

“Joy for Jesus” (John 3:22-36)

1. Occasion for Dispute (22-26)

- a. More likely, “into the Judean land” means simply into the Judean countryside in distinction from the city of Jerusalem.^{6 1}
- b. Jesus was baptizing i.e. His disciples were (4:2).
- c. John was also baptizing nearby i.e. “Aenon near Salim”
- d. 2 groups of baptisms = dispute. The ingenious man who was stranded on an island alone for years: Rescued and gave a tour to the man who came ashore: Elaborate hut, coconut bar, spa, a courthouse, and two buildings across from his hut. The man asked about the buildings: one is where I go to church and the other is where I used to attend.
- e. The original dispute over ceremonial cleansing: There is evidence that John had come from the Essenes who had great interest in ceremonial purification rites and thus his followers would have been local or informed of such and thus ready to debate such.
- f. A little light may be shed on it however, by the Qumran scrolls. These show that there were Essene-type sects with a deep interest in ceremonial purifications. If the suggestion that John the Baptist had contacts with such a sect and had broken with it are well grounded, such a dispute as the one mentioned here would be very natural. It is also a natural touch that the dispute involved John’s disciples and not John himself. They would probably be more aggressive than their master, and possibly more accessible for such a dispute.²
- g. The subsequent dispute: their exchange with a Jew over purification baptism became one over Jesus’ baptism.
- h. Now if there was a critical difference in the meaning of baptism, debate would be necessary. In this case it wasn’t. Instead of looking to arguments to cast down, we need to find points of common ground – or we will not be able to persuade others about Jesus, as John did.

2. Opportunity to Declare (27-30)

- a. As in 1:27, John is quick to proclaim Jesus’ accreditation.
- b. V. 27 Heaven’s Allocation – If Jesus is drawing more people it is because of God’s (from heaven) apportioning. God’s sovereignty stands hidden behind all human claims, for a human being does not have anything but what he has received (*cf.* 1 Cor. 4:7).³
- c. C. S. Lewis once put it, to play great parts without pride and small parts without shame. At the very end of the gospel (21:20–23), Peter is reminded that what counts is not comparing yourself with other people and seeing whether your status is higher or lower than theirs, but simply following Jesus.⁴
- d. V. 28 *cf.* 1:20.
- e. V. 29 Marriage analogy: Israel is regarded as the bride of Yahweh (Isa. 54:5; 62:4–5; Jer. 2:2; 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:19–20). This imagery made its appeal as a way of referring to the Messiah, and we find it applied to Christ, for example in 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:32; Rev.

⁶ Compare *χώρα* in 11:55. Bultmann (170) cites Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 993, “both country and city” (καὶ γῆν καὶ πόλιν); see also Schnackenburg, 1.410 (“γῆ = *χώρα*, 11:54”), and 2.364, on 11:55 (“*χώρα* here ... means the rest of the country as opposed to the capital, probably with particular reference to Judaea”).

¹ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 213). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 211). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 211). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁴ Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (p. 37). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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21:2, 9; 22:17. “In some real sense the Baptist testified that God Himself was in Christ betrothing His bride to Himself afresh”⁵

- f. How illogical, how silly, how presumptuous, and how dangerous is it to put oneself above or even equal to the Bridegroom, the LORD God, the King of Israel?
 - g. I mean, how much more honor could one have than John? After all, he was ‘sent from God’ (1:6; 1:33; 3:27) and praised by Jesus (Mat. 11:11)!
 - h. V. 30 His conclusion is logical. His conviction is often neglected.
3. Overview of Declaration (31-36)
- a. Most agree that the ff. vv. are the author’s comments. See **Further Consideration**.
 - b. This declaration is parallel to Jesus’ recorded words which John just penned (vv. 5-12).
 - c. As the new birth (v. 3) is from above, so too is Jesus (31). 1 Cor. 15:47.
 - d. As the Word (Logos) is from above such was the O.T. view of divine wisdom. Do you see the word play? He who is from above is above all.
 - e. Heaven’s Light (32)
 - i. Naturally Rejected cf. v. 11; 1:5, 11 but →
 - ii. Supernaturally Received cf. 1:12; 6:44, 65
 - f. V. 33 is interestingly worded. God needs not our confirmation – yet what a privilege to be a confirmer of it (2 Cor. 3:2 living epistles).
 - g. Leon Morris wrote: “That person sets a seal on the proposition that God is true. The seal was used a good deal in antiquity, when there were many who could not read. A design affixed by a seal conveyed a clear message even to the illiterate. Great men used distinctive seals that stamped articles as belonging to them. The seal came to be used not only to denote ownership but also to authenticate, to give its owner’s personal guarantee. It is something of the sort that is meant here (Moffatt: “certifies to the truth of God”).¹²⁷ Those who accept Christ are not merely entering into a relationship with a fellow human being (as they would be doing, for example, if they attached themselves to John the Baptist). They are accepting what God has said. They are recognizing the heavenly origin of Jesus. They are acknowledging the truth of God’s revelation in Christ. They are proclaiming to all their deep conviction that God is true.”⁶ Our lives are proof of God’s work! Has Christ marked you for His purposes? Are you living testimony to His salvation?
 - h. V. 34 is also a point of mystery. Jesus has the Spirit w/o limit and we can grow in the Spirit w/o seeming limitations. “Because many thought that the Spirit had been quenched in Israel till the future restoration of Israel, and many thought that only a few had merited the Spirit, to say that someone had unlimited access to give the Spirit indicates that he is greater than any person who had ever lived (the *most* anyone else could have would be unlimited access to *receive* the Spirit)”⁷
 - i. D. A. Carson offers this commentary: Jesus so completely says and does all that God says and does, and only what God says and does (e.g. 5:19–30; 6:37–40; 8:29), that to believe

⁵ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 213–214). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Moffatt James Moffatt, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (London, n.d.)

¹²⁷ Cf. Luther: “Among men nothing is safer and more certain than that which is given under one’s hand and seal. I feel sure when I have a sealed document.... Anyone who really accepts the message of the Gospel resolutely sets his seal to it and says: ‘This seal and document mean that I can stake life and limb and all I possess on this.’ His heart is certain and harbors no doubts” (vol. 22, pp. 471–72).

⁶ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 217). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁷ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Jn 3:34). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

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Jesus is to believe God. Conversely, not to believe Jesus is to call God a liar (*cf.* 12:44–50; 1 Jn. 5:10). ¶ Throughout redemptive history, God spoke to his people through many accredited messengers. Each received that measure of the Spirit that was required for his or her assigned task. Three centuries after John wrote, Rabbi Aha rightly commented that the Holy Spirit who rested on the prophets did so according to the measure (*b^emišqal*) of each prophet’s assignment (*Leviticus Rabbah* 15:2). Not so to Jesus: to him *God gives the Spirit without limit* (this is almost certainly the correct rendering).¹⁹ John the Baptist had already testified that he had seen the Spirit descend *and remain* on Jesus (1:32–33), in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1); the same truth is repeated in new form. (*Cf.* also the notes on 4:23–24.)⁸

- j. Simply put, without measure means not measured but poured out!
- k. V. 35 “The hallmark of Jesus’ mission was that *the Father loves him and has complete trust in him* (35). As evidence of what the Father has entrusted to the Son *cf.* 5:22, 27; 12:49; 17:2, 24.”⁹
- l. God’s wrath is not in spite of His love but precisely because of it! Every sin is due the wrath of God but every sinner need not experience it!
- m. The more I have learned about current, imminent, dark, and horrifying evil – I appreciate the wrath of God and thus the more I hate my own sin and proclivity to do such evil. Thanks be unto Jesus Christ...!

PC:

There is much upon which Christian folk disagree. There is always opportunity for opposition but we ought to seek points of agreement firstly. The main things are the plain things and the plain things are the main things! Although a controversial figure, John the baptizer (crazy in the eyes of the religious right) pointed to Jesus as the ultimate truth and savior. His example for us to follow is to focus on Jesus, for He must increase and we must decrease. Jesus stands in the way of our punishment because He endured it for us. God’s wrath is just and perfectly proportioned and if we all got what we deserved we’d get our share of it. Jesus (our salvation) came from heaven just as the wrath of justice comes down from heaven. Any salvation borne of the world cannot produce one who is born again. That which is of the world has warranted wrath but that which has brought righteousness from heaven has warranted life!

Further Consideration

Author’s (John the Apostle) comments: “It seems more probable that verses 31–36 are from the Evangelist.¹¹⁶ They come more naturally as his reflection on the significance of Jesus in the light both of the Baptist’s words and of subsequent happenings, than as a comment of the forerunner or of the Master. There are some stylistic points of a minor nature that perhaps indicate the hand of the Evangelist. There is also the difficulty of seeing how the Baptist could say, “no one accepts his testimony” (v. 32) in the

¹⁹ The alternative is to construe the last clause of v. 34 as if Christ were the subject: Christ does not give the Spirit in merely measured fashion to his followers. That may be true, but it does not fit the context well, and it loses the close connection with v. 35, a connection nicely preserved on the assumption that God is the subject of this last clause in v. 34.

⁸ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 213). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁹ Guthrie, D. (1994). *John*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1033). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

¹¹⁶ See the note in Lagrange, p. 96.

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very speech in which he is answering the affirmation that “everyone is going to him” (v. 26). Whoever originated them, the words bring out the community of Jesus with the Father and the importance of being in right relationship with him.”¹⁰

Verse 33. After hearing about “the person who believes in the Son of God,” we would have expected “the person who does *not* believe in the Son of God,” but instead the text speaks of “the person who does not believe *God*.”⁵⁴ To not “believe in the Son of God” is to deny God himself and make God a liar. In both passages, God entrusts his own credibility to the Son.¹¹

Verse 34. “Without measure” (*ou gar ek metrou*) is simply another way of saying that the Spirit “remained” on Jesus (1:32, 33). The point is not that God “gave” the Spirit to Jesus “once upon a time” at Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28), but that God “gives” the Spirit to Jesus always and everywhere in the course of his mission to the world.⁵⁷ That is why this Gospel never specifies Jesus’ baptism as the moment of the Spirit’s descent. Just as Jesus’ glory is revealed not in a particular incident, such as the transfiguration, but throughout his ministry (see 1:14), so the Spirit comes and remains on Jesus not on one specific occasion, such as the baptism, but all the time, as his constant companion and possession. To say that the Spirit is his “without measure” is to recognize Jesus as a man “full of grace and truth” (1:14), of whose “fullness we have all received” (1:16). The phrase is probably intended to distinguish Jesus from the prophets, who (it is implied) received the Spirit “by measure” (*ek metrou*) in order to prophesy,⁵⁸ and so to identify Jesus uniquely as God’s Son, or “One and Only.”⁵⁹ It confirms John’s earlier testimony, “This is the Son of God” (1:34), and is itself confirmed in the next verse, where John goes on to speak explicitly of “the Father” and “the Son” in much the same way in which Jesus himself will speak later in the Gospel (see 5:19–23, 26; 14:13).¹²

Morris: “It is true that the wrath of God has sometimes been understood in crudely literal fashion, but of which of God’s attributes and activities is this not true? The remedy is not to abandon the concept, but to

¹⁰ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 215). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁵⁴ Not surprisingly a number of later manuscripts in 1 John 5:10 substitute “the Son,” or “the Son of God,” or “Jesus Christ,” for “God” as the one who is “made a liar” by those who disbelieve.

¹¹ Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (p. 225). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁵⁷ Compare perhaps 6:32, “Amen, amen, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you [οὐ ... δέδωκεν] that bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you [δίδωσιν] the true bread from heaven.”

⁵⁸ See the late midrash, *Leviticus Rabbah* 15.2: “Even the Holy Spirit resting on the prophets does so by weight, one prophet speaking one book of prophecy and another speaking two books” (*Midrash Rabbah* [London: Soncino, 1961], 4.189). John’s expression, ἐκ μέτρου (literally, “from a measure”), occurs nowhere else in Greek literature (ἐν μέτρῳ or κατὰ μέτρον would have been expected). Schlatter (111) attempts to take the ἐκ literally as “from,” but it seems to function here much as it does in the expression ἐκ μέρους, “in part” (1 Cor 12:27; 13:9, 10, 12).

⁵⁹ Compare the distinction in Hebrews 1:1–2 between God’s speech through the prophets and through the Son.

¹² Michaels, J. R. (2010). *The Gospel of John* (pp. 225–226). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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think it through more carefully. It stands for the settled and active opposition of God’s holy nature to everything that is evil.¹⁴⁰ We may not like it, but we should not ignore it. John tells us that this wrath “remains.” We should not expect it to fade away with the passage of time. Anyone who continues in unbelief and disobedience can look for nothing other than the persisting wrath of God. That is basic to our understanding of the gospel.¹⁴¹ Unless we are saved from real peril there is no meaning in salvation.”¹³

I want to share D. A. Carson’s summary of these verses. “This is the fourth successive section to point out ways in which Jesus fulfills and surpasses Judaism: in 2:1–11, Jesus provides new wine that vastly surpasses anything that contemporary Judaism could afford, and renders obsolete the stone jars of purification; in 2:12–25, Jesus displaces the temple and thereby intimates that the temple’s proper role is best seen as an anticipation of the ultimate point of mediation between God and man; in 3:1–21, Jesus fulfills prophecies of a ‘water and spirit’ regeneration, and proves in his death to be the ultimate antitype of the snake ‘lifted up’ in the desert; and hence (3:22–30) Jesus surpasses John the Baptist and any baptism or rite of purification he may represent. In the next chapter (4:1ff.), the uniqueness of Jesus will be set against movements that extend beyond the boundaries of Palestinian Judaism”¹⁴

V. 36 Carson: “*God’s wrath* is not some impersonal principle of retribution, but the personal response of a holy God who comes to his own world, sadly fallen into rebellion, and finds few who want anything to do with him. Such people are ‘condemned already’ (cf. v. 18).”¹⁵

¹⁴⁰ Strachan quotes from Westcott that God’s wrath “is not an arbitrary sentence, but the working out of a moral law,” and objects: “This tends to make us think that moral laws are forces which come automatically into operation when men do wrong, or cherish wrong aims.... The New Testament writers ... think in much more personal terms of the nature and consequences of wrong-doing.... God is not thought of as handing over the wrong-doer to an impersonal blind force which automatically punishes. The ‘wrath of God’ is an expression of God’s holy personality.” Our God is active in opposing the wrong. Cf. also L. Hodgson: “The wrath of God and divine punishment are essential elements in a doctrine which is to face the facts of evil and retain a fundamental optimism. The belief that God has sworn in His wrath that men who do certain things shall not enter into His rest enables the Church to open its worship each day with the words, ‘Come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation’ ” (*The Doctrine of the Atonement* [London, 1951], p. 60). The last reference is to the use of Ps. 95 in the morning worship of the Anglican church.

¹⁴¹ Filson maintains that “verse 36 is as basic as the famous 3:16.” A little later he says, “The wrath of God, the divine judgment, immediately and relentlessly rests on the unrepentant sinner who stubbornly rejects the offer of grace and life. There is no place for neutrality. Man was made as a moral being who can really live only by being obedient to his Father. He must either believe, obey God, and find eternal life, or refuse and so suffer the ruin that his evil choice makes inevitable.”

¹³ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 220–221). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 208–209). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

¹⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 214). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.