

Title: **THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE**
 AND
 THE BRIDEGROOM

Text: John 3:22-36

Subject: *John the Baptist's Last Testimony to Christ*

Date: Sunday Morning — August 10, 2008

Tape: John #18

Reading: *1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13*

Introduction:

My text this morning should be of great interest to us all. It contains the last testimony of John the Baptist concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to John 3:22-36. That faithful man of God, John the Baptist, was the same at the end of his ministry as he was at the beginning. the same in his views of himself, the same in his views of Christ and the same in his views of God's salvation. Blessed is that church whose pastor is as steady, as bold and as constant in proclaiming the saving majesty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ as John the Baptist!

With that as my introduction, let's get right to our text. The title of my message is — **THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND THE BRIDEGROOM.**

(John 3:22-36) “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. (23) And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salem; because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. (24) 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. (26) And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness; behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. (27) John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. (28) Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. (29) He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. (30) He must increase, but I *must* decrease. (31) He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

from heaven is above all. (32) 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.”

MUCH WATER

The first thing that is obvious in our text is the fact that it takes “*much water*” to perform the gospel ordinance of Believer’s Baptism. The Holy Spirit tells us plainly that “*John was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there*” (vv. 22-24). You cannot baptize anyone with a few sprinkles, or even a cup, of water. **It takes “much water” to perform the gospel ordinance of Believer’s Baptism.**

(John 3:22-24) “After these things 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 to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. (24) For John was not yet cast into prison.”

John had not yet been arrested and murdered by Pilate. He had not yet reached the end of his time on earth. So his work was not yet over. Here he is baptizing all who came to him, wishing to publicly confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. Let’s look at these three verses line by line, and learn what they teach.

If we compare what the Holy Spirit says in verse 22 with what he says in John 4:2, we see that **that which is done by Christ’s servants, in his name and by his authority, is done by Christ himself.**

(John 3:22) “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.”

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

(John 4:1-2) “When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (2) (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)”

God’s servants are to be heard, received and treated as the Lord Jesus himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2; Luke 10:16; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

(2 Corinthians 5:18-21) “And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(2 Corinthians 6:1-2) “We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2) (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)”

(Luke 10:16) “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”

(Hebrews 13:7) “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.”

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

Verse 23 is one of the most definitive statements in Holy Scripture with regard to what men call “the mode of baptism.”

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

(John 3:23) “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”

If baptism could be performed by sprinkling or pouring, “*much water*” would not be needed. Baptism is by immersion. The word “*baptized*” (both in the Greek and the English) means to dip, to immerse, or to plunge. The example of our Lord himself ought to settle all controversy in this regard. No unprejudiced mind can read the New Testament without seeing that baptism is immersion.

- **The Lord Jesus was immersed** (Matthew 3:16).

(Matthew 3:15-17) “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. (16) And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: (17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

- **Baptism is a burial** (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).

(Romans 6:3-4) “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

(Colossians 2:12) “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

- **Baptism symbolizes the fulfillment of all righteousness by Christ** (Matthew 3:15).
- **And baptism shows forth our hope of the resurrection** (Romans 6:4).

SATAN’S DEVICE

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

The second thing we have in this passage is a warning, a warning against one of Satan's favorite devices. The fiend of hell constantly seeks to divide God's people and to divide his servants (vv. 25-26).

(John 3:25-26) "Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples 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."

Some of John's disciples and the Jewish religionists were involved in a heated debate about rites and ceremonies of purification. The Jews observed countless many purification ceremonies. Some scriptural, being required by God's law as pictures of his work of grace in saving his people; but most of these ceremonies were observed because of religious tradition and had no basis at all in Holy Scripture.

These Jews seem to have thought that John was practicing a new purification ceremony. That would have been alright; but he refused to practice their ceremonies. In Matthew 3, when the Pharisees came to John for baptism, trying to tie his baptism to their traditions, he refused.

Now, read at verse 26 carefully. When we read, "*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,*" the "*they*" are not John's disciples, but those same Jews who had been arguing with his disciples in verse 25. They are the same ones who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees (John 1:19).

(John 1:19) "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?"

These same Jews came to John and told him that Jesus of Nazareth, the one to whom he bore witness, was baptizing and that all men now were coming to him. What do you suppose their motive was? They were trying to make John jealous and envious! They were trying to divide John's disciples and the disciples of Christ, as if they were serving two different causes. — That is one of Satan's favorite devices. He constantly tries to divide the church of God. He constantly strives to divide God's servants, to make one jealous

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

and envious of another. Satan does everything he can divide the people of God. We see one example of this after another in Scripture (Numbers 11:26-29; Philippians 1:14-18; Ephesians 3:8).

(Numbers 11:26-29) “But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. (27) And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. (28) And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. (29) And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!”

(Philippians 1:14-18) “And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. (15) Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: (16) The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: (17) But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. (18) What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

(Ephesians 3:8) “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

All hell must hoot and roar with laughter when the fiend of hell succeeds in dividing brethren! O Holy Spirit of God, protect us from this device of the devil! Make us peace-makers.

(Ephesians 4:1-7) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Strife and division are horribly evil, insidious, contagious and injurious to the cause of the gospel. Let us do nothing to cause it and nothing contribute to it!

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

Third, John the Baptist is held up by the Spirit of God as a pattern and example of a truly faithful servant of God (vv. 27-35). Here is a man “*clothed with humility*” (1 Peter 5:5).

(John 3:27-30) “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. (28) Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. (29) He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. (30) He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”

Here is one of the most important, most greatly used men in the history of the world, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. When men sought to honor him, he turned the honor away from himself to another. **In verse 27 John asserts that any honor a man has, any usefulness in the kingdom of God, any place of service is that which God gives him.** Blessed is that servant who knows this and acquiesces in the sovereign will of his God! (1 Corinthians 4:7; 12:11, 18) — John turned the attention of these men away from himself to that other man who came into the world as Jehovah’s Servant, Jesus of Nazareth.

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”

(1 Corinthians 12:11) “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

(1 Corinthians 12:18) “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

(Ephesians 4:7) “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

In verse 28 John declares himself to be nothing, just a voice, a voice sent to proclaim the coming of the Christ. This was not a sham, pretentious show of humility, but genuine humility. Like Paul after him, he says, “*By the grace of God I am what I am*” (1 Corinthians 15:10). We see in John the Baptist a very different spirit from that displayed by these Jewish religionists. He genuinely sought no honor or praise, no recognition or applause from men. Rather than receive it, he turned it to another Servant, to promote another Servant of God! — That is a faithful servant! True, that other Servant was the Lord Jesus Christ; but the principle is the same.

Beware of any preacher who courts praise and recognition, who seeks light to shine upon him, who calls attention to himself, and does nothing to promote the ministries of other men.

John Trapp said, “Self-love makes men unreasonable, and ever teacheth them to turn the glass to see themselves bigger, and others lesser, than they are.”

- Ezekiel uplifted the name of Daniel (Ezekiel 14:14).
- Paul promoted Epaphras (Colossians 1:7).
- And Peter praised Paul, though he had been publicly reprov'd by him at Antioch (2 Peter 3:15; Galatians 2:11).
- Faithful men promote one another, but never themselves!

God’s servants, faithful gospel preachers are friends of Christ, the Bridegroom. Like the best man at a wedding, faithful preachers rejoice to see Christ come to take his bride in his arms. They do not desire to be seen, but for him to be seen with his bride (v. 29). They just hold the ring (the everlasting gospel of peace).

(John 3:29) “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

The bride is the church, God's elect of every age and nation, the people of God. They belong to the Bridegroom (given to him by the Father, redeemed by his blood, and brought to him by his Spirit). The friend of the Bridegroom is not jealous and envious. He is truly a friend and loves the Bridegroom, he rejoices in the happiness of the Bridegroom, and his joy is fulfilled when the Bridegroom is glorified. The servant of Christ is occupied with Christ and his glory — nothing else!

Since the first time I read verse 30 with any sense of its meaning, since the day that it was first brought home to my heart, I have been praying that the Lord God might daily make this the ambition of my heart. — "**He must increase, but I must decrease!**" This is the will and purpose of God. Let it be my will and purpose, too. — "*He must increase, but I must decrease!*"

- He must increase in his greatness; but I must decrease.
- He must increase in his fame; but I must decrease.
- He must increase in the eyes of men; but I must decrease.
- He must increase in my eyes; but I must decrease.
- He must increase himself; but I must decrease myself.
- He must be increased; but I must be decreased.

We can never think too highly of Christ. We can never extol him too much, love him excessively, or be overly devoted to him.

Then, in verses 31-35, John begins to increase Christ and decrease himself.

(John 3:31-35) "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. (32) 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."

- **Christ came from heaven and is above all.** — I am of the earth and speak as one of the earth (v. 31).

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

- **The Lord Jesus is the perfect revelation of God; but men refuse to hear him** (v. 32).
- Yet, all who receive his testimony, all who believe him, **set to their seal that God is true** (v. 33).

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we seal the truth to our own hearts. But, this 33rd verse might be translated, “He that received his testimony is already sealed, because God is true.” Chosen, redeemed sinners come to Christ in faith, we believe him, when Christ has sealed us by his Spirit (Revelation 7:1-3). That translation is verified by Scripture (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:12-14; 4:30; Jude 1:1).

(Revelation 7:1-3) “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. (2) And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, (3) Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

(2 Corinthians 1:21-22) “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; (22) Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

(Ephesians 1:12-14) “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

(Ephesians 4:30) “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

(Jude 1:1) “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called.”

**THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM**

- **Christ is the only man to whom the Spirit is given without measure** (v. 34). He is the full Revelation of God. He is the full Truth. — All the fulness of the Triune God dwells in him, — without measure (Colossians 2:9)! — **How vast the difference between the servants of God and the Servant of God!**
- **God the Father has given all things to Christ, as our Mediator, because of his love for him** (v. 35; John 10:16-18). — *“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”*

You might ask, “What all does that include?” — It includes all things pertaining to the universe, — all things to life, — all things to the new heavens and new earth, — all things to the church, — and if there is anything else, all things pertaining to that too! God has laid help for our souls upon One that is mighty (Psalm 89:19).

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Fourth, in verse 36, John the Baptist gives us the final point of the last sermon he preached before his execution. Having declared the greatness and glory of Christ, the Lamb of God, the sinner’s Substitute, he asserts that **your eternal destiny is your own responsibility.**

(John 3:36) “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.”

Here is the nearness and presentness of God’s salvation. John the Baptist declares, — *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life!”* Pardon, peace, eternal life and a complete title to Heaven, are the immediate possession of every sinner who believes on the Son of God. This salvation, in all its fulness is the immediate possession of every believer.

What a glorious assertion! There are no works to be done, no conditions to be fulfilled, no price to be paid, no years of probation to be passed, before a sinner can be accepted with God. Believe on Christ, and you are at once forgiven. By Christ all that believe are justified from all things.

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

If faith in Christ brings with it present and immediate privileges, to remain unbelieving is to be in a state of tremendous peril. If heaven is so near to the believer, hell is just as near to you who believe not! — *“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

How sure is that soul of blessedness who has the Son! How sure the everlasting misery of hell’s torments to those who have not the Son of God! The wrath of God, not taken away by Christ, *“abideth on”* you who believe not the Son of God!

“Here is the inevitable alternative. All things are in Christ: all things are ours through union with Christ; that union with Christ comes through faith in Christ. Those who believe not shall not see life, nor enter in, nor enjoy it.” — *Pastor Henry Mahan*

“Come humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve.

‘I’ll go to Jesus, though my sins
Like mountains round me close;
I know his courts, I’ll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

Prostrate I’ll lie before his throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I’ll tell him I’m a wretch undone
Without his sovereign grace.

I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know,
I must forever die.

But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (Delightful thought!) —
As sinner never died!”

Having said all that, read verse 36 again, paying close attention to the verb tenses. — “*He that believeth on the Son hath* (present tense) *everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life* (future tense); *but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” Why, do you suppose, did the Holy Spirit inspire John to use different verb tenses? Would it not have meant the same thing if he had used either the present tense or the future in both places? No, the meaning would have been completely different.

- When John declares, “*He that believeth on the Son hath* (present tense) *everlasting life,*” he is telling us that wherever faith is found life is already present. — Faith in Christ does not produce eternal life. Eternal life produces faith in Christ.
- When he asserts, “*he that believeth not the Son shall not see life,*” while placing all responsibility upon the guilty soul that chooses not to believe, he shuts the poor sinner up to God’s sovereign grace, declaring plainly that unless God the Holy Spirit gives you life, you will not and cannot believe on the Son of God.
- At the same time, John assures us that if we find ourselves believing on Christ, we are born of God! Faith is the evidence that it is so (1 John 5:1, 10-13).

(1 John 5:1) “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

THE BAPTIST, THE BRIDE AND
THE BRIDEGROOM

(1 John 5:10-13) “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13) These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Amen.