

Food for thought from the Gospel of John

3 – 9 John Yields to Jesus

John 3:22-36

The ministries of John the Baptist and of Jesus dovetail. John was gathering people and pointing them to Jesus. Jesus is the preeminent One. John's ministry will melt into the ministry of Jesus. John will eventually go to prison, but Jesus will go to the cross.

In John 3:22-24, we are told that Jesus left Jerusalem and went to the countryside of Judea. John 2:13 – 3:21 revealed that, in Jerusalem, Jesus had purged the temple. He did miracles / signs to establish His power and authority before the people. He also had an interview with Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Pharisees. But now, In John 3:22, Jesus went to spread His ministry elsewhere. Disciples were being baptized. To the north, in Samaria, John was also baptizing disciples.

John the Baptist's ministry is a transition from the Old Covenant to a New Covenant, that is about to be revealed. John is introducing Old Testament saints to Jesus Christ – the Messiah, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

To understand the significance of this transition from old to new, from law to grace, a study of Romans chapters 7-8, II Corinthians 3, Galatians 3, and Hebrews chapters 8-10 would help.

This transition, from John to Jesus might be compared to the launching of a rocket into space. The payload is at the top of the rocket. The lower part of the rocket consists of staging rockets that get the rocket lifted with a tremendous momentum. But when they spend their fuel, the staging rockets drop off, leaving the upper part to go on into space. So, John gathered people who repented, as their hearts turned to expectation of the coming of the Messiah. John gathered up momentum among the people of Israel. It was all for the purpose of promoting Jesus Christ, not himself. When John's purpose was fulfilled, he would go to prison and later be executed. People needed to move forward with Jesus Christ, who would later go to the cross to die for the sins of His people. May we stay focused on Christ and His cross (Galatians 6:14).

To further illustrate this, we note a discussion, **in John 3:25-26**. This discussion was between John's disciples and a Jewish person that was probably attended by a group of other Jews (translations differ between "*the Jews*" and "*a Jew*"). It was a discussion about purifying – probably centered around ceremonial forms or methods. This discussion led John's disciples to come to him and express their concern that more people were going to Jesus for baptism than to them. This gave John the opportunity to say important things about Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Important statements of John the Baptist from John 3:27-36

- John 3:27 – All true ministry is the result of God’s direction and empowerment.
- John 3:28 – John never claimed to be the Christ. John was sent to go before Him and prepare people for Him.
- John 3:29 – John described himself as *“the friend of the bridegroom.”* This is like being the best man at one of our weddings. The best man helps the groom. But the groom gets the bride, and the attention moves on from there.
- John 3:30 – John knew that his job was to give the attention to Christ, not himself. Christ and His ministry must move forward. The *“friend of the bridegroom”* must step back from the attention.
- John 3:31 – Jesus is heavenly, spiritual, and holy. Jesus is the preeminent One because He comes directly from God and speaks for Him.
- John 3:32 – Earthly humans cannot naturally understand and receive the testimony of Christ. See John 3:11-13.
- John 3:33 – Those who have the grace to receive His message are confirming what God has said from the beginning concerning His Son. See John 1:10-14; 5:24; Matthew 10:40; I John 5:9-12.
- John 3:34 – Christ’s words are God’s words. Jesus is united with the Spirit of God. That unity has no limitations.
- John 3:35 – The Father also is united with His Son in a bond of love. Therefore, He has entrusted His Son with all authority to do His will.
- John 3:36 – To believe on the Son of God is to immediately have everlasting life.
- John 3:36 – To not believe on the Son of God is to remain in the state of condemnation and spiritual death. See John 3:16-18

After considering John the Baptist’s testimony, what kind of questions should we ask ourselves?

- Am I united with the Father and His Son? Am I truly a believer, having eternal life now?
- Do I live my life in harmony with the words of Christ?
- Do I seek to give glory and honor to Christ? – to point others to Him?
- Do I go to a church that has these same priorities?