

## Introduction

One day when I was playing on the PGA Tour, I was paired with a man named Alan, who was a fairly established player on tour. On one hole he hit a superb approach shot onto the green, and I applauded him for it. He responded by telling me that I should never do that. He said we are competing against one another, and I should never applaud, encourage, or celebrate another player's game while playing. I just listened to him, and did not try to argue with him. In his mind we were rivals; in my mind he was just another player trying to play his best. I was free to rejoice with him, and it did not take away from my own concentration or game.

I grew up being very competitive, and was involved in both individual and team sports, where our goal was to beat the other team. People that have played tennis, ping pong, or anything else with me will vouch that there are still some competitive juices flowing in me. However, early in my Christian walk, there was a huge change in my life that came about from meditating on Galatians 6:4-5. Paul wrote that we are to examine our own work in regard to ourselves alone, and not in regard to another, for each will bear his own load. I stopped comparing myself to other golfers. I focused solely on my own work, my own game. I looked at the strengths and weaknesses, and worked towards becoming the best golfer that I could be. I made a game plan for each hole on the course, and focused on how I shoot my lowest score on that course. I found that this freed me up from how others played. It did not matter if they played great, and were ahead of me or behind me, it did not affect my outlook. I found that I could applaud their great shots, and it had no affect on my game.

(Ga 6:4-5) "But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. {5} For each one will bear his own load."

Our text today is about a potential rivalry between Jesus and John the Baptist. I say potential, because it did not materialize. John the Baptist was not in competition with Jesus to gain the most crowds. John the Baptist did not have Galatians 6, like I had, but he understood three things that helped him celebrate the success that Jesus was having. Our text today is John 3:22-36. John was baptizing people in Aenon, and Jesus' disciples were baptizing people in Judea. A Jew came to John and told him that everyone was going to Jesus. John's answers to the Jew show that he knew who he was and who he was not. Second, his answers reveal that he knew what God had called him to do. Third, his answers reveal that he knew Christ. Let's read our text.

## John's Final Testimony

1. John knew who he was
2. John knew what he was called to do
3. John knew Christ

(Jn 3:22-24) "After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. {23} John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized— {24} for John had not yet been thrown into prison. {25} Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. {26} 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."

(Jn 3:27-30) "John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. {28} "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' {29} "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. {30} "He must increase, but I must decrease."

(Jn 3:31-36) "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. {32} "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. {33} "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. {34} "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. {35} "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. {36} "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

### 1. John knew who he was.

There arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. It was more than a discussion; it was a seed of rivalry and strife. Jesus' disciples and John were both baptizing people. It was a baptism of repentance, which was a purification or cleansing of people from their sins. The Jew that came to John's disciple told them that all or everyone was going to Jesus. We have Jesus and His disciples baptizing people in Judea, and John and his disciples baptizing people north of them in Aenon. This Jew was trying to stir up the rivalry between the two groups.

(Jn 3:25-26) "Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. {26} 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."

Rivalry is not new and certainly not limited to this incident. Throughout the Old and New Testament, we find rivalry. In the beginning there was rivalry between Cain and Abel about who had the best offering. Abel's was accepted and Cain was angry about it and killed his brother. There was rivalry between Sarah and Hagar. There was rivalry between Jacob's two wives: Rachel and Leah. Each of them wanted to bear more children than the other one, and gain more favor with Jacob.

One of the classic cases of potential rivalry was in Numbers 11. The people had grumbled to Moses about their food. They wanted some meat, not just the manna. Moses went to the Lord and said the burden of the people was too much for him by himself. So God had Moses gather seventy elders of the people and to bring them before the tent of meeting. Moses did that and he put some of the Spirit on them that was on him, and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. Two of the men, Eldad and Medad, remained in the camp, and they prophesied. (The other sixty-eight did not prophesy again.) A young man ran and told Moses that Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. Young Joshua was Moses' attendant, and he said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them." Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" Moses did not feel threatened by these two prophesying. His desire was to see the Spirit of God upon everyone. He knew he was God's servant, and he was not trying to elevate himself. John the Baptist had a similar view. He was preparing the way for the Messiah, and he wanted everyone to follow the Messiah. He was not trying to build up his own ministry, but the kingdom of God.

(Nu 11:26–30) “But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. {27} So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” {28} Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, “Moses, my lord, restrain them.” {29} But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” {30} Then Moses returned to the camp, *both* he and the elders of Israel.”

If we fast forward to the New Testament, there was rivalry in Corinth. Some said they were of Paul, and others said they were of Apollos. Even among Jesus’ disciples there was rivalry. They were constantly discussing and arguing about who was the greatest among them.

In our text, this Jew came and said, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.” The Jew was not even accurate in his report. John clarifies in chapter four, verse two, that Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were. In any case, his comment had all the makings of stirring things up between John and his disciples and Jesus and His disciples.

(Jn 4:1–3) “Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John {2} (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), {3} He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.”

Notice how John responds and handles this report. He said, “You are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but I have been sent ahead of Him.” John knew who He was, and who he was not. He knew that he was not the Messiah, but the forerunner of the Messiah.

(Jn 3:28) “You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’”

In chapter one, the apostle John records that when the priests and Levites asked him, “Who are you?” that he confessed, “I am not the Christ.” Since he said that, they asked him if he was Elijah and then the prophet. He answered no to both of these questions. Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” John answered, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’” John knew who he was not, and he knew who he was.

(Jn 1:19–23) “This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” {20} And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” {21} They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” {22} Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” {23} He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Next, John tells us that he who has the bride is the bridegroom. John does not have the bride, and he knows that he is not the bridegroom. John knows that he is the friend of the bridegroom. He knew who he was not, and he knew who he was.

(Jn 3:29) "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full."

In Jewish weddings at that time, the friend of the bridegroom was like the best man in our weddings today, only he had more responsibilities. The Jewish word is *shoshbin*, and he was more than just someone in the ceremony, he was a close and trusted friend. The *shoshbin* often helped with the marriage contract and served as a witness, advocate, guarantor, and even helped with the negotiations. He helped the groom prepare for the wedding, and accompanied him when it was time to pick up the bride and bring her back to the groom's house for the wedding ceremony. The *shoshbin* would never try to overshadow the bridegroom, but would support the bridegroom and celebrate the marriage union with great joy. At the wedding ceremony, he would stand by the bridegroom and be the witness. Once the wedding ceremony had ended, his role and responsibilities were finished.

In our text, John said that the friend of the bridegroom stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, and that his joy had been made full. "He must increase, but I must decrease." John had introduced Jesus and vouched that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He had vouched that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Now that he has introduced Jesus, his job as the friend of the bridegroom is over. His role must end. He must decrease, but the bridegroom must increase. Just as the bridegroom rejoiced, he was full of joy and rejoiced with the bridegroom.

John was a humble servant of God. He was not trying to take the place of Christ. He was not trying to take the place of the bridegroom. He was to prepare the way for Christ. He was to humbly serve the bridegroom and rejoice with him. Knowing that you are a humble servant of Christ is one of the keys to dealing with rivalry.

Notice what Jesus said to His disciples when they were discussing about who was the greatest among them. There was rivalry between them, and they all wanted to be the greatest. Jesus told them that if they wanted to be first, they needed to learn to be the last of all and the servant of all.

(Mk 9:33–35) "They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" {34} But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest. {35} Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

Notice what the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians when there was strife in the church. They had become divided over the different leaders. Some claimed to be under Paul, and others under Apollos. There was jealousy and strife in the church. Paul, like John told them that he was not the Christ. He said that they were just servants that the Lord had given opportunities. He and Apollos had different roles, but neither the one who planted or the one who watered was anything; it was God that caused the growth. He and Apollos were just God's fellow workers. Paul diffused the situation by telling them that they were just humble servants whom the Lord had given opportunities. Paul knew that he was just a humble servant of God, that had been graciously given the opportunity to plant the church in Corinth. He knew that he was God's fellow worker, but that the field belonged to God. He knew that he was a builder, but the building belonged to God. Paul knew who he was not, and he knew who he was

(1 Co 3:3–9) “for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? {4} For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not *mere* men? {5} What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. {6} I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. {7} So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. {8} Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. {9} For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

John knew who he was. He was not the Christ; he was the forerunner who prepared the way for the Messiah. He was the friend of the bridegroom, the Shoshbin, who had vouched for the bridegroom and declared him to be the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and the Messiah. John knew that he was a humble servant of God, and that is how he responded to the Jews.

Many people try to be like other people because they have not found out who they are. It is important for us to know who we are. We need to know who God has created us to be. The identity of people, particularly our youth has been under tremendous attack. Little boys and girls do not know who they are, and we need to help them learn who they are in Christ, and who God has created them to be.

## 2. John knew what he was called to do.

John also knew what God had called him to do. Our text began with John baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. Jesus and His disciples were in Judea, where His disciples were baptizing people. That is where John had been, but when Jesus came, John got out of the way and went north to Aenon. He kept preaching repentance and baptizing people, because he knew that this is what God had called him to do. He knew he was sent ahead of Jesus, and was to prepare the way of the Lord. He kept preaching repentance until his ministry was over. Notice that John had not yet been thrown into prison. His public ministry ended when he was thrown into prison by Herod for telling him that he should not have his brother’s wife.

(Jn 3:22–24) “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. {23} John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized— {24} for John had not yet been thrown into prison.”

In John 1:23, John had said that he was “a voice of one crying in the wilderness ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” which was what God called him to do.

(Jn 1:23) “He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

John also knew that he was to identify and testify that Jesus was the Messiah. In John 1:29, He testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He said that he did not recognize Him, but the Lord who sent him to baptize said to him, “He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.” Once John had seen the Spirit descend upon Jesus and remain, he testified, “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.” John had heard the Lord tell him what to do and

how to recognize the Son of God. John knew that he had been called to prepare the way of the Lord and to testify that Jesus is the Messiah.

(Jn 1:29–34) “The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} “This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ {31} “I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” {32} John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. {33} “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ {34} “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

Notice that John was following the directions given to him by the Lord. He knew that his ministry had come from the Lord, and he was simply doing what he had been called to do. Notice John's first statement after hearing the report that the Jew gave. He responded by saying, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from above.” John realized that the ministry that he had received had come from God. John was doing his part, and he was not concerned that more people were going to Jesus. He was being faithful to do what he had received from God.

(Jn 3:27) “John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.”

John also knew that the Father loves the Son and had given all things into His hand. John had received from the Lord what was his, and Jesus had received from the Father all things. There was no rivalry here because everything belonged to Jesus.

(Jn 3:35) “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”

John knew that he was the friend of the bridegroom. He was to help the bridegroom and assist Him. He was to be a witness of the bridegroom. He was to stand and hear the bridegroom's voice and rejoice with him. John was not in competition with the bridegroom. The bride belonged to the bridegroom. He was called to serve the bridegroom, and help the bridegroom. Once the bridegroom was there, his role was going to end. Instead of getting riled up about more people going to Christ, John said, “this joy of mine has been made full.”

(Jn 3:29) “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.”

When we go through the New Testament, we see Paul often beginning his letters by saying that he was an apostle, called by God, or by the will of God. Paul knew that his ministry had come from God, and he knew exactly what God had called him to do.

(Eph 1:1a) “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus **by the will of God...**”

(Col 1:1a) “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ **by the will of God...**”

(1 Co 1:1a) “Paul, **called as an apostle** of Jesus Christ **by the will of God...**”

When you do the things that God calls you to do, whether it is teaching, prophesying, serving, helping, evangelizing, showing hospitality, giving, or showing mercy, you will be full of joy. There is tremendous joy in doing the things that God has called you to do. We need to know what God has called each of us to do.

The Greek word for gifts is charisma (Strong's G5486). The root word is charis (Strong's G5485), which means grace or favor. The root word of charis is chairō (Strong's G5463), which means joy. The unique gifts that God gives to every believer are gifts of grace and joy. Therefore, one of the things to help us identify our gifts is to see where God has given us grace and ability. Another thing to help us identify our gifts is to see the things that bring us joy.

### 3. **John knew Christ** (Jn 3:27-36)

John knew who he was, a forerunner of Christ, a servant of God, and friend of the bridegroom. He knew what he was called to do, which was to prepare the way of the Lord and to testify that Jesus is the Messiah, the bridegroom. John also knew Christ, and in this passage he identifies him several different ways.

#### a. **Jesus is the Messiah** (Jn 3:28)

John began by saying that he was not the Christ, but had been sent ahead of Him. Jesus is the Christ, which means anointed One. The Hebrew word for Christ is Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for. God had given him a sign of how to recognize the Son of God and after seeing the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus and remain, he testified that Jesus was the Christ.

(Jn 3:28) "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'"

Many of the expectations of the Jews for the Messiah were incorrect. They thought that the Messiah was going to come and free them from the Roman rule. They thought He would come as the King and re-establish Israel. Jesus is going to come and establish His rule on earth, but that was not what His first coming was all about. Jesus came to save people from their sins. He came as the Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. Jesus came to heal the sick and free the oppressed. He came to preach the gospel to the poor. He came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and establish the church, which is the bride of Christ. Jesus did not come to overthrow the Roman government and re-establish Israel. Therefore, some had a difficult time seeing Jesus as the Christ.

Even John himself struggled with it when he was imprisoned. Matthew and Luke both record that while he was imprisoned, he sent a word by his disciples, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" He was in prison, and if Jesus was truly the Messiah, he should establish His rule and get John out of Herod's prison. Jesus responded, saying, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

(Mt 11:2-5) "Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples {3} and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" {4} Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear

and see: {5} *the* blind receive sight and *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them.”

Christ came to die for our sins, so that we could have eternal life in Him. In John 10:10, Jesus said, “The thief has come to kill, steal, and destroy, but I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” Earlier in John 3, we saw that Jesus did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. Jesus came to forgive us of our sins, so that those who believe in Him would have eternal life. On this initial visit, the Messiah came to save us from our sins, not to restore the nation of Israel.

(Jn 10:10) “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.”

(Jn 3:16–17) “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. {17} “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

John ends the passage by saying that “he who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. John the Baptist received Jesus’ testimony and set his seal to this, that God is true. A seal was used to authenticate something. John’s testimony was a seal, something that authenticated that God is true, and that He had sent Jesus as the Messiah. Those that believe in the Son have eternal life, but those who do not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God. Jesus is the only way to have eternal life. To have eternal life, we must believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ. Those that believe in Jesus have life, and those who do not obey the Son will not have life. We have many today that say they believe in Jesus, but they are not obeying Him. To the Jews, to believe meant to trust, adhere, and obey, it was not intellectual assent. Those who truly believe Christ will obey Him. The Messiah came to save us from our sins, but we must believe in Him to have eternal life.

(Jn 3:33–36) “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. {34} “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. {35} “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. {36} “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

#### b. **Jesus is the Bridegroom** (Jn 3:29-30)

Second, John identifies Jesus as the Bridegroom. The bride, which are those that have accepted Jesus as their Messiah and come into a covenant relationship with Him, belongs to Christ. John was the friend or shoshbin of the Bridegroom, but the bride belonged to the Bridegroom.

(Jn 3:29) “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.”

In the Old Testament, the Song of Solomon speaks about the Bridegroom and the Bride. They are in love with one another, and long for one another. In the New Testament, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5 for husbands to love their wives. He told them to love them as Christ loved the church and laid His life down for them. He taught husbands to cherish and nourish their wife and to wash them with the water of the word. Then, he concludes saying, “This mystery is great; but



I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” The church is the bride of Christ, and Jesus is the Bridegroom.

(Eph 5:25–32) “Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ** also loved the **church** and gave Himself up for her, {26} so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, {27} that He might present to Himself the **church** in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. {28} So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; {29} for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as **Christ** also *does* the **church**, {30} because we are members of His body. {31} For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. {32} This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to **Christ** and the **church**.”

When Jesus came the first time, it was to establish a covenant with the bride, which He did with His blood. In John 14, Jesus told us that in His Father's house are many dwelling places, and that He has gone to prepare a place for us, (His bride). When Christ returns, He will be coming to take His bride, and there will be a wedding feast. John wrote that He is going to come again and receive us to Himself, that we can be with Him. In the meantime, as the bride, we are to be preparing ourselves for that wedding feast. We are to be a holy and blameless bride, without spot or wrinkle.

(Jn 14:1–3) “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. {2} “In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. {3} “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul said that he was trying to present every man complete in Christ. He was working hard to prepare the bride of Christ. I identify with Paul's statement. As a pastor, I am trying to present every man complete and mature in Christ. I pray and ask God what are the things that I need to be sharing so that they become more complete in Him. Like John and Paul, I feel like the friend of the bridegroom, and I rejoice when I see people following Christ.

(Col 1:28–29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

#### c. **Jesus is the Incarnate God** (Jn 3:31-34)

The third way that John identifies Christ is as the Incarnate God, God in the flesh. He recognizes that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is the Incarnate God. In verse thirty-one he wrote, “He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

(Jn 3:31) “He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

Another reason that John the Baptist was not concerned about people going to Jesus is that Jesus is above all. He was higher than John. In chapter one he wrote that He is higher because He

existed before him. In the flesh, John was six months older, but John recognized that Jesus was God in the flesh and had always existed.

(Jn 1:30) "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

John said those who are of the earth speak of the earth. He contrasts that with Jesus, who came from above. Jesus spoke the words of God because God had sent Him. Jesus could speak about the things of heaven because He came from heaven.

(Jn 3:34) "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."

**d. Jesus is the third member of the Trinity (Jn 3:34-36,**

Jesus was the Incarnate God, and He was also the Son of God. John wrote that the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He wrote that he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him. John identifies the Father and Jesus as the Son. John also wrote that "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure." Here we see the third member of the Godhead mentioned.

(Jn 3:34-36) "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. {35} "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. {36} "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

He was God in the flesh, but He was also the Son of God. He was God, and He took the form of man, and came as the Son of God. Even though the trinity was a new concept, John had a grasp of it. He knew that the Father had sent the Son, and had given all things to the Son. Jesus was part of the Godhead, and spoke the words of God and He gave the Spirit without measure.

**Conclusion and Applications (Jn 3:22-36)**

We began our text today with John baptizing people in Aenon and Jesus baptizing people in Judea. They were not rivals, and John made it clear that he was not the Christ, but was preparing the way for Christ. He was the friend of the bridegroom, the shoshbin, was an attendant and witness for the bridegroom. John rejoiced to see people following Christ. John knew that his ministry must decrease and Jesus' ministry must increase, and He rejoiced in that.

John testified and set his seal on this, that God is true, and that Jesus was sent by the Father, and spoke the words of God. John concludes by stating that "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

(Jn 3:36) "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

There are lots of applications for our passage. The first and most obvious is John's concluding statement. Do you believe in the Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus Christ? Have you received Him into your life and are you following Him? Are you obeying the Son? If you have received Christ

and are obeying Him, you will have eternal life. Those who have not believed and are not obeying Christ will see the wrath of God. If you would like to receive Christ today, you can simply say a prayer like this. "Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, the Christ, and I believe that You died for our sins, and were raised from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and to be my Lord. I confess You as Lord, and I am choosing to follow and obey You from now on. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."

A second application is for us to recognize that we are servants of Christ. It is not about building our kingdom and our own ministry, but about building the kingdom of God. We are the friends of the bridegroom, and are helping prepare for the wedding feast that will take place after Christ's return. Are you serving? Do you know your place of service? Do you know the gifts and calling in your life? Do you know your place in the body of Christ? God wants us to know who we are in Christ, and to be faithfully serving Him. If you do not know the answers to these, pray and ask Jesus to make these clear to you. Ask one of your pastors or friends to help you identify your spiritual gift(s). Look for opportunities to exercise your gifts and to serve others.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, You are the source of everything we have. "All we have needed Thy hand has provided. Great is Thy faithfulness." Lord, help us to have the humble attitude of a friend of the bridegroom. Help us to rejoice in the success of others. Help us to know who we are, who You have created us to be. Help us to know what you have called each of us to do. Help us to grow in our knowledge and understanding of who You are. Help us to be like John and testify about what we have seen and heard. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Do you think the Jew was jealous for John? How do his remarks compare to the remarks of the young man in Numbers 11:26-30 that told him that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp? How did Moses respond to Joshua?
- Why do you think that John moved from beyond the Jordan to Aenon to baptize people?
- What kind of attitude will we have if we understand that everything that we have is from God?
- How did John discover who he was, and what he was called to do?
- What kind of attitude do John's responses reveal about himself?
- Why is the illustration of the bridegroom so relevant and meaningful?
- How do you think that the Jew would have responded to John's answers?
- The apostle John said the world could not contain all the books if all the things Jesus did were written in detail. He chose to include this account for an important reason. What do you believe was his reason for including this incident?
- What is one application for your life that you can take from this account?

## **John's Final Testimony**

### **Introduction** (Ga 6:4–5, Jn 3:22-36)

1. **John knew who he was.** (Jn 3:25-29, Nu 11:26–30, 4:1–3, 1:19-23, Mk 9:33-35, 1 Co 3:3–9)
  
2. **John knew what he was called to do.** (Jn 3:22–24, 1:23, 1:29-34, Jn 3:27, 3:35, 3:29, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1, 1 Co 1:1)
  
3. **John knew Christ** (Jn 3:27-36)
  - a. **Jesus is the Messiah** (Jn 3:28, Mt 11:2–5, Jn 10:10, 3:16-17, 3:33-36)
  
  - b. **Jesus is the Bridegroom** (Jn 3:29-30, Eph 5:25–32, Jn 14:1-3)
  
  - c. **Jesus is the Incarnate God** (Jn 3:31-34, Jn 1:30)
  
  - d. **Jesus is the third member of the Trinity** (Jn 3:34-36)

### **Conclusion and Applications**