

HE MUST INCREASE
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John 3:22-36

1. This chapter is divided into three sections.
 - a. Verses 1-21 chronicles Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus.
 - b. Verses 22-30 have to do with a conversation between John the Baptist and some of his followers precipitated by Jesus' ascendancy and John's diminished role.
 - c. Verses 31-36 contain the Apostle John's addendum to what had transpired and been said.
NOTE: Commentators disagree as to whether or not the entire passage, beginning with verse 22, should be attributed to John the Baptist.
2. Whatever position one takes does not, in any way, impact the truth that was written or recorded.
3. Before we examine today's passage I want to make a couple of comments about Jesus' closing remarks to Nicodemus.
 - a. God sent Jesus into the world that the world might be saved through Him.
 - b. He who believes in Jesus, according to the Scriptures, is no longer under judgment, but he who does not believe is already judged, or under condemnation.
 - c. Those who are evil and under judgment avoid the Light because they love the darkness and the sin it hides.
 - d. They hate the Light because it exposes them and their deeds.
 - e. They who embrace and practice the truth constantly come to the Light because they want their lives to be what God wants them to be.
4. Now we find that for a short while the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus overlapped.
5. Both were ministering and baptizing in the same general area.
NOTE: At this point Jesus had not yet appointed any of His disciples as Apostles, but He was allowing them to baptize. (4:1-2) G. Campbell Morgan believed that both John and Jesus, through His disciples, were performing the baptism of repentance.
5. Some of John's disciples got into a discussion with an unnamed Jew about the issue of purification; the whole subject of moral and ceremonial cleansing.
NOTE: The baptism of repentance was preparatory and not celebratory; not a proclamation of a person's conversion and new birth.
6. Perhaps the unnamed Jew questioned the validity of John's ministry in light of the success Jesus was having. (People love to make comparisons.)
7. John's disciples came to him and reported what they had heard—probably with some feelings of resentment and jealousy because they respected and loved John.
8. John used the opportunity to point out several important truths that we need to understand if we are going to fulfill our ministries here on earth.

I. A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from Heaven.

NOTE: Heaven is an actual place, and I believe it should be capitalized.

- A. John had received his calling, authority, anointing, message, and ministry from God.
- B. He understood that his purpose had pretty much been fulfilled.
- C. God is sovereign, and in His sovereignty He imparts to us what we need to fulfill His purposes in our lives.

D. We are not in the business of competing, but rather we are to cooperate with God in the accomplishment of His will.

E. The Apostle Paul directed a blunt question to the Corinthians, some of whom had arrogant on behalf of one against another. I Corinthians 4:7

“For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (Why do you act as if you deserve the credit?)

II. John found joy in knowing that he had fulfilled God’s purpose.

A. He saw his role as that of “the friend of the bridegroom.”

B. As the friend of the bridegroom he was to deliver the bride to the bridegroom, and then step back and give the bridegroom center stage.

C. Jesus made a great statement related to friends and friendship. John 15:12-14

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you.”

D. John proved to be Jesus’ friend, and in doing so doing experienced the joy of Christ.

E. If our joy is tied to our outward success, the recognition success brings, and the gratitude of others we are wrongly motivated.

III. He must increase, but I must decrease.

A. John knew that he had accomplished the work God had given him to do, and so he was ready to step back and give Jesus Christ center stage.

B. If you are looking for a guiding principle for your life this would be a good one.

C. It is a good one because this is exactly what God is trying to accomplish in our lives.

1. Romans 8:28-29

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.

2. 2 Corinthians 4:7-11

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; 8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

D. Very few people ever come to the place where Jesus truly has center stage.

APPLICATION

1. We are of the earth and have earthly limitations, but Jesus is from Heaven and is above all.

2. He has perfect understanding, He speaks the words of God, and He is loved by the Father and has been given all things.

3. The person who believes in the Son declares that God is true and subsequently receives eternal life.

4. The person who does not obey the Son will not see life because the wrath of God abides (rests) on him.