

9. John Gave His Last Teaching About Jesus

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly the things that Jesus said to Nicodemus when he came to Jesus at night. We saw that Jesus clearly explained to Nicodemus how he could come to Jesus in true belief and receive eternal life. As our children learn to explain clearly passages like this chapter, the Lord will give them an effective ministry to others. In this topic, we will learn about the public ministry of John the Baptist shortly before he was imprisoned.

After talking to Nicodemus, Jesus left Jerusalem and went to another part of Judea. John 3:22-26 says, “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. 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!’” Jesus and His disciples went into that area of Judea and remained in that area for a period of time.

While Jesus and His disciples were in the land of Judea, John was baptizing in a place named Aenon near Salim. “Aenon” means *springs*, and we see that this was a place where there was plenty of water. During this time, we see that John had not yet been thrown into prison. As a result, many people were still coming to him to be baptized. Some of the Jews used this as an opportunity to have a dispute with the disciples of John about purification. We saw at the wedding at Cana that there were six large pots of water for purification. Many Jews practiced a ceremonial washing. Mark 7:3-4 says, “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.” These Jews used this question about washing as a way to try and bring conflict between John and his disciples and the disciples of Jesus.

The Jews, which may have included some of the disciples of John, came and told John, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!” Jesus had earlier come to John to be baptized when John was baptizing beyond the Jordan. Matthew 3:13-15 says, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John *tried* to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him.” The Father used this baptism to identify Jesus as His beloved Son. However, the Jews, apparently, wanted to make John jealous because they said that Jesus was baptizing and that all men were coming to Him to be baptized by Him.

Instead of becoming jealous, we see that John showed an attitude of true humility. John 3:27-30 says, “John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from

heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, “I am not the Christ,” but, “I have been sent before Him.” 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. He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”” John began by pointing out the fact that all opportunities for ministry are given by God. Paul showed this same understanding when he said in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.” God gives all opportunities for ministry that anyone is given by His grace.

John went on to remind those who were questioning him of something he had told the Jews earlier. John had said that he was not the Christ. Instead, he had been sent before the Christ to prepare the way for Him. In fact, John had just described himself as a voice. John 1:22-23 says, “Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’ He said: ‘I am “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.”” John fully understood that his ministry was to prepare the way for Christ and not to build his ministry around himself.

John gave a very interesting illustration to show his relationship to Jesus. John said that the person who has the bride is the groom. The friend of the groom stands beside him and rejoices for his friend that is getting married. However, the friend does not try to draw attention to himself because he is just the friend. In fact, the friend is just thankful that he has the opportunity to hear the voice of the groom. John said that he was filled with joy because of the fact that many people were now turning to Jesus instead of continuing to follow him. In fact, John points out the attitude that all of us should have as we are given opportunities to minister for Christ. John 3:30 says, ““He must increase, but I *must* decrease.”” We want to show our children by our example that we want to bring glory to Christ and not to ourselves.

John went on to describe Jesus further in the following verses. John 3:31-36 says, ““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. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 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.”” Here, we see that John went on to give several reasons why Jesus was more important than he was.

First, Jesus had come from heaven. John said that the One from heaven is above all. In contrast, John said that he was earthly. In Luke 1, we see that John had been born by a natural conception and birth. In contrast, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit* will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Here, we see that Jesus is the Son of God and was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Second, Jesus spoke what He had seen and heard from the Father. That was in great contrast to John who had been sent by God to prepare the way for the Christ. That was why John recognized that he was just a voice preparing the way for Christ. He recognized that he was fulfilling the words of Isaiah 40:3 which says, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” He was preparing the highway for God because John knew that Christ was God and he was no comparison with God.

Third, the things that Jesus said were always in agreement with God. Later, Jesus would say in John 5:30, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” Jesus made it clear that He always spoke the things that were the will of the Father. Then, in John 5:37 Jesus said, “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” Jesus said that just as He did the will of the Father that the Father gave testimony of Him.

Fourth, Jesus experienced the Holy Spirit in all of His fullness with no limitations. Jesus said that the Father sent Him and He always spoke the words of the Father because He experienced the Holy Spirit with no limitations. Jesus said in John 7:16-17, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.’” Jesus said that those who do the will of the Father will recognize that His words are always in agreement with the Father.

Fifth, Jesus said that the Father showed that He was over all because the Father had given all things in His hand. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Jesus said that He is able to show the same power as the Father. John 5:20-21 says, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”

Because Jesus is equal with the Father, John concluded this statement about Jesus in John 3:36 by saying, “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.” Jesus is the One who gives life to all who will believe in Him, but those who reject Him will experience the wrath of God against sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly that each person must make the choice to accept or reject. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain this choice to others.