

"Jesus Must Increase and We Must Decrease"

John 3:22-36

Introduction: As we continue our study in the Gospel of John the Holy Spirit is taking us from the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus to a scene Judea where there are people being baptized. As we step into the verses, we shall see that there are two groups baptizing. This will lead to a conversation in which John the Baptist will point to the Supremacy of Jesus Christ.

➤ **John the Baptist's Testimony**

Notice John 3:22

Here we find Jesus with His disciples in Judea and He tarries with them as they baptized. I say they baptized because of what we are told in John 4:2.

Notice John 4:2

I picture the scene as Jesus sat on the bank of the water and He and His disciples talked as people came to be baptized. We do not know what the conversations were like, but it would have been a great joy to be part of all that was happening. I picture the scene as Jesus sat on the bank of the water source and He watched and between baptisms they would discuss spiritual matters.

Application:

This same blessing is available to each one of us who knows the Lord. We too can sit at the feet of Jesus and have sweet fellowship with Him. This is what our Lord desires and this is what we need.

Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

⁴¹ *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:*

⁴² *But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

Notice John 3:23-24

Now the scene changes and we are taken to Aenon which means, "many springs", and it was there that John was baptizing. The idea here is that there was a steady line of people coming to John for baptism.

Notice John 3:25

Here we see that the Jews came to John's disciples and they entered into a question about purifying. Let me show you a passage we looked at last week and then we can understand what this was all about.

Mark 7:3-9

³ *For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.*

⁴ *And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables.*

⁵ *Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?*

⁶ *He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

⁷ *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

⁸ *For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.*

⁹ *And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

The Jews were so caught up in the traditions that they missed the Truth of the Scriptures. They believed if a man ate without washing his hands or the pots then he would be contaminated spiritually. Jesus corrected this thinking.

Mark 7:14-15

¹⁴ And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

¹⁵ There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

Notice John 3:26

The Jews had got into the heads of the disciples of John. Now his disciples were concerned because there were more people going to Jesus and His disciples than there were coming to John. There was jealousy that had developed in the hearts of the disciples of John.

Application:

This same spirit of jealousy has made its way into many churches today. When this happens the end result is not good. Many times, the churches will make changes as they compete for people. They may open a coffee bar, they may change the music, they will go down a contemporary path, and the list goes on and on. Many of the churches lose sight of what God has ordained the church for. It is to be a place where we come in and learn the Bible. Too many have become so caught up in the "contemporary" side of things that the Bible is lost.

Ephesians 4:11-15

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Getting back to our text, the question is, "How will John handle this?"

Notice John 3:27-28

John was not jealous. He understood that this was his mission. He was to point people to Jesus Christ. This was the will of God for people to follow Jesus Christ.

Application:

This verse has a broad application, and we need to lay it to heart. Notice the words of Cole.

"This is such an important lesson to keep in mind at all times: All of my gifts, abilities, and opportunities come from God by grace alone. Everything! Do I have a sound mind? That came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory. Do I have money? That came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory. Do I have a ministry or place of service? That, too, came from God, who wants me to use it for His purpose and glory. John knew that he was the forerunner of the Messiah, and he sought to fulfill that ministry which God had given him."

James 1:17

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

1 Peter 4:10-11

¹⁰ As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 4:7

⁷ For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Notice John 3:26-28 again.

We need to notice that John understood his ministry. It was not a competition. It was his responsibility to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Jesus Christ. John's ministry was to point people to Jesus.

Mark 1:2-3

² As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Notice the words of MacArthur.

"The measure of success for any ministry is not how many people follow the minister, but how many people follow Christ through the minister."

Notice John 3:29

Here in this verse John illustrates his ministry. The best man in the Jewish culture was often the man who had introduced the bride and the groom. His responsibility is to bring the two together and then he fades from the scene. That is exactly how John saw his ministry. He served as the best man. It was his ministry to introduce the bride to the Groom and as he seen people coming to Jesus Christ his joy was fulfilled. John was only interested in pointing people to Jesus Christ.

Notice John 3:30

Here is John's plan behind his ministry. John was very popular, but he was content to decrease in popularity so as to have Jesus Christ increase. The word "MUST" is essential in this verse. This is how it had to be. John had to decrease and Jesus had to increase.

Application:

This should be true for our lives as well. As we live and we grow in grace there should be seen in us more of Jesus and less of me. Paul made it very clear in Galatians.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

As we grow in grace there should be seen more of Jesus seen in us and less of us. Notice the Words Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

⁷ *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

⁸ *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

⁹ *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

¹⁰ *Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*

¹¹ *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.*

Conclusion:

In our lives as believers there should be more of Jesus seen in us and less of us.

Illustration:

If we boil water and place a tea bag in and let it boil for a while and then come to find out that we do not like the tea because it is very bitter, it is not the fault of the boiling water, but it is what is in the tea bag. We go through hot water experiences in life, and if what comes out of us is bitter and sinful it is not the fault of the hot water experience. The hot water only reveals what is in our heart and if what comes out is bitterness then we can be sure that we are not under the control of the Holy Spirit. We are not surrendered over to the Spirit but instead we are controlled by the flesh. When we are controlled by the Holy Spirit and we encounter "hot water" situations, then the Spirit will manifest the life of Jesus Christ when the hot water is applied.