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John Decreases, Jesus Increases (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the shift from John the Baptist to Jesus and how it reflects a future trend in bringing attention to Jesus. While John's fasting and mourning were not effective in attracting people, Jesus embraced a more joyful and social approach. Gregg notes the importance of belief in Jesus for obtaining eternal life and reminds listeners of the value of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Through biblical passages and anecdotes, Gregg offers insights into the teachings of Jesus and John the Baptist.

Transcript

The people wouldn't respond to John the Baptist style, so God tried something else. He played the flute. He played a tune to dance by.

But they wouldn't dance. They didn't want to play that game either. That's what he's saying.

John came with one approach, and I've come with the other. John's approach was severe, aesthetic, self-denying. But he says my approach has been just the opposite.

I eat, I drink, I eat with sinners, I'm not aloof. I have a good time with you people, and that doesn't really win you over either. Now the point I'm making is that Jesus directly used John the Baptist as a person whose lifestyle was a contrast to his own.

Though John and Jesus had the same message, namely the kingdom of God was at hand, yet they represented two different aspects of it. John represented the call to repentance and the need for sorrow over sin. Jesus, his lifestyle depicted the joy of having sins forgiven, grace.

Both are part of the message, but John pictured it one way in his life, Jesus the other way. Well, when the disciples of John came to Jesus, why aren't your disciples fasting? Well, John's disciples can fast. That's John's style.

Fasting is very much like the whole way that John did things, but not the way Jesus did

things. Now we know Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. We know Jesus was not opposed to fasting or unable or wasn't willing to do it.

It just wasn't appropriate once he began to gather the bride. The wedding feast was on, and it was a time to celebrate, not a time to mourn. It wasn't a funeral, it was a wedding.

John's ministry was like a funeral. John's disciples alone, however, were willing to mourn with him. But Jesus' disciples were willing to dance at this wedding, and they weren't into mourning and fasting.

Now the time would come when the bridegroom would be taken with them, the wedding feast would be over, the party would be gone. It would just be a dim memory, and then they'd have occasions to go back to the somber realities that would cause people to fast and mourn. But the point I'm making is that Jesus referred to himself as the bridegroom when talking to the disciples of John.

And he thus used the very metaphor or symbol for himself that John had used in speaking about Jesus. What's interesting to me is that Jesus was not present when John said those things to his disciples in John chapter 3. When John said, he who has the bride is the bridegroom, and thus affixed that image to refer to Christ, a bridegroom. Jesus wasn't there, but at a later date when Jesus was speaking to the disciples, he counted on them being aware of that.

It's as if he knew supernaturally that John had said words like this to his disciples so that he could almost... His answer to them about fasting was a reminder to them, in a sense of what John had told them, what they should have been able to do. Jesus is a bridegroom, and the people are his bride. And when bridegrooms and brides get together, it's a happy festival, it's a wedding.

And that's not a time for fasting, it's not a time for mourning. Now John, making the same illustration, makes a different point. The bridegroom should get the bride, the bridegroom's friend shouldn't.

And therefore the disciples of John were wrong-headed in being jealous. They were wrong-headed in thinking that the bride should come to the bridegroom's friend, John the Baptist. And so he corrects them on that, and his final word I think is verse 30, He must increase, but I must decrease.

I've heard this quoted in sermons a great deal over the years, as sort of a personal attitude that we should have about Jesus in my life should increase, and me, self, in my life should decrease. Frankly, I think that's a great concept. I don't think it's necessarily what John had in mind here though.

John is not talking about his own personal sanctification, his own personal growth in Jesus. He's talking about on the larger scale. Jesus' following is already larger than

John's.

And what Jesus is saying, Jesus' following should get larger and mine smaller still. In other words, this shift is not finished taking place. My following is going to decrease far more than it even has already.

I mean, I would imagine after John was put in prison, only the most stubborn of his disciples remained disciples of John once he was in prison. I think his following probably did decrease beyond this point. But Jesus' did increase, and that's what he's referring to.

Now, as far as the application to one's personal heart and sanctification and so forth, like I said, it's a great concept. I, myself, have to decrease. I have to become less important to myself.

I have to become less inclined to attract attention to myself. And Jesus has to get more attention through me. It's more important for my reactions to be those that he would have rather than the kind myself would have.

It's important that I do things in a way where it's Jesus that's visible, not me. It's Jesus that would obviously command the adoration of onlookers. And that concept, like I said, I've got no problem with that concept.

I think it's a great one, but I don't know that John the Baptist's words really meant that particular thing. I think what he meant is, I don't think he was saying that I'm still too proud, and I need to become more humble and let Jesus have more of his way in my life. What he's saying is, this trend that you're bringing to my attention is the trend of the future.

I have done my duty. I have brought the bridegroom and the bride together. I've served my generation, and my influence, my ministry is going to kind of fade now.

It's going to decrease. I'm going to kind of draw back and allow myself to be upstaged by this one whose ministry and whose influence has certainly got to increase. It's what God wants.

That's what John says. And he shows himself not in any sense jealous at the loss of the congregation that used to follow him, who are now coming in greater numbers to hear Jesus. Now, verses 31 through 36, I mentioned that I think that these are probably, even though the New King James has quotations around them as if John the Baptist is continuing to speak, something about the phraseology and stuff, it's kind of a subjective thing.

I could be wrong. But just being acquainted with John's other writings, and John's personal style, I'm talking about the writer of the gospel, verses 21 through 36 sound a lot more like John the writer than like John the Baptist. One reason I say so is because

John the writer, John the apostle, who wrote this book and who wrote the epistles of John, had a very strong philosophical streak that runs through his writings, and mystical.

Real fascinated by things like light, concepts like that, things like the word, things that are non-material, ethereal things. He likes to give the interpretations of things. Well, Matthew and Luke actually give both stories about Jesus, just the historical facts.

John omits all that, and he does mention the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, which is an allusion to the birth of Jesus. But instead of giving any of the details, he gives this theological interpretation of it. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and everything was made by him, and in him was life, and that life was the light of men.

And he's the light that enlightens everyone that comes into the world. This is more of like a philosophical, theological, abstract kind of interpretation of the meaning of the incarnation, as opposed to giving the facts. Well, Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, and there was no room in the inn, so they had the baby and put him in a manger.

That's what the other gospels tell us. John is more into expanding on the philosophical side of things. And I think that, as I mentioned earlier in our last session, I suspect that much of the verses leading up to and including verse 21 in this chapter, John 3, 21, and the verses before it, back some distance, I don't know how far back, possibly back to verse 16, that those are possibly not the words of Jesus, although, again, the quotation marks in this edition would suggest Jesus is the speaker there.

But they just have the sound to me. Like I said, you don't have to believe me, because this is subjective all the way, but just from my acquaintance with John's writings, it strikes me as John talking here. And him saying, okay, Jesus said all this stuff up through verse 15.

Now, I want to expand on that. I want to make some points about that. I want to preach about that a little bit.

And I think he may be doing that at verse 31 again. After John finishes saying, I must decrease, he must increase, I think the author says, he who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth.

He who comes from above, excuse me, from heaven, is above all. And what he has seen and heard, that he testifies. And no one receives his testimony.

He who has received his testimony has certified that God is true. For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God. For God does not give him the spirit by measure.

The Father loves the Son and has given all things to his hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. He who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath

of God abides on him.

Now, one reason I think this is John the writer rather than John the Baptist giving his words is, these are concepts that come up again and again in the Gospel of John and in the Epistles of John. That John the Baptist would come up with these very same concepts and emphasize them in the same words that the Apostle would later use in his writings, doesn't seem as likely to me. Especially in view of the fact that these words, verses 31 through 36, don't particularly, they're not particularly called for by the context of the conversation of John the Baptist and his disciples.

This idea that the Father loves the Son, in verse 35, and has given all things into his hand. Well, look at John chapter 13. John 13, 3. It says, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside his garments, and so forth.

Now, here's another example of how the other Gospels just tell us some of the facts about what happened in the upper room without much interpretation. John is about to tell us here about Jesus washing his disciples' feet, but he gives us all this interpretation in verses 1 through 3. He knew that his hour had come, that he should depart from the world to his Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. He knew that the Father had given all things into his hand.

This is like almost giving us a psychological sketch of what was going through Jesus' mind when he washed the disciples' feet. Now, the other Gospels don't even record Jesus washing the disciples' feet, though they do record other events in the upper room. But if they did record it, they would have just said, well, Jesus put a towel around him and went around and washed the disciples' feet.

But John has to give us all this stuff of, this is what was going through Jesus' mind, and so forth. There's a lot of theology and a lot of, more of a philosophical approach, as you can see the way the story is being told. But notice in verse 3, it says, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands.

In John chapter 3, verse 35, it says, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. The same line. Although in chapter 13, it's clearly not John the Baptist speaking, but John the author writing.

It's a very John the author kind of thing to say. Actually, John the author probably got it from Jesus himself. Because in John chapter 5, boom! In John chapter 5, look at verse 20.

Jesus is here speaking. It says, for the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that he himself does. And he will show him greater works than these that you may marvel.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to

whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Then skip down a little bit. Verse 26. For as the Father has life in himself, he has also granted the Son to have life in himself.

And he has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Now, this is Jesus speaking. But only John recorded these words.

These must have been the kinds of things that Jesus said that John really got into. I mean, the other Gospels don't record any of these kinds of statements from Jesus, except one. And I'm getting off on the beaten path here a little bit, but let me just... We only have a few verses we have to cover.

I can probably afford the time. There is the... When I talk about this distinctive way that John writes, actually the particular points he makes, Jesus made them in the same words. John's style is really Jesus' style here.

But this brings something interesting to light. And that is that the style of Jesus' speeches in John is very different, generally speaking, than his style of speeches in the Synoptic Gospels. So much so, in fact, that scholars have had a very difficult time in some cases.

Mostly liberal scholars. They have a harder time than others. But liberal scholars have mostly had a hard time believing that the same man made the speeches recorded in the Synoptic Gospels as made the speeches in the Gospel of John.

Just because there's all this kind of talk that we were just reading in the sayings of Jesus in John, and it sounds a lot like John's own way of speaking. Now, I'm of the impression John got this way of speaking from hearing Jesus talk this way. Rather than that this was just John's way of talking and he fabricated things and put them in Jesus' mouth, which is what the liberals would say.

But there is a very interesting passage in the Synoptics, which proved that even the Jesus represented there sometimes spoke in the way that the Jesus in the Gospel of John spoke, which basically tells us that the same Jesus spoke both ways. If you look at Matthew chapter 11, for example. Matthew 11, verses 25 through 27.

It says, At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight. Now note verse 27.

All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except

the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him. Now, I don't know how acquainted you are with the Gospel of John, but if you are very acquainted with it, you can hardly read this passage without saying, boy, that sounds like something right out of the Gospel of John.

This is a very Johannine saying of Jesus, as it were. That is, it's the exact styles, the very same kind of things, that John constantly records Jesus saying. And yet, scholars sometimes say, that the Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels didn't talk that way.

But what's interesting is that Matthew and Luke both record this statement. They're both Synoptic Gospels. And while it is true that most of the discourses of Jesus in the Synoptics don't have that style, both Matthew and Luke do bear witness to the fact that Jesus they were recording, the words of, was capable of speaking that way.

The fact is, John simply records more of the times that Jesus spoke that way. And probably because John was really attracted to that particular way of communicating, those kinds of concepts and so forth. John picked up this style from Jesus, I believe.

But what I'm saying is, we saw in that passage in Matthew 11, 27, Jesus said, all things have been delivered into my hands, or have been given to me by my Father. John makes that same point in John chapter 13, Jesus knowing that all things have been given into his hands. Jesus makes similar comments in John chapter 5. The Father has given all authority to the Son.

The Father will give him even better things. And now back in the verse that got us into all this, John chapter 3, verse 35, The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. That just sounds so much like John the writer and like Jesus, in those statements that John loves to record.

It sounds more like typical of what John would say, than what John the Baptist would say, given what John the Baptist's other recorded statements are like. This idea of referring to Jesus as the Son, and believing on the Son, and having everlasting life, in verse 36 here, it's possible that John the Baptist could have known and said those things, in those words, but one thing we know for sure, is that those very words echo many other passages in the Gospel of John, including some earlier in the chapter, where John the Baptist was clearly not the speaker. For example, John 3, 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The reference to having everlasting life, because you believe in the Son, in verse 36, if John the Baptist said that, without having heard Jesus say it to Nicodemus, it would be a tremendous coincidence that they would use practically the very same words in making the point. However, it would be no coincidence if John the writer was the writer of both statements. It's very typical of the kind of thing that he emphasizes, that those who

believe in Jesus will have everlasting life.

There is no evidence anywhere else in the Gospels that John ever made such points, or even knew such things. John the Baptist was very much an Old Testament prophet who came to pass the baton to the bringer of the New Covenant. And the New Covenant idea of receiving everlasting life through believing in the Messiah, it's hard to say how much the Old Testament prophets understood that, how much John himself understood that.

That is John the Baptist. But I guess all things considered, it seems to me that this passage is from John the Apostle. Another reason for saying so is, for example, in verse 33, John 3.33, it says, He who has received his testimony has certified that God is true.

Look with me at 1 John chapter 5. In 1 John chapter 5, in verse 9 and following, it says, If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness of God that he has testified of his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

He who does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of his Son. Now this is very clearly not John the Baptist, but John the Apostle writing these words. It says, Anyone who does not believe the witness has made God a liar, has declared God to be a liar because he has not believed the testimony that God gave.

Now compare that with John 3.33. He who has received his testimony has certified that God is true. It's just the flip side of the same idea. If you don't receive God's testimony, you make him a liar.

If you do receive his testimony, you certify that he is true. You either declare him to be honest or a liar by your reception or non-reception of his testimony about the Son. So again, we have, I think, strong indicators that we have John the writer, not John the Baptist, giving this bit of commentary at the end of the chapter.

He springboards off what John the Baptist said. John the Baptist indicated that even he, as important as he was, he had to decrease because someone far more important was on the rise. And John the writer, I feel, wants to comment on that in verse 31 by saying, He who comes from above is above all.

That is, Jesus is even above John the Baptist. He that is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. Now, I'm not sure exactly what that means.

If the contrast is between Jesus and John the Baptist, it's quite clear that John the Baptist was of the earth, unlike Jesus who came down from heaven, which, by the way, John tells us, and Jesus tells us many times in the Gospel of John, Jesus came down from heaven. John the Baptist didn't come down from heaven. He is of the earth.

And John seems to be making this contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus is above all. He's the one who comes down from above, from heaven.

John the Baptist, like every other human, is just from the earth. Therefore, he speaks of the earth. Now, that's difficult because John the Baptist didn't just speak from the earth.

He spoke as a prophet of God. He spoke words God gave him. But in some sense, John is trying to tell us here that John the Baptist's message was limited in what it could reveal.

He only knew such things as an earthly man, even an earthly man inspired by God, could tell. But Jesus could speak far superior. He had seen.

He had been in heaven. He had seen God. This is, I think, what he's pointing out, that Jesus can speak as an eyewitness of things in heaven because he's come down from heaven.

John the Baptist, he can bear witness to things he's seen on earth. He saw the dove come down on the head of Jesus, and he testified to it. He can speak of the earth.

He can testify of having seen earthly things. But Jesus could testify of things that he's seen in heaven. And so he who comes from heaven is above all, even above John the Baptist, who is the greatest of those born of women, mere men born once only.

Jesus is, however, greater than he because he comes down from heaven. He is of heavenly origin. And what he has seen, that is what Jesus has seen and heard, that he testifies, and no one receives his testimony.

Now, this statement, no one receives his testimony, a couple of things I want to say about that. First of all, it sounds absolute, but it's not absolute. Obviously, some people do receive his testimony, and even the very next verse acknowledges that.

Verse 33, he who has received his testimony has certified that God is true. So, verse 33 acknowledges that some people, in fact, have received Jesus' testimony. Therefore, the statement in verse 32, no one receives his testimony, can hardly be taken as an absolute, though the language sounds absolute.

I think, perhaps, it is meant as a correction to the disciples of John, in verse 26, when they said of Jesus, at the end of verse 26, he is baptizing and all are coming to him. That, too, was an exaggeration, and not everyone was coming to him. A few people were not, but they were saying, well, everyone's after him, and the corrective in verse 32 is basically no one is.

I mean, essentially no one. These are comparative terms. They're both stated as if absolutes.

Everybody's going after him. No, no one's believing him. Neither statement is true in its

absolute sense, nor intended to be understood that way.

But it's basically a corrective. Sure, it may seem, in fact, like everybody's running after Jesus. Everyone's being baptized by Jesus, but, you know, very few, negligible numbers, are really receiving his testimony.

It's one thing to go out and hear him. It's one thing to join his congregation. It's one thing to go out and let him baptize you.

It's an entirely different thing to receive his testimony. It's possible to hear and not receive. It's possible to listen, to be attracted in large numbers to the preaching of the truth, and yet not to respond to it, not to receive it.

Ezekiel was told by God that his words were affecting people that way, that they were interested in coming to hear what he had to say. He was like a man who could play a musical instrument in a pleasant way, but people were not going to do what he said. Just off the top of my head, I'm trying to remember where that is.

Lance, do you remember? You've pointed that out to me before, haven't you? Is that chapter 30? I thought someone had pointed that out to me. What time? I don't think it's that late. My... Oh, you know what? I'm not even looking at Ezekiel.

That's one reason I'm not seeing it. I was looking at the chapter, I thought I might be in, but it turns out it was Lamentations I'm looking at, not Ezekiel. Let me see if I can quickly find it.

If not, no big deal. Was that it? I thought it was possibly... I think it might be chapter 30 of Ezekiel. It's not there.

I'm not going to keep looking, but just... No, it's not there. Chapter 30 is wrong. Anyway, no big deal.

Basically, God essentially says to Ezekiel, You're like a musician. You're playing to them. They like to come and hear what you have to say.

Okay, my eyes are at chapter 33. What verse is it? 30 and 31. Okay, thanks.

Okay, there you go. Thank you. Ezekiel 33.

Start at verse 30. God tells Ezekiel, As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of their houses. And they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.

Now, let's go listen to the prophet of God. So they come to you as people do. They sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them.

For with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, for they hear your words, but they do not do them. Now, this is the idea here, that a lot of people are attracted to hear the prophet.

You know, if a guy's got a reputation for, you know, something's happening over here, life's pretty boring, generally speaking. If someone's heard that God's speaking through someone, a whole bunch of people are going to come out of curiosity. But they're going to come for the same reasons they come to a concert.

They come to be entertained. They come to be amused. They come, you know, they're looking for some distraction in their life.

But they're not coming with the mind of, let's hear what God says so we can do it. And that's essentially, I think, what John's words here are saying, is that John the Baptist's disciples indicate that everybody has become a follower of Jesus. All men are going to him.

And John the writer wants to clarify something for his readers. Well, it may have seemed to them that everyone was going to Jesus, and maybe, in fact, a lot of people were going to Jesus, but no one was really listening. That is, no one was really receiving his testimony.

It's one thing to go out and listen. It's another thing to really receive his testimony. And I think John's trying to counteract what the disciples of John the Baptist were saying.

No one, really, relatively speaking, very few are receiving his testimony. But he does acknowledge that some do. In verse 33, he who has received his testimony has certified that God is true.

And that simply means, if you believe what Jesus said, then you're giving God credit for being honest. And as we read a moment ago in 1 John 5, he that doesn't believe has made God a liar because he doesn't believe the witness that God has made. Belief and unbelief are nothing else but crediting God with honesty or dishonesty.

That is, it's a judgment call you make about God's character. There's nothing more mystical or supernatural about faith than that. It's just a matter of crediting God with being honest.

If you credit someone with being honest, you believe them. If you think maybe they're not honest, then you probably won't believe them. And belief is nothing else but a judgment of somebody's character, the character of the person who tells you something.

If you believe it, it'll be because you judged them to be honest. And that's what it says here. Those who have received his testimony have certified or have essentially put their

stamp of approval on God as being truthful.

Whereas the flip side of that in 1 John 5, we looked at a moment ago, is if you don't receive it, if you don't believe it, you make God a liar. You're essentially saying, I'm judging that God doesn't tell the truth in these matters. Now, verse 34, For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

Some versions say, does not give to him the Spirit by measure. There is a... That would make a difference. If it means God does not give to Jesus the Spirit by measure, it means that he gives him an unmeasured fullness of the Spirit.

That Jesus, unlike others, is as full of the Holy Spirit as anyone could be, because the Holy Spirit is 100% resident in him. And nowhere else, by the way. There... The Holy Spirit is given to us also, and we can be filled with the Spirit.

But it seems to me like you and I can be filled with the Spirit, and God still has plenty of his Holy Spirit left, you know, for others to be filled with. God can give us a measure of the Holy Spirit and still accomplish all that needs to be done in us as individuals. And therefore, it's, you know, those versions that read, the Father does not give, or God does not give his Spirit by measure to him, would make this a comment about God's pouring out an unmeasured and unrestricted anointing on Jesus.

But it would not be making a generic statement about God ever doing that with others. Now, the way it reads here, if this is the correct way, then we'd have to say that God never gives his Spirit by measure. That when he gives his Spirit, he gives all there is of the Holy Spirit.

He doesn't just eke out a little bit. However, the Bible does indicate that some people who are Christians have yet need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Christians in emphasis are urged to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as if that's not an automatic reality.

And although every Christian has the Holy Spirit, one must assume that not all are filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't know whether this means that God hasn't given them all that they have to receive yet, and they need more, or whether he's given them as much as they ever need, but they simply have not given him as much of themselves. Some of these things are more academic concepts rather than practical things.

But I've heard this quoted, that God does not give his Spirit by measure, which would mean that you're either full of the Spirit or you don't have the Spirit at all. God doesn't give a portion. However, God does apportion the manifestations of the Spirit to individuals.

And that's made very clear, for example, in 1 Corinthians 12, the manifestation of the Spirit is given with all to profit all around, to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, and so forth. These are all different manifestations of the Spirit.

Not everyone, as far as I know, not anyone, is given all the gifts.

They are divided up, and the gifts are simply manifestations of the Spirit within a person. So how this may affect the question of whether God ever gives the Spirit by measure, I don't know. I mean, I don't know for sure.

It strikes me as there's a possibility it is relevant. But in 1 Corinthians 12, which would help if I turned to 1 Corinthians instead of 2 Corinthians, it says in verse 7, that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all, for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, etc. Now these different gifts are referred to in verse 7 as the manifestation of the Spirit.

However, this doesn't... I mean, it's clear he's indicating one person gets this gift, one gets another gift. It's not as if everyone gets all the gifts. You know, there are other ways of understanding this, too.

It may not necessarily mean that this aspect of the Holy Spirit is given to one person and a different aspect is given to another. It may be that everyone has the Holy Spirit without measure. But the Holy Spirit within me just manifests one gift and within you manifests another gift.

This is not an issue that has to be... that's central in any sense to our Christian walk. We know that we have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I do believe the Bible makes it plain that some people are not filled with the Spirit, although they are Christians.

But the issue of giving the Spirit by measure and so forth are more academic points that really have very little to do with the way we live our lives or the way we submit to God. So I go off on the tangent only because people speculate on it, so I give my speculations along with it, too, that I have no answer about whether this is talking about just Jesus. God only gives to Jesus his Spirit without measure, whereas the rest of us get it with measure, get Him with measure.

Or whether it's saying that God never... as a policy, He never gives His Holy Spirit without giving all of His Holy Spirit. Yeah, Romans 12. Yeah, I mean, it seems to me very possible that everybody who is a Christian has the entire endowment of the Holy Spirit, but that my own... I limit myself, and I limit Him by not being surrendering every part of my life to Him.

And the filling of the Spirit might not be so much that more Spirit is given to me than I had before, but that more of me is given to Him than He had before. It's just another way of looking at it, and really, people do speculate a great deal about these things, and the bottom line is it really doesn't matter which way is the correct way of looking at it, being

filled with the Spirit is what we need. I think you're referring to Ephesians chapter 1, where the Spirit is the earnest down payment of our inheritance.

Yeah, the Holy Spirit is given to us as a deposit or a down payment, or as a guarantee, an earnest money, that God is going to claim us and that we belong to Him. I don't know if that is suggesting anything with reference to whether He's given us all that He can, all we can have, the Holy Spirit, all at once or not. Once again, I'm just kind of rambling, but it's not absolutely essential that we nail down which of these explanations is most true to life.

The phenomenon of being filled with the Spirit, regardless of how we explain it in detail, is what really matters, not the theological explanations of it. Those last two verses in John chapter 3 then say, The Father loves the Son, and He has given all things to His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.

He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Now, in verse 15 and verse 16 of the same chapter, we get this same thing. Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life.

There's a question perhaps arises as to if you have everlasting life, how could you ever not be saved? Could you possibly lose your salvation? If the life you have is everlasting life, then how could it ever not last? How could it ever not endure? But the fact of the matter is, whoever believes, present tense, has, present tense, life. The life is everlasting, but the life is in Jesus. It says in 1 John chapter 5 that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

He that has the Son has life. He that has not the Son has not life. Now, it's quite clear that Jesus has eternal life.

This is in Him. Whether I have it or not doesn't change the fact that it is eternal life. The question of whether I have it or not has to do with am I in Him or am I not in Him? He that has the Son has this life that is in the Son.

He that doesn't have the Son doesn't have the life that's in the Son. And therefore, the life is in Jesus. And believing in Him accesses this life.

If I'm believing in Jesus, then I am receiving and a participant in this eternal life. Whosoever believes, present tense, in Him shall not perish, but has, present tense, eternal life. All the way through, it's always the present tense.

If you are a believer, you have it. But the question is not answered in those passages. What if you cease to be a believer? While you are believing, you have it.

But what if you stop believing? Well, of course, that's something that's argued in various ways. We'll talk about that another time. But I've heard people use John 3.16, for

example, as a proof of eternal security.

Well, whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Well, I believe in Him. Therefore, I have everlasting life.

If it's everlasting, I can't possibly ever not live. Well, the life is everlasting. The question of whether you participate in it to the day you die is contingent on whether you keep believing in Him.

Because some people do depart from the faith. And the Bible does not encourage us to say that they are saved. Even though they've departed from the faith.

Whoever is believing in Him is participating in eternal life. The issue of if they stop believing in Him, will they still have eternal life is not even referred to in this passage, but I think elsewhere in Scripture suggests believing is the thing. If you stop believing, you stop being saved.

Anyway, we'll talk about that under another heading sometime. We're done with John 3. And next time we'll get into the woman at the well.