

## JOHN THE BAPTIST'S WITNESS TO JESUS

John 3:22-36

Key Verse: 3:36

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

John the Baptist was prophesied to come as the forerunner of Jesus. As was promised, he came to this world and carried out his mission to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus, God's King. In order to carry out his mission as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, God's King, he preached repentance, forgiveness of sins and baptism before God. Time had passed away and it was a transitional period from John the Baptist to Jesus. In this part, in the transitional period, John the Baptist identifies who he is. Also, he shows us a good example to be a coworker of Jesus. In this passage, we learn who Jesus really is in accordance with the testimony of John the Baptist. This part is a brief summary of John chapters 1-3. May God richly bless you and help you to be a coworker with Jesus like John the Baptist. And may God open your eyes to see Jesus and help you come to know who Jesus really is.

### I. John the Baptist (22-30)

First, John, the one and only son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. John the Baptist was prophesied in Isaiah 40:3. It says, "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.'" But John was born of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Humanly speaking, Zechariah and Elizabeth were pathetic, because they had no son until they were too old to bear children. According to [Jewish tradition](#), those who had no heirs were considered to be cursed by God. But God provided John the Baptist to be born by Zechariah and Elizabeth. Why did God do so? Humanly speaking, Zechariah and Elizabeth looked as though they had no blessing from God. But in the sight of God, they were the lamp of God of the times. They were the whole church of God of the times, even though they were only one house church composed of grandfather and grandmother and no more. But Luke 1:5-7 says, "In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years." When we read these verses, we find that it was the time of Herod king of Judea. This insinuates the worst time in the history of Israel, in which people suffered and [bled](#) and the situation was utterly lawless. At that time, ordinary people thought to [believe](#) in God was against social consensus and nobody wanted to identify himself as a man of God. In such a time, Zechariah and Elizabeth were the only house church. This old couple kept all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. Simply speaking, they loved God. They were a blessing to neighbor people. And they lived a sacrificial life in order to obey all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. God was pleased with them and gave them John.

Finally a son was given to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Nobody could

understand this miraculous event. But the author Luke comments, "For the Lord's hand was with him" (Lk 1:66b). Zechariah and Elizabeth were also human beings. They had no heir. Now they had a one and only son. So they really wanted to name him "Little Zech." The community people also pressed them hard to call him Little Zech. But Zechariah obeyed the angel's instructions to call him John, the gift of God (Lk 1:60). Here we learn who is the most important person in the sight of God in this world. They are not wealthy men. They are not men of standing. They are not the king and his royal subjects. They are Zechariah and Elizabeth, who had God in their hearts, who had God's words in their hearts, and who practiced the words of God in their daily lives.

When we see modern days we sigh every other seven minutes because of people's wretchedness. According to news, in 1994 in Germany, 9,400 people were killed and 10,000 people were injured by car accidents. What is worse, 12,000 people committed suicide. They were mostly from rich families. According to Karl Marx, Germany was well established as a social democratic nation. College tuition is free and all kinds of benefits are given. To most workers, four months of vacation are given a year besides regular holidays and Sundays. Why do they commit suicide? Because they have no God in their hearts. They commit suicide because they are full of demons in their hearts. They did not commit suicide, but they were deceived by demons to hate God and hate their parents and hate their community people and hate their country and hate their wives. Finally they commit suicide. The world without God is well described in Genesis 1:2, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." In short, where there is no God, there is chaos without and within. Zechariah and Elizabeth were indeed the lamp of God. They were worthy of being the parents of John the Baptist.

Second, John was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. As we thought about, John was prophesied in Isaiah 40:3 to come to this world as the forerunner of Jesus. As a one and only son of old parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, to carry out his mission was unthinkable. But from the beginning he lived worthy of being the forerunner. He lived a holy life. He did not mingle with wicked people of the world. He lived in the wilderness, wearing camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey (Mk 1:6). When the time came, he went out and preached the gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins and baptism before God. Luke 3:4-6 says, "As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.''" These verses overwhelm us with the poetic expression. For example, "every valley shall be filled in." It sounds like one stanza of a poem. But the main point of this prophecy was that John will preach the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins and baptism before God. You may wonder what baptism means. Baptism is one's declaration to the world that he is a child of God and a symbol of washing away his sins and no more. True baptism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which our Lord Jesus Christ gives (1:33).

Luke 1:16-17 explain Isaiah's prophecy excellently. Its main point is that John would preach the message of repentance and forgiveness of

sins and baptism before God. It says, "Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Here we studied how John prepared the way for the Lord Jesus.

Third, John's witness of Jesus (22-26). Once, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them and baptized (22). Simultaneously, John was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water and the people were constantly coming to be baptized (23). Here we see that Jesus was baptizing and John was baptizing. When we read further, many who had been crowding to John were now going to Jesus to be baptized. Historically speaking, it was a transitional period, so no argument was necessary. John's disciples saw Jesus and his disciples' triumphant spirit, and that the crowd of people who had been coming to them were now going away to Jesus. Probably, John's disciples' stomachs were very good in consuming a huge amount of food. But their stomachs were upset and they could hardly breathe because of their jealousy. In addition, a certain Jew stirred up John's disciples and said, "You are washed up. You are no more. See, all the people are going to Jesus. Jesus' disciples look like four-star generals after World War II, but you look like wounded soldiers." One of John's disciples raised an issue concerning the legal right of baptism. He said, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him (26). What'll we do in the future?" What they would do was not the real problem. John's disciples were boiling mad because all the people were going to Jesus and only a few people were coming to them.

John knew that his disciples were unhappy about Jesus' success, especially because of their competitive spirit toward Jesus' disciples since many people who had followed John were now going away to follow Jesus. So John told them allegorically that it was a transitional period. Now his time of mission is over and Jesus' mission for God's salvation plan started. John says in verse 27, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven." In this verse, the words "from heaven" have spiritual meaning. This implies that by God's sovereign will his mission is over and Jesus' mission has started. John continued to say to his disciples, "I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him'" (28). In this verse, he clearly identifies himself that he was not the Christ, he was the forerunner of Christ. After nailing down his mission and Jesus' mission, John expresses his inner joy of being the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, God's King. In the ancient time, marriage was a great blessing to the bridegroom and bride and all the community people. So he said in verse 29, "The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete." John compared Jesus to the bridegroom and himself to the best man of the bridegroom. It is easy to understand this parable. We had a musical wedding on October 11th, 1996. I saw a bride. As soon as she saw the bridegroom appear on the stage, she was so happy that she could hardly breathe. And her face was flushed. She shed many tears out of joy. God made the bride to be happy when she sees her bridegroom first. The Bible says our Lord Jesus Christ is our

bridegroom and we are his brides (Rev 19:7). We are eagerly waiting for our bridegrooms' coming. Matthew 25:6 says, "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'" When the brides heard this news, they could hardly breathe because they could see the bridegroom face to face. Isaiah 62:5 describes this joy very well. It says, "As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you." In conclusion, John said in verse 30, "He must become greater; I must become less." Here we learn our basic attitude toward our Lord Jesus as his precious children. We must have an unutterable happiness toward our Lord Jesus. John said, "He must become greater; I must become less." In other words, he said, "He must be exalted, I must be faithful to him unto death." We find the same kind of expression from St. Paul. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." When we ponder upon this verse, Paul's description is really amazing. It means that we must please God when we drink a cup of water or eat a Big Mac. In short, whatever we do, there must be a clear purpose in our hearts that we live to please God, and that we live to be a blessing to others and that we live a sacrificial life of faith for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no greater joy than the joy of living to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only spiritual men can understand this. On the other hand, we should not eat or drink if it is not pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. In this part, we learned John the Baptist's happy attitude toward our Lord Jesus Christ, God's King.

## II. John testifies that Jesus is God the Creator (31-36)

First, John testifies that Jesus is from above (31-33). Look at verse 31. "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all." We can understand this verse when we read John 1:1-4. John 1:1-2 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." John 1:3,4 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." This means that Jesus is originally God himself, the Creator God and the origin of human life.

Second, John testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God (1:29). John the Baptist says in 1:29, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John the Baptist knew that Jesus is the Creator God and the origin of human life. But he knew that God willed to send a one and only Son as the Lamb of God in order to shed his blood on the cross for the sin of the world. God willed through his holy blood to forgive all our sins and bring us back to his glorious kingdom of God. Revelation 5:12-13 says, "In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!'"

Third, John testifies that the word of Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit (34). Let's read verse 34. "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." People wonder

why they are unhappy. The other day a lady said, "My husband is a professor. I am a doctor. But we are only tired to keep up our daily routine and no more." They were high class people. But we don't see any happiness in them. Their unhappiness increased because of their wretched two sons and wayward three daughters. But when we accept the word of God, our Lord Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit and makes us unutterably joyful. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy and peace (Gal 5:22). How nice it is to forget about his tiredness after work, because he loves his wife so much so that he is only happy for no obvious reason. How nice it is for the career woman to forget about her tiredness after work, simply because she respects her husband so much so that she is always happy every evening. How wonderful it is to enjoy peace of mind in Jesus Christ our Lord. Without Jesus we are like rhinos. When we have Jesus we are like sheep under good care of a good shepherd who leads us into green pastures every day.

Fourth, John testifies that Jesus gives eternal life (35-36). Read verses 35-36. "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." Fallen man thinks that \$5 is more important than eternal life. Fallen man thinks that he is going to live in this world forever. An old man was very proud of his health, even though he is 65. But lately, news came that he has gotten throat cancer. Everybody was sorry that he worked too hard and now he is old and sick. Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?" (Mk 8:35-36). But verses 35-36 says that God sent his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Those who do not believe in the Son, God's wrath remains on them (36).

Today we are abundantly blessed by the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus. May God bless each of us to be a coworker of God and a coworker of Christ and a coworker of our coworkers like John the Baptist. May God bless us to testify that Jesus is the giver of eternal life.