

STUDY #9

HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE

John 3:22-36 (ESV)

²²After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. ²³John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized ²⁴(for John had not yet been put in prison).

²⁵Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over **purification**. ²⁶And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease."

³¹He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³²He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. ³³Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Key Words:

"baptizing" (v. 22, 26)—Jesus' disciples were baptizing. See John 4:2.

"prison" (v. 24)—see Mark 6:14-29

"purification" (v. 25)—perhaps the value of baptism or the various Jewish rituals of cleansing.

"friend of the bridegroom" (v. 29)—his job was to ask for the hand of the bride, to arrange the preliminaries of the wedding, and to oversee the reception of the bride & bridegroom.

"above" (v. 31)—same word translated as "born again" in 3:3,7. Here it refers to Jesus as the One who comes down from heaven.

"Earth/earthly" (v. 31)—speaking of human limitations

"no one receives his testimony" (v. 32)—John is using hyperbole to emphasize that the world in general rejects Jesus & his teaching.

"set his seal" (v. 33)—i.e. signing off

"has eternal life" (v. 35)—this is a present possession (not just a future hope).

"Wrath of God remains" (v. 36)—being condemned or under God's settled, holy displeasure against sin is the present condition of those who reject Jesus.

Related Passages:

Ephesians 2:1-2—"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air..."

1 Corinthians 2:14—"14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Colossians 2:9—"9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."

John 10:10b—"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

2 Peter 2:9—"9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."

*Key word explanations are from MacArthur or Phillip's commentaries

Discussion Questions

1. What issue did John the Baptist's disciples come to him with? (v. 26) (O) How did they refer to Jesus? (O) What do their words reveal about their heart? (I) Can you identify a time in your life when you were resentful of someone because you were jealous of his/her success? (A) Explain.

2. John responded with an admonition (v. 27-28), analogy (v. 29), and announcement (v. 30).

Admonition (v. 27-28)—How did he admonish or correct his disciples? (O) Of what truths did he remind them? (O) If everything, including a popular ministry, is a gift from God, not something to which we are entitled, is there a place for jealousy? (I) Have you ever seen this happen or experienced this? (A)

Analogy (v. 29)—What analogy did John give of his role? (O) In what way was John's role as the forerunner of Jesus like that of the "friend of a bridegroom"? (I) Did John see Jesus' increasing popularity as a concern or as a fulfillment of his ministry? (I) Explain.

Announcement (v. 30)—What does the use of "must" convey? (I) What do these words reveal about John's character? (I) What does this indicate about John's ministry? (I)

3. In what daily circumstances may we be tempted to want people (kids, friends, family, coworkers, ministry people etc.) to follow *us*? (A) What can we learn from John's example? (I) How can we change from wanting people to follow us to wanting people to follow Christ *because of us*? (A)

4. Read vs. 31-36. Who is the focus? (O) How do these words explain John's announcement in v. 30: "He must increase, but I must decrease"? (I)

5. Look at v. 31. Circle the words “earth”/“earthly” and “above.” How many times are they both used? (O) How do “earth” and “above” serve to contrast each other? (I) How is that relevant to the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Jesus? (I)

6. Thinking about Jesus’ position in heaven and his existence from before the origin of the universe, describe the significance of Jesus bearing witness to “what he has seen and heard.” What does/doesn’t John the Baptist mean when he says “*no one* receives his testimony”? (I) Though Jesus speaks as a first-hand witness, why do people reject His testimony? (I) Read 1 Corinthians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:1-2. How do those passages relate? (I) When people do “receive his testimony,” what are they affirming? (O/I) (v. 33) When you read the Bible are you actively thinking, “I am receiving Jesus’ testimony because I know God to be true”? (A)

7. Read v. 34-35. What does it mean that God gave Jesus “the Spirit without measure”? (I) See also Colossians 2:9. Were there any limits to the Spirit’s power working through Him? (I) How was that displayed through His words and works? (I)

8. Read vs. 36. What is the invitation and what is the warning? (O) In what way is “eternal life” the present possession of those who believe? (I) Read John 10:10b. In what way is the “wrath of God” the present possession of those who disbelieve? (I) Read 2 Peter 2:9. How ought the truth that we exchanged living under “the wrath of God” for living with “eternal life” through Jesus lead us to worship? (A)

STUDY GUIDE #10

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1-26 (ESV)

4 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not

your husband. What you have said is true." ¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

Key Words:

"left Judea"(v. 3)—to avoid a premature collision with the Pharisees and to prevent a public rivalry between His followers and those of John the Baptist, Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee.

"had to" (v. 3)—John often uses this verb to speak of Jesus fulfilling the mission given Him by the Father.

Samaria— an area occupied by a people group who adopted a corrupted form of Judaism. Jews rejected them and racial animosity was strong between the two peoples. Strict Jews would always avoid Samaria by going across the Jordan and make a long detour to avoid contaminating themselves with contact with Samaritans.

"sixth hour" (v. 6)—noon; an unusual hour of the day to draw water showing us that she was avoiding interaction with people.

“draw water” (v. 7)—this was the women’s work. Women usually came to the well during the cool of the evening to collect water.

“...no dealings” (v. 9)—In the Greek literally: “They don’t use the same utensils.”

“living water” (v. 11)—salvation, including forgiveness of sin and the ability and desire to live an obedient life that glorifies God.

“this mountain” (v. 20)—The Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim.

Salvation was from the Jews (v. 22)—salvation was from the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, from the family of David, from the city of Bethlehem, that the Savior of the world was to come.

Related Passages:

Isaiah 12:3—“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

John 7:37-38—“³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

Revelation 21:6—“And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.”

Study Questions:

1. Why was it shocking to the woman that Jesus asked her for a drink of water? (O)
2. Describe the illustration Jesus uses to explain “the gift of God” (v. 10) Why is that an effective illustration? (I/A)
3. How did Jesus draw the woman’s mind away from worshipping *at a place* to worshipping *a person*? (I) What is the nature of God-honoring worship? (O/I)