

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 32

October 9, 2019

We're in John 3:22-36 It's long so I'll read the first part of it.

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.

This is an interesting section so I'm going to stop right here. This is taken up, not so much with the words of Jesus, but simply the reporting of John the Apostle who is telling us what happened next. Jesus and His disciples have left Jerusalem where the Temple was cleansed and where Nicodemus had been taught and they went into the countryside where they were baptizing, most likely, near the Jordan River. It says that Jesus continued with them. The NAS Bible says, "spending time with them" (talking about His disciples). Now remember it is likely that He has not accumulated the Twelve yet. There may be only four or five disciples at this point. There is no indication that the full number of the Twelve were with Him here. It's still very early in His ministry.

The word that's used here for "spending time" with them is "diatriben" (διετριβεν) and it is a very interesting word and I want to be careful not to make too much of it but I probably will. It means, "to rub, or to wear away by friction" metaphorically speaking, that's the literal meaning of the word. It means "to pass, or to spend time, or to remain, or to stay, or to tarry or continue with someone". The root word is a word that means to rub, or to wear (like a beaten track; a road or a highway). In **Matthew 3:3** where it says, "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, **make straight** paths for him.'" John the Baptist was to make straight the paths. Those were "**beaten down**" places; **well-worn paths**. In **John 11:54** we read a similar idea although it's a different word. {"He (Jesus) **withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.**"} In **John 14:2 and 23** Jesus made an "abode, a place for us to be" with Jesus permanently. **My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to **prepare a place** for you?** There is the idea of Jesus spending time, while He was on the earth, and later He is anticipating spending time; or having a place where **we** can spend time with Him. Let me show you why I think this whole idea of "spending time" is important.

The idea in His spending time with His disciples meant there was a rubbing or a wearing away by friction. It reminds me of **Proverbs 27:17**, "**As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.**" When iron is applied to iron there is friction, and in the friction there is shaping that occurs. In this case, Jesus was the one with the harder iron. When the disciples were in His presence listening, they were learning, being challenged, being shaped, being changed and being molded. Was this a method or form chosen by Jesus as a necessary part of their training? We're going to explore that a little bit because the whole idea of spending time with Jesus indicates experiential learning; not academic classroom learning. So, was this a necessary part of the way Jesus went about doing what He did? The time spent was not in a classroom but in the midst of ministry ... baptizing in this case.

They had classroom models used by other teachers or Rabbis, so Jesus *could* have employed these, but He did not. Is Jesus telling us, by example, what He knows is the ideal way of discipling? Do we fail today because we do little of this? Do we need more circumstances in which we can rub, sharpen, or create some useful friction by which we can be changed? And in this circumstance; not just that we rub *with* each other but each and all of us rub *with Jesus*; spending time with Him. Just spending more time with other disciples does not work. We must spend more time with *Jesus* individually and as a group ... sometimes a small group. In other words, do we need time to be in more dynamic settings – in settings where there is actually something going on other than settings in which we’re just sitting and learning as we’re doing now? This, tonight, is more static learning. The dynamic learning, as we sometimes call “one the job training” is when you’re actually in circumstances and you actually have to *do* something, and in those settings, you are learning. There’s more opportunity for friction or rubbing to take place in those settings, but when there’s friction and rubbing, there’s more opportunity for shaping to also take place. I think I could make a pretty good case in other places in Scripture where this is more woven into, not just simply the circumstances like it is here in a story, but is woven into theology. One of those would be in **2 Peter 1:3** and following.

³ His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

There is a participation or sharing in the divine nature, that *then* begins this process of adding to your faith:

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

There is a change that occurs from within the person because of the *participation* in the divine nature. I think we see a window of that in the very ministry of Jesus when He spent time with His disciples. We’re just being introduced to it *here*, but it’s all through the ministry of Jesus.

It’s interesting. I thought it would be neat to read this little note: Jeff Simes is one of the most unusual people you will ever meet. I don’t know of any person, including professors on the college level who has challenged me more deeply than Jeff Simes challenges me in the word. I wrote: *“Father, what are you doing to me? Why does Jeff, in orienting me to Christ’s word, have such a profound effect on me?”* This may have been one of the times back in 2010, when we would discuss, in depth, the Word of God for hours ... probably 6 hours at a stretch. The only other thing I’ve done for 6 hours at a stretch is probably play my guitar with some of my buddies and it had a parallel kind of effect on me. I felt like *I was in a daze*; that I had been immersed in this for so long that I was just *disoriented* and I just *had to rest*. It “propelled me into a new realm ... it was almost like ecstasy. That was going on when I was writing this...

There have already been, a few times, when Jesus and His disciples are mentioned. The word **disciple** is “manthano” (μαθάνω) meaning *to learn* or *to understand*; intellectually **and** morally to learn. The word disciple is more than simply a label or a designation. It is an *orientation*. Think about it in regards to when you go to school for the first time. One of the first things you usually do is “go to orientation”. I don’t think orientation always works in college because it is supposed to orient you to learning, and sometimes they are not there primarily for learning, but to party. Learning may be secondary, and if it happens, fine. But one may be enrolled in school and technically be a student, but come to school for the wrong reason. The designation does not match the action. As things unfold we will see more on how Jesus views discipleship.

The most important point in **John 3:22** is the fact that these men are **HIS** disciples. I think that’s one of the *most telling* facts here. They are **HIS** disciples, and not merely “disciples”; they are **His disciples**. The discussion that follows will, in part, attempt to challenge this designation, and let me say as just a side-note that if we claim to be His disciples, that designation also should be challenged by others regarding us ... are you *really* His disciples? You see, it’s not enough to be simply disciples; are you His disciples?

These men were devoted to learning from Jesus. Disciples have a *primary source* of learning. They made a decision that Jesus was going to be that source; one who they could trust to tell them the truth; one who *knew* the truth, *knew* God, and *knew* the path that leads to life. As Peter would later say in **John 6:68**, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” So Peter and the others eventually came to understand there was no other Rabbi to study under than Jesus.

This is a central issue in the ministry of Jesus. The attachment people make to Him, through faith, leads them to be disciples. He invites *all* to be disciples. His school is global. He was modeling this while on earth. As a sergeant might say, “These are my men” or a coach might say, “Those are my boys out there playing”, so Jesus had a *special attachment* to His disciples.

Since Jesus and His disciples were involved in the same activity as John and *his* disciples; John also had his disciples, as opposed to Jesus disciples, a dispute, or at least a question arose. It was a question of authority to baptize. *Where does the authority come from* to baptize? It’s a question that Jesus raises again in **Matthew 21:25**, “Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁵ *John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?*” Where does the baptism of John come from?

For John’s disciples it was either / or; either you were John’s disciples or you were Jesus’ disciples. But Jesus knew that both He and John were *authorized* to baptize. In other words, they {the chief priests and elders} were asking the question like, ‘John’s baptizing over here and Jesus is baptizing over here; so who has the right to baptize?’ And the answer was, they *both* do. They both have the authority to baptize. So note, when we question other groups and churches regarding a practice, the question is the same. It’s a good question. “*By what authority do you teach these things?*”

It's not enough to give the right answer. There needs to be within the teaching of Jesus, actual authority for the practice or teaching. Everyone has a right to know the source of our authority, and one Jesus can confer on His disciples. In other words, He can give them authority like He did in **Matthew 10** when He sent out the twelve. When He sent them out, he gave them authority to teach, to cast out demons, and to do what He called them to do. So, it's a good question.

I think, probably, in much of the denominational world, more-so than in Churches of Christ, it lead to the idea of ordination or passing down authority from someone originally, down through some ranks, as it happens in the Catholic Church, from a Pope, down to a Cardinal, down to a Bishop, down to a Priest, down to a deacon, and I don't know how far down it goes to the congregation. I don't have all my Catholic hierarchy totally in mind here, but there is something of a line of *succession authority* that occurs there. It seems *here*, that the authority is rooted directly from God, and how do we know what the authority is? How do we know that Jesus had the authority to baptize, or whether John had the authority to baptize?

Jesus' baptizing activity was personally conducted by His disciples, not by Him, so I guess He authorize them to do the actual baptizing for Him. They were obviously taught by Jesus, trained by Jesus and supervised by Jesus; the disciples were obviously not doing this on their own.

Our text does not directly indicate the purpose of the baptism here. In other words, the text doesn't tell us **why** Jesus was baptizing; it just says that he was, unlike the text regarding John the Baptist. We have *a lot* of information about John the Baptist and why he was baptizing. But here are some observations:

First, we can assume it was for the same reason that John baptized. I think it's a fair assumption that Jesus baptized for the same reason that John did ... with water for repentance. (**Matthew 3:11**) "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." I would be really, really surprised if Jesus' baptism was not connected with repentance.

Second, the context indicates there is some discussion with a Jew about purification, but the exact question is not posed. In other words, if we look down here in **verse 25**, "Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification."

There was a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. (Here you see my powers of deduction. I'm joking; it's pretty straight forward.)

And so they came to John (**verse 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." NASB

"They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." NIV

There's a question about purification that is being raised, but it doesn't get into what the question really is.

Ruth: One time I was looking into why baptism suddenly showed up in John as there was no sign of that in the Old Testament. This was a long time ago, so I don't remember everything. But what I read was that there was this thing where they would baptize people to purify them to become a "*legitimate*" Jew. It was for purification, not necessarily for sin; because these people wanted to be part of a synagogue or something like that. And having travelled around the world, and seen temples to idols, one thing you find is a bath that they put their sacrificial people into before they throw them into Huitzilopochtli; before they cut their hearts out; for the Aztec god. They purify them.

Is this like taking something in the culture of the Greek world that would purify people to make them able to come to the god they picked? Is **that** the reason for baptism at that time? But John said it was for forgiveness of sin to make things ready for Jesus. Is that why this Jew is asking about this purification John is doing? Should John purify you or should you get Jesus to purify you?

Rod: It does't really say that he was personally asking a question about that; about whether it was Jesus or John, but you are right. Part of the proselytizing process ... like Jesus talked about in **Matthew 23:15** when he said to the Jews, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte (one gentile convert) and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

I guess the purification thing wasn't working. But they did have a process by which they purified people, but there was also a purification process for the priesthood as well, before they went into the Holy Place. There were all kinds of ceremonial washings that occurred even within the Jewish system that had nothing to do with the gentiles coming in. Even the washing of hands was, at another level, it was not a baptism but was a purification even before you ate. So there were a lot of levels of purification rites within the Jewish system. They're just trying to figure out "where does *this* fit in to all of that".

In **John 3:34**, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit **without measure**." Jesus gives the Spirit **without measure** and we know that the Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, and was later associated as a gift on Pentecost in **Acts 2:38**. Jesus had already told Nicodemus that he must be born of water and the Spirit. So what is {was} the indwelling Spirit as a result of Jesus' baptism? In other words, was it, at that point, a part of Jesus' baptism as opposed to John's because we know later on in **Acts 19, verses 1-4**, that those who only knew the baptism of John did not seem to know or have this experience with the Spirit.

"While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

⁴ Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” That was why Paul rebaptized these people. We’re just exploring this idea of the purpose of Jesus’ baptism.

In John 3:36 *belief* and *obedience* to the Son, and their actions, result in eternal life; or if they failed, they would be under the wrath of God. “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.”

Remember when John is baptizing he is warning people to flee from the coming wrath. So, is Jesus baptizing in order to ‘protect them from the coming wrath’ as John did, and therefore, to be able to give them eternal life as a result ... as the solution? So is Jesus baptizing for eternal life and avoidance of the wrath to come? He’s already *teaching* about this; He already taught Nicodemus about this. This is part of **John’s** reason for baptizing; warning them to flee from the coming wrath.

What I’m saying is that when we start to get into issues like eternal life or being able to avoid the wrath of God, we’re getting into some pretty heavy theology that is fleshed out *more* in the writings of Paul later on. We are trying to ascertain, ‘what was it that **Jesus intended** and what did the people who were baptized by Him understand in regard to *why* they were being baptized’.

Macy: When Jesus mentioned that John the Baptist was first in the Kingdom, (**Mt. 11:11**) {Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater ... I tell you no one ever born on this earth is greater than John the Baptist. but whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven}. I wonder if there was some part of that **Kingdom** mentality that’s a part of that as well. I don’t know. You noted that Jesus Himself didn’t really mention the Holy Spirit until way, *way* later. It’s interesting to think about that. I think if I were to sit back and watch that; John baptizes **one** guy and all the people are going out to **him**. It would be interesting to make the observation of what transpired here of what happened and why they *passed the torch*, sort of.

Rod: Yes, and, well again. The question is; is it the Jew who is asking about purification who is raising these issues or is it simply prompting John’s disciples to raise the issue. And that’s a little different. John’s disciples are asking why Jesus is baptizing other people.

We have an indicator here that He is involved in this activity but there is not the kind of definition given to it like was given to John. The choice is: is Jesus baptizing for the **same** reason John baptized for; or does He have a **different** purpose. We *do* know that there is a distinction being made between John’s baptism and the baptism of Jesus later on in **Acts 19** (above) and fleshed out by Paul and others in the New Testament. There is a lot more said about the purpose of baptism after the cross than there is before the cross.

Another observation: The discussion that follows (and I’m trying to keep things in context here) that was begun by **John’s disciples** was about allegiance. Somehow, baptism is associated with following an allegiance.

Of course, John makes it clear that his baptism was not focused on him, and his diminishing role as a friend of the Bridegroom, indicating something of a uniting of a bride and bridegroom, or at least an engagement of becoming one flesh and one body (**1 Cor. 12:13**). For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. All these approaches to the question of ‘why Jesus was baptizing’ are confirmed in the letters. We’ll talk a little more about the bridegroom thing in a moment.

Baptizing, baptizo (βαπτίζω) means to whelm, to dip, to immerse, to saturate, to wash, to submerge. The mode of baptism is clear; immersion. No other kind of baptism can be found in the word. The word baptizo stands alone and is marked with adjuncts {a word or phrase used to amplify or modify the meaning of another word or words}. It indicates the object of or the effect as in **Matthew 3:11** was unto repentance. “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” The effect of the baptism was to effect repentance; to lead to this change that was going to take place.

In **Acts 2:38**, baptism was for the remission of sins; Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

In **Acts 19:3**

NIV Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

NASB Into what then were you baptized?

In **Romans 6:3** we read that we are baptized into Christ; baptized into His **death**.

In **1 Cor. 12:13** “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body ...

Therefore, baptism is not a mere ceremonial formality; it has *aim* and *purpose*, and is instrumental in God’s work in producing these aims and purposes. In other words, let’s not get confused with the purification question that was being asked above, because **purification** was largely *ceremonial*. Its **intent** was to show some kind of inward purification, but... It’s like, ‘how could the blood of bulls and goats bring about the forgiveness of sins; or how could merely washing somebody *externally* bring about the cleansing of a person’s sins?’ All of that is found **in Christ**.

During this brief overlap of the ministry of John and Jesus, *both* were baptizing and *both* were having people come out to be baptized. It’s interesting that John created quite a stir in Israel. The whole Judean countryside was said to be coming out to be baptized by him, (**Mk. 1:5**) and now *Jesus* is emerging. This is a transition time when people are observing all of this and they’re trying to figure out what all this is about; what does this really mean?

John 3:23 “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized— Aenon, near Salim was perhaps in the Samaritan region of the Jordan. We went to that sight when we were in the Holy Lands – the spot was picked because “*there was sufficient (or much) water there.*” This spot would not have been convenient for most people.

John, the writer, also notes that, ²⁴ “all this took place before John went to prison.” I always thought that was somewhat odd that John put that in there. Of course it did, since John the Baptist was beheaded in prison. We don’t know why it was mentioned other than to give *some* kind of perspective. There are all these little curious remarks in scripture that I don’t exactly ‘see the point’. Obviously, John was alive and well; after he went to prison he dies.

The discussion of John the Baptist’s disciples and a Jew about purification seems natural to take place. How did baptism fit with Jewish purification rights? The word for purification is “katharismos” (καθαρισμός). We get the word catharsis (the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions) from this word. It means “to clean” or to wash.

This was mentioned in **John 2:6** about the six jars or waterpots at the wedding feast, “Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.” They were used for purification and used by Jesus to make wine. These folks had purification jars so they must have been using them for some kind of ceremonial purification.

In **Mark 1:44** it is used for the cleansing of the leper (“See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them”). He was supposed to go the priest and go through the rites of purification.

It is used for purification after birth. In **Luke 2:22** it is also used for circumcision when Jesus was taken to the temple area for the purification rites. (And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord).

It is used in **Hebrews 1:3** for purification of sins by Jesus. (After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.)

In **2 Peter 1:9** it says the person who does **not** have the qualities in increasing measure, he has forgotten his purification from his past sins. “But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.” Certainly this is not mere ceremonial purification.

It’s not an outward cleansing as in regard to **Matthew 23:25-26** the cleansing of the outside of the cup but not the inward cleansing of the cup, but the removal of sin. Again, it is not the removal of dirt from the body, but an appeal to God for a clean conscience as in **1 Peter 3:21** “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.”

Perhaps this Jew wanted to know, “what is the difference between Jewish purification and baptism.” **Matthew 3:6** makes clear that baptism is about repentance and forgiveness. “...they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.” They confessed sin, were fleeing from wrath. They were to bring fruit in keeping with repentance. In **Luke 3:3** says it was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

The issue with **Acts 19** was that John's baptism looked forward to the One who "*was to come*" and it **did not have** the indwelling Spirit as a result of baptism. That is the only reason I can imagine why Paul actually rebaptized those folks.

Now, did John's disciples know all of this? Did they *know* any of this? What did they say to the Jew? How will they answer his question? But I know this discussion prompted them to be concerned about Jesus and His disciples baptizing. This provides John with the opportunity to, again, testify as to the essential difference between himself and Jesus, but he will not make the case of a difference in their baptism. What John does **not** do, he does not say there is any difference between his baptism and Jesus' baptism; what he *does* is say there is a difference between **me** and **Jesus**. That's the essential *difference* here. It's not so much that "**I**" baptize over here for *this* reason and Jesus baptizes over there because He's bringing something **new** to you. It is, "**I** am going to be decreasing and **He** is going to be increasing. John's disciples call him "Rabbi", something that later Jesus warns us about in **Matthew 23:8**. "**But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.**"

They identify Jesus in two ways. He was "the One who was with you beyond the Jordan" and "the One to whom you have borne witness". That's what they say about Him. Jesus came from Galilee **to** the Jordan to be baptized. This indicates that He crossed the Jordan; it's not a large or very deep river. I could probably even swim across it...without drowning. (I once almost drowned in a river).

More significantly, John bore witness to Him already addressed in our notes from **John 1:6** and following. John the Baptist's disciples were concerned about His *increasing* popularity and John's *decreasing* popularity. There's something about us, I think maybe in our DNA, but something about us that makes us want to think that *we're* at the center of the action. Who is the **closest** to the stage? Who is on **row 4** of the 50-yard line? Who has the best **back stage** passes? Who is at the **right** and **left** in the Kingdom? Who won; the Steelers {or the Ravens} (giggles)? Who lost? What table do we get to sit at? Is it the best seat in the house? We are about 'cutting edge', being at the center. We want to be here, now!

John is going to give another perspective; a Kingdom perspective. In fact, he makes numerous points as he continues to bear witness. Well, we'll get to a couple of these points maybe... And again, we're trying to understand how John used this transition period between himself and Jesus.

Point Number 1 A man can receive **nothing unless** it has been given to him from heaven. Now, let that sink in. Ponder that. A man can receive **nothing unless** it has been given to him from heaven. So, we have *position*, we have *authority*, we have *responsibility*, and we have *opportunity* all coming down from above. If it comes from *below*, then it is a **usurping of authority**. Those are two options here.

If something comes from above, it goes back to the question of "by what authority" do you baptize? Remember Jesus in Matthew 21 saying, you have two choices. It's either from men or it's from God. And if it's from men, and man's authority is not in line with God's authority, then man's authority is usurping God's authority.

Matthew 21:23-26

“When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”²⁴ Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.²⁵ The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’²⁶ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.”²⁷ And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

It's God's authority. You do not want to be snatching away His authority. So, a man can receive **nothing unless** it has been given to him from heaven.

Another place He addresses this is in **John 19:10-11** when He was before Pilate, “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said, “Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

Paul says in **Romans 13:1** that governing authorities all come down from heaven. “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

James 1:17 speaks that every good and perfect gift comes down. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

In other words, if you go through Scripture and look at everything that actually came down from above; wisdom that is from above versus wisdom that is from the earth, look at all the things that are coming down.

Ecclesiastes 1:9-11 even gives us a little bit of that flavor when Solomon talks of the things “under the sun”. All the things that are “under the sun” are meaningless as opposed to the contrast, the things that are “above the sun.

James 3:13-17 speaks of the wisdom that comes down from heaven versus the wisdom from humankind. Why grumble about what we **have** or do **not** have when what we have is a gift from God. In other words, if it's coming down from heaven, it's a **gift**. If it's a **gift**, why would we grumble about **who** is the most important? If it's “coming down” we didn't create it anyway. **We're** not the ones who made it important. It's simply a gift and why should I grumble with you because I have **one** gift and you have **another**? We both got the gift from the same place. So, **what** is there to grumble about?

2 Peter 1:3 says, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

All we need for life and godliness is grace! This is a fundamental truth and reveals the mind of Christ. **And don't take this lightly!** This is the mind of Christ. Everything you have comes down from above. *You do not have anything inherently within you.* You don't gain anything by your expertise, by your education, by your skill, by anything that you do here on this earth. You don't gain anything that will make you closer to God by anything you do on this earth. You gain closeness to God because **God comes down!** It is God who connects with us. **He is the One** who is *reconciling* the world to *Himself*. **He** is the one who is sending the one to indwell in us, to become a dwelling place on the earth.

It's not us reaching out to God. It's all coming down from God and we're just opening our arms and accepting it from God as a gift! And if it's a gift, why are we fighting over it? Why are we fighting?

Imagine if all the leaders of all the countries in the world understood this one principle...if they had any authority whatsoever, it comes from **God**. Why would they jockey for position if the only authority they had came from God and they're **all** accountable to Him? Why would I look at you and say, "Well, you're not like me, so therefore there's something wrong here?" God made the pot the way He wanted it to be.

Brian Henegar: Pilate thought he had all the control over Jesus in **John 19:10-11**, "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize *I have power* either to free you or to crucify you?"

¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not **given** to you **from above**."

Rod: Exactly. Pilate, what are you thinking? You *think* you're in so much *control* here. You really don't have any authority whatsoever except what you have received from above, and if you think "above" is Rome, where did Rome get **their** authority?

John 3:12 "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" When He's talking to Nicodemus, he was talking about earthly and heavenly things. Only **Jesus knows** heaven so only **He** has the words of life. Of course, we must test all of this to be sure it is from God. But *many* things are revealed in Scripture to be *from* Him. It is righteousness *from* God. (**Romans 3:22** and **Philippians 3:9**). It's **not** a righteousness that springs from our works below.

Man is in a constant place of giving and receiving; there is the taker, and the one who thinks he is self-sufficient. It's really amazing that *we're* the takers but *we think* we're self sufficient. We're taking *everything*. *Everything* is a gift. The breath in our mouth is a gift. But we think we're self-sufficient! I guarantee if God cuts off the air supply; just think how long you'll be sufficient.

Brian: As you get older, when you're in the hospital, you realize one heartbeat, one breath, one step; every little thing is a gift from God.

Rod: Yes, slowly but surely, one thing begins to be taken away at a time. Of course, if it's the breath or the heartbeat, the rest really doesn't matter. They're the most critical ones.

Again, underscore this: A man can receive **nothing unless** it has been given to him from heaven. What would happen if the world truly believed that everything we have is from heaven? Nothing originated here.

Let me see if I can fit in Point number two here:

Point Number 2 I am not the Christ.

I am not the Christ. Imagine how good the world would be if we just **didn't** think we were the Christ; if we didn't think we were God. We *act* like we are sometimes. How could John be any plainer? There WAS a Christ and John was not him. We must remember who we are and who we are not. There are designations unique to Jesus that are not applicable to us.

Matthew 23 says “there is only *one* Teacher, *one* Father, so call no one else teacher and Father.”

Mark 10:18 “Only One is good.”

Matthew 16:16 Peter gave the only correct answer; “**You are the Christ**, the Son of the living God.”

John 1:17, John the Apostle designates Him and **Jesus Christ**.

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through **Jesus Christ**.”

In **John 1:20**, John the Baptist “confessed, but did not deny, and he confessed I am **not** the Christ”. This was said to the priests and the Levites. In this context he explains his role and why he is baptizing.

It is equally important for us to know and to confess *who we are not*, *who He is*, and *who we are in Him*. That is what we confess; that we are *not* the Christ. He **is** the Christ, and who I am **in Him**. That is the essential nature of our identity.

So, if somebody says something like, “Well, who do you think you are?” And they usually say, “Who do you think you are to tell me this...” What is the correct answer? “I am not the Christ. I am *nothing*.” I am nothing. It's like the old saying, “You take Christ out of Christian and what's left ... ian ... I ain't nothing”.

But those are the first two points.

“A man can receive **nothing unless** it has been given to him from heaven”, and “I am *not* the Christ”

This is from John the Baptist and these are some of the last things we will hear him say before he gets arrested and gets his head cut off.