

HEAVEN TO EARTH

CORE PASSAGE: JOHN 3:25-36

CONTEXT

Jesus began to attract a crowd after His first miracle and driving out the money changers in the temple. Not long after meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus and His disciples went out to preach the message of the kingdom. Jesus and John the Baptist found themselves baptizing in the same vicinity with crowds flocking to each. John the Baptist's disciples questioned Jesus's rise in prominence, and John took that moment to explain that true joy comes from glorifying Jesus, the Son of God.

KEY CONCEPT

Belief involves acknowledging the supremacy of Jesus.

As you examine John 3:25-36:

- Note that John understood that he was the messenger, not the Messiah.
- Recognize that believers lift up Jesus and humble themselves so that He gets the glory.



TIMELINE

John the Baptist Calls People to Repentance in Preparation for Jesus and Baptizes Jesus (Matthew 3:1-17)

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (John 2:13-22)

SESSION STUDY:
John the Baptist Scales Back His Ministry (John 3:22-36)

Jesus Performs His First Miracle at the Wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)

Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night (John 3:1-21)

Jesus Speaks with a Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-42)

Daily Readings

- Day 1:** John 3:22-24
- Day 2:** John 3:25-26
- Day 3:** John 3:27-30
- Day 4:** John 3:31-34
- Day 5:** John 3:35-36
- Day 6:** Psalm 45



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JOHN 3:25-30

BELIEF IN CHRIST INVOLVES HUMBLING OURSELVES BEFORE HIM.

Underline words and phrases that indicate how John's disciples felt about Jesus.

Highlight words and phrases that show how John felt about Jesus.

Note the contrast between John's feelings and those of his disciples.

25 Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. **26** So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him." **27** John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' **29** He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease."

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus is the Messiah and God the Son, coming from above to give eternal life to those who believe in Him, so He is worthy to be put first in our lives.



We are not given much information about the dispute between John's disciples and an unnamed Jew over Jewish purification rites. But somehow that discussion drew John's disciples to the topic of baptism. They noted that Jesus was baptizing "across the Jordan" on the eastern shore, though John 4:2 explains Jesus's disciples did the baptizing. The envy of John's disciples was palpable in their exaggerated statement, "Everyone is going to him" (3:26). John's crowds were smaller than Jesus's crowds, and John's disciples didn't like it.

John made two key points in response. First, he said everything is from God—our gifts, callings, positions, and even the results of the ministry God assigns each person. People have resources at their disposal only as God permits. Desiring greater prominence is like telling the Lord He erred in the calling He assigned us. Second, John acknowledged he was a messenger, not the Messiah. He was the one prophesied to "prepare the way of the LORD" (Isaiah 40:3).

How can you find contentment with the circumstances God assigned you rather than desiring greater prominence?

John the Baptist used a parable to explain his attitude toward Jesus. John was like "the groom's friend" at a first-century Judean wedding (John 3:29), roughly equivalent to what we would call the best man. He assisted the groom with every detail of the wedding, organizing and presiding over the festivities. If he drew the spotlight away from the groom, then he failed in his role. If the groom drew focus and experienced joy, he succeeded.

In this regard, John the Baptist is a model for all followers of Jesus. As believers, we lift up Christ and humble ourselves before Him. John's statement that "He must increase, but I must decrease" (v. 30) was not a statement merely of what John should do. Rather, it was a statement of the Lord's plan. True joy comes not when the spotlight shines brightest on us; it comes when we shine the spotlight on Jesus.

What does glorifying Jesus rather than yourself mean practically in your current season of life?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

JOHN 3:31-36

WE HUMBLE OURSELVES BECAUSE CHRIST IS SUPREME.

Highlight phrases describing the supremacy of Jesus, denoting either His attributes or His actions.

31 The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. **33** The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. **34** For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands. **36** The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

FAITH: Biblical faith is the resting or trusting in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Key Concept: Belief involves acknowledging the supremacy of Jesus.



After John the Baptist fulfilled his mission of exalting Jesus, he faded from the narrative, mostly because Herod arrested him (cf. v. 24). Verse 31 begins an extended commentary on the supremacy of Jesus over all things and all people.

Jesus is above all for various reasons. Among them, He “comes from heaven” (v. 31); He is God, but God come in human form. So Jesus is fully God and fully man. And He came to “[testify] to what he has seen and heard” (v. 32), to the reality of God and the truth of God’s plan, but His testimony is often rejected. Yet those who do accept it know that “God is true” (v. 33) because Jesus fulfilled the promises of old that the Messiah would bring God’s salvation.

What do you think is the most compelling reason to believe Jesus is God and supreme over all things?

Verse 34 adds another reason to humble ourselves before Jesus: His authority to speak God’s Word. The Old Testament prophets received the measure of God’s Spirit needed to fulfill their missions. Jesus, in contrast, was given the Spirit’s power without limit (v. 34). The Father “has given all things into his hands” (v. 35) so that Jesus can announce to us

the Word of God. This far exceeded the ministry of any Old Testament prophet. On occasion, the Lord would reveal to a prophet a message, which he would announce by saying, “Thus says the LORD.” With Jesus, every single word that came from His mouth was the Lord speaking.

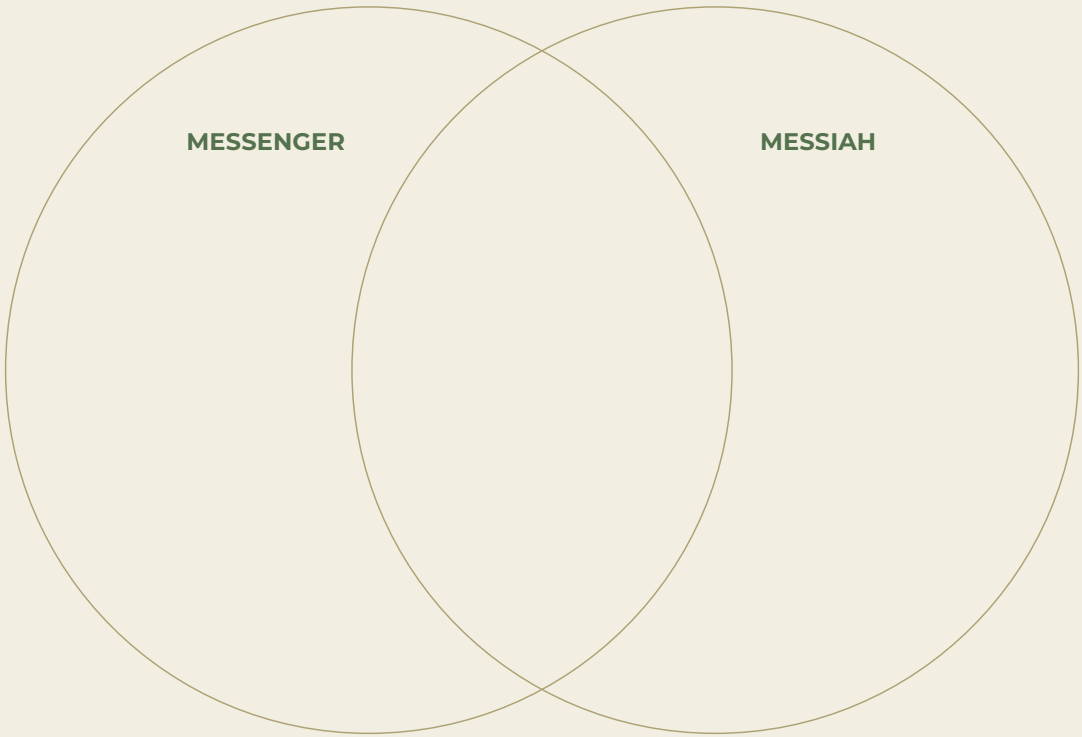
The appropriate response to Jesus’s supremacy is faith. Indeed, believing in Jesus results in eternal life. The type of belief in view is not mere mental ascent to the facts about Jesus, though that is included. Saving faith in Jesus entails trusting Him alone as the Master of our lives. People who do not place Jesus on the throne of their lives will not experience eternal life in God’s kingdom. Instead, they will experience the eternal, just punishment their sin deserves.

What are some common reasons people reject Jesus’s offer of eternal life?



MESSENGER OR MESSIAH?

Read John 3:25-36. Use the Venn diagram to compare Jesus's and John the Baptist's ministries.



What can we do to remind ourselves to adopt humility when it does not come easily?

What might have been the outcome if John the Baptist had chosen not to humble himself and elevate Jesus?

Key Concept: Belief involves acknowledging the supremacy of Jesus.



HEAD

How might a lack of knowledge about Jesus limit your ability to believe in Him?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE



Read Psalm 45. Praise God for His majesty, splendor, and power (vv. 3-6). Ask Him to grant you joy and flourishing as you submit to His rule (vv. 7-12). Commit to exalt Jesus's name over your own (v. 17).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

In what ways should you commit to humble yourself before Jesus?



HANDS

How will you encourage someone this week to have a humble attitude before Christ?

