

A very well known and beloved chapter in the Bible is John chapter 3. Probably the best known, and publicized, verse is John 3:16,

(16) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Every sectarian, denominational ideology jumps on that verse as a beginning of making people believe that they, and only they, have the belief system to insure their salvation. As further "Proof Text" they often quote John 3:5,

(5) "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

And, of course, the famous verse 3 jumped on by all,

(3) "Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The "Born Again" text that we should all hold dear to ourselves.

It is not my purpose here to dwell on doctrinal issues but I do want to point out that so many sound doctrines of Christ are brought up in John Chapter 3, and therefore many issues concerning doctrine, that it would take a years worth of 30 minute sermons (at 52 Sundays in a year) to begin to cover them. When a verse is plucked out of the Bible and attacked from all angles it is hard to keep a good perspective on what the verse was indeed about and the context of it. I want to point out that most, if not all, "discussions" about John chapter 3 are limited to the first half of the chapter and end at verse 21. Uh, there are 36 verses in the chapter. I would like to focus on those overlooked 14 verses and say for the record that I think the first couple of verses from chapter 4, (well, actually the first three verses) should be included as the end of the thoughts of chapter 3, so 17 verses.

Let us read, let us hear, those 17 verses of John 3:22 through John 4:3;

(22) After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing.

(23) John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized--

(24) for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

(25) Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification.

(26) 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."

(27) John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.

(28) You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'

(29) 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. So this joy of mine has been made full.

(30) He must increase, but I must decrease.

(31) He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

(32) What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

(33) He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.

(34) For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

(35) The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

(36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

And John 4:1-3

(1) Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John

(2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

(3) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

Most people seem surprised when they read the last half of John chapter 3. It appears to be almost a secret that the ministry of Christ was one of baptism. It seems that baptism doesn't come up in people's thoughts until "The Great Commission." Whereas it is undeniable that Christ told His apostles in Matthew 28:19 & 20 to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them..." it is a misnomer to think that the apostles were "commissioned" at that time to baptize as they were baptizing from the beginning of their service with Christ and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God being at hand. Baptism was and is the "Commission," the "Call" of Christ.

The last half of John chapter 3 is basically a rehash of the first half. The man, Nicodemus, is perplexed and confused in the first half and comes to Jesus for an explanation of what is going on. The last half is all about "a Jew" engaging the disciples of John the Baptist in a "discussion" (Yeah! Right! A "discussion") about "purification." The Jewish leaders knew the Law and its demand for a sacrifice and the participation in sacrifice in order to be pure in God's sight. How did John, and now this Jesus, dare proclaim that baptism has anything to do with being pure in God's eyes? Where was the sacrifice? Why wasn't there a sacrifice!? It was coming.

John the Baptist gave a very good summation of God's plan for salvation and purification. We can believe that John spoke as a prophet for God and with

God's words. I would like to zero in on the 33rd verse as it pertains to us the most.

Jn 3:33 "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true."

We are told that we have set OUR seal to God's plan. That is a bit archaic to our minds but it just means we have put our signatures to, we have signed, the agreement. At the time of the writing of this Gospel of John signatures were unheard of but a Signet in a seal, usually wax, was the means of a personal sign. In the future we may have to explain that a signature meant putting your User ID and password to an agreement. So those who do receive Christ's testimony put their seal, their signature, their User ID and password to it.

"Receiving Christ's testimony" as verse 33 describes and "obeying the Son" as verse 36 says is no small matter. Many have succumbed to the lie that there is nothing to know or think about concerning Jesus as He did all the work for their salvation and don't worry about anything, as Jesus has everyone's back. Many others are overwhelmed with the smorgasbord of ways "to honor Jesus" that they just go with the flow of what's most convenient and easy. Such a choice usually leads to more misunderstandings of Christ and His salvation than otherwise. But there is no way of their ever knowing as they already believe that one thought is as good as another and there is no discernable knowledge of God.

Testimony was given and purification was rendered. It now falls to us whether we take part in it. Coming together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ and taking part in observance of His commands is, again, no small matter. To continuously acknowledge the great sacrifice of the Lord Himself for our purification in the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood in a New Covenant, a New Testament, of our relationship to God is our privilege and duty.

This is you. You are taking the time and making the commitment to be here, to participate in Christ's testimony. The observance of the one thing Christ told us to do "In remembrance of Him" is your seal, your signature, your application of your User ID and Password to the testimony of Christ. Let us do so with joy at the sound of His voice in His command.

In Christ
DeMilt Morse