



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

John 3:31-36 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 3:31) The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

Beginning with John 1:1, we learn that Jesus is God and was with God from the beginning; furthermore, Jesus is the Son of God, the Word made flesh. To emphasize these truths, John revealed the same truths from a slightly different perspective when he wrote that Jesus came from above, from heaven (from God) and is above all. All human beings are from the earth, and their bodies will

return to the earth as Genesis 3:19, teaches, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Therefore, no matter how primitive or sophisticated our different philosophies, our different religions, and our different worldviews, our human ideas are earthly, finite, and worldly. No one can understand the full truth of God and ultimate reality using reason alone or experiences or emotions. With the help of the Holy Spirit, believers can use reason to understand and explain what God has revealed in the Bible; therefore, believers pray for the help of the Holy Spirit when they study and teach the Bible. The Bible draws a sharp distinction between what God has revealed and what human beings have dreamed. Some follow their own ideas and dreams, or the dreams and ideas of others. The Bible teaches people to follow the revealed truths from God and from Jesus’ ministry on earth and in heaven.

(John 3:32) He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He testified to or bore witness to what He had personally seen and heard above in heaven and throughout the universe. Jesus has seen and heard everything that has ever taken place in time and eternity and within the mind of God [see Note below]. Jesus knew and knows all the plans and purposes of God His Father, and He now sits at the right hand of God in heaven where He participates in all the plans and purposes of God. The

Bible makes these bold claims about Jesus. In a variety of ways, Jesus made these bold claims about himself as we will learn lesson-by-lesson throughout our study of John's Gospel. So, no wonder John wrote, "No one accepts His testimony" (meaning "very few," for Jesus' disciples accepted His testimony as far as they understood Him). But to John, so few accepted Jesus' testimony that it seemed like "no one" was (the type of expression we all sometimes use meaning "very few"). During this time of Jesus' ministry, He spoke to His disciples using parables, proverbs, and "figures of speech," so they did not understand Him plainly (see John 16:25-29). After Jesus' death on the cross and after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus sent the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach His apostles the absolute accuracy of Jesus' testimony on earth and how to understand, live according to, and communicate what Jesus taught. In John 16:13, Jesus promised them, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

[Note: Consider what Jesus meant in Matthew 24:36, "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." The Father and Jesus knew that depending on where and when someone lived, the day and hour would be different for them. One only needs to ask themselves how Jesus would have explained Time Zones, Daylight Savings Time, and the International Date Line to His listeners 2,000 year ago

in ways they would understand. To solve this and other problems, before Jesus came into the world, the Father and He probably agreed that knowledge of the day and the hour would be withheld from Him. Furthermore, His followers would have been demoralized if He had told them something like, “I’ll come back about 2,000 years from now.”]

(John 3:33) Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true.

In courts of law, judges and juries hear the testimonies of witnesses, and from these testimonies and other factors they decide to the best of their abilities whether what they have seen and heard from these witnesses is true or false. As a personal witness to all the facts about God and reality, during Jesus’ ministry on earth, Jesus, the Son of God, revealed all the truths about God and reality which were helpful and needful for people to know the truth of God and receive Jesus as the Son of God. After Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit revealed more truth about God and reality to His apostles, which they recorded in the New Testament. John and the other apostles certified that what they taught and wrote in the Bible is true. Whenever a person accepts the testimony of Jesus, they certify that God is true. Believers certify that Jesus and His testimony, which we learn from the Bible, are truthful, without defect, and are completely reliable. Believers certify that people can receive eternal life through believing in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. I, too, certify that God has spoken truly in

Jesus and in the Bible. As a believer in Jesus, you can do the same.

(John 3:34) He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah, and John pointed people to Jesus, the Lamb of God. God sent John the Baptist and when he preached, he spoke the words of God. He taught about God, Jesus, and the reality his hearers needed to learn to repent of their sins and be baptized. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and the Holy Spirit guided his thoughts and words during his ministry (see Luke 1:15). God sent Jesus, the only Son of God, the Word made flesh, and Jesus spoke the words of God. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus baptized and baptizes His followers in the Holy Spirit and fills them with the Holy Spirit without any limits. Jesus fills believers with all the presence of the Holy Spirit, but we must be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit or assume whatever we say has the infallibility of the Bible (see Ephesians 4:30 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit works within all who love Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us understand and share what we learn from the Bible, the Word of God written. The Holy Spirit helps us teach the truth of God to unbelievers and helps many of them believe. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers us to fulfill God's will in serving Jesus and others.

(John 3:35) The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands.

None of the gospels speak of love more than the Gospel of John. The first truth we learn about God's love is in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Because God loves, God gives. Because God loves, the Father sent Jesus into the world. Because God loves, those who believe in Jesus may have eternal life and not perish. Regarding God the Father and Jesus, John used the word "loves" three times. First, in John 3:35, we learn that because God loves Jesus, the Father gives all things into Jesus' hands. Second, in John 5:20, we read, "The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished." Because God loves Jesus, the Father shows Jesus all that He is doing and will show Him even greater things. Third, in John 10:17, we read, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again." Because God loves Jesus and Jesus loves the Father and the world, Jesus will lay down His life and take it up again that many might receive the gift of eternal life. Because God loves, the Father wants the best and wisest plans perfectly fulfilled for all concerned throughout eternity. Because the Father knows His Son, He knows Jesus will always fulfill the best and wisest plans perfectly for all concerned throughout eternity. The Father has placed all reality, all that exists, all that has been, is, and ever will be,

in the hands of Jesus or under the control, direction, and power of Jesus. God the Father knows Jesus is and will always be perfectly true and trustworthy. Jesus has revealed and continues to reveal to all who believe in Him that He is perfectly true and trustworthy; therefore, all who receive Jesus love Jesus, and with confidence they place their lives in His hands for all eternity.

(John 3:36) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.

As we conclude the third chapter of John, notice John repeated in a slightly different way what Jesus proclaimed in John 3:16. Because God and Jesus love the world, Jesus came so whoever believes in Him, the Son of God, has eternal life—which begins the moment we first believe in Jesus. When we receive the gift of eternal life through believing in Jesus, we are born again or born anew and become children of God. Truthfully, nothing can be simpler than believing in Jesus as the Bible reveals Jesus to us. On the other hand, John has told us (and we know from observation) that few accept the testimony of Jesus and the Bible. Why is this so? John's Gospel has given us the answer: most people love darkness and want to remain in darkness because their deeds are evil. In John 3:19, we learned, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Those who love darkness and the pursuit of evil will not obey God or the Son of God;

they will not do what God and Jesus require them to do to receive eternal life; they will not believe in God and Jesus as revealed in the Bible. Jesus is the only One the Father has given to us and through whom we can receive eternal life, and Jesus died and rose again to make it possible for us to justly and mercifully receive eternal life from our loving God. When some choose to live in rebellion against Jesus, they also choose the consequence of not seeing life. God's anger, wrath, and punishment are not irrational. Our loving, just, merciful, and reasonable God must and will uphold justice. Even today, millions call out for justice, and God will bring justice to world. But everyone must remember that bringing justice requires the punishment of those who live in disobedience to God's Law of Love, unless they repent and place their faith in God's Way of salvation (see John 14:6). The Bible reveals the reasonable character and nature of the God who loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die, rise again, and lead us from darkness into the light—if we will only follow the Way and the One that God has sent to us, even Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What does it mean when John wrote that Jesus testifies? To what did Jesus testify?
2. What do believers in Jesus certify? What does that mean to you?
3. What did Jesus speak? What did and does Jesus give?

4. What has the Father done for Jesus? Why has the Father done this?

5. What is the difference between believing in Jesus and disobeying Jesus?

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.