc?

Congress?

Democrats?

Republicans?

Supreme Court?

The Pope (advising the world based on scientific advice of an  
atheist/Mother earth worshipper)?

A Pastor?

- Lonnie Frisbee
- Jimmy Swaggart
- Jimmy Bakker
- Robert Tilton
- Paul Crouch
- Ted Haggard
- Bob Coy
- Mark Driscoll
- Billy Graham's grandson
- any

Jesus Christ?

There is only one correct answer

And a faithful servant of God...the greatest man born to woman...is inspired  
by the Holy Spirit to gives us that one correct answer – Jesus Christ

So let's take stock of the inspired sayings of John the Baptist in this passage:

1. v27: It is not "our" ministry or "our" anything, ever...so stop questioning or challenging God by "comparing and competing"
2. v30: The increase goes to Him Who does the increase (1 Cor 3:5-9a)
3. v33: Believe God is true...and stake/pledge your life to it  
Stand separate from the filth of the world  
Stand fast on the Rock of our salvation  
Call good good and evil evil  
More than ever, fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and Luke 21:28
4. v36: Listen to the Heavenly voice and choose life over wrath (1 John 5:10-13)

If we do these things, we will have the desires of our heart

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Contentment
- "Prosperity"

in Jesus Christ