

Bible Study John 3 : 22 - 36

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. 24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

After these things: Passover feast, see John 2:13-3:21

Jesus and John baptizing at the same time. Baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins.

Working together. Not against each other.

John had not yet been thrown into prison. See 5:35: There John's time is past.

25 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews 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!"

A dispute arose. Negative atmosphere. It was not a brotherly discussion, it was not an enquiry, a genuine search for answers, but a quarrel, a fight with words.

The topic was purification. What exactly is meant with that is not clear. But the result is that John's disciples were concerned that a kind of competition was starting here between John and Jesus. They came to John and brought this up. They remembered that John was so positive about Jesus, but now, look, this Jesus is taking away followers from John. He is baptizing and all are coming to Him!

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before 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. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

John explains that he has been sent as prophet of Jesus. A prophet cannot be more than the One about whom he prophesied. John was called to prophesy His coming, to prepare the way and should not stand in the way. He is quite content with so many of his followers now going to Jesus and him receiving less and less attention. His work is coming to an end and now he has to hand it over to Jesus Christ Himself.

And that is important for all those who preach or teach the Word of God.

And also those who listen should not have favourite preachers, ministers, elders, writers, but should be content with whomever and whatever God sends to preach to them and teach them. The focus should always be on Christ, and not on what is my preference.

John uses here the example of the bridegroom. The best man is there to assist the bridegroom, not to take his place. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom who is coming to His people. And He speaks to His bride and He rejoices in here.

See Matthew 9:15.

John knows that his task is coming to an end. What he prophesied, is happening right now. Jesus started his work. Now it is time for him to move to the background. John was considered the greatest prophet, but he must decrease, see vs. 30.

The time of prophecy is coming to an end, the time of fulfillment begins! This is the transition from OT to NT. From the time of prophecy to the time of fulfillment.

Question:

1. **How do we see the connection between the Old and the New Testament? Is it important to know and read the Old Testament? Why?**
2. **For John it was important that he prophesied Jesus Christ and was not standing in the way of Jesus. How can we in our life stand in the way of Jesus Christ, and of others receiving the message of salvation and coming to Christ? And how can we by our life and behaviour encourage others to go to Christ?**

31 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

John can only speak as human being. He is subject to the One Who is from above.

The One Who comes from above, is God. His own Son. He has all knowledge and wisdom.

See 1:18 : *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*

And no one receives His testimony. See John 1:11-12.

The words 'no one receives His testimony' are a general expression. In general, people did not believe His testimony There were only a few who did, mainly the disciples. And those who do receive it, they can testify that it is truth.

33 He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. 34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

See vs. 16-21.

Vs. 33: He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. John heard the testimony, the preaching of Jesus Christ, about Himself. And he certified that God is true. This will come back in chapter 8 where the Lord has a dispute with the Jews about the truth.

Jesus Christ was sent by God and spoke the Words of God. Because He was filled with the Holy Spirit. "God does not give the Spirit by measure". He is the fulness of God. Filled with God's Spirit. As Isaiah prophesied when he spoke about the Servant Who would come.

Question:

The Bible makes it clear that we cannot blame God if people are getting lost. God sent His Son to bring salvation, but only those who receive Him will receive eternal life. How can you show from these verses (verse 36 and also verse 18-21) that it is the unbelievers' own responsibility if they don't receive eternal life?