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JOHN 3:22-36 -- Further Testimony From John the Baptist

NOTES:

Vs. 22 -- *into the land of Judea* -- This probably means the countryside of Judea, since Jesus and His disciples were already in Jerusalem, a Judean city (2:21). *He was spending time with them and baptizing* -- He was training His followers, but they were not alone. He appears to have been operating His ministry in a way that was similar to how John the Baptist had done things. Both verbs, "spending time" (lit. - remaining, staying) and "baptizing" (lit. - immersing, dipping, plunging under) indicate ongoing action.

Vs. 23 -- *And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim* -- Twenty to twenty-five miles north of where Jesus probably was. These two towns are in the Jordan river valley only 13 miles from Sychar, the site of Jacob's well. Just north of the Samaritan border, they appear to have been included in the jurisdiction of the Decapolis, rather than part of Galilee, where Herod was in power. *because there was much water there* -- A statement which would make the most sense if total immersion was the mode of baptism. Any place along the Jordan would have offered a continual flow of water. Here the water was evidently deeper, which would better suit the requirements of John's ministry, especially to accommodate large numbers of people. *and they were coming and being baptized* -- John was still a significant attraction in Israel.

Vs. 24 -- *John had not yet been thrown into prison* -- This verse provides a very important historical benchmark for determining the overlap of Jesus' and John's ministries. The other Gospel writers give the impression that Jesus' ministry did not really get off the ground until after John was imprisoned (Matt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:18-23). John the apostle clarifies this misunderstanding by recording this incident. From this Gospel we know that Jesus already was very busy in His ministry. He had already been gathering some disciples, and had gained the attention of both the general populace and the religious leaders by the signs that He performed, and by His other activities. The Baptist would soon be imprisoned for criticizing Herod's illegal marriage to his brother's wife (Matt. 14:3,4; Mk. 6:17,18; Lk. 3:19,20), though at this point both he and Jesus are openly ministering in the land.

Vs. 25 -- *a discussion... about purification* -- It is not spelled out for us in the text exactly what they were in disagreement about, but the content of the concerns that John's disciples brought back to him would imply that the Jew that they had met was claiming that Jesus' ministry was more effective than John's.

Vs. 26 -- *He... to whom you have borne witness* -- John's disciples did not miss the most important directive he had given to them. Nevertheless, unlike Andrew and John, they continued to follow John (1:35-40). Long after John the Baptist had died, he continued to have groups of followers who identified with his teachings, including how he was the forerunner of the Christ (Acts 18:24-19:7). This is a testimony of the power and impact of this man of God, as well as another support of the veracity of the Gospel accounts. It also is an example concerning the danger of having too much loyalty in a godly individual. Some of these people missed the ongoing movement of God, because they were determined to remain loyal to John. *He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.* -- They are offended that Jesus appeared to not only be in competition with John, but that He was beginning to even overshadow him.

Vs. 27 -- *A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven.* -- A more literal translation of this sentence would be, "A man is not able/capable to receive/take not even one (thing) if ever it might not be (being) having been given/granted to him out from heaven". A rough paraphrase might be, "No one is able to take anything that is not something God has granted to him". John is saying that Jesus' popularity is something that God has given to Him. Conversely, John knows that he can't make something happen that is not within God's permission. Cf. I Cor. 3:5-7.

Vs. 28 -- *You yourselves bear me witness* -- John reminds them of what he had said. He is saying that these events are what should be expected.

Vs. 29 -- *bride., bridegroom,' ...the friend of the bridegroom* -- It was the custom at the time for the best man to bring the bride to the bridegroom at the wedding and to stand nearby to hear the vows exchanged. *And so this joy of mine has been made full.* -- As it was fitting for the best man to rejoice at the joy of his friend, so it is fitting that John would rejoice at the exaltation and popularity of the One whose way he came to prepare.

Vs. 30 -- *He must increase, but I must decrease.* -- The Greek is a little more emphatic, "It is necessary/it is bound that (one) to increase/grow/become more important, but me to be made lower/become less important".

Vs. 31 -- *He who comes from above is above all* -- Lit., "The (one) from above (Gr. - anōthen, as in 3:3,7) He is above/'upon above/over all..." (Note that this is good contextual support that anōthen earlier in the passage should have been understood as "from above", not "again"). The next phrase would be more literally rendered, "The (one) being out from the earth, he is out from the earth and out from the earth he speaks". This makes sense. We speak out of our own experience and knowledge. *He who comes from heaven is above all.* -- A virtual restatement of the first part of the verse. It makes specific, in case it was not yet clear to us, that the "from above" (anōthen) in the first phrase of the verse is a reference to heaven, ...not social standing, privilege, or any other thought one might supply in their attempt to make sense of the statement. The word translated as "from" in the NASB, and translated as "out from" three times in my translation of the previous phrase, is the Greek word ek. It carries the idea of source or origin. This person is not just someone who has been in heaven and come back "from above". In some sense, He has sprung "out from" there, He originated from there, ...in contrast to one whose source or origination was "out from" the earth. This stronger, more specific restatement of this phrase adds emphasis, as well, to the idea of Jesus having come "from above". Unlike someone "out from" the earth, who speaks earthy things, He is "the (one) coming out from heaven".

Vs. 32 -- *What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness* -- His testimony is based upon personal experience, not mere speculation. He is eminently qualified to speak of heavenly realities since He is "out from" there. The argument is very similar to verses 11-13, though it is stated even more directly now. There is some question as to where John the Baptist's words may end. The same can be said about where Jesus' words may have ended earlier in the chapter. Are verses 16-21 Jesus' actual comments, or the apostle John's? Did the author record John's testimony in vss. 27-30, and then return to his own thoughts, or is John's response recorded here because it is so similar to Jesus' comments earlier in the chapter? There is no definite way to tell. *and no man receives His witness* -- In spite of His qualifications for speaking about heavenly things, having come "out from" there, people were not generally accepting of what Jesus had to say.

Vs. 33 -- *He who has received His witness* -- The Greek is not past tense, here. Rather, "The (one) receiving/taking (in a present or an ongoing process) of Him the testimony...", *has set his seal to this, that God is true.* -- Lit., "s/he sealed (past completed, point-in-time action) that the God is true/real/genuine". The point seems to be that those who are accepting and taking what was

Jesus' message have at some point "stamped" with their personal approval or endorsement that God is for real, and trustworthy.

Vs. 34 -- *For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God* -- God has sent a messenger to communicate the personal directives of God to us. The Greek for "word" here is a form of rhēma, referring more to spoken words than just the ideas, i.e., the utterances of God, not just the content. The significance of it here would be the idea of more personal communication from God to Jesus, which then qualifies Him to more accurately convey God's heart to us. *for He gives the Spirit without measure.* -- Lit., "for not out from measure He gives the Spirit." Technically, "Spirit" could be either the subject or the direct object. He is either the giver, or the thing given. It could mean that the Spirit gives without measure to Jesus (thus qualifying Him as a source of information from God), or that God gives the Spirit without measure to Jesus (again, to show His qualifications), or that God gives the Spirit without measure (a general statement regarding God's desire to freely and abundantly offer His Spirit to all, applying certainly to Him who was from above), or it could mean that Jesus gives the Spirit without measure (i.e., freely to men).

Vs. 35 -- *The Father loves the Son* -- Powerful word picture with immense ramifications. "The" is a significant word here. Not just any father or any son is referred to. *and has given all things into His hand* -- The phrase "into His hand" means under His dominion. Incredibly absolute statement! The verb, "has given", means it was given at some time in the past and it remains the privilege of the recipient.

Vs. 36 -- *He who believes in the Son has eternal life* -- Lit., "the one believing/trusting into/unto/towards the Son". The Greek communicates an ongoing action or state of relationship. At first blush it would seem to be an amazing thing for Jews to consider the Son as the object of faith, but He is not taking the place of God the Father. Rather, He, like the bronze serpent in the wilderness, or like a messenger, was appointed to have this role and function by the Father's free choice. We either accept Him as God's provision, and believe Him as God's messenger, or we disregard God's plan. Eternal (age-type) life is the present possession of those who trust toward Jesus. *he who does not obey the Son shall not see life* -- Lit., "but (for contrast) the (one) stubbornly resisting/not obeying/being-disobedient/being-disbelieving-in/toward the Son not will he see life". The alternative to responding to Jesus is to be in the ongoing state of not trusting or not obeying. The word implies a resistance to truth, not mere ignorance. This is a negative form of the word meaning to be persuaded or convinced, hence to obey. It is interesting that this Greek word communicates that obedience is the response that comes out from trust or belief in that person. Here, these are those who are unconvinced, unpersuaded, and resistant. Their disobedience is the outworking of the condition of their heart. Those who continue in this state miss the opportunity of ever knowing this life from God. *but the wrath of God abides on him* -- The language in the Greek communicates again the alternative nature of this scenario. Instead of discovering life, they remain under God's righteous anger. This is the only place in the Gospel where this particular word picture is used. The Greek employs several words for anger, each with a little different twist or image that it portrays. This word, orgē, describes usually an anger that is a response to an offense or injustice. It is not so much an explosion of emotion as the determination of the heart to require justice, revenge, or retribution. It is an attitude of righteous indignation that will require action. It is quite clear from the context that all human beings have been under the wrath of God. Those who have responded to God's offer of clemency (as the bronze serpent in the wilderness) have the opportunity to escape the wrath. Those who persist in their resistance to God remain under His indignation, having rejected His offer of reconciliation.