

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 18TH - 19TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

DECREASING (JOHN 3:22-30) MORE ABOUT JOHN'S MISSION AND MESSAGE

The second half of chapter 3 talks more about John the Baptist and the transition of John's disciples becoming Jesus' disciples.

- Competition started between John's and Jesus' followers that wasn't condoned by either leader. In fact, John's whole point was to direct people to Jesus.

COMPETITION AMONGST CHRISTIANS?

Division between John's and Jesus' disciples went on for almost 20 years. We can understand the jealousy between camps proclaiming the same message because we still see it today.

- I hope we can also see **the ridiculousness of competing groups that are fighting on the same team** (majors and minors)!

JOHN'S BAPTISM VS. POST-CHRIST BAPTISM

John baptized people as a sign of cleansing and repentance to prepare them for Jesus.

Post the resurrection, **we are baptized in response to the forgiveness and cleansing we receive through repentance.**

- John's baptism was preparation for Jesus; Christian baptism is much more.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

We should desire baptism out of **obedience** to receiving Christ and choosing to follow Him.

- In our obedience, we're **"buried with Christ and raised to new life"** (Romans 6), **initiated into the family of God** (1 Corinthians 12:13), and have **the promise of the Holy Spirit activating gifts and fruit in our life** (Acts 2).

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITIES

John's disciples put too much emphasis on their leader instead of the One their leader was pointing to. Today, **too many leaders do very little to point to Christ, and too many people rely too heavily on leaders.**

- **We need godly leaders, but we still keep the Bible as our final authority!**

A GREAT MODEL FOR THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

John the Baptist is a great example of both a leader and a follower. As a follower, he lived in **full submission to God regardless of the pressures of the world and religious legalism.**

- **We live in the tension of temptation to pursue self or live by religion instead of true relationship. We must not bend to either.**

THE THESIS OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

As a leader, when attention was put on John, he deflected it by calling himself the "groom's friend, who stands by and listens for Him." He gave us a thesis for truly following Jesus: **"He must increase, but I must decrease."**

- **To be saved, changed, and sustained, we must become utterly dependent on Jesus.**

LIFE VS. WRATH (JOHN 3:31-36) MAN WILL NEVER BE THE ANSWER

V31 refers to Jesus, "The One Who comes from above," and John, "The one is from the earth," working on two very different levels.

- John is saying he, or any human, can only teach earthly knowledge, but **the One from Heaven can speak of all things because He "is above all."**

IN A CULTURE OF IDOLATRY

We have become a culture that worships individuality and self. In this, we make people (often ourselves) into gods. To the one who wants to see true reality, it is no wonder that we're limited and imploding.

- **We can only take ourselves so far, and that distance is always short of good** (Romans 3:23).

JOHN EXPECTED MORE TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH

"...yet no one accepts His testimony" is an exaggeration showing John's frustration that so few Jews accepted the anticipated Savior.

- Those who did accept Jesus "affirmed" the truth of God found in the prophecies of the OT. They were **looking for the promises of the Bible to be fulfilled.**

REMARKABLE ACCESS THAT BRINGS PEACE

We should also be reliant and **expectant on the promises of the Bible.** We have **the Word to give us truth** along with **the Spirit of God** that Jesus "gives without measure" to **give us power, comfort, and wisdom.**

- **We properly worship God when we do so in Spirit (heart) and Truth (mind)** (John 4).

CHRISTOLOGY AND THE HOLY TRINITY

V31-35 shows us a developed "Christology." This is simply a focus on the person of Christ in the Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit).

- **Jesus is sent by God and is God, He is above all, He gives truth to those willing to hear, gives the Spirit to sustain us, and when He returns, we inherit eternal life.**

"THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON"

So, according to the Bible, **Jesus is the exclusive key** to knowing God, experiencing true change in this life, and being saved for eternity. **There is no other way.**

- **There is no room for ambiguity in Christianity. Any approach to salvation and lasting fulfillment is futile without Jesus.**

THE WRATH OF GOD

There cannot be goodness, mercy, and justice without evil being held accountable. God/Jesus is perfect love, and in that love, there must be discipline.

- **God is merciful and slow to anger, but there will come a time when God will reach His limit and return to deal with evil.**

WHAT IS "GOOD" AND "EVIL"?

There's no relative truth, only the truth. **The standard of what is good or evil isn't set by the creation but by the Creator.** God has provided clarity on how we're to correctly live through the Bible.

- **The question is if we trust His Word or our emotions and feelings** (Jeremiah 17:9).

HOW COULD A LOVING GOD SEND US TO HELL?

We're already on a sinking ship because our path is imperfect, selfish, and evil. In Jesus' love for us, He offers us salvation from the consequences of our bad decisions!

- **Our eternity is us receiving what we already chose to live for: an existence with God OR completely devoid of Him.**

LESS OF US, MORE OF HIM

- The beginning of all wisdom is believing there is something bigger than us, and understanding only comes when we know it is Jesus (Proverbs 9:10).
- The life of the Christian must be modeled around the teaching, **"He must increase, but I must decrease."**

OBEDIENCE

- The Christian lifestyle that focuses on Jesus increasing as we decrease is **countercultural and not easy.**
- **We're called to obedience and dependence on Jesus.** Not because He's a dictator or we have to, but because He loves us, knows what is best, and we want to honor Him.

WHO DEFINES GOOD AND EVIL?

- To live in obedience to Jesus means **we rely on the Spirit and the Word to lead us regardless of our feelings, ideas, or excuses.**
- In an anchorless world that is imploding, we must firmly **hold onto the truths of the Word and the conviction of the Spirit!** Any other way leads to chaos.

GOD LOVES US, BUT...

- God loves everyone, but that doesn't mean everyone will be saved. **Salvation is presented by Jesus but must be accepted by us through genuine faith!**
- For those who choose to live increasing self while the thought of God decreases, the **"wrath of God remains on [them]."**
- The wrath of God is His righteous anger for evil and injustice that have disrespected God's holiness and hurt people.
- **God has no desire for us to experience His wrath in this life or in eternity, but there will come a time when we will have to give an account for how we have lived!**