

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 33

October 16, 2019

We're in John 3:22-36 Okay, we are still in John Chapter 3 and there is a series of statements that are made by John the Baptist. This may be one of the last statements that is recorded about Jesus; there are several points that he has been making.

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."

In the statement that begins in **verse 27**, there are 10 points that John is making.

Point # 1: A man can receive nothing *unless* it has been given to him from heaven

Point # 2: I am not the Christ. And we will pick up here.

Point # 3: I have been sent before Him.

Literally, the word "Him" is the word "**that one**"... *before that one*. John the Baptist acknowledges that he is a man under authority. The idea of being sent is the same word from where we get **apostle "Apostolos"** (αποστολος) which means "one sent". Sometimes we add, "... with a commission".

John the Baptist was not an apostle in the same way the Twelve were apostles, but he was "**one sent**". Is everyone who is sent an "apostle"? Well, there was a distinction made based on apostolic authority in **Mark 10** when Jesus gave the Apostles certain authority to preach and teach and drive out demons.

In **Acts 8** Peter and John came down to Samaria and as apostles, they laid their hands on the people there.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ **Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

2 Corinthians 11:13 Paul speaks frequently about apostolic authority; the authority that is given to him *as an apostle*. These are broad concepts that are often applied specifically. Elder is another term that we use like this. Older men are elders, but not *all* older men can be elders in the sense that they're "elders in the church" because certain qualities and qualifications must be met.

Might one describe himself as an elder in a particular church without actually being an elder? In other words, Mike could describe himself as being an elder at Central, but some might be confused if they know our nomenclature, our terminology, and they might think he is on the "board of elders".

Mike: I am an *elder man*.

Rod: You are an elder man, yes. But that might be a little redundant because the Greek word elder is masculine anyway. But part of the body of elders that were appointed by the Holy Spirit according to **Acts 20:28** to be "overseers" of the church is different. We read, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

So, what about older women? They have a specific function but they can't be elders. I don't know if that's even a word. We have "deaconesses" so why can't there be elders? I don't know. But, being a "sent" person (getting back to the apostle thing) requires us to understand the limits of our authority or our mission.

Jesus was also a "sent person". He says that often in the book of John. I was the One who was "sent" by the Father, but He was "sent" for a different purpose and a different mission from others who were "sent".

For John the Baptist, he was "sent" (in his words, before Him). He was "sent" *before Jesus* to prepare the way; to ready the people; to testify or bear witness; so that the Christ would be pointed out to them.

Buffy: Were **the twelve** the same thing?

Rod: They became **the Twelve Apostles**. Yes. The Twelve, as we call them if you go to **Mark 3:13-18**, 'The Twelve' were *among* the disciples. But Jesus *called* the ones He wanted and designated them; He gave them the designation of Apostles. It was a special designation and we see that in many different ways; even in the Book of **Revelation 21:12** where he talks about the foundation of the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel.

In one sense, in a generic sense, we are all “sent”. We are all apostles of the Lord.

Brian: Some men call themselves apostles (little “a”).

Rod: Yes. Sometimes I run into them. I have a friend who I met a man in Kenya and I’ve gotten to know him pretty well, and he refers to himself as an apostle. I haven’t taken issue with him on that because I can read into that anything I want to. I don’t think he thinks that he’s one of the twelve. I don’t think he’s delusional in thinking he’s one of the Twelve Apostles reincarnated or something. I don’t know why he has chosen that term, and maybe one day I’ll have a conversation with him. It’s not a high priority on my list with him about that. But one day, we might have that discussion.

Point # 4 is about the Bride and the Bridegroom. This is really interesting to me. Verse 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.](#) The Bride and the Bridegroom ... let’s unpack that a little bit.

This metaphor is to distinguish himself from Jesus. Remember in **Chapter 2**, we had Jesus attending a wedding, and the people who were going out to learn and be baptized by Jesus were the “bride”. It’s interesting here because Jesus begins His ministry at a wedding and then we go into this metaphor of the bride and the bridegroom. The people who are coming out to Jesus are described as the bride. John’s role was to be the “friend”; the “Philos” (φιλος) of the bridegroom. That was the role that John had to the bridegroom.

These words are curious to me. The word “bride” in the Greek and the word “bridegroom” are, as you would expect, to be very similar in nature. Just the endings are different. Strong’s definition says it is from a primary, but obsolete verb. The verb is translated as “nupto”. Does that ring a bell? A **nuptial** agreement; say your **nuptials**.

But, actually, the core root verb of that is from a word that meant a veil, or to veil as a bride. The original word for bride had, in it, the idea of veiling the bride. We compare that to the Latin which is “nupto”, which means “to marry” and we get nuptials. So if we have a young married woman as veiled; including a betrothed girl, by implication a son’s wife or bride, a daughter-in-law; the one who is veiled can be referred to as a daughter-in-law. She is the veiled one. So the original idea included the idea of a veil in it when it comes to the bride. We continue that in today’s weddings. Many brides are behind the veil even though you can see through it. It’s made of a material called tulle. It’s not hiding much but it makes it more difficult for the bridegroom to kiss the bride. They usually have to lift the veil.

Stay with me on this. The primary designation is a bride ‘giving way’ to the bridegroom. In **Matthew 9:14**, [Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”](#) John’s disciples want to know why Jesus’ disciples do not fast. So in that question, Jesus identifies them as attendants of the bridegroom. The word “attendant” is actually the word “**sons** of the bridegroom”. So the sons of the bridegroom do not fast when they have the bridegroom with them.

So let’s get all these features here:

We have the bride who is represented with the veil. We have the attendants or the friends of the bridegroom who do not fast because they have the bridegroom with them. Then Jesus saw Himself as the Bridegroom betrothed to a bride, a young bride, engaged but not yet married. He saw the disciples and John the Baptist as attendants, sons of and friends surrounding Him in preparation for the coming marriage.

He understood that there would be a ‘going away’ period (**Matthew 25:1-13**). In the parable of the ten virgins, the ten virgins were waiting for the Bridegroom (who was there and then went away). He was going to come back again and he expected the virgins, who were the attendants and friends to be prepared for His return.

Again, this is a picture of what this whole “wedding thing” looks like in a Jewish setting and in the mind of Jesus. During this time, while **He** is away, they will be fasting. While he’s with them they will not fast; but when he goes away for that period of time, they will be fasting since the bridegroom is not there. So as in **John 14**, Jesus anticipates his return. But, what is he doing while he is away?

In **John 14** He’s preparing a place for His new bride. The wedding will take place and he and his bride (the church) will be together forever. So in John 14 when it says that **Jesus is going away to prepare a place for you; that where I am you may be also**, in the figure of the bride and the bridegroom, He is going away to prepare the home or house for His bride so when he has the marriage, (and that marriage is talked about in **Revelation 20-21**; the marriage of the bride and the bridegroom) the Lamb of God and the bride, and then He will take her home to the place He has prepared for her. They have a home now. This is the picture that we piece together from the different parts of the story in the mind of Jesus.

So the metaphor shows Jesus’ relationship with His people. There can only be one bride and one bridegroom. Jesus is not a polygamist. Paul, (and this is very telling: **2 Cor. 11:2-3**) this is during the period of time that we are still in now. Jesus is off preparing a place for us, His bride, so we may live with Him when He comes back again. And Paul, in writing to the Corinthians says, “²I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised (betrothed) you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. ³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.”

Here, Paul is serving as an apostle, and as *a friend of the Bridegroom*. Now, he’s part of the bride, too, as he is part of the church. But he was afraid that they would be lead astray from the simplicity and pure devotion to Christ. In other words, Paul was afraid that in this interim period, when Jesus, the bridegroom was away preparing a home for the bride, that the bride might be lead away from the bridegroom so that when the bridegroom came back, the attendants could not present the bride to the bridegroom because she had eloped with somebody else. She ran off with “Harry” down the street. It really bothered Paul to think that when Jesus came back again to marry His bride, His bride might not be ready for Him. She might not even want to get married anymore and might leave Jesus standing at the altar.

Can you imagine what would happen if Jesus came back to receive His own and go to the wedding, and the bride has already run off with somebody else? And *don't* think that some think didn't happen with God in the Old Testament! His bride, *the Jewish people*, ran off with somebody else. **IDOLS!** They ran off with somebody else and God even reached one point where He **divorced** them. *He divorced His bride in the Old Testament.*

Now the metaphor gets a bit mixed up because in the Old Testament He's married to Israel. In the New Testament Jesus is in preparation for the marriage to us. But just like there was a commitment made between Joseph and Mary ...

It's interesting, and I hadn't thought about it until now, and I don't want to make too much of it. But if you think about the situation of Joseph and Mary, of how they were not legally married, but they were betrothed to each other prior to Jesus' birth, and *then* they married. It's interesting to me to compare that with the idea of us being promised to Christ *now*, and the commitment that is involved in that promise or in that engagement period just like Mary and Joseph were promised to each other; they were engaged and had a commitment to each other that eventually resulted in marriage.

Carole: Could that be why, when Joseph found out she was pregnant he wanted to "put her away privately"; in a way, divorcing her, because they had been promised to each other?

Rod: Yes. He would have had to go through some quasi-legal process. The putting away idea is the idea of divorce. When you "send away"; that's what the word divorce means: to send away.

At the wedding of the Lamb, (that's John the Baptist's most used phrase, the Lamb of God; and Jesus used that phrase as well), as the friend of the bridegroom, John has no envy or jealousy. He rejoices greatly just to hear the voice of Jesus. It says it makes his joy "full". **John 3:29**, "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.**" That one *distinct* and *necessary* voice; when he **hears** the voice of the bridegroom, it makes his heart swell.

Do you remember what happened before John the Baptist was even born? **Luke 1:41** says, "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Now he didn't hear the voice, but when Jesus was in the womb when He got even *close* to John the Baptist, John leapt within the womb. It was like John was so attuned to the presence of Jesus, that it evoked this fullness of joy from him. So this is a distinct and a necessary voice; the key ★ to the fullness of joy.

John 10 continues that theme when it says that the sheep follow the shepherd because they "**know His voice**". They became one flock with one shepherd when they hear His voice. It is the voice that pulls them together as one flock and shepherd. Ironically, the Jews disputed these words from the voice. Some tried to make the case that Jesus was either insane or was demon-possessed. And when Jesus prayed in **John 17:13**, he also prayed for their joy to be made **full in themselves**. In other words, they were to have joy within *themselves*. It was a complete joy, but it came from within and it had to do with the complete unity.

John the Baptist experienced this complete joy. John knew his work was near completion; he was genuinely happy for Jesus, and was not reluctant to just “move over”. He was so **happy** for Jesus and **having so much joy** with Him, celebrating with Him of the *anticipated* wedding of the bride and the bridegroom. So, this statement of John, **Point number 4 - about the Bride and the Bridegroom** takes us into a lot of different places.

Point # 5: He must increase but I must decrease. (John 3:30).

When Jesus talks about the mustard seed *increasing* in size, it is the same word there. Do you remember the little stone in Daniel 2? It is so small but it’s going to grow, increase in size, and become a great mountain that will fill the whole earth. This idea of increasing; of the Kingdom increasing, Jesus increasing is a gospel theme. There is the influence that spreads; that grows is a gospel theme.

1 Cor. 3:6-7 God causes the seed to grow, or to increase. “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” We may plant, we may water, but God gives the increase – only **He** can cause the increase.

In **Matthew 6:28** consider how the lilies grow or increase. How *do* they grow and increase? They put out spores and they – they germinate. But there is something about that that comes from the inside of them, not something from the outside.

Brian: Lilies don’t have spores. They use pollen.

Rod: Okay. What’s the difference between pollen and a spore? I don’t know. Come on Doc. You’re getting technical on me here.

So we have “increase” and “decrease”? This idea of *decrease* means to lessen in rank or influence; to make lower, but note, Jesus Himself was also, according to **Philippians 2:6-7**; **He** was made lower. *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

In **Hebrews 2:9** Jesus was made lower than the angels. “But we do see Jesus, who was **made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor** because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

This idea of Jesus decreasing; He **did** decrease when He came to earth, or He “decreased” under the angels. So even though John the Baptist is **decreasing** and Jesus is **increasing**, before Jesus began to **increase**, He **decreased**. And then, once He **decreased**, He began to **increase** again.

Macy: So God exalts the humble. You have to be decreasing in order to increase.

Rod: Yes. Absolutely, and seeing this as a work of God; who was directing and was increasing and decreasing, is God, Himself. This wasn’t just a function of men who somehow turned away from John the Baptist and said, “We don’t want to listen to you

anymore. We like Jesus better than you; we want to listen to Jesus.” This was a deliberate work of God the Father in the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus. It’s not just getting into the fickleness of men; like one day you like “this” person and the next day you like “this” person. It’s none of that.

So, whether Jesus or John the Baptist, in God’s plan, the road to greatness and success always involves becoming less! To become one *great*, one must be a *servant*. The way up is the way down. Submit; take a back seat; or the lowest place at the feast or banquet. Do not seek glory. Let it be conferred by the one who *has* it. Be content with the role assigned to you. When I am weak, I am strong. All of these are phrases that you find in various places in Scripture that have the same idea. ***Let God be the One*** who moves you up. Don’t assume anything for yourself.

This methodology may have been hard for people to accept. They were not accustomed to this kind of *leader*. They were not accustomed to this kind of *dynamic* within the Kingdom of God. It didn’t appear right to them. It was not what they had experienced in the world. Jesus turned this whole idea upside down on its head.

Point # 6: Jesus is from above; the descended One, just as new birth is from above and He is the only begotten *FROM* the Father who has become *flesh*. He was *sent* from above. This point had been made already in **John 1-3. This is a spatial reference.**

This orients us to God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They are not from here. They are not from “these parts”. But John the Baptist adds another twist on this idea of being “from above”.

John 3:31, “**The One from above is above all.**” The One FROM above is above all. It was no problem for John to know his place with Jesus because Jesus is above all. If I understand Jesus is above **all** then He’s obviously above me; He’s above all. If He’s already at the highest place, then we shouldn’t have a problem accepting Him as above us.

It’s a spatial thing. We say that someone is above his classmates; maybe in intelligence. Or that someone is head and shoulders above his peers; perhaps in leadership. Or we may say that in creativity or in power or wealth or wisdom; ‘yes’ to all ... they are above us in many ways; business, power, wealth or whatever it might be. It’s not hard to take a back seat to someone like this. When you contrast the one from the earth as Jesus did in **John 3:12** talking to Nicodemus, “**If I told you *earthly* things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you *heavenly* things?**” We lose something because of our earthly orientation.

Now get this. This is really important. This is one of the challenging things that I’m not sure all of what to make of all this, but let’s go there and see where we get. We lose something because of our earthly orientation. **We have an earth-bound bias.** Our vision is dimmed and our range of sight is limited. This is what the Mind of Christ does. It increases our perspective. We are ***able to understand more and more as we see through His eyes.*** But looking only through ***our*** eyes, we are earthbound. We are biased. Notice what we talk about. What we talk about. We speak of the earth. We are fascinated with what we know and what we understand.

We talk about News and knowledge, and gossip, and discoveries, and crises, and tragedies, what we did, what we didn't do, what we're going to do, what we should have done, where we are, where we're going, where we've been, what we bought, what has been given to us, what we want to buy, what aches (giggles), we are caught up in this earth. And we yearn, many times, to know as much about this place as we can know about it.

But, what about the heavens? That too, we explore, and we look and we imagine, but what of **HEAVEN**? Not "the" heavens, but what of **heaven**? Of the heavens, we explore, we look, we imagine; but what of **heaven**? The "of the earth" person is from the earth, or belongs to the earth and speaks of the earth. But by contrast, in Christ, we are not of the earth, but **of heaven**. And we speak of Heaven. That's what Jesus does. He speaks of Heaven because He's not of the earth.

Colossians 2:3 would be a good follow-along for this, to learn to speak the heavenly language. "to know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We need to learn to speak this language.

It was interesting today; I had a Bible Study with a gentleman who, confessedly, has not read the Bible much at all. But in the early days of life, he did go to church and had some training in church. And, again, by his own confession, he has not often spoken of heavenly things. Almost all of his conversation in his life, and he's approaching 55 + years, has been about earthly things.

Today I asked him heavenly questions to see if he understood any of the language of heaven. And I was surprised that he is not **fluent** in the language of heaven, but he was **conversant** in the language of heaven. And I was pleasantly surprised that what he learned in his childhood, and children usually do retain a lot of what they learn in childhood, that they keep that in adulthood. He was able to speak very well about spiritual truths, and he confessed that he hadn't spoken about these kinds of truths in a very long time. And I commended him for how well he spoke about heavenly things.

It's interesting to me that as Christians, and we can each do our own judgment of ourselves, what do we spend most of our time talking about; earthly things or heavenly things? What language do we speak, because we as Christians are supposed to be **bilingual**? We know the language of the earth because this is where we were born. But as Christians, we learn the language of heaven. And **that's** the language we're supposed to be speaking more and more and more. I predict that one day, when we're the bride living in heaven, that we won't be speaking of the earth very much. We'll just be speaking a heavenly language.

If you want to take this metaphor just a little bit further, if you want to be conversant when you get to heaven, practice the language now so that you'll be able to talk to the angels and the rest of them up there. Even in our relationships, we can talk about them in an earthly way or in a heavenly way. Not everything here is bad, but how do we talk about it?

Mike: Paul talked about the eyes of our heart might be enlightened in **Ephesians 1:18**.

Rod: Absolutely. Yes.

Point # 7: Eye-witness testimony usually speaks of John the Baptist or the Apostles. In other ways, this point has been made but again, it's the importance of eye witness testimony. **John 3:32** is, "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and **no one receives His testimony (witness).**" This is part of the exclusive nature of first-century Apostleship. **They** were the ones who were **eye-witnesses** so when he talks about testimony or witnesses, there were only a few that were eye-witnesses, and who shared with us what they saw.

1 John 1:1-3 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we have looked at and **our hands have touched—this we proclaim** concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

John talks about what "we've **seen** and what we've **heard**, what we've **touched** with our hands; **that's** what we proclaim to you. They were **eye-witnesses** of Christ. (And there are lots of passages about that).

John the Baptist's point is that it's not about **man's** witness, but about **Jesus'** witness. Jesus is the only witness, although Paul did see some things in the third heaven but he wasn't able to tell us what they were. He wasn't permitted to tell us. He could *see* it, but he wasn't a witness who could *speak* it to us and tell us what he saw.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 "Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴ was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

But what did Jesus see and hear? The amazing thing is that **Jesus spent three years** bearing **witness to the heavenly experience**. And somehow, most people who heard Him missed it **because** it was not what they expected. They **missed the witness of heaven** because they didn't expect to hear what they heard.

So, perhaps if Jesus had described the heavens just a little clearer, (tongue in cheek), or the features of God's face, or what we will be doing there, or the mansion that we are going to live in, we might be a little more interested. Can you imagine if Jesus had talked about **those** things? I want to tell you what the mansion looks like. I want to tell you about what God's face looks like because I'm the only one that can see it; you can't see it because if you see it, you'll die. Let me tell you what God looks like. Or, I'm going to tell you what we'll be "doing" up there.

I had **that** conversation with someone a few days ago and they admitted to me that they're not really excited about going to heaven because they don't know what they're going to be doing and it sounds a little boring. Well, maybe if Jesus had described to us what we'd be doing up there, we'd get a little more excited about it.

There may have been certain things that we would have like to have heard about, but Jesus didn't spend any "time" on those. He didn't **tell** us about those things.

The **sad** fact is that Jesus reveals all these things and we just don't **see** it or **hear** it. He reveals everything we need to know about heaven in the words that He actually spoke, but because it's not what we would *expect*, we *miss* it! What did Jesus see and hear in Heaven that He didn't witness to on earth? We only **must**-read His words to know as He told Nicodemus in **John 3:12**, "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe; how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Our ears are not tuned to heavenly truths. Jesus thinks in heavenly ways and speaks heavenly truths and heavenly language. For me to have the mind of Jesus I must make the transition. The witness is a key ★ to this. What does Jesus say that reveals something *to me* about *what it's like* in heaven?

So, Jesus came to take the stand; to testify. We do what defense attorneys do today. They try to discredit the witness, or twist his words, or impugn his motives, or try to find witnesses to contradict His story – anything so it will not be believed! Can you believe that at Jesus' trial later, some *obscure nameless opportunists* were **recruited** to try to cancel out the word of the **only person** who ever lived, **who actually knew what He was talking about**, and told us what God said?

The *irony of ironies* is that there is a person or two in the Bible that we don't even know their names; who were called as witnesses at Jesus' trial, to discredit the only person who knew what He was talking about, who knew absolute truth, who had been to heaven and seen it all; and these two or three obscure people were put on the stand by the Jewish leadership to cancel out His testimony. Amazing!

John the Baptist does address the one who does receive Jesus' witness. So, he *does* talk about the one who receives Jesus' witness. Just as a *jury must decide* if they believe the defendant, **we** must decide if we will accept Jesus' testimony! If we do, we will set our **seal** to the truthfulness of His statement.

We have a **choice** to set our seal, to certify, or to take a stand, to go on the record to make it official, that Jesus is telling the truth about what he says He has seen and what he has heard in the presence of the Father. **We set our seal on that!** We **certify** it. And since Jesus is testifying about His Father, when **we** set our seal, it is really us saying, "God is true". Our seal does not make Him more true; just as the Good Housekeeping seal of approval does not make the product better. If the product is good, with or without the seal, the seal simply means that someone tested the item or the product to see if it was safe and it actually works and if it does what it says it will do and is what it says it is. With our without the seal, it is what it is. And with or without **our** seal, **God is Who He is**. I AM WHAT I AM whether we certify Him to be I AM, or not.

Like finding the pearl of great price, the one doing the appraisal does not increase or decrease its value; **he merely certifies it** as being a real, true pearl of great price. **But the seals go both ways.**

Now get this. This is interesting. Seals go both ways. We're talking about **John 3:33** now; the concept of seals. "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that **God is true.**" **The seal God places on us is as important as the seal we place on Him.** He knows whether or not **we** are true or false. God must first authenticate us. **He makes us true** by removing the impurities, refining us, sifting us, purging out the old leaven, making us new. He is the one who **makes** us new, He **makes** us true. Only then, can He set His seal of ownership on us; that seal being His very Holy Spirit. **2 Corinthians 1:21-23** "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ²³ I call God as my witness—and I stake my life on it—that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth."

Paul says that God establishes us, He anoints us, and then He seals us giving His Spirit into our hearts as a pledge. This is why Paul could call God as a witness ... **that God is my witness**. He is the witness because **He** is the One who certifies our truthfulness. God can take the stand on our behalf.

In **Revelation 9:4** it speaks of the seal of God on the forehead as opposed to the mark of the beast on the forehead of some. "They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the *seal of God on their foreheads.*"

The confession we make is our seal. ***What is the confession that we make?*** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God; God abides in Him and he in God. **1 John 4:15** "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us."

That's the seal. It's the confession. But the reason that God can place his seal on us and certify that is because He knows whether or not we're telling the truth; whether or not we really believe that.

So read **1 John 5**. This makes a mutual sealing important; essential to our relationship with God. Think about it this way. Here is God, Who is sealing me, stamping His seal on me. His seal is on me because I stamped my seal on Him and said, "**He is true.**" And then God turns around and seals me. We are both sealed in this relationship; we are both certified. I certify that God is true and every man is a liar (from **Romans 3:4**). And God certifies that I am true; I am authentic; and when He comes back, the Authentic God will look so see who are the people of faith; authentically belonging to Him and He will take them home as His bride because Jesus doesn't want to marry an inauthentic bride. He only wants an authentic one. That is why Jesus had this idea: "when the Son of man comes again, will He find faith on the earth?" (**Luke 18:8**) And if I can take a little liberty with that, when He comes again, is He going to find a bride, a sealed, authentic bride waiting for Him. And if He does, then it will be a great wedding and we will get home to live with Him.

I'll share points 8, 9, 10 and a summary of this next. In Point 8, by the way; I have a little 'teaser'. It wasn't in my notes but it came out in my current study in "The Person and work of the Holy Spirit", I had an "aha" moment; a **new** way to talk about the **trinity** next week.

