

## Where all Good Things Come From

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John 3:22-26

Because water was plentiful at Aedon near Salim, John was baptizing people there. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Christian baptism is more. Repenting sinners are baptized, but baptism is understood to be an outward sign of obedience pointing toward the inward grace of salvation brought by the Spirit of God. Christian baptism pictures the cross of Christ and the empty tomb.

Converts to Judaism were often baptized as an act of purification. Knowing this may have prompted a Jew to raise questions with John's disciples about purification, and its place in John's ministry of baptism. With this came a word to John about the work of Christ. "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."

Here is an opportunity for John to view the activity of Christ Jesus as a kind of competition. But he will have none of it. John taught his disciples that all one has is the gift of God. "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven." If what we are and what we have comes to us from above, then any notion that we should think of ourselves as competitors with others believers is wrongheaded! We have no grounds for any demonstration of personal ability or strength. We are what we are because of the grace of God.

And so John denied that he was the Messiah. He was the forerunner of the Lord. He was not the bridegroom; only his friend. John's time had come to decrease that the Lord Jesus Christ might increase. John was a human being who had found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Jesus was a human being also, (as well as being God in the flesh), but with a very different origin.

There is found here in this testimony of John the Baptist a very important truth concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Speaking of himself, John says that "he who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way." The contrasting truth is essential to understanding who the Lord Jesus really is. Every man and woman who lives on this earth began life here. Life begins at conception. William Wordsworth wrote a poem which contains the line, "trailing clouds of glory we come from God who is our home." Lovely sentiment, but it is not true. We live by the providence of God, but we had no preexistence. Our lives begin here on the earth with the union of our parents.

Jesus Christ is different. He created all things in heaven and on earth. Paul taught the Coalescence that Christ is before all things, and that he is actually holding everything together by his most powerful authority. We have already heard the proclamation of John the apostle, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1-2)

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who came down from above. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only human being who once lived in perfect loving fellowship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, needing nothing. And yet out of love he condescended to come to earth and take the form of a servant. He came down as the greatest gift of all and took our humanity, the likeness of sinful human flesh, in order to die in the place of undeserving sinners like you and me.

John taught his disciples that the Spirit is given to Christ without measure. He speaks the truth of God. The Father has given all things into his hand. And so the Lord taught the necessity of his atoning death on the cross and the certainty of his

resurrection from the dead. He taught that human beings are without hope unless God intervenes on their behalf.

In Christ there is life that comes from above, the eternal life of God. In Christ there is pardon for sin. John could call men and women to a sign of repentance, but the Lord Jesus Christ could actually grant the grace of repentance. If a person cannot receive anything unless it is a gift from heaven, then repentance must come as the gift of God. Faith in the Son of God, God's provision for poor lost sinners, is the gift of God and must have come from above. To God be the glory, great things he has done!

by Joe Nesom