

John the Baptist – Study Leader’s Questions – John 3:22-36

The Baptism of Jesus and John, John 3:22-28

1. *Jesus and John are both baptising. Do you think that there are two different types of baptism here or just one (John 3:22-23)?*
2. *Should this baptism be administered in the church today (John 7:39, Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3)?*
3. *Why does John tell us about the imprisonment of John [the Baptist] (John 3:24)?*
4. *What is the dispute about amongst John’s disciples and what is it that they ask John about (John 3:25-26)?*
5. *Were the Jews trying to drive a wedge between Jesus and John? Why would they do that?*

John’s Testimony about the Authority of Jesus, John 3:29-30

6. *What is John’s answer to them (John 3:27-28)?*
7. *What is the relevance of the ‘Bridegroom’?*

John’s Testimony about the Authority of Jesus, John 3:31-36

8. *What do these verses teach us about the ministry of Jesus (John 3:31-32)?*
9. *What do these verses help us to understand (John 3:33-34)?*
10. *What has Jesus been given by God the Father (John 3:35)?*
11. *What is the great contrast in this verse (John 3:36)?*

The Baptism of Jesus and John, John 3:22-28

1. *Jesus and John are both baptizing. Do you think that there are two different types of baptism here or just one (John 3:22-23)?*

John 3:22-23 refers to two types of baptisms. John's baptism was in part explicitly to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to Israel, according to John 1:31.

“And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”

Jesus' baptism, carried out by the apostles, John 4:1, 2, was for willing disciples of the Lord, *who would later be baptized “with the Holy Ghost”* Matthew 3:11. This is the saving baptism of Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:5 that happens now immediately on receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, John 1:12. It is foreshadowed by the apostles' baptism of John 3:22, 4:1, 2, like the pledge of the Holy Ghost that Jesus gave in John 20:22 that is fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4, for all the disciples ***“about an hundred and twenty”*** Acts 1:15. Note from Luke 24:33 that more than the eleven disciples were present in John 20:22.

Jesus' baptism carried out by the apostles, John 4:2, is also *like* the believer's baptism set out in Matthew 28:19, which is why the apostles, not the Lord Himself, carried out the baptism. See also Acts 8:36-39, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:31-33 for specific examples of believers' baptism.

See *Seven Baptisms* by Dr Peter S. Ruckman, pp 6-12, 18-21, Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of John* p 49 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 1296, 1423-1424, 1447, 1450.

Jesus' baptism carried out by the apostles, John 4:2 and believers' baptism does of course indicate commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, or should, according to Luke 9:23, which should be memorised.

“And he said to them all, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*”

2. *Should this baptism be administered in the church today (John 7:39, Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3)?*

Yes, in accordance with the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19. See also comments on believers' baptism under *Question 1*, which was carried out consistently in the early church.

Note, however, that Romans 6:3 refers to *saving* baptism, not *water* baptism. See remarks under *Question 1* with respect to Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:5 and Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of Romans* p 233.

3. *Why does John tell us about the imprisonment of John [the Baptist] (John 3:24)?*

The other Gospel writers mention John's imprisonment; Matthew 4:12, 11:2, 14:3, Mark 1:14, 6:17, Luke 3:20 from which he never returned Matthew 14:10 and so John completes a fourfold Gospel testimony to John's fate that the Author of scripture evidently believes that John should have, according to Psalm 116:15.

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

Moreover, John 3:24 helps to explain what John says in John 3:30.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

4. *What is the dispute about amongst John's disciples and what is it that they ask John about (John 3:25-26)?*

John's baptism "***with water unto repentance***" Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3 was for purifying those who were baptised in preparation to receive their Messiah, John 1:31. See Mark 1:5.

"And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

John's ministry, however, conflicted with the Jewish understanding of purification according to Leviticus 16 with respect to the Day of Atonement and Numbers 19 with respect to "***the putting away of the filth of the flesh***" 1 Peter 3:21.

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of John* pp 71, 116.

"And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" Leviticus 16:18-19.

The sense of the passage was *reconciliation* between God and Israel.

"And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:" Leviticus 16:20-21.

"And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people" Leviticus 16:24.

"And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin" Numbers 19:9.

Note the application of the "***water of separation***" in Numbers 19:10-22.

John's ministry did not correspond to the purification procedures that Leviticus 16 and Numbers 19 describe, especially in that it did not include any offering for sin but the Lord Jesus Christ would be that offering for sin as "***the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world***" John 1:29.

John's disciples don't actually ask him anything in John 3:26 but they are dismayed by what John describes in John 4:1.

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John..."

John then explains in John 3:27-30 why this is happening. See *Question 3* with respect to John 3:30.

5. *Were the Jews trying to drive a wedge between Jesus and John? Why would they do that?*

John 3:26 appears to refer to John's disciples, not the Jews, because those who come to John in John 3:26 refer to him as "**Rabbi**."

Any schism that they hope to promote between Jesus and John would be because they were not at that stage willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as two of John's disciples had done earlier, namely Andrew and the apostle John himself, John 1:35-41:

"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" John 1:37.

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *The Book of John* pp 54-56.

John's Testimony about the Authority of Jesus, John 3:29-30

6. *What is John's answer to them (John 3:27-28)?*

John says in effect that the Lord Jesus Christ is "**the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ**" John 1:41 and that the Lord is able to surpass John in his ministry because the Lord has the power from God to do so, as the Lord Himself would confirm in Matthew 28:18.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

7. *What is the relevance of the 'Bridegroom'?*

The Lord Himself is likened to a bridegroom as "**the Sun of righteousness**" Malachi 4:2. See Psalm 19:4-5.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork...In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."

See Dr Ruckman's commentary *Volume I of the Book of Psalms* pp 114-116 and the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 784.

The Lord refers to Himself as "**the bridegroom**" in Matthew 9:15, 25:1, 5, 6, 10, Mark 2:19, 20, Luke 5:34, 35. See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1286.

The Lord's bride is revealed in Ephesians 5:23.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

John's use of the term "**bridegroom**" shows that as a true prophet of God, he understood both the Old Testament scriptures such as Psalm 19:4-5, Malachi 4:2 and how they would be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. See 1 Peter 1:10-11.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

John is a good example for the Christian in that he searched the scriptures John 5:39 and cried out for knowledge and understanding, Proverbs 2:3 which God clearly granted to him. As Moses said with feeling Numbers 11:29:

"Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

John's Testimony about the Authority of Jesus, John 3:31-36

8. *What do these verses teach us about the ministry of Jesus (John 3:31-32)?*

The Lord Jesus Christ is ***“the Lord from heaven”*** 1 Corinthians 15:47 i.e. ***“he that cometh from heaven is above all.”*** His ministry therefore is as John states in John 3:32, 34 and as the Lord Himself said in John 17:8.

“And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth;”

“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”

However, the Lord encountered a reluctance to receive His words on the part of those to whom He was sent to minister i.e. ***“no man receiveth his testimony,”*** as John 1:11, 7:5 reveal.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

“For neither did his brethren believe in him.”

The Lord Himself experienced disappointment in the ministry and so will any of His followers today but as Mark 6:6 shows, the Lord's will is to keep on ministering.

“And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.”

Note Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:58, which should be memorised.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

9. *What do these verses help us to understand (John 3:33-34)?*

John 3:33 states ***“He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”***

Though many did not receive the Lord's testimony, some did and remained steadfast to the Lord as He testified in Luke 22:28.

“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.”

John 3:33 therefore shows the truth of what Paul states in Galatians 6:9. Compare remarks under *Question 8* with respect to Mark 6:6, John 1:11, 3:32, 7:5.

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

See remarks under *Question 8* with respect to the first part of John 3:34. See also 1 Corinthians 15:58.

The expression ***“for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him”*** in John 3:34 refers to the Lord's anointing in Matthew 3:16 as John testified in John 1:32.

“And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.”

The expression ***“for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him”*** in John 3:34 also refers to Colossians 2:9 with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ:

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

10. What has Jesus been given by God the Father (John 3:35)?

“All things” with respect to **“All power...in heaven and in earth”** Matthew 28:18, see *Question 6*, **“all judgment”** and **“authority to execute judgment also”** John 5:22, 27 and **“power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him”** John 17:2. John 6:37 shows that this power is unrestricted. The second group that the Lord mentions is anyone wanting to get saved now, 2 Corinthians 6:2.

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

11. What is the great contrast in this verse (John 3:36)?

Eternal destinies, salvation versus damnation.

They are conditioned on *belief* versus *unbelief*.

The *believing* group **“shall...ever be with the Lord”** 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

The *unbelieving* group **“shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”** 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

The outcomes, as John 3:36 shows, nevertheless apply *now*.

The contrast could not be greater.

In sum, with respect to John 3:36, as Joseph said in Genesis 41:32 **“the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”**