

#11 - John 3:22-36

Need: Final confirmation by John of Jesus' role.

Aim: To share John's last testimony about Jesus as to His role as God to save all of mankind.

Title: "Jesus Increase..."

Prop: In Jn. 3:22-36, John gave his last witness about **I. John The Baptist - His Role – Jn. 3:22-30**, and the **II. Role of Jesus – Jn. 3:31-36** in the plan and implementation of the grand scheme of redemption.

Intro: Jealousy can be a dangerous emotion. It exists in personal relationships, the business world and yes, even in religious circles. I have been jealous at times hearing from other pastors about the size of the congregations they serve, the programs which the church provides, the building programs and even the money that comes in from each offering. Some churches provide pastors with company cars, an expense account and other perks. Some have a large number of staff members whose sole purpose is to serve and facilitate the pastor in his work. Some men even have a research team who do all the ground work so when it comes time for the pastor to write his sermon everything is in place.

In Beaver City, as pastor I was responsible for any and everything which had to do with the church, from scraping and painting the baptistery to cleaning the church, even supervising renovations of the facility and oh yes, preaching on Sunday morning, teaching a Bible study on Sunday evening, a couple of community Bible studies during the week, hospital visitation, rest home ministry and even a children's afternoon program. All which was to be done during an often 7 day a week work schedule, for a \$180 a week!! I even found time to coach kid's baseball in my off time. Yes I have been jealous. The ministry team here spoils me. The jealousy I felt in Beaver City, NE is pretty much nonexistent as I now have active Trustees and Deacons who assist me in the ministry of this church.

In John the Baptist's ministry he had multiple disciples, people who hung on his every word and catered to his every need. His ministry was wildly successful, as people came from all over to hear him preach. Multitudes were convicted of their personal sinful condition and made life rendering commitments commemorated by water baptism. In the first few verses of our passage today, things were changing.

Prop: In Jn. 3:22-36, we find the last witness from I. John The Baptist - His Role – Jn. 3:22-30, and the II. Role of Jesus – Jn. 3:31-36 in the plan and implementation of the grand scheme of redemption which offers eternal salvation for all who would believe.

Transition: In verses 22-25, the Apostle John added an editorial note about the background in which the Baptist spoke concerning Jesus in verses 26-36.

I. John The Baptist – His Role – Jn. 3:22-30

A. Background (22-25)

1. Jesus' Activity – After the encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus must have fleshed out His group of disciples by this time, left Galilee and had come into the land of Judea. He was just beginning His preaching ministry and many believed in the Gospel message and were publically baptized bearing witness to the change wrought on the inside by the Spirit of God. Jesus interacted with the populace which probably meant He was healing the sick as well.

2. John's Activity (23) – In verse 23, John the Baptist's ministry was working simultaneous with Jesus, though John's field of ministry was further to the north and closer to the Jordan River. Crowds were beginning to wane as John directed people's attention to Jesus.

There was no jealousy, no competitive conflict between Jesus and John. Both knew their roles, each being uniquely equipped by God with their particular gifts and mission. John was the forerunner of Christ, proclaiming the message: **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** That was John’s message and now that Jesus had come into His own, John’s work was coming to a close.

3. Time Line (24) – In verse 24, John the Apostle added an editorial note to give a timeline which signified the follow incident as happening early on in Jesus’ ministry and in the twilight of John The Baptist’s work.

4. Situation of Conflict (25) – In verse 25, as the ministries of John and Jesus intersected; a conflict arose between John’s disciples and other Jews about the rite of purification. The central issue indicated there must have been confusion over the respective merits of the message of Jesus and John. If both were baptizing, whose baptism was valid? By popular acclaim Jesus’ influence was growing and John’s was waning. John’s disciples felt their mentor, friend and teacher had been eclipsed by Jesus’ sudden popularity, and they wanted an explanation. The power and prestige that they had with John was coming to an end.

B. John's Explanation (26-30)

1. Issue of Concern (26) – The issue raised in verse 26 was one of great concern: **“Rabbi, He (Jesus) who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.”** In a sense John's disciples were saying: **“How ungrateful can Jesus be? He wouldn't be popular if it wasn't for you John. You did all the ground work to set Jesus up and He is now stealing all your followers!!**

2. “No Mas”(More) (27-28) – In verse 27 John hit on the main issue about his ministry: **“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven above.”** John clearly understood that all he had done was ordained by God who gave him the capacity to do and now complete his task, that for which he was sent. God gave John the job, empowered him to fulfill it, and it was now complete as God ordained it from the beginning.

There are many tasks in my own life which by God's power, love and care are now completed as I move from one stage of life to the next. I completed high school, college and seminary. I completed my time in Beaver City, NE. The role of being a parent has changed and now I am reveling in the role of a grandparent. I am in the process of completing my calling here in Colorado Springs.

I am also involved in the ever changing relationship with my wife. One day the job of life will be complete and I will be called to the next state, eternal life.

John knew his role, his work; his calling was done and things were winding down. Many of us are stuck, failing to move on to the next step that God has in mind for us and thus robbing ourselves of God's blessing.

In verse 28, John bore witness and reminded his disciples that he had made it clear from the beginning he was not the Christ. His role was to bear witness and to identify the Christ, that being Jesus. On several occasions both among the people he preached to and the religious leaders who challenged him, John made it very clear he was not the Messiah, just the forerunner who came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

3. Illustration (29) – To clarify his position, John, in verse 29 used an illustration to prove his point. **“He who has the bride is the bridegroom...”** In the context of a wedding only two, the bride and bridegroom are the focal point of the ceremony. All attention centers upon the couple. Alongside the groom is a close friend who facilitates the bridegroom while remaining in the background. There was a certain element of joy when the bride-groom appeared, and in this case that was Jesus.

In like manner so was John's joy and sense of anticipation fulfilled when Jesus appeared on the scene. John was the best man in this illustration. Something he had been prepared for from the beginning of time had finally happened.

Transition: Therefore...

4. Final Assessment (30) – “He must increase, but I must decrease.” It was no longer about John as his task was rapidly coming to a close. Jesus now was the focal point. He was God in human form and John's job was to bear witness and to strongly encourage, actually ordering, his disciples to switch their allegiance to Jesus. John couldn't save anyone, only Jesus had that capacity.

Many times in this life we are searching for things that can satisfy our emptiness. We spend a life time accumulating things only to realize that our life has been wasted in the pursuit of material things, money and prestige, things which cannot bring purpose and meaning in life. We are all created with a God-hole inside of us, a space which only God is big enough to fill. Yet people spend a life-time trying to plug that hole, never reaching that goal outside of Jesus, and then die without hope, broken and empty. What in this world is so important that you would be willing trade for your own soul? God offers eternal life; the world offers nothing of lasting value.

II. Role of Jesus – Jn. 3:31-36

A. Jesus Origin & Ministry (31-24)

1. “Comes From Above” (31) – In verse 31 John spoke of Jesus and of His origin from heaven. It is kind of a comparison between John and Jesus. He knows the things He does because He spoke from His role as the eternal God. John spoke only from his own earthly experience, being of the earth, while Jesus spoke heavenly truth because that is where He is from.

If you were to ask me about the Pacific Northwest I could answer most of your questions, because that is where I was raised. When I visited my brother in Maine he asked me what I wanted to see. I had to defer to his experience as I knew nothing about Maine. In the same situation, Jesus spoke of Heavenly things because that was where He was from. John could speak of earthy things because that is all he knew.

2. Eternal Truth (32) – What Jesus has seen and heard was what the Father had given Him. Jesus spoke truth and the one who receives the His words joins Him in experiencing the truth of life.

3. Seal (33) – In verse 33, the one who receives the message of Jesus now bears the mark and bears witness that God’s Word, the message of Jesus is true.

4. Assurance (34-35) – In verses 34-35, I can just imagine the disciples of John gathered around him as he spoke these words, which pretty much sealed the closing of his ministry. John pointed his followers to Jesus, who bears the truth in His very person. **“You must follow Him as only He has the power to grant eternal life and give knowledge of what God is truly like.”**

John clarified his teaching in verse 35: **“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”** If you want more to life, look to Jesus. Not men in the pulpit or Christian authors or men on the radio or TV, as they are fallible, men who will fail you; but God never fails nor disappoints.

As a young man I thought I was bullet proof. I did things which today seem unimaginable. I took great risks often with less than delightful results. For example: I spent a summer in the woods logging for St. Regis Paper Company. I suffered a back injury which gets more severe with age. I played football, dislocated my shoulder, which blew apart some 20 years later and had to have reconstructive surgery. The list goes on and on. So these days I understand mortality; the body breaks down and the only thing that lasts forever is my personal relationship to God. As I grow in faith, I become stronger and stronger spiritually, more in tune with God.

It is my faith which has sustained me through the pits, holes and bad choices of my life. Only Jesus holds the key to eternal life which has present day effects which are ongoing for all eternity. So why are you wasting your life pursuing things which can never satisfy the longing God has placed in your very soul. He alone has the ability and capacity to fill that hole in your heart. But many of us choose to limp our way through life, jumping from one disaster to another; failed relationships, addictions, the list is endless. Jesus promises hope, purpose and meaning in this life. He brings hopefulness. If this is true and it is, why would we continue to wallow in our sin, shame and despair, when Jesus opens His arms to us?

On other side, I can only imagine what God has in store for me in the future. I know that eternity is waiting just over the horizon and it gives me the strength to face the challenges of life today. Do you have such an anchor, a bulwark of faith that will sustain you in this life? John's spoke of Jesus as the only One who can offer hope to a lost and dying world, one individual at a time.

B. Two Choices in Life (36)

1. Eternal Life – The formula was simple in verse 36: **“He who believes in the Son has eternal life.”**

It is just as simple as that. When all the smoke of life dissipates, there are only two choices, no other options. Rich or poor, life boils down to two simple choices.

2. Alternative Life – The second choice was just as modest: **“But he who does not obey the Son will not see life”** – with the continual consequence of **“But the wrath of God abides on Him.”** So we have two choices which will determine our present and most importantly our immediate and eternal future. We can have Life in Jesus now and in heaven to come, or death in the present and death to come.

So we have seen the witness of John, his final testimony concerning Jesus. He alone gives life, both now and for all eternity. John left us with two distinct choices: (1) **“He who believes in the Son has eternal life.”** (2) **“But he who does not obey the Son will not see life”** and **“But the wrath of God abides on Him.”** What is your choice today: life or death? Don’t leave this place without the Person of Jesus in your life.

“Jesus Must Increase...” - Jn. 3:22-36

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 - It exists in personal relationships, the business world and yes even in religious circles.
- John the Baptist’s ministry was wildly successful.
 - In the first few verses of our passage today things were a changing.

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3. Time Line (24)
4. Situation of Conflict (25)

B. John’s Explanation (26-30)

1. Issue of Concern (26)
2. “No Mas” (27-28)
3. Illustration (29)
4. Final Assessment (30)

II. Role of Jesus – Jn. 3:31-36

A. Jesus Origin & Ministry (31-34)

1. “Comes From Above” (31)
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3. Seal (33)
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B. Two Choices in Life (36)

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