Lessons from the Life of John the Baptist

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[0:00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church on Fred, Georgia. This is the next message in our series on the book of John, entitled, Jesus is God.

Amen. To you alone belongs the highest praise. That would be a great summation of what John the Baptist says here in John chapter number 3. We're going to look at these verses in like three segments tonight.

But that's what John the Baptist says here. John the Baptist says, don't worship me. The disciples will come to him and they will say, can you believe all the tension that's going to Jesus? And he says, I think it's wonderful because Jesus deserves all the praise.

That's what I hope you've heard tonight. And the testimony is about foundations. It isn't natural for people, natural or earthly for people to get together and talk about anything but themselves. And in foundations, we lift our conversations from just talking about ourselves and our day to something that is heavenly.

Talking about Jesus. Wonderful testimony from Brother Micah. And as he talks with his co-workers. And we can always fall back into talking about whatever it is that we feel most knowledgeable about.

[1:07] We're talking about something that makes us look smarter. But we never get back to what's most important. And John the Baptist was a faithful witness that was consistently pointing people to Jesus Christ.

Because he knew that Jesus was from heaven. He knew Jesus was a preeminent one. He knew Jesus alone was worthy of our praise. And we'll look at that tonight in John chapter numbers 22 through 36.

And as I said earlier, John chapter number 3 up to where we got to this morning. The verse 22 is a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Which means that it took place in a few hours or six hours or something that would take place during the night. But then when we get down to verse number 22, it says this. And it says, These things came Jesus and his disciples in the land of Judea.

And there he tarried with them and baptized. Well, according to the order here, we find that Jesus spent, some believe, about six months here. So we always want to make sure as we're reading through the Bible, we're paying attention to the order of what's going on.

[2:12] Because sometimes it's difficult. We just read 21 verses, which took place in a night. And now we're in one verse that take place in six months. And then we go on to a conversation between that John the Baptist will have with his disciples.

Before I continue to read on here, speaking about where Jesus was tearing and baptizing, let me just remind you quickly, we're in the book of John. And the book of John refers to John the Baptist. And these are two different men, two distinct men.

And so when we're talking about John the Baptist here, we're not talking about the same John that records the writing here in the book of John. So the verse number 23, And John also was baptized in Anne near to Salem, because there was much water there.

And they came and were baptized. And for John was not yet cast in the prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizes and all men come to him.

And John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except to be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him.

[3:22] He that hath the bride is the bridegroom. For the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This is my joy, therefore, is fulfilled.

John the Baptist, as I said here, is a faithful witness of Jesus. The key passage we'll look at tonight is in verse number 30 where John says, the famous verse we know about, he says. I must decrease and Jesus must increase.

We're in some transitional verses here from the ministry of John the Baptist goes off the scene. He'll be in prison and he'll be killed soon. And then Jesus is coming on the scene and we see how this happens.

We see an old system leaving and then the new system of Jesus coming here. And it says here a couple things. We'll say John was not yet cast in the prison. Because when you're reading this part of the story and the gospel is not recorded in Matthew and Mark.

So it's helping you figure out exactly where this is placed in the order. But John's ministry overlaps that of Jesus. If salvation came from baptism, this would have been the perfect place to talk about it.

[4:25] Because the disciples of John, they had been baptized by John the Baptist. And they had been following John the Baptist. And we know some of them wouldn't be, they were disciples now of Jesus.

Well, Jesus comes to the river where John the Baptist is baptizing. He's downstream a little bit and they're baptizing. And when this happens, during the six months, those that are around John the Baptist, they begin to leave and then they begin to go to where Jesus is.

And so there is a conflict that said that some of the disciples of John the Baptist are having a conversation with some Jewish people. Maybe Nicodemus was involved in that. We don't know. But they were having a conversation with some Jewish people.

And then they had an argument or they had a dispute or a conflict about the importance of baptism and purifying. Well, the conversation doesn't stay there very long. Because when it comes to John the Baptist, it becomes personal.

They said there's a conflict about baptizing and about purifying. But the disciples of John the Baptist said, but really what we want to know is what are you going to do about it? John, you are losing your ministry to Jesus.

[5:28] What a wonderful way to lose a ministry, isn't it? That you lost all your people to Jesus. I pray that's the ministry of our church, that we lose everybody to Jesus. That we go on to be with the Lord.

Maybe we'll be raptured together or as we pass on and go there. But John the Baptist says that. And even when the young guys, the disciples come up to them, they even say this man that you've been speaking about. Verse 26.

And they said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness. These are the words of his disciples. Behold, the same baptizes us and all men come to him. So they're saying they understand who he is or they act like they understand who he is.

But they're frustrated and they don't understand why all the people are leaving John the Baptist. And it's a wonderful testimony of John the Baptist as a person who points to Jesus all the time.

As somebody who shares the gospel, as a discipler, that is our job is to point to Jesus. Now as we talk about the foundations in here, you could say, well, I don't really want to help anybody grow in the things of the Lord.

[6:33] Because I don't really have everything together. And we should constantly be living. We should be striving to live holy lives. Or you say, my life is not that interesting. Or nobody wants to be my friend, as Zach would say earlier.

His neighbors have to be his friend. All right? So you could say something like that. And you should live a holy life. You should be obedient to the word of God if you're going to be discipling.

But the fact that you're not interesting doesn't matter. Because the message that you have is highly interesting. Because it's not about you. It's about the person of Jesus that you're pointing to.

And John the Baptist, he exemplifies this. So first of all, we find a conflict here. Jesus came with his disciples, the baptized. He waited six months. He isn't doing the baptizing.

His disciples are, as I said there in verse number 22. But he waits some months. And then he goes there and he begins baptizing. And Jesus intentionally created the conflict.

[7:29] I first said, I think Jesus, he might have intentionally created this conflict. And then I thought about it and I thought, Jesus is God. And so he doesn't do anything non-intentionally.

He didn't accidentally show up and say, oh, John had no idea that you had a ministry going on just a few miles down the road. I'm so sorry. I'm going to go some other place. He intensely came there.

And he intensely went there so that there would be this conflict. He came to preach. He came to baptize. But he also came so that this discussion would happen. So that those people in that day would understand who Jesus was.

And they could understand the ministry of John the Baptist. And also so that it could be inspired and written and then preserved for us today. So that we could read it and understand why John the Baptist ministry and the ministry of Jesus, they would overlap.

One commentary said that Jesus ran away from the city because he was not accepted as the Messiah. And he was hiding out here. And none of us in this room believe that today.

[8:29] Jesus was not running away from anything. I just want to remind you once again, he intensely took himself to this river. Him and his disciples are baptizing. And then John the Baptist and their disciples are baptizing.

And the people are coming over to Jesus. The Jews have questions. They're like, this seems kind of redundant. Why there's two groups of people having the same ministry? What's going on? And then John the Baptist is going to explain that to us.

He made a loud statement with his actions. It's always interesting as you're reading through the Bible that not only look at the words of Jesus, but look at the actions of what he was doing. He is God.

He does nothing by mistake. So he went to a place on purpose to teach a lesson. And we learned something from that. In verses 25 through 29, John ends his ministry.

And then in verse number 30, it's a transition I said where he said I must decrease. Jesus must increase. And verses 31 through 36 is Christ increasing. We'll look at what John the Baptist says about Jesus.

[9:25] The matter of purifying was important to the Jews. Jews started the conflict. I said maybe Nicodemus was involved, but the conversation got personal quickly. And so the question of what was going on, there was a passing from the old system to the new.

John was baptizing for repentance as he was preparing the way, as he was making straight the path. Jesus is going to come. He's baptizing. He's telling people that they need to repent, that Jesus is coming.

And now we find Jesus, he is baptizing as well. And if Jesus and the disciples are baptizing, then Ed obviously hasn't been crucified on the cross yet. And obviously as in Romans chapter number 6, when we are baptized, as Miss Alicia was baptized just a few weeks ago.

And it says buried in the likeness of his death and raised the walk in newness of life. Well, obviously that hasn't happened yet because he hasn't been buried and he hasn't been risen. But Jesus here is baptizing.

And the baptism that he has given is not for salvation. It never has been and it will never be. And no dispensation will baptism save somebody. But what his baptism here is a sign of those that have put their faith and trust in him.

[10:33] And so there's a difference there in what's happening. One system is leaving and a new one is coming in and people don't understand it. Well, they don't stay on that subject very long. And there's other passages in the Bible about it because it goes away from baptism, the conversation.

There's not more verses on this subject there. The conversation immediately goes to John the Baptist. All the men in here have had that happen before with them, with their wives. The wives introduce one subject.

But very quickly you realize it's not about that subject at all, is it? It's about something that you have done. And that's what John the Baptist, they did. They kind of introduced an argument. They said, this thing's about purifying.

It's about baptism. But then they quickly said, but what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do? They tried to provoke jealousy in John the Baptist there and say, you don't really like this, do you? That these people are leaving you and going to them.

Now, John confronts his disciples in verse number 26 here. He tells us, it says, And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, be home to the same baptizers.

[11:33] And all men come to him. In Matthew 11 and verse 11, we'll look at that. We're told something about John the Baptist that's not said about any other man.

And so his disciples would know this. So Matthew 11 and 11 said, Verily I send you among them that are born of women. And we established today that's all of us except for our brother Mac back there. All right. All of us that are born of women that hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist, notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

We'll look at that second part in a minute. But first it says, he that is born of women, there is none that is greater than John the Baptist. How would you imagine putting that painting on a business card? That would be pretty nice, wouldn't it?

According to God in heaven, there's been nobody greater that is born of women than me. That would be pretty good, wouldn't it? That would open up a few doors for you. So John the Baptist, his disciples knew this.

John the Baptist knew this was said about him. So you would think that he would be a prideful man, but he was not a prideful man at all. They did not like the crowds going to Jesus. John was accepted by the people.

They had looked for an Old Testament prophet. And they were willing to say they repented of their sins. But now we get to a point where they're going to have to bow down to Jesus as king. And many of them who took of John the Baptist's baptism that said they were ready to repent of their sins, they were not ready for Jesus as savior.

They were ready for Jesus, the one that would set up a millennial kingdom. They were ready for Jesus, the king who would come to this earth and who would rule and reign, who would, they thought, destroy the Gentiles and make them great.

And they were willing to say that they repented for this king Jesus, but they didn't think they needed a savior. And that's what Jesus came as. It was a savior. Moving on here.

Others had dealt with this same problem in the Bible. In Numbers 11, 26, and 29, some people come to Moses, and they say that there's people out there and they're doing these things.

In Numbers 11, 29, Moses says that he wished that everybody, if we look, it says, And Moses said unto him, Envious thou for my sake? Would God that all Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.

[13:45] They came to Moses and they said, There's a lot of other people doing stuff out there. Are you jealous? And Moses said, I wish all God's people were out there doing ministry like this. Not only do we see it with Moses, we see it with Apostle Paul.

You're familiar with that story in Philippians 4. They come to them and they said, There's people out preaching in your territory. There's people out there preaching where you preached before. And Paul said, Hey, if they do it by contention, for whatever reason they're preaching the gospel, I'm glad that it's happening.

And then Paul really understood this. He says this several times in 1 Corinthians 15, 10 is another time that Paul talks about it. 1 Corinthians chapter number 15, verse number 10. But by the grace of God, I am what I am and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I have labored more abundantly than they all.

Yet not I, but the grace of God, which was in me. He says, By the grace of God, I am what I am. I want to stop here a second because we're looking in the Bible and we're looking at the characteristic of John the Baptist.

And we're looking that he's a man that said, Hey, I'm just thankful that the Lord is being praised and glorified. God, I'm thankful that God allowed me to be a prophet for the time. And I'm thankful for the ministry that he gave me.

[14:52] I'm not disappointed that I'm going off the scene. I'm so glad that Jesus is here and that people are going to him. But there's no jealousy in it because he knew that the ministry did not belong to him, but it belonged to God.

And we just saw two other examples. Could I encourage you in that? How excited do you get when you hear about your brothers and sisters that are in this room or maybe they're at a church down the road or maybe they're on the other side of the world and a missionary?

How often do you say, Man, I am excited about how God is using them. I'm excited that people know about them. Or how many times is there a jealousy that gets in? They say, Man, I come to this church and I'm about tired of hearing somebody from the Tawby family.

How many kids do they have and how many places are they going? Every time I go somewhere, I'm hearing about them. Or you come in the church and another person comes up and they just have another great story about how God's done something.

And you've got to ask yourself, Are you sincerely excited about that? And you should be because you ought to know that it's not your ministry. You and I don't have ministries, that the Word of God has a ministry, that Jesus Christ has a ministry.

[15:55] And so when we see it happening in another place, we should be like John the Baptist and there shouldn't be any jealousy in us. We ought to say, Praise God. Or as we say in India, Jamasiki. Right, Brother James?

All right, you ought to say, Praise the Lord for that. John knew the message that Jesus had. And then the messenger was greater than he was.

He said in verse number 29, he says, He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He said, I know here that I am not the one. I am not the bridegroom. I am not the Son of God. I am not God.

I am just simply a messenger of him. John preached about the millennial out there. Jesus comes and he speaks about eternal life. What is the message he brings? John compares himself to where we get the best man.

[16:51] This position that we have would come from that in American wedding. It would come from what is being spoken about here. He knew that his job was over. Micah, you were married recently.

I don't imagine that your best man has come over and cooked supper. He's not going to mow the yard for you. He's not going to pick up dry cleaning for you. He's not going to do anything. He had an easy job, right?

He stood there. Maybe you gave him the ring. Maybe you didn't. You know, I wouldn't trust my best friend, man, with the ring. Just pretended like I took it from his hand. And so his job's over at that day. He knew that it was over.

When your hand went into the hand of Catherine and you were married, all those people and all those parts, they ended. They don't exist anymore. The flower girl didn't show up at church and say, Hey, I'm the flower girl forever.

I'm going to keep passing out flowers. Her job was temporary and it ended. And this is just some of the Hebrew tradition, but they said some of the things like that the bridegroom would not speak until his hand was in the hand of his bride.

[17:48] And in verse 29, it said, John the Baptist, I rejoice when I hear the voice of the bridegroom because he knew that his job had been completed. And John the Baptist is a great example of a man who did his job without jealousy, who pointed to Jesus.

And when he went off the scene, we look in the Bible and we hope to hear all day, Well done, my good and faithful servant. But we know that about John the Baptist. He did what was given him to do.

And he brought the people to Jesus. He helped to bring us together to the messenger. And he rejoiced and was there. And that's what he had been preparing, was people that had been repenting, that had been baptized, and now they were waiting for the Messiah to come.

And that's his job. And he did not try to upstage the bridegroom. He knew that his job had ended and that it was time for him to lead. Now, in the last, I said that he was decreasing.

John the Baptist was decreasing. And then in verse number 30, it said, I must decrease, he must increase. Now, listen, if you will, in verses 31 through 36. Here are five things that John the Baptist says about the supremacy of Christ.

[18:56] This is some of his last words. He's in his earthly ministry. He'll quickly go off to jail. As we know, a lady was dancing one day. And he said, what can I give to you?

And she said, I want John the Baptist's head. And so we know that this is the end of his ministry. And his last public announcement, he takes five verses of speaking. And he says, let me tell you how amazing and wonderful Jesus is.

Verse number 31. He that cometh from above is above all. He that is of earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth. He that cometh from heaven is above all. Christ came from heaven.

He is above all. And he said of me in Matthew 11, 11. He said, even though I may be the greatest born of women, the Bible says at the end of that verse, it says that the least in the kingdom is greater than him.

So he was saying that the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist, which means the greatest in the kingdom of God must be so much greater than him. So John the Baptist says Christ came from heaven.

[19:56] It's good to keep in mind when people question you if Jesus is God. Because they would say, I believe the Bible and I believe God, but I just don't believe that Jesus really was God. Well, if you can't believe the testimony of Jesus, you can't believe the testimony of God.

If you can't believe the testimony of Jesus and you can't believe the testimony of John the Baptist or any other character in the Bible. So first of all, he said Christ is supreme and is greater than me because he came from heaven.

Secondly, in verse number 32, and what he has seen and heard that he testifieth and no man receiveth his testimony. Verse number 32 says Christ gives truth firsthand.

John the Baptist was giving truth secondhand from what he would be taught, but Jesus Christ is truth, and so the truth he would give would be firsthand. Verse number 33, He that has received this testimony has set this to seal that God is true.

His testimony always agrees with God because when Jesus speaks, he speaks in the place there for God. He is the Godhead fully of the body here, that he represents the Spirit and the God here on earth.

[21:07] You cannot separate believing in Jesus without believing in God. Verse number 34, For he whom God has sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

Jesus Christ is not given the Holy Spirit in measure. Remember in Luke chapter number 1 when John the Baptist is in the womb of his mother, and then Jesus comes thereby and he leaps in the womb.

And so John the Baptist, he knew of that, and they'll test them. We see the Holy Spirit comes upon men and dwells in them. The day he lives inside of us, he said that in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is there without measure, meaning he has him completely.

Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And then lastly, Christ is supreme because God says so. And that's good enough, isn't it? You don't need many reasons when one of your reasons is that God said so.

Verse number 35, The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things unto his hand. And then in verse number 36, at the end of John the Baptist's ministry, he extends an invitation one more time.

[22:11] He says, 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. Sounds just like the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus, and now it's at the end of verse number 36, he is saying, He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.

And he echoes once again what we had already learned in this chapter in the Bible, that John stated it. In truth, it's stated. If it's stated by Jesus, or if it's stated by John the Baptist, if it's true, it's true here.

And so we have many things that we can learn from John the Baptist. Can I challenge you? I know that you probably didn't get all of those five things when you read it. I hope you'll see it. But just get this. John the Baptist, all of his people are leaving him.

It's the end of his life. He knows that his ministry is over. And so what does he use to do with his very last breath? Is he just goes to say, God is amazing, and Jesus Christ is God.

That's what he chooses to do with his time. And we need ministers like that, that says that no matter what I could talk to you about, I can tell you about Judas Iscariot, as Brother Mike had mentioned, I could tell you about him many things, but if I only have so many words, and I only have so much time here on this earth, I want to use all of my time and energy to tell you about how wonderful our Savior is.

Let me give you some quick lessons before I pray from John. He knew putting people to Jesus, pointing people to Jesus, is the greatest job anyone could ever have.

There is not a greater responsibility than anybody could have been given, than what was given to John the Baptist. And isn't it wonderful that now, that we get to be part of that same thing. There is nothing that you do, there is nothing in your identity, regardless of your profession, that is greater responsibility than pointing people to Jesus.

He knew what he could do for people, did not compare to what Jesus could do for them. Isn't that wonderful? When you see a situation, you say, man, there is only so much I can do, I feel so limited.

Well, that's okay, because you know of somebody that can do what you can't do. And John the Baptist got off the scene, and Jesus Christ came and did what only he could do. He worshipped Jesus when those following him did not expect him to.

I get that from when John the disciples, John the Baptist come to him, and they're saying, all right, I know that you made a big deal about Jesus, but now that you've lost your ministry, are you really all that excited about Jesus being here?

[24:30] Or would you want some more time, so that you can be the big shot a little longer? And he said, praise the Lord that this is happening. People are watching you. Every one of you are being watched in here.

Some on more levels than others. Some of you are choosing to be watched, but regardless, you're being watched. And when you're at a point that people do not expect you to serve the Lord and to say that he is wonderful, that's when your message will mean the most.

John the Baptist really made the statement that he was just a messenger, and that Jesus was God at this moment, where they expected him to make a choice. He constantly used his voice to promote Jesus, and not himself.

And then he gave all that he had to invite people to Jesus. And that last verse there, in verse number 36, is what he did. So can I give you some practical application in here today, and being like John the Baptist.

We are not Jesus. We are not the Son of God, and we are not God. And there are things that we will never be able to do for people, that only God can do. But that's okay, and that's great, because we're in this ministry with him.

[25:33] And we should take the job that he has given us to do, and do it as well, and do it as good as we can, knowing that he is going to come in, and do only what he can. And can I encourage you in here, not to become jealous of one another, not to be jealous of a ministry at a different place down the road, because we're all in this thing together.

And can I also encourage you that we must share Jesus. And I couldn't say it any better than Brother Micah said it, that there's nothing you can do. John the Baptist was greatest among men. He could have talked about anything that he wanted to talk about, but his message was simple, and he stayed on target.

And can I encourage you, get involved in the foundations, learning about it, and teaching people about the person of Jesus Christ. You know, some of you know that, all of you probably know I went to Kentucky last weekend, and I was there with my brother.

And I have realized that there is no conversation that you can have that will replace an ongoing relationship with somebody. You know, I would liken it to this.

Remember when, we all know when Ethan Howarth had the accident, when his leg was shot, his relationship with his earthly father was already there. His relationship with his heavenly father was there.

All the teaching was there in his life, when he was ready to encounter that problem. There's no great orator, no great preacher, no matter how great a communicator you were, if that was not in the heart of Ethan at that time, when you came to him, and you tried to offer words of comfort to him, it would have been very little, and it would have been very weak.

And so in foundations, we should be constantly be people in the book that are focusing on Jesus, so no matter what happens, we know that he is going to be glorified. And so you do that.

You keep your conversations on Jesus. As we share the gospel and evangelism, that's one thing. But if you're not sharing the gospel with one another, then you're not going to do it with your coworkers.

At the end of this day, if when I'm hanging out with Andrew Pearson or somebody in here, and I'm not comfortable speaking about the things of the Lord, then I'm definitely not going to be comfortable speaking about the things of the Lord with one of Micah's coworkers.

John the Baptist was a man who gave his life to speaking about Jesus and constantly pointing to Jesus that I am not the man, he is the man. Focus your eyes on him, give your attention to him, because he is the one that is worthy of our praise.

[27:52] And so I'm going to pray here tonight. And could I ask you to think, decrease, say, Lord, I must decrease in myself. Some of you in here that are in a training center, you want to get to the mission field, you want to do something, and it's very easy to think, man, this thing of the ministry, I must have a ministry so that I can get to the next step.

Jesus never wants you to get to the next step, because he is the next step. He is this step, and he's the next step, and he is the one that is most important. Some of you that have been saved here a while, and you think you've graduated past some of these foundations, some of these fundamental things.

If you've ever got bored of the gospel, then you never really knew it. And so we should get excited about the things of the Lord. John the Baptist, greatest man born among women, that was born from a woman, he gave his life the pointing to Jesus, and he gave his last words to it.

And I hope that could be said about every one of us in here tonight, that we will give our lives to point people to Jesus. Heavenly Father, thank you for the testimony of John the Baptist, Lord. Thank you for the words that were recorded, Lord, so that we could see it.

Lord, I ask that you will be with us tonight, that we will make a decision in here. Lord, to be a crisis man like Jesus is, to be teachers of the gospel like Jesus. But Lord, we want to be like John the Baptist, and decrease, and make much of you.

[29:05] I pray that this week, Lord, our conversations will center around you, and the things of you, and that at the end of this week, people will know more about Jesus, than they would know about Trent Cornwell. They would know more about you, than anybody in this room.

And I pray that we will give our conversations, over to worshiping you. With every head bowed, and every eye closed, Miss Kristen's going to play. We won't prolong this, but if you'd like to find a place, at this altar, or at your seat, and say that I must decrease tonight, and I must make sure that Jesus increases in my life, now you have a time to do that.

That Jesus increases in my life, now you have a time to do that. You have been listening to Trent Cornwell, pastor at Vision Baptist Church.

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	Thank you
[30:18]	