

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON XXX : THE HUMILITY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John 3:22-36	related passages
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○ The ministry of Jesus in Judea after leaving Jerusalem, falling into three parts: brief account of the movement and success of Jesus which provoked a comparison between John and Jesus, v22-26; John's humility and last testimony of Jesus, v27-30; the apostle John's expansion upon the comments of John the Baptist, v31-36.

v22 After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judaea; : Jerusalem was itself in the land of Judea but the apostle is speaking of Jesus leaving the city proper after the Passover and going into the surrounding countryside. At this time His group of disciples were at least the six mentioned in John 1:35-51, although it is possible the term includes many which chose to follow Him, even for carnal reasons.

and there He tarried with them, and baptized. : Jesus stayed in the area with His disciples for an unknown period of time, the interpretation of which depends on how one takes John 4:35. Hendriksen says probably for a long time, perhaps from May - Dec AD 27. "Tarried: the verb originally means *to rub*, hence *to wear away, consume*; and so of spending or passing time." [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Regardless of the duration of the stay, Jesus continued to teach and preach while baptizing those who accepted His teachings. Vincent says the tense denotes that He *continued* baptizing during His stay, emphasizing an on-going ministry in Judea. There are those who state Jesus baptized at first then later His disciples under His authority. I have always taken this passage with Jn 4:2 to indicate it was always the disciples which administered the baptismal rite, although I must admit there would be room for the other interpretation. My main reasoning on this is the nature of man: if the Corinthians argued about the leadership of Paul, Peter and Apollos (1 Cor 1:11,12), what would have been the attitude of one who had been baptized by the Son of God Himself?

v23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. : while Jesus and His disciples were baptizing in the Judean countryside, John the Baptist was continuing his ministry farther north. We last saw John in Bethany beyond Jordan (Jn 1:28) where Jesus was baptized. Now John has crossed over the Jordan onto the west side, although the exact site of Aenon near Salim is unknown. Aenon, probably from the Aramaic meaning "fountains", having a group of seven springs. Vincent says the phrase is literally "many waters" which probably was a reference to a number of pools or springs. Some imagine it to have been at the juncture of Samaria, Perea and Decapolis, about eight miles SW of Scythopolis. This fits the circumstances and is supported by the ancient historian Eusebius and the church father Jerome.

That John also was involved in an on-going ministry is revealed here: "Was baptizing: The substantive verb with the participle also indicating continuous or habitual action; *was engaged* in baptizing....Came, were baptized: Imperfects. They *kept* coming." [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

The reason for that locale is because there was much water there, allowing for immersion even in the summer. "*There was much water:* And this was equally necessary, where such multitudes were baptized, whether the ceremony were performed either by dipping or sprinkling. But as the Jewish custom required the persons to stand in the water, and, having been instructed, and entered into a covenant to renounce all idolatry, and take the God of Israel for their God, then plunge themselves under the water, it is probable that the rite was thus performed at Aenon." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v24 For John was not yet cast into prison. : familiar with the Synoptics' writings, John adds a note to prevent any misunderstanding. Seeing that the Synoptics do not follow strict chronological order, and that material is inserted / deleted according to each author's design, some may have assumed that John was cast into prison immediately following the temptation of Christ (Mt 4:11,12; Mk 1:13,14). Someone reading John's account may have raised the objection, "how was it possible for John to be engaging in his ministry at this time? The other gospel writers state he was in prison at that time." The apostle is stating he is fully aware of John the Baptist's imprisonment and that these events took place prior to that time.

v25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. : the exact tenor of the questions is not known, although we can make some general assumptions considering the language used and the passage which follows.

- According to Morris, the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate there was a great deal of interest in the matter of ceremonial purification during the time and just prior to the life of Christ. By the very title they ascribed to John, "the Baptist", indicates how much importance they held what John was doing. "Since different people had different ideas about what was effective in the way of ceremonial purity, it is not surprising that disputes should arise from time to time about what was the right thing to do.... Maybe the man was asking why he should get baptized by John when Jesus was doing so much better. Perhaps he was saying that with the different leaders operating at the same time it was not easy to see who

was right. All that we can be sure of is that in some way Jesus' success was drawn into the discussion." [Morris, *John*]

- Others place much more blame upon the disciples of John themselves, of which I agree. Vincent for example says the following: "Then: Not a particle of time but of consequence; *therefore*, because of both Jesus and John baptizing... Question: more correctly, questioning... The word here represents the *process* of inquiry.... Between: correctly, *on the part of*. Literally, *proceeding from*. The rendering of the AV does not show with which party the discussion originated. The Greek distinctly states that the question was raised by the disciples of the Baptist." [Vincent, *Word Studies*] In support of this is the literal translation from an interlinear Gk NT: "Arose then a question (on the part) of the disciples..." Perhaps the man or men had been baptized by Jesus' disciples and the disciples of John took issue with their doing so.

v26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him. : perhaps out of frustration, perhaps wanting John to settle the issue, the disciples now come to John the Baptist himself. Note the following:

- in the spirit of rivalry and jealousy, they do not even mention Jesus by name
- there was possibly a veiled rebuke in that John bore witness to Jesus, and now people are following Him rather than John.
- they made full use of a figure of speech called *hyperbole*, "ALL are going to Him", in the sense that soon none will be left to follow John.

v27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. : cp Jn 6:65; 19:11; 1 Cor 4:7. John was saying everyone has been assigned a place in God's eternal plan, and that he (John) had no right to lay claim to an honor not given to him from heaven. "Once given, it remains given, as the tense used in the original implies. Similarly, once withheld, it so remains. Instead of complaining about the success of Jesus, John's disciples should have rejoiced in the fact that the task of the Baptist was being fulfilled." [Hendriksen, *John*] "I have received, not only my commission, but the power also by which I have executed it, from above. As I took it up at God's command, so I am ready to lay it down when he pleases. I have told you from the beginning that I was only the forerunner of the Messiah, and was sent, not to form a separate party, but to point out to men that Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world: John 3:28." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. : John's disciples should have been prepared for this since John's entire message was that there was a greater One coming and He was sent to merely point the way.

v29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. : [for commentary, see below]

"Rejoiceth greatly: Literally, *rejoiceth with joy*. A Hebrew idiom.... This my joy: A very emphatic expression: *this, the joy which is mine*." [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v30 He must increase, but I must decrease. : in summation, John further clarifies that Jesus must continue to increase while John further slips into oblivion, his primary purpose given from heaven being fulfilled. "MUST": indicating this is divinely ordained to be and it will come to past. "It is for Him to go on growing and for me to be ever getting less" [quoted in Dods, *Gk NT*] "*He must increase*: His present success is but the beginning of a most glorious and universal spread of righteousness, peace, truth, and good will among men. *I must decrease*: My baptism and teaching, as pointing out the coming Messiah, must cease; because the Messiah is now come, and has entered publicly on the work of his glorious ministry." [Clarke, *Commentary*]

v31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all. : from this point it is unclear as to these being the words of John the Baptist or the apostle John in explanatory fashion, as with John 3:16-21. "The change of style in the following verses seems to indicate that the words of the Baptist break off at this point, and are taken up and commented upon by the Evangelist." [Vincent, *Word Studies*] Again, who spoke these words are unimportant; it is brought together for us within the word of God and should be taken as such.

Jesus is greater not only than John the Baptist but to all. The reason for this is His divine origin contrasted with the earthly source of John.

Note "He that cometh *from above*" is the same word used in Jn 3:3 for being *born from above, born anew, born again*.

v32 And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. : seeing and hearing is here the equivalent to having direct knowledge. Man can speak of earth, but Jesus alone can speak of heavenly things with utmost authority since He is from heaven. While one would be expected to therefore listen to Him, the people on the whole reject this testimony. Note there is disagreement as to whether the testimony spoken of in these two verses is that of John the Baptist's or of Jesus Himself. I am taking it to refer to Jesus.

v33 He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. : the testimony of Christ was on the whole rejected (Jn 1:10-13). But there are exceptions (v33): but he who does accept the testimony of Christ acknowledges that God is true, meaning that by accepting Jesus as Who He claimed to be, receives as well the Father's testimony concerning Jesus, and acknowledges that God is true, truthful. This is the positive affirmation, the negative is given in 1 John 5:10, "he who does not

believe God had made Him a liar; because he has not believed in the testimony which God has borne concerning His Son.”

But those who are the exception “sealed” that God is true. *esphragisen* = to stamp with approval, to endorse, to give confirmation. The one who accepted the testimony of Jesus placed his stamp of approval not only on Christ but on the veracity of God, that God is telling the truth. “Hath set to his seal: To *set to*, is to *affix*. To *set to* a seal is therefore to attest a document. The expression is retained from Coverdale’s version (1535)... Better, *hath set his seal to this*. The meaning here is, *has solemnly attested and confirmed* the statement ‘God is true.’ Only here in this sense. Elsewhere of closing up for security; hiding; marking a person or thing.... The aorist tense here denotes an accomplished act.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

v34 For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. : four interpretations:

- means that God, instead of giving occasional and limited supplies of the Spirit as had been given to the prophets, gives to Christ the fulness of the Spirit.
- the primary reference is not to Christ but that the statement is general, that God gives the Spirit freely and abundantly, and does thus dispense it to Christ.
- Christ is the subject and the clause means that He proves His Messiahship by giving the Spirit without measure to others
- the Spirit is the subject, and the Spirit gives the words of God to Christ without measure.

The wording of v35 favors the interpretation of KJV. “The Spirit was given to Jesus not in the restricted and occasional manner in which it had been given to the OT prophets, but wholly, fully, constantly. It was by this Spirit His human nature was enlightened and guided to speak things divine; and this Spirit, interposed as it were between the Logos and the human nature of Christ, was as little cumbrous in its operation or perceptible in consciousness as our breath which is interposed between the thinking mind and the words which utter it.” [Dods, *Gk NT*]

sent = *sent with a commission*, as an ambassador, the same word in which we get our word *apostle*

v36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. : The climax of John’s testimony is here given: as Christ has all things in His hand (v35), so is everlasting life in His hands. It is not for thrill-seekers or those who “believe” in Jesus just for what He can provide them, but for those who have an abiding, residing faith.

Note the contrast set forth: **the opposite of faith is disobedience**. Two different words are used here which the KJV translates by believing. The first is our normal word for faith, *pisteuōn*, while the second time believe is used the word is *apeithōn*, translated 9x *believeth not, unbelieving*, etc., and 7x *disobedient, do not obey*, etc. It comes from a root word which is used 6x in the NT, always translated *disobedient*. Hendriksen: *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*. The important lesson for us to glean from this is that **faith is a moral issue, and those who do not believe do so willingly**. It is not an issue which concerns intelligence or superior understanding but rather those who believe are those to whom God has turned their hearts towards Him. Unbelief in the saving work of Christ is so closely tied with conscious, direct disobedience that the words are alternately used in translating the Greek in a harmonious fashion.

We should be careful how this is taught: it is not merely those who have rejected the gospel that the wrath of God abides upon, but Rom 1:18 and Eph 2:3 makes it clear that this same wrath is upon those who have never heard the gospel. **Men are lost and under the condemnation of eternal punishment by virtue of our sinful natures**. The illustration has been given of two men with a deadly disease, one who lives in New York City and one on a remote island. The man living in the city has access to the best doctors and all the resources of medical science, while the other has none to address his need. Both will die because of the disease, regardless of the care received. **All men are by nature under the condemnation of God, regardless of the opportunities provided within the hearing of the gospel**. “Abideth: The present tense. As the believer *hath* life, so the unbeliever *hath* wrath abiding on him. He lives continually in an economy which is alienated from God, and which, in itself, must be habitually the subject of God’s displeasure and indignation.” [Vincent, *Word Studies*]

Wrath = settled indignation, often contrasted with anger which is portrayed as turbulent commotion, suddenly blazing up and quickly extinguished. But in relation with God, it is probably incorrect to place too much emphasis on the distinction between the two words.

Christ has been represented as Sovereign, commissioned with supreme powers, especially for the purpose of saving men and restoring them to God. Hence ‘he that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.’ He who through the Son finds and accepts the Father has life in this very vision and fellowship of the Supreme.” [Dods, *Gk NT*]

“*But the wrath of God abideth on him*: ... we may consider the phrase as a Hebraism: punishment of God, i.e. the most heavy and awful of all punishments; such as sin deserves, and such as it becomes Divine justice to inflict. And this abideth on him — endures as long as his unbelief and disobedience remain! And how shall these be removed in a hell of fire! Reader! pray God that thou mayest never know what this continuing punishment means!” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

Biblical Expository Principles

The passage in today's lesson has been I believe mis-handled by some, and unfortunately it has been done so among those whom we would call our own. For this reason I believe it prudent to review some basic principles which must be remembered in handling the Word of God. I do so with fear and trembling, remembering the words of the apostles in Gal 6:1,3 and James 3:1. I pray my heart is correct in these matters and that the admonitions be received in the spirit in which they are given.

A word to those who disagree with what follows: I request your prayers and ask that you pray for yourself as well. No one is perfect and no one has all the answers. If we disagree, either you are wrong, or I am wrong, or we are both wrong. I believe the key thing to remember is not what "Bro so-and-so" believes, or what a certain school or denomination (even our own) teaches, but *what is God trying to say here?* If we can through prayer and comparing scripture come to an understanding of the passage, and we can do so as before God, then what does it matter who agrees or disagrees?

Some practical lessons on bible exposition:

- **illustrations and parables are typically given to emphasize a single point.** There are of course exceptions but the context always makes this plain.
- **while illustrations and parables are generally for a single point, there are always many secondary applications present for practical application.** It must be remembered however that these items are *secondary applications* and not confuse it with the *primary meaning*.
- **in the teaching / preaching of the secondary applications, extreme caution must be taken to make sure these applications have other scriptural support.** If the doctrine is plainly taught in other passages, the secondary applications may be brought forth as support and illustrations. But if there are no clear passages found in which the secondary applications may be applied, it would be an error to base one's teachings on an illustration alone.
- **these secondary applications must never be used as the foundation of a doctrine.** This coincides with the previous principle.
- **it is bad exposition to over-apply an illustration or parable.** This over-application may be done in several manners and will be discussed below.

Let's look at some examples of the above principles:

- An example of a parable / illustration which *cannot* be applied in the fullest sense is Lk 11:5-8 in which Jesus is teaching the necessity of persistence in prayer by a man which went to his friend for bread but the friend was asleep. The man kept knocking and finally the friend gave in, rising and giving the man bread. The point Jesus was making was to not give up in prayer, but if pressed to the fullest degree, God is portrayed as not wanting anything to do with us but will give in if we persist in prayer. That is totally unscriptural.
- An example of an entire denomination pressing a picture to the extreme may be found in Jn 6:51-54 in which Jesus compares Himself with being the bread from heaven. This combined with the Lord's Supper has brought forth Roman Catholicism's teaching on the Mass in which the bread and the wine is literally turned into the body and blood of Christ by the authority of the priest, Jesus is literally "re-crucified" during the Mass, and the partakers of this is endowed with grace which helps in their journey to everlasting life. To those familiar with the doctrines of grace, this needs no refutation.
- An example of secondary applications being used in both a good and bad manner is found in the parable of the prodigal son. Luke 15 contains three parables with a common main application: the good shepherd that leaves the ninety-nine sheep to catch the wanderer, the widow with the lost coin, and the prodigal son. Jesus is addressing the Jewish leaders (Lk 15:1,2). Note Lk 15:5-7 (the good shepherd); 9,10 (the widow's coin); 22-24 (the prodigal son) in which the main thrust in each of the parables is the joy in heaven over a repentant sinner. Yet who has not heard good, God-honoring and biblical messages on the prodigal son? In this case the secondary applications have proper scriptural support and is used to illustration those other doctrines. But also as an example of how this may be *mis-used*, it should be noted that many churches use this parable to teach that one can lose their salvation and re-gain it by coming home (note Lk 15:32). To some denominations, this parable has been used in such a manner so much that this is often mistaken for the primary purpose of this parable.
- An example of an illustration being over-applied may be seen by the question: who or what is the foundation of the church? Without hesitation every Baptist would answer Jesus Christ, with reference made to 1 Cor 3:11. They would certainly be correct in that answer; in fact, we even have songs to that effect: "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord ... ". Yet in Eph 2:20 it is said that the foundation of the church is the apostles, not Christ; and that Christ is the chief cornerstone. Which is correct? BOTH! *Each is simply using an illustration to drive home the point in which they are teaching*, and in one instance the illustration given is that Christ is as a foundation, with all else resting upon His finished work of the cross. In the other illustration, the apostles are the foundation in the sense that they were the beginning of the local churches upon this earth, and our doctrines are derived from their teachings, with Christ being the cornerstone. ***Each is teaching a principle and using a picture to drive home their point. It is an error to over-apply these pictures to make them mean more than they were originally intended to mean!*** There are some who would stand on Christ as being the foundation of the church, and they would be correct. But they would be

ignorant of scripture if they would argue when someone mentions that the apostles are the foundation of the church in another sense, as we have seen scripture which bears this out. **Both are true, both are only a picture used to illustrate a point.**

- This brings us to today's lesson. This passage has been used in this sense:

Q: Who is the bridegroom?

Q: Who is the bride?

Q: Who is the friend of the bridegroom?

A: Indisputably Christ.

A: Christ's disciples.

A: John the Baptist.

The passage is therefore used to teach the following: Christ is the bridegroom, His true local (Baptist) churches are the bride, and all those who are not Baptists are not part of the bride but are "friends of the bridegroom" and will not constitute the heavenly bride of Christ. The error of this teaching (or at the minimum, the use of this passage in support of this teaching) is the violation of several principles given above:

- for one thing, it cannot be pressed that the bride in this instance is Jesus' disciples who constituted His first assembly (church). The bride mentioned in this passage would more accurately be a portrayal of all those who were deserting John for the ministry of Christ. From Jn 2:24,25 and again in Jn 6, it is obvious not all those were part of the first church for many were clinging to Christ for the wrong reasons and therefore not true believers.
- The analogy further breaks down when we check other passages in the gospels in which similar terminology is used:

Mt 9:14,15 Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

Mk 2:18-20 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

Lk 5:33-35 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but Thine eat and drink? And He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

In the above illustration, Christ is again portraying Himself as the Bridegroom. How are His disciples (those who Baptists believe to have constituted His first local church) illustrated? Not as the Bride but as the *guests of the bridechamber*. Dependent upon the marriage situation, the guests of the bridechamber was the equivalent to the friend of the bridegroom (even if that be denied or a point made that the exact terminology is not used, it must be admitted that the disciples in today's lesson was portrayed as the bride while in the above passage they are portrayed as guests). As stated in the previous example, *which illustration is correct? They both are, and it is an error to over-apply a picture in one instance to the exclusion of all else.*

Therefore as we look at today's passage, the main thrust of what John the Baptist is saying is that the honor due at a wedding is not for the friend of the bridegroom but for the bridegroom himself. The satisfaction that the friend of the bridegroom receives is derived in the fulfillment of his duties to the bridegroom. John uses that picture which would have been familiar to those to whom he was speaking to drive home his point: *John the Baptist is not the focus of attention but is merely the forerunner that pointed people to the Messiah. His source of rejoicing is derived by the very thing his disciples were complaining about: that people were gathering around the Christ.*

My Baptist friends: I cannot emphasize enough that I believe this to be the *main thrust* of the passage in today's lesson. Granted, there are many secondary applications which may be brought forth from the passage over and above the main thrust, and an entire sermon could easily be preached using the picture John the Baptist provides. But is it honest to use this to teach none but Baptists are the Bride and all other denominations are the friend of the Bridegroom? Especially when in another similar passage the disciples themselves are placed in the same position as John places himself in this passage? One might add that the Baptist Bride position is doctrinally correct and beyond dispute Biblically. Whether that is so is not within the realm of today's lesson, but one should be open and honest enough to not use this passage in support.

Miscellaneous Notes on Jewish Marriage Customs

from Vine, *Expository Dictionary*: “ ‘The friend of the bridegroom’, John 3:29, is distinct from ‘the sons of the bride-chamber’ who were numerous. When John the Baptist speaks of ‘the friend of the Bridegroom’, he uses language according to the customs of the Jews.”

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from Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*:

The betrothal typically lasted for no more than one year for a virgin. On the night of the wedding:

bridegroom with friends of bridegroom goes to house of bride

bride led to house of husband or his parents:

marriage procession

led by musicians

followed by those who distributed wine / oil to the people; nuts to the children

next came bride surrounded by her companions, led by “friends of the bridegroom” and “children of the bride-chamber”

everyone rose to salute the procession or join in

all around were people carrying torches or lamps on poles; those nearest the bride had myrtle branches and flowers

once they arrived at the bridegroom’s home, the bride was led to her husband

some formula was spoken (e.g. “take her according to the law of Moses and of Israel”)

legal document was signed

washing of hands and benediction

marriage supper which may last more than one day

bride / bridegroom led by “friends of the bridegroom” to the bridal chamber

Note in the wedding of Cana (Jn 2) there is no friend of bridegroom mentioned but there is in Jn 3:29 where the words are spoken outside of Galilee. Edersheim believes the weddings of Galilee to be simpler, calling each guest at the wedding by a general name of “children of the bridegroom”.

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from Vincent, *Word Studies*:

The bride. A common figure in the Old testament prophecies, of the relation between Jehovah and His people (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2:19; Malachi 2:11). See also on Matthew 1:21, concerning Hosea.

Friend of the bridegroom. Or groomsman. The term is appropriate to Judaea, the groomsmen not being customary in Galilee. See Matthew 9:15, where the phrase *children of the bridechamber* is used. In Judaea there were two groomsmen, one for the bridegroom, the other for his bride. Before marriage they acted as intermediaries between the couple; at the wedding they offered gifts, waited upon the bride and bridegroom, and attended them to the bridal chamber. It was the duty of the friend of the bridegroom to present him to his bride, after marriage to maintain proper terms between the parties, and especially to defend the bride’s good fame. The Rabbinical writings speak of Moses as the friend of the bridegroom who leads out the bride to meet Jehovah at Sinai (Exodus 19:17); and describe Michael and Gabriel as acting as the friends of the bridegroom to our first parents, when the Almighty himself took the cup of blessing and spoke the benediction. The Baptist represents himself as standing in the same relation to Jesus.

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from Dods, *Gk NT*: “The bride is the familiar OT figure expressive of the people in their close relation to God (Isa 54:5; Hos 2:18; Ps 45). This figure passes into NT. Cf Mt 22:2; Eph 5:32; James 4:4.... It is the bridegroom, and no one else, who marries the bride and to whom she belongs. There is only one in whom the people of God can find their permanent joy and rest; one who is the perennial spring of their happiness and life.”

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from Clarke, *Commentary*:

The friend of the bridegroom: The person whom the Greeks called the paranymph — there were two at each wedding: one waited

on the bride, the other on the bridegroom: their business was to serve them, to inspect the concerns of the bridechamber, and afterwards to reconcile differences between husband and wife, when any took place.

The friend of the bridegroom is the person called among the Jews *ybēwē shoshabin*; and *paranymph* among the Greeks. Several matters are found in the Jewish writings relative to these, which may serve to throw light, not only on the discourse of John, but also on other passages of Scripture.

1. There were generally two *shoshabinim*; one for the bride, another for the bridegroom: though in many instances we find the *shoshabin* of the bride only mentioned.
2. These officers were chosen out of the most intimate and particular friends of the parties: — a brother might be *shoshabin* or *paranymph* to his brother.
3. Though it is probable that such persons were not always found in ordinary weddings, yet they were never absent from the marriages of kings, princes, and persons of distinction.
4. The Jews believe that this was an ordinance appointed by God; and that he himself was *shoshabin* to Adam. But in *Bereshith Rabba* it is said, that God took the cup of blessing and blessed the first pair; and that Michael and Gabriel were *shoshabins* to Adam.
5. So important was this office esteemed among them, that it was reckoned one of the indispensable works of charity: much depending on the proper discharge of it, as we shall afterwards find.
6. Those who were engaged in this office, were excused, for the time, from some of the severer duties of religion, because they had so much to do about the new-married pair, especially during the seven days of the marriage feast.

These *shoshabinan* had a threefold office to fulfill, viz. before, at, and after the marriage: of each of these in order.

I. Before the marriage: it was the business of the *shoshabin*:

1. To procure a husband for the virgin, to guard her, and to bear testimony to her corporeal and mental endowments; and it was upon this testimony of this friend that the bridegroom chose his bride.
2. He was the *internuncio* between her and her spouse elect; carrying all messages from her to him, and from him to her: for before marriage young women were very strictly guarded at home with their parents or friends.

II. At the wedding: it was the business of the *shoshabin*, if necessary:

1. To vindicate the character of the bride.
2. To sleep in an apartment contiguous to the new-married pair, to prevent the bride from receiving injury.
3. It was his office to see that neither the bride nor bridegroom should be imposed on by each other; and therefore it was his business to examine and exhibit the tokens of the bride's purity, according to the law, Deuteronomy 22:13-21.
4. When they found that their friend had got a pure and chaste virgin, they exulted greatly; as their own character and the happiness of their friend, were at stake. To this the Baptist alludes, John 3:29, *This my joy is fulfilled.*
5. They distributed gifts to the new-married couple, which, on their marriage, were repaid either by their friend, or by his father. The same thing is done at what are called the *biddings*, at marriages in Wales, to the present day.
6. They continued with the bride and bridegroom the seven days of the marriage, and contributed variously to the festivity and hilarity of the occasion.

III. After marriage.

1. The *shoshabin* was considered the patron and advocate of the wife, and in some sort her guardian, to which the apostle alludes, 2 Corinthians 11:2. He was generally called in to compose any differences which might happen between her and her husband, and reconcile them when they had been at variance.
2. They appear to have had the keeping of the marriage contract, which in certain cases they tore; when they had reason to suspect infidelity on the part of the woman, by which the marriage was dissolved; and thus the suspected person was prevented from suffering capitally.

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Bride = *νύμφην* (*numphān*), used 8x in the NT:

Mt 10:35 and the *daughter in law*

Lk 12:53 against her *daughter in law*, and the *daughter in law* against her

Jn 3:29 he that hath the *bride*

Rev 18:23 and of the *bride* adorned for
Rev 21:2 prepared as a *bride* adorned
Rev 21:9 shew thee the *bride*, the Lamb's wife
Rev 22:17 the Spirit and the *bride* say come

bridegroom = νυμφίος (numphios), used 16x in the NT:

Mt 9:15 as long as the *bridegroom* ... when the *bridegroom* shall be taken
Mt 25:1 went forth to meet the *bridegroom*
Mt 25:5 while the *bridegroom* tarried
Mt 25:6 behold the *bridegroom* cometh
Mt 25:10 went to buy, the *bridegroom* came
Mk 2:19 while the *bridegroom* is with them? ... as long as they have the *bridegroom*
Mk 2:20 when the *bridegroom* shall be taken
Lk 5:34 while the *bridegroom* is with them?
Lk 5:35 when the *bridegroom* shall be taken
Jn 2:9 called the *bridegroom*
Jn 3:29 that hath the bride is the *bridegroom* ... but the friend of the *bridegroom* ... because of the *bridegroom's* voice
Rev 18:23 and the voice of the *bridegroom*

children of the bridechamber, used 3x in the NT:

Mt 9:15 can the children of the *bridechamber*
Mk 2:19 can the children of the *bridechamber*
Lk 5:34 the children of the *bridechamber* fast

2 Cor 11:2 the church at Corinth "espoused as a virgin to Christ"

Eph 5:22-32 church compared to bride

Rev 22:17 Spirit and Bride says come