

SEQUENCE 5

THE BAPTIST WITNESSES TO JESUS AGAIN

3:22--4:3

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE FOR SEQUENCE 5

- (a) **Jesus comes and baptizes in Judea and all are going to Him** (3:22-26).
- (b) No one can receive anything except what is given **from heaven** (3:27-28).
- (c) John the Baptist's role in redemptive history (3:29-30).
- (b') He who comes **from heaven is above all** (3:31-36).
- (a') **Jesus baptizes** more disciples than **John** and **leaves Judea** (4:1-3).

Sequence 5
3:22-4:3

This is the fourth successive sequence to point out ways in which Jesus fulfils and supersedes Judaism: in 2:1-12, Jesus provides new wine that symbolizes the inauguration of the Messianic Age and surpasses anything that contemporary Judaism could afford, and thus renders obsolete the stone jars of purification; in 2:13-25, Jesus displaces the Temple and thereby intimates that the Temple's proper role is best seen as an anticipation of the ultimate point of mediation between God and man in Himself; in 3:1-21, Jesus fulfils prophecies of a "water and Spirit" regeneration (cf. Ezek. 36:22-32), and proves in His death to be the ultimate antitype of the snake "lifted up" in the desert; and hence (3:22-30) Jesus surpasses John the Baptist and any baptism or rite of purification he may represent. In the next sequence (Sequence 6: 4:4-38), the uniqueness of Jesus will be set against movements that extend beyond the boundaries of Palestinian Judaism.

Some estimate that the juxtaposition of the new birth sequence (3:1-21) and this next sequence (3:22--4:3), with their mention of baptism, constitutes solid evidence that John understood "born of water and Spirit" to refer to baptism. But too much stands against such a view: (1) The most natural reading of "born of water and Spirit"

lies in the eschatological passage of Ezekiel 36:25-27 (cf. notes on 3:5); (2) Baptism is not a major theme of 3:22--4:3, Christology is. Insofar as baptism is mentioned, it is associated with the Old Covenant purification rites (cf. v. 25); (3) If 3:22--4:3 pictures Jesus baptizing more people than John the Baptist, the focus of interest lies in the relative stature of Jesus and of John, *not* in the nature of the baptism itself; for on that topic, the Evangelist by a parenthetical note at 4:2 will shortly distance Jesus from the actual act of baptizing; and (4) the chiasmic parallelism between Sequences 1 (1:19-51) and 5 (3:22--4:3) suggest a closer tie, as does the parallelism between Sequences 5 and 17 (12:12-50), than the conceptual tie between Sequences 5 and 4 (3:1-21).

TEXT (3:22--4:3) The NASB Text

(a) (3:22) After these things **Jesus and His disciples came** into the land of **Judea**, and there He was sending time with them and **baptizing**. (23) And **John** also was **baptizing** in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being **baptized**. (24) For **John** had not yet been thrown into prison. (25) There arose **therefore** a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. (26) And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is **baptizing**, and **all are coming to Him**."

(b) (3:27) John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing, unless it has been **given him from heaven**. (28) You yourselves **bear me witness**, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'"

(c) (3:29) "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full. (30) He must increase, but I must decrease."

(b') (3:31) "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes **from heaven** is above all. (32) What He has seen and heard, of that He **bears witness**; and no man receives His witness. (33) He who has received His witness has set his seal to *this*, that God is true. (34) For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He **gives** the Spirit without measure. (35) The Father loves the Son, and has **given** all things into His hand. (36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

(a') (4:1) When **therefore** the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that **Jesus** was **making and baptizing more disciples** than **John** (2) (although **Jesus** Himself was not **baptizing**, but **His disciples** were), (3) He **left Judea**, and departed again into Galilee.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

In Sequence 5, John creates parallelism by using both conceptual and verbal parallels. The central concept discussed in (a) and reiterated in (a') is that Jesus is drawing larger crowds than the Baptist and is "baptizing more disciples than John" (3:26; cp. 4:1). Verbal parallels abound: "therefore," "Jesus," "His disciples," "Judea," "baptizing," "John," "John's disciples," and the antithetical parallel, "came," "left" (cp. 3:22 and 4:3).

In (b) and (b'), the parallels are more complicated but nevertheless clear. In (b), John begins to explain why Jesus is superior to him: what Jesus has *received* is what "is given Him from heaven" (v. 27). Also, Jesus is the Messiah; John is the one who has "been sent before Him" (v. 28). In (b'), John explains at greater length why Jesus is superior to him. In addition to this basic conceptual parallel, there are the following verbal parallels: "given" (v. 27; cp. vv. 34 and 35); "from heaven" (v. 27; cp. v. 31); "witness" (v. 28; cp. v. 32).

In the center (c), the central theme of the whole sequence--Jesus superiority--is summed up in the analogy of the bridegroom and the best man, and in the words "He must increase, but I must decrease" (v. 30).

Chiastic Parallels between Sequences 5 (3:22--4:3) and 1 (1:19-51)

Sequence 5 forms a major inclusion-conclusion with the first sequence (1:19-51) which constitutes PART 1 (1:19--4:3) by bringing back the Baptist to reiterate the witness he gave to Jesus in 1:19-34 and by showing him now ready to fade from the scene as Jesus' manifestation of Himself to Israel becomes an accomplished fact.

"Already, in his opening chapter, he [John] has insisted that John the Baptist regarded his function as that of bearing witness to Jesus. The readers of the Gospel

now know what Jesus wants of men. They know that He demands a radical rebirth. They know that He will die for man's salvation. They knew that those who believe in Him have eternal life while those who do not are condemned already. Now John wants them to see that in the light of all this the Baptist maintains his unswerving support. He is still a witness to Jesus" (Morris, *Gospel according to John*, p. 236).

The inclusion--conclusion is achieved by returning to the scene many of the same persons--the Baptist and his disciples, Jesus and His disciples--and by highlighting once again the theme of baptism. In addition, the reader should attend to the other numerous verbal parallels indicated below.

Sequence 5

Sequence 1

3:23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim.	1:25-26: They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing . . . ? John answered, I baptize with water"
3:25 There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John's disciples"	1:35 "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples "
3:26 "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan"	1:28 "These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan"
3:28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ' I am not the Christ ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him .'"	1:20 He confessed " I am not the Christ ." 1:30 "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' 1:33 "He who sent me to baptize"
4:1-3 When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John . . . He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee .	1:23: ". . . make straight the way of the Lord " 1:43 The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee"

Parallels Between Sequences 5 (3:22--4:3) and 17 (12:12-50)

Parallels between Sequence 5 and Sequence 17 are primarily conceptual. Both deal with the nature and origin of Jesus' ministry as the ministry of one sent and empowered by the Father as the Father's emissary to the world for the salvation of the world.

Verbal parallels are few but significant. In 3:34, the Baptist says, "For He *whom God has sent speaks* the words of God . . ." In 12:49, Jesus declares, "For I did not *speak* on My own initiative, but *the Father Himself who sent Me* has given Me commandment, what to *say*, and what to *speak*." In 3:26, John's disciples say of Jesus, ". . . behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him." In 12:19, the Pharisees complain, ". . . the world has gone after Him." In 3:36, the Baptist says, "He who *believes* in the Son has *eternal life*." In 12:44-50, Jesus speaks about belief in Himself and about the commandment He has received from the Father and declares, "He who *believes* in Me, believes not in me but in Him who sent Me" (12:44), and concludes with the words "And I know that His commandment is *eternal life*" (12:50). In both sequences, what is central is the concept of Jesus as the Messiah who has come, not as a power-politics Messiah, but as a Messiah sent by God to bring eternal life.

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