

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 19TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

THIS IS NOT A COMPETITION (JOHN 3:22-26) A DISPUTE BETWEEN FOLLOWERS

This dispute between John the Baptist's disciples and Jesus' disciples sprang up between the people following their respective leaders—though it was not started by their leaders.

- Leader-centered **disputes between followers is not a new problem** (1 Corinthians 3:1-9).

THE BODY OF CHRIST SHOULD NOT BE DIVIDED

These believers were divided under the banner of a leader and the different opinions pertaining to purification rituals.

- "One of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos' or '... Cephas,' or '... Christ.' **Is Christ divided?** Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul's name?" (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

KEEPING CEREMONIALLY CLEAN

This topic of purification would have been very important to the Jews (Mark 7:1-23). Under OT law, it was necessary to keep themselves ceremonially clean to serve and please God.

- The Pharisees added so many man-made traditions that it was almost impossible to observe. Thankfully, under the new covenant, **it is the blood of Christ that cleanses us.**

A MANUFACTURED COMPETITION

One group of followers looked at **another group of followers doing what they were initially doing but with more success** and started an argument about doctrinal differences.

- **This manufactured competition, rooted in pride and jealousy, detracts from the mission: to seek and save the lost!**

BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

John the Baptist and his disciples were baptizing, not to bring Gentiles into the Jewish faith, but to bring repentance to anyone.

- Jesus and His disciples would have been baptizing as a continuation of repentance since **these took place before the crucifixion, resurrection, and coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.**

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Now we repent and choose to follow Christ. Out of that choice, we should desire to be baptized out of obedience.

- We are **buried with Christ and raised to a new life** (Romans 6:4), **adopted into the family of God** (1 Corinthians 12:13), and **we have the promise of the Holy Spirit activating gifts and fruit in our life** (Acts 2).

WE MUST DECREASE (JOHN 3:27-30)

"WHAT DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU DID NOT RECEIVE?"

John the Baptist attempts to expose the fallacy of this competition by reminding us, **"No one can receive anything unless it has been to him from Heaven."**

- **All success in ministry and all blessings come from God**, so there can be no competition. Since **our gifts and opportunities come from God**, He alone gets the glory.

"THIS JOY OF MINE IS COMPLETE."

John the Baptist uses the **familiar example of the bridegroom and best man** to communicate further the ridiculousness of a competition.

- Once the bridegroom is introduced to his bride, **the best man's work is completed. The best man does not attempt to bring attention to himself** once the bridegroom and bride are brought together.

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

There is great significance in the image of a bridegroom.

- The Jewish people would have been familiar with a "marriage covenant" between the people of God and God. Today, God calls a people to Him, the Church, as the bride of Christ. **One day the bridegroom will come to claim His bride** (Revelation 19:6-9).

POWERFUL ESSENTIALS TO FOLLOWING CHRIST

Chapter 3 in the Gospel of John is a "must" read for Christians as **three essential "must" statements are made.**

- **The sinner "must" be born again** (John 3:7), **the Savior "must" be lifted up on a cross then in our hearts** (John 3:14), and **we "must" decrease so that He may increase** (John 3:30).

GETTING SMALL

Here's the hang-up for a lot of Christians. Like John the Baptist, our goal is not to draw attention to us, but to the one who sends us.

- **Are we okay with never getting accolades for our work in our ministries? Are we okay with the attention being shifting off us and onto God where it belongs** (Matthew 5:16)?

SPEAKING GOD'S WORDS (JOHN 3:31-36)

HE CAME FROM HEAVEN

John the Baptist and every prophet who came before him were from the earth and spoke in earthly terms.

- Jesus was from Heaven and above all, and John's audience would have known exactly what that meant. It meant **He was God! It was this claim of deity that so many rejected during His ministry.**

HE CAME WITH AUTHORITY

Jesus, the Son, was sent by God, the Father, with authority to communicate what He has seen (John 5:19).

- John 3:16 is a beautiful testament to the depths of God's love for the world, but here in v. 35, **John wants his audience to see the Father's love for the Son and that He has given him all things.**

HE CAME TO SAVE US

God does not send people to Hell. Hell was prepared by God for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Through the fall of humanity, we are all condemned and awaiting judgment.

- **But God** sent His son as a propitiation (satisfying wrath and being reconciled) for our sins. **The blood of Christ allows us to escape the wrath of God** (Romans 5:9).

HE WAS REJECTED

Jesus' message and miracles were rejected. When we reject His witness, we reject His sacrifice and are, therefore, still under judgment. The wrath of God is not satisfied through Jesus' sacrifice and is still upon us.

- **Why should someone follow Christ? Because salvation exists nowhere else and by no one else** (Acts 4:12).

HE IS JUST

The verdict has been given, we are guilty, but judgment has not been executed. Why? What is God waiting for?

- He is waiting for sinners to come to repentance. He is patient and long-suffering. **His desire is that no one would perish but come to eternal life** (2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16).

THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND

- We must decide how we will respond to Jesus. **Do we realize that indecisiveness is still a decision?**
- **There are only two choices: our way or His; the light or the darkness; life or death; temporary or eternal; the wrath of God or the grace of God.**

DO NOT DELAY

- There will come a time when it is too late to decide. **Do we know that delayed obedience is still disobedience?**
- Just like in the days of Noah, when the first raindrop fell, it was too late. When the eastern sky opens up and Christ returns, it will be too late.
- **Get on the boat before it's too late!**