

# CONCERNING THE WAY

October 20, 2009

## LESSON 78: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



### Chapter 2

Well, Jesus has gathered at least six disciples by this point - Peter, Andrew, James, John, Phillip, and Nathanael (Bartholomew). And these were not country bumpkins. They were intelligent men, and they knew their scriptures. They probably sat under the teachings of learned elders.

**John 2:1-2** Now on the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, (2) and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

This is probably the 3<sup>rd</sup> day since the last day mentioned, the day Phillip and Nathanael were called as disciples. It would take a couple of days to get to Cana, from Bethany beyond the Jordan where they were in chapter 1. Cana was west of Lake Galilee, 5-10 miles from Nazareth. So it was close to where Jesus grew up, and where His mother Mary presumably still lived. It would have been an easy walk for her to the wedding.

Wedding celebrations in Israel ran for up to a week, so they may have arrived after it had been going on for a while, which would explain why the wine was running out. Joseph is not in the story, which probably means that he had died by this time.

**John 2:3-4** When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine left." (4) Jesus replied, "Woman, why are you saying this to me? My time has not yet come."

Let's first get something very clear. I'm sorry if I upset your sensibilities, but **this was not grape juice they were serving!** That may be what you were taught in Sunday School, but it's just not true. In those days you couldn't have juice like we know it today. There was no way in that warm environment to refrigerate it or preserve it. Within hours of the stomping of the grapes the juice would ferment, and so the only way to drink it was as wine. It was not high in alcoholic content, it could have been diluted, but it was definitely real wine. This is what people drank regularly.

In researching this chapter I've seen the silliest, most nonsensical arguments people have made in a desperate attempt to support their non-Biblical idea that wine is sinful. The Bible does not teach that drinking alcohol is a sin. It teaches that drunkenness is a sin. This is a misunderstanding of what the Bible says; what holiness and sanctification are. Abstaining from alcohol has nothing to do with holiness. The issue is alcohol abuse. Now if you feel that drinking alcohol is a sin for you, then it would be a sin for you to drink. But don't impose that on others.

It looks like Mary had some authority in this wedding; some think she was related to the bride. Otherwise, why would she care if the wine was running out and try to do something about it? It would have been extremely embarrassing for the host to run out of wine.

It seems that Jesus is speaking pretty strongly to His mother, here. This is an accurate translation of the Greek. For one thing, while it would seem rude to us today to call our mother, "woman", it was actually a polite term of respect and affection in those days. He also used this expression from the cross in John 19:26. Also, remember that Mary knew who her son was, and there may have

been a little pride at work in her. She is trying to push him forward, to showcase Him, and that was not her responsibility. So Jesus is basically rebuking her here and rightly so.

Bible teachers wonder exactly what Jesus meant by saying “my time has not yet come”. Jesus was probably telling her that it wasn’t time for Him to begin to do public miracles yet, but we’re not sure. He says this again five more times in the book. We do know that Jesus didn’t just do miracles willy-nilly. He did them for a specific reason - so that people might believe He is the Son of God and have life in Him.

**John 2:5-6** His mother told the servants, "Whatever he tells you, do it." (6) Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washing, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Even though Jesus had lightly rebuked Mary, He went ahead and did what she asked. This is assumed to be the first miracle that Jesus performs, but it’s only the first one the Bible records. He could have already performed private miracles before this time, and that would be one reason why Mary knew He could do this.

Notice that the water jars there were for ceremonial cleansing. When guests came into where the wedding was, they would wash their hands and feet. This ritual cleansed them from both physical dirt and symbolic dirt from touching people or things that were considered unclean. This must have been a pious Jewish home. Some think the fact that John points out that there were six (the number of man, imperfection) water jars symbolizes the fact that Judaism was imperfect, while Christ is perfect.

Read Mark 7:1-8. There were no commands in the Law of Moses to wash their hands before eating, but it had become a tradition. And this was a good tradition. They didn’t understand anything about germs in those days, but it was a healthy practice. What Jesus was rebuking them for was they took what was a good tradition and made it part of sanctification. This is similar to the alcohol issue. Taking what may be your tradition, something that is important to you, and making it an issue of sanctification and expecting everyone else to treat it the same way is a sin.

But Jesus saw right through their hypocrisy, making a legal issue out of a tradition when “their hearts were far from Him”. And ***“They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men”***

**John 2:7-8** Jesus told the servants, "Fill the water jars with water." So they filled them up to the very top. (8) Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the head steward," and they did.

Jesus obviously could have performed this miracle all on His own, but He chose to use people in the process. That’s what He does with us! He expects us to do what we can, and then He will do what only He can do.

It’s interesting to note that Jesus created the wine in the jars used for the ceremonial cleansing. If the host and the people at the wedding had known they were drinking wine from these jars, they would have been aghast.

**John 2:9-10** When the head steward tasted the water that had been turned to wine, not knowing where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), he

**called the bridegroom (10) and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the cheaper wine when the guests are drunk. You have kept the good wine until now!"**

The head steward's (or headwaiter) job was to arrange the table, the courses of the meal, and tasting the meal and the wine before it was served. He was surprised the wine was so good, because it was customary to serve the cheap wine later when the guests were too drunk to know the difference! It is estimated that Jesus created about 180 gallons of wine in this miracle.

**John 2:11 Jesus did this as the first of his miraculous signs, in Cana of Galilee. In this way he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.**

This would seem to rule out the possibility that Jesus had ever done any miracles before this time, which would also discredit any of the extrabiblical accounts of Him performing miracles when He was a child. But it could be speaking only of public miracles since it uses the word "signs".

Jesus did miracles for specific reasons, to show people something, which is why they are called signs:

- 1. To bring glory to God**
- 2. For the purpose of showing the Jews that He was the Messiah, the real deal. Miracles revealed His heavenly glory, His power and authority. He has authority over creation.**
- 3. To demonstrate how He fulfilled prophecy (John 6:14)**
- 4. To express His compassion for people (John 11:5, 35)**

The disciples knew the prophecies and accepted that He was Messiah, but as they saw His glory being revealed, over time they gained a personal belief in Him.

**John 2:12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there a few days.**

Capernaum was a fair-sized fishing village on the shore of Lake Galilee. It had a synagogue, and some of Jesus' disciples lived there. Here you see that Jesus had brothers. Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus.

**John 2:13 Now the Jewish feast of Passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

He went south to Jerusalem, but literally went "up", because he went from low-lying Capernaum on the lake to Jerusalem, which is in the mountains.

**John 2:14-16 He found in the temple courts those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting at tables. (15) So he made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple courts, with the sheep and the oxen. He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. (16) To those who sold the doves he said, "Take these things away from here! Do not make my Father's house a marketplace!"**

Most scholars think this is not the same event as the cleansing of the temple that is spoken of in Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, and Luke 19:45-46. This one seems to happen at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, while that one occurs just before Jesus' death.

So many people only have a picture of the meek and mild Jesus, and He is portrayed that way by most of the movies about Him. But here He is anything but meek and mild, He is very angry and very violent, and with good reason. They are blaspheming God by turning His house into a marketplace.

People who wanted to make a sacrifice at the temple did not have to bring their own animals, they could buy them right there next to the temple. In fact, many of those who did bring their own animals found that they were rejected by the priests as being not worthy. So it was just easier to buy the animals at the temple, even though they charged many times what the animals were worth.

And the money changers exchanged different denominations of coinage for the foreigners who came to the temple, because foreign coins were not accepted for offerings or the annual temple tax. They charged very high exchange rates, because people had no choice but to pay whatever they wanted.

These businesses were supposed to be outside the temple area, but they had moved in close to the temple into the courtyard. And, even worse, the priests were probably getting a kickback from this business. The serious business of bringing worship and sacrifice to God had become a moneymaking opportunity. The merchants and the priests were trying to get rich at the people's expense.

So instead of being able to approach the temple in quiet contemplation and prayer, all you heard was the sound of animals and people shouting and hawking their merchandise. Also remember there would have been thousands of people in that area then, as it was Passover, and there would have been many people there making pilgrimages to the temple. Jesus is furious with righteous indignation, and He drove all these business people and animals out of the temple courtyard. It would have been quite a scene!

Some think Jesus was symbolically announcing that the time of animal sacrifices was about to end.

**John 2:17** His disciples remembered that it was written, "**Zeal for your house will devour me.**"

This is a quote from Psalm 69:9. The way John says "His disciples remembered" makes us think perhaps it was years later that the disciples looked back on this event and then realized that Jesus was fulfilling this prophecy. I don't think the disciples realized that Jesus was fulfilling many of the Messianic prophecies until years later.

**John 2:18-19** So then the Jewish leaders responded, "What sign can you show us, since you are doing these things?" (19) Jesus replied, "**Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.**"

It is clear from what the Jewish leaders said that they probably had heard what was being claimed about this man. John the Baptist had told the leaders that he wasn't the Messiah, but had been promoting Jesus as the Messiah. So there was probably already a buzz about Jesus among the religious leaders. That's why they were asking for a sign, something to prove who He was.

Jesus didn't do miracles on demand (ok, maybe just that once for His mother). He knew what they were thinking - you can tell by His answer that they already wanted to kill Him, because He was such a radical and thought He was dangerous to their authority. The sense of what Jesus said is like

saying, "Go ahead and kill me and see what happens."

**John 2:20-21** Then the Jewish leaders said to him, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and are you going to raise it up in three days?" (21) But Jesus was speaking about the temple of his body.

You will see over and over in the gospels that the religious leaders always tripped over spiritual things and went right to the physical. They could not think spiritually! They never stopped to think that there might be deeper meaning to what Jesus was saying. Of course Jesus was speaking of His body, not the temple.

It's interesting that John uses two different Greek words to describe "temple" in this passage. When he's describing the temple building, he uses the word hieron (2:14). When he's speaking of the temple as Jesus' body, he uses the word naos, meaning "holy place", or "sanctuary". John is apparently doing this to tell us that the real temple of God was never a structure built by human hands, but the temple was where the presence of God lived, which was Jesus Christ.

This mention of 46 years is good evidence for the accuracy of this account, and helps us know the approximate age of Jesus. This temple was actually not a completely new one, but a renovation of Zerubbabel's Temple. We know from history that the work was begun in 20 B. C. and wasn't completed until 63 A.D. That would date this chapter at 26 A.D., if the Jewish leaders are accurate in what they said. If Jesus was born in 4 B.C., which is now the most generally accepted date, then He was about 30 years old here at the beginning of His ministry, which agrees with what Luke 3:23 says. This just shows how historically accurate this account is!

**John 2:22** So after he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the saying that Jesus had spoken.

So we see that the disciples probably didn't get it at the time He said this, but they remembered this event after the resurrection and then realized what He said. The scripture would have been Psalm 16:10.

**John 2:23** Now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, many people believed in his name because they saw the miraculous signs he was doing.

Passover was a celebration of the event in Exodus where Israel was spared from the "passing over" of the death angel by the blood of the lamb on their doorposts and left their slavery in Egypt the next day.

So while He was there for Passover He did miracles among the people, probably healings, and many people believed in Him because of those miracles. But for many of them it may not have necessarily been saving faith that resulted in a commitment to follow Christ, as we can see from the next verse:

**John 2:24-25** But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people. (25) He did not need anyone to testify about man, for he knew what was in man.

I think this is saying that He would not allow these people to crown Him King, because He knew their hearts. Jesus has always thoroughly understood what people are like. He knew that many of

these people did not have genuine faith, that they only believed in Him because of the power He displayed, and would betray Him if given a chance. They were only looking for a powerful political king to deliver them from the Romans, not the Son of God who came to save them from their sins.

This is a powerful reminder to us that it is not enough to just believe in Jesus. It is important WHAT you believe about Jesus. Some people believe in Jesus for the wrong reasons. Some people believe in Jesus because of some emotional experience they have had, and once the emotions go away so does their belief. Some profess to believe because they hope He will do something for them. Some believe with their minds, they agree with what they hear in church, but that's as far as it goes. Jesus is looking for people who will commit their whole selves to Him as Savior from their sins and give Him full control of their lives.

I know that this is not a politically correct thing to say, but the Bible teaches we are not to put our faith in people, because people will let us down and stab us in the back. It is this way in church and in the world. We are to put our faith in God alone.

### Chapter 3

This chapter starts off with the famous meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus. It's important to remember as we go through the gospels that these events took place during the age of the Law. This was not the Church age. That can make a big difference sometimes when you try to understand some of these passages, and some get confused by them.

A good example of this is the end of chapter 2 where it says many people believed in Jesus. Well, at this point, what did they believe about Jesus? They may have truly believed that He was the Messiah, but they didn't have the full picture of Christ in His death and resurrection that we do now, and that's very important to remember.

I'm not saying their belief wasn't genuine, it certainly could have been, and in the Old Testament era all that was necessary for salvation was that they believed what God said, which included the promised Messiah. But they didn't really understand who the Messiah was then, they would not have been able to put it all together. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament, including those about His death, resurrection, and atonement for sins, but most people could not understand that, including the religious leaders, as we are about to see. Today we have the full revelation of God and can understand the necessity of the Messiah coming to die and rise from the dead.

**John 3:1-2** Now a certain man, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, (2) came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him."

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 Pharisees and Sadducees who were the political and spiritual leaders of Israel. They were not only politicians, but theologians. So Nicodemus was in a high position in Israel. He is mentioned in the Talmud as one of the four richest men in Jerusalem at that time.

Nicodemus may have come by night because he was afraid of being recognized and being seen with Jesus. It might have caused trouble for him on the Sanhedrin. But it was common for teachers to

gather in conversation in the early evening hours. And he may have been trying to catch Jesus when there no crowds around. Most think he came as a representative of some others on the Sanhedrin who believed that Jesus was a great teacher sent from God, because of the miracles He did.

**John 3:3** Jesus replied, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It looks like Nicodemus probably asked Jesus some questions here that are not recorded, like, "When are you going to drive out the Romans and establish your kingdom?" Jesus is answering him that you can only enter His kingdom by being born spiritually.

The Greek word translated "from above" has a double meaning. It can mean either "again" or "from above". The traditional translation is "born again", but it actually makes more sense as "born from above", because it truly is a spiritual rebirth.

The idea of a new birth has to do with the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31), which we'll get into further later on in John. The New Covenant will begin with the death of Christ, and replace the Law. Of course, that had not happened yet at this point in John. They are still under the covenant of Law.

But it's important to understand that this statement by Jesus, and verse 16, divides all humankind. Everyone who has ever lived falls into one of two classifications - those who have been born from above and those who have not. Only those born from above get to see the Kingdom of God.

**John 3:4-5** Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he?" (5) Jesus answered, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Like all Pharisees (and most people, I suppose), Nicodemus can't think spiritually, he's stuck on the material.

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that this is what he must do to enter the Kingdom of God, not to get into the Church, the body of Christ! The Kingdom is not the Church, and the Church is not the Kingdom. Don't get those two confused. The Kingdom of God is the Messianic 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.

Some use verse 5 to say that you must be water baptized to be born again. Others believe that Jesus is just saying you have to be born physically and spiritually to enter the kingdom of God. Others say that the water pictures the Word of God, so you have to be born by the preaching of the Word and the Spirit.

However, the key is in the original Greek text. The conjunction between water and spirit in Greek is better translated "even", or "that is" in this verse instead of "and", so water and spirit are the same. This water concept should have been familiar to Nicodemus if he knew the scriptures:

**Ezekiel 36:25** I will sprinkle you with pure water and you will be clean from all your impurities. I will purify you from all your idols.

And we know that the water is the Holy Spirit. This is confirmed later on in John:

**John 7:37-39** On the last day of the feast, the greatest day, Jesus stood up and shouted out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and (38) let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the scripture says, 'From within him will flow rivers of living water.' " (39) (Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

And, we've already been told in John 1:33 that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit when He came out of the water after being baptized by John. So Jesus is simply saying in John 5 that you must be born of the Holy Spirit. Don't try to read anything more into it.

**John 3:6-7** What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must all be born from above.'

Jesus is saying don't be surprised at what he says, the Kingdom is a physical kingdom but to get into it you must be spiritually reborn. It's a spiritual issue. A human being is born in the flesh, but we must be born spiritually as well. He's basically telling Nicodemus to start thinking spiritually!

**John 3:8** The wind blows wherever it will, and you hear the sound it makes, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The only New Testament use of *pneuma* (meaning "spirit") for "wind" is in this verse, although the Old Testament writers commonly used the same Hebrew word (*ruach*) for both "wind" and "spirit." The reason for its use here is obviously to compare how the Holy Spirit works to the wind. As the wind is invisible and gentle, so is the Spirit. And as the wind also exhibits great power on occasion, so does the Spirit (Acts 1:8).

God is sovereign, He goes where He will. The spirit can come upon on us dramatically, when He will. We do not control where and when He comes and goes. You may see the results of the Spirit having come, you can see the work of the Holy Spirit in someone's life, but you don't know where He came from and where He is going.

**John 3:9-10** Nicodemus replied, "How can these things be?" (10) Jesus answered, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you don't understand these things?"

Jesus is holding Nicodemus accountable for knowing these things. He was a theologian, a teacher of Israel, supposedly a Master scholar, and while He had undoubtedly read the scriptures which talked of these things, He did not understand them. For example, Ezekiel 36:25-28. This idea of being born by the Spirit should not have been foreign to Nicodemus. And notice how this is tied to the land of Israel in the Kingdom.

I suppose that many of us are in the same boat, especially those of us who have been brought up in Sunday School and church all our lives. We know the events and facts in the Bible, but we may not really understand their meaning.

*"The same is true today. We live and think so much in the natural that we find God's supernatural a little confusing. We wind up looking at Christianity as a religious code, full of do's and don'ts, instead of a supernatural relationship and empowering by God. For most of us, trying to understand this relationship*



*and empowering is like being blind and trying to understand the concept of color. If you've never had sight, how can you understand, say, the color blue?" Bill Myers*

**John 3:11-12 I tell you the solemn truth, we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. (12) If I have told you people about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?**

I think Jesus is speaking on a wider scale here, in His role as a prophet. The prophets throughout Israel's history had spoken the truth from God, but they were rejected, they never received the testimony of what they were saying. And Jesus was saying that if He spoke plainly about earthly things (through the prophets), then they'll never understand Him when He speaks of spiritual things. They are very earthbound and hardened in their hearts.

**John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven — the Son of Man.**

What is Jesus saying here? I'm pretty sure lots of people have ascended into heaven when they died. I think that Jesus is saying no one that has ascended into heaven can reveal who the Father is and what His plans are except Himself, who came to earth from heaven when He was born in Bethlehem. This is another claim of divinity for Jesus.

**John 3:14-15 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."**

The event that Jesus refers to is Numbers 21:9 when Israel, in their journey to the Promised Land, ran across a bunch of snakes that were biting and killing people. God told Moses to put a snake on a pole and lift it up, and anyone who looked at it would be spared. Now some people try to read too much into what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is not like a snake! He is just saying that He would be put up on a pole and killed like the snake was. And, as people who looked on the snake on the pole were spared, people who look to Christ in His crucifixion will be saved. This is the first time the phrase "eternal life" is used in the book.

Again we see the title Jesus gives Himself of "Son of Man". That title comes from Daniel 7:13, and means the Son related to mankind. He is also the Son of God - the Son related to God.

We don't know for sure how Nicodemus responded to what Jesus said, because it is not recorded, but I think he made the decision to follow Christ and be born from above by the Spirit (read John 19:39). He was probably a "secret agent" disciple from then on.

**John 3:16 For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.**

These next few verses are assumed to be a summary commentary by John, instead of direct quotes by Jesus. Verse 16 is one of the most famous, and considered by many as the greatest verse in the Bible. It summarizes the message of the Bible, it is that profound!

God loved the world so much that He took action. He sent His only Son, whom He'd had loving communion with for eternity past, to the earth to die for the world - it was a rescue mission to save

those who are perishing. And notice that ONLY those who believe in Him will not perish and have eternal life.

“Eternal life” doesn’t just mean living forever, but a different quality of life, and it doesn’t involve just the soul, but also the body. At creation men and women were made for everlasting life in communion with God, not for death and separation from God. The death and resurrection of Christ restores that original purpose for mankind.

For those of us who have “believed in Him”, eternal life isn’t just something we hope for after we die, but it is a present reality for us (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:13).

**John 3:17** `For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him.

Everyone starts out condemned in God’s eyes, because we’re all born in sin, none of us measure up. But God has provided A WAY, the ONLY WAY, through Jesus. Someday the Son will come back again to judge the world. But the first time God sent Him into the world He came to save.

**John 3:18** The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

We must talk about limited atonement here. Calvinists believe that Christ died for only the Elect. The Elect are those who were chosen, predestined by God to be saved before the world was made. Now predestination is a very clear doctrine in the Bible, God chooses who will be saved; no one is saved except the Father draws them (John 6:44).

What is not clear is how that happens, because the Bible is also clear that each one of us is responsible for the choice we make to either accept Christ or reject Him. Some see a conflict there; I don’t. God makes both predestination and the volition of human beings work out, I don’t need to understand how.

However, some Calvinists take the idea of predestination too far and insist that Christ only died for those who are predestined to be saved. They interpret verse 16-17 as saying that “the world” is referring only to the Elect. I cannot agree with this view. The clear and obvious meaning of these verses without preconceived biases is that “the world” means the entire world! This view is creating a doctrine that is not in the text.

It always helps to look at the context of the verses. Look at verse 15. Jesus is explaining how anyone can have eternal life by believing on Him. Don’t complicate the Word of God - most of the time the simple explanation is the correct one. Also, notice how much the choice of the individual is emphasized in this section!

**John 3:19** Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

We can see this working out more and more in our country, can’t we? The United States continues to remove God and the Bible from every vestige of our culture, government, and education system. This is nothing less than a rejection of the Light.

**John 3:20** For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed.

People who hate and fear the light do so because they don't want anyone to tell them what to do, or judge them for what they do. They think they are autonomous, that they have no responsibility to anyone but themselves. And people don't like having their deeds exposed, unless it brings them glory, of course. They are like criminals who work in the dark because they don't want what they're doing to be seen.

People offer many excuses for not accepting Christ. Some say that all Christians are hypocrites. Others argue against some of the truths about Christ or the gospel. These are just excuses. Their hearts are in rebellion against God. The ultimate reason people do not come to Christ is that they do not want to.

**John 3:21** But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.

People who live by God's truth and are trusting in Christ for their salvation aren't afraid of the light any more. They're not afraid of God's judgment, because they know they have been saved from it. "Practices" is really not a good translation of the Greek here, it is better translated "accept", or "commit to", or even "believe". The commitment or belief in the truth comes first, and then the deeds will follow. The verse is saying that God works in those who have come to the light. That's huge! God works in us to produce good deeds! This is another one of those verses that are just so full that you could spend an hour talking about.

**John 3:22-24** After this, Jesus and his disciples came into Judean territory, and there he spent time with them and was baptizing. (23) John was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming to him and being baptized. (24) (For John had not yet been thrown into prison.)

This is after the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus. Jesus left Jerusalem and spent some time with His disciples and even did some baptizing! Did you know that Christ baptized people? Again realize this is not the same as a Christian baptism today. These people were being baptized unto repentance (changing their mind about their sin), and being washed as a sign of their repentance. And John the Baptist was continuing his work as well.

**John 3:25-26** Now a dispute came about between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew concerning ceremonial washing. (26) So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River, about whom you testified — see, he is baptizing, and everyone is flocking to him!"

John's disciples came to him and said, "Hey, you're losing your followers to this guy!" The fact that both John and Jesus were baptizing tells us that there was great conviction sweeping the nation. There was revival going on! The nation was in a very low period morally, and of course not everyone repented. Thousands may have repented but the nation as a whole still rejected their Messiah. But the baptisms here indicate that there was a revival going on.

**John 3:27** John replied, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.

John is saying that God is the one causing this to happen. Christ was increasing and John was decreasing because that was the will of God, and John accepted that.

**John 3:28-29** You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but rather, 'I have been sent before him.' (29) The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly when he hears the bridegroom's voice. This then is my joy, and it is complete.

John is saying he has done his job; he has done what he was called to do. Unlike many pastors and Christian leaders today, he didn't try to create an empire for himself, try to become more and more "successful". John was content, and more than content, he was thrilled that Jesus was getting the glory due Him, and happy that he had done his part.

**John 3:30-32** He must become more important while I become less important." The one who comes from above is superior to all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is superior to all. (32) He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

John the Baptist really understood, he got it! Jesus came from heaven to bring heavenly things. But it says no one accepts His testimony, which reminds me of Isaiah 53:1.

**John 3:33** The one who has accepted his testimony has confirmed clearly that God is truthful.

If you accept the witness of Christ, you are agreeing with God that He is true.

**John 3:34** For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he does not give the Spirit sparingly.

Notice all three members of the Trinity are in this verse. Jesus was given the full measure of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-2) by the Father.

**John 3:35** The Father loves the Son and has placed all things under his authority.

A simple verse but so very profound. Does all things mean all things? Of course it does! Jesus Christ has authority over EVERYTHING!

**John 3:36** The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.

It's very clear, isn't it? One thing about "believes" that should be noted. This is a very Jewish idea. To a Jew, to "believe" meant to obey. So this really means the one who obeys the Son has eternal life, and this is supported by scripture. Just to believe He exists is obviously not enough to be saved. To obey is the true meaning of "believe". And to obey the Son is to believe that He died for your sins and has saved you.

That is the end of the accounts in this book about John the Baptist. To see what became of John, read Matthew 14:1-12.