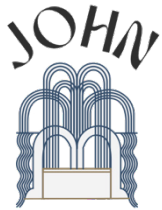


An Exposition of the
GOSPEL OF JOHN



“POINTING PEOPLE TO CHRIST”

John 3:22-36

Theme: The more a person concentrates on the glory of Christ, the less impressive one is to himself.

Introduction: Imagine you’re standing outside on a calm, clear night. The moon is full, bright, and beautiful. It lights up the landscape, and we admire its glow. But then morning begins to break. The sun rises slowly at first, and the moon's light fades as it does. The brighter the sun becomes, the more invisible the moon becomes. Not because the moon is no longer there—but because its light was never its own. It simply reflected the light of the sun.

This is precisely what John the Baptist understood about himself. He was a witness to the Light, but he was not the Light. As Christ, the true Sun of Righteousness, began to rise in public ministry, John was glad to fade into the background. His joy was made complete not by being popular but by seeing Christ exalted. *Just as the moon finds its purpose in reflecting the sun, we discover our purpose not in being seen or praised but in pointing others to Christ, whose glory alone provides true light and life.*

The main point in this section is: **“The more a person concentrates on the glory of Christ, the less impressive one is to oneself.”** There are three things to consider in concentrating on the glory of Christ in this text:

- 1) **Address the Hazards of Rivalry over Christ – 3:22-26**
- 2) **Aspire for Humility in Relating to Christ – 3:27-30**
- 3) **Affirm the Honor in Regard to Christ – 3:31-36**

I. Address the Hazards of Rivalry over Christ – 3:22-26

A. Avoid the Rivalry Caused by External Issues – vv. 22-25

1. The first area of concern deals with what happens when a person loses perspective on the purpose for various religious activities.
2. Immediately in this text, we are told that the rite of baptism consumed the two leading spiritual leaders of the day – *“After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. John also was baptizing ...”*
3. Jesus was just beginning His ministry while John was nearing the end of his: *“John had not yet been thrown into prison,”* an event that ultimately led to his murder.
4. They were both in the same region – both baptizing, and a dispute

occurred *“on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification.”*

5. As previously discussed, the Jewish people were enslaved by a religious system of works that they believed could justify them.
 - a) *Baptism, as presented by John, is a public declaration of a change in the soul – a sign that one has repented and turned away from one’s previous life.*
 - b) *It is identifying with a group of people different from one’s previous identity.*
6. John the Baptist had been calling people to repent of their sins and to *“make the paths of the Lord straight”* so that the Messiah might come and demonstrate His redeeming grace.
 - a) *His baptism had been anticipatory of what Jesus would truly accomplish – cp. 1:23.*
 - b) *He was calling for people to deal with the issues of their hearts through repentance.*
7. Now, a *“Jew”* refers to those who reject the ministry of Christ Jesus (since the term *“Jew”* was always a reference to those who resisted Christ Jesus).
8. In quibbling with John's disciples, this *“Jew”* apparently brought them to a discussion of *“purification,”* arguing about a sign of conversion not taught in the Old Testament.
9. Based on John’s disciples’ reaction, it is apparent that the *“Jew”* taunted them, indicating that he wasn’t sure to which of these “baptizers” he should go: *“Your master began; here is a second who succeeds better than he; to which of the two should one go?”*
10. The issue here is that they lost focus on the purpose of their ministry – it was not to wrestle over external issues and formalisms but to address the sin of the heart.

B. Avoid the Rivalry Caused by Expectations – v. 26

1. These disciples expected to be found in the “seat of popularity,” as their leader knew such notoriety.
2. However, Jesus did not fit into their paradigm, with John remaining predominant.
3. In essence, these men’s aspirations were being squelched because of the work of Christ Jesus: *“And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you, beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.’”*

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4. The relatively close proximity of Jesus' activity and John's caused John's disciples to complain that so many people were flocking to Jesus.
5. Essentially, these men saw Jesus and John as rivals – vying for preeminence.
6. They indicate that their attitudes were that there was no room for the work of God if it would disrupt their expectations and priorities.

II. Aspire for Humility in Relating to Christ – 3:27-30

A. Recognize Your Purpose in God's Plan – vv. 27-28

1. John's response was tremendous – calling these disciples back to focusing on what is important – *“John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.’”*
2. John is saying that a person ought not attempt to take what God has not given – that we all must defer to the authority of God's will and word.
3. Instead of bemoaning Jesus's increasing popularity, these men ought to have rejoiced that John's ministry was being fulfilled.
4. John calls their attention back to his purpose: *“You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’”*
5. His purpose was never to walk through the door but merely to open the door for the Messiah.
6. John saw himself as not worthy of the role that He knew had to be filled by the Son of God Himself.

B. Rejoice in the Promotion of God's Glory – v. 29-30

1. Instead of participating in the rivalry developing among his disciples with the ministry of Christ, John began to rejoice that his ministry and message was being fulfilled.
2. He illustrates his emotions by appealing to the scenario of being “the best man”: *“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.”*
3. He then states the principle of every believer's existence: *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”*
 - a) Literally, this says, “It is necessary for Him to grow in stature and influence.”

- b) The second phrase is passive and literally means, “It is necessary that I be made less or inferior.” – describing what has been occurring and what has upset his disciples.

III. **Affirm the Honor in Regard to Christ – 3:31-36**

A. **He Is Superior Due to His Access – v. 31**

1. *“He who comes from above is above all”* – references that Jesus Christ is exalted above all others; the reason is because of from where He has come (his origin).
2. In contrast to Christ Jesus, who is *“from above,” “he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth”* – there is an inferior orientation and message – reliant on what God can give.
3. *“He who comes from heaven is above all”* – indicates that Christ Jesus has come directly from Heaven and therefore has access directly to the Father – a privilege no other one has outside of Christ Jesus Himself.

B. **He Is Superior Due to His Awareness – v. 32**

1. John then addresses Jesus's ability to provide proper testimony because of *“what He has seen and heard”*—His awareness.
2. This is essentially a restatement of what Jesus Himself stated in *John 3:11-13*.
3. The Son of God has the ability to provide proper witness of the Father because of His unique perspective gained through having been with the Father in eternity past, and it is *“of that He testifies”* – yet *“no one receives His testimony.”*
4. Clearly, he is speaking about most people – those who possess no genuine saving faith – cp. *John 2:23-25*.

C. **He Is Superior Due to His Allegiance – v. 33**

1. This third reason why Jesus Christ is superior is because this testimony that He uniquely is qualified to provide men is **ALWAYS** consistent with the Father.
2. *“He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.”* those who believe agree that what He says about God is true.
3. There is never any incongruity between Christ and the Father – He remains completely loyal and faithful to the Father – a matter of intense allegiance.

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4. This affirmation of a believer aligns him with the testimony of the Father – *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.”* – cp. [1 John 5:10](#).

D. He Is Superior Due to His Anointing – v. 34.

1. Again, John provides another reason for Jesus’ superiority over all others: *“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.”*
2. This speaks of the anointing that Jesus possessed from the Father for His work as Redeemer – cp. [Matthew 12:18](#).
3. Thus, Jesus possessed God’s limitless anointing through His Spirit, which enabled Him to fully succeed in His mission of redeeming mankind.

E. He Is Superior Due to His Authority – vv. 35-36

1. John’s final issue regarding Jesus’ superiority is the authority Jesus possesses from the Father: *“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”*
2. Essentially, the authority spoken of here deals with the judgment and forgiveness of sinners – [John 17:2](#).
3. This authority forms the basis by which we can serve as ambassadors for Christ – He has commissioned us to reconcile the world on His behalf – cp. [Matthew 28:19-20](#).
4. This authority is delineated in the final verse of this section:
 - a) *The authority of Christ to forgive sinners: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; ...”*
 - b) *The authority of Christ to condemn sinners: “... but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*
5. Hence, there is no other way but through Christ – it is to Him we must turn, and to Him we must turn others.

So What?

1. In what areas of my life am I still trying to maintain personal recognition or control rather than surrendering it for Christ’s glory?
2. How does Christ’s supremacy impact my daily choices and priorities?
3. Does my life demonstrate that I believe God’s testimony about Christ is true?
4. Have I truly believed in Christ with a faith that leads to obedience?

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the less impressive one is to himself.**