

John 3:22–30

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²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

²⁴ For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews 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 testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

²⁷ John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

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. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

"*He Must Increase*"
John 3:22-30

INTRO:

This paragraph in **John 3** turns our attention from the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, back to John the Baptist, the forerunner. Here we find John the Apostle's summary of the whole of John the Baptist's ministry. The event that precipitates John's great statement is a conversation with some Jews about a theological issue (v.25). "*Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.*" This made John's followers aware that this Jesus is suddenly eclipsing John the Baptist

himself in popularity and importance. This causes them to seek out John and to expect him to do something about all of this.

The answer they received shocked them. John's basic response was in **verse 30**. The principle was that He, the Lord Jesus Christ, must increase and that I, John the forerunner, must decrease. In this passage, John the Baptist gave us three reasons why this must happen. The Lord Jesus must increase and John decrease:

- I. *Because it is God's Will (v. 22-27)*
- II. *Because Jesus is the Promised One (v. 28-29)*
- III. *Because it is God's Ultimate Plan (v. 30)*

I. Because it is God's Will (v. 22-27)

A. The Lord Jesus must increase and John the Baptist must decrease first because it was the will of God the Father. **Verses 22-26** set the scene for the question John's disciples were going to ask him.

"After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!'"

1. John's followers came to John the Baptist saying in effect, *"John, that Jesus whom you kept promoting earlier in your ministry has now gotten bigger than you are. He is the center of attention. Everyone is following Him now instead of you."*
2. Implied in this question is the assumption that John the Baptist needed to do something about this situation.

B. John's response to this question must have shocked his disciples. Far from upset that this was the case, John was actually pleased.

"John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.'"

1. In stating this principle, John was simply giving voice to a truth which is underlined over and over again in the Bible. John lived his life in awareness of the sovereignty of God over all the details of life. This principle takes several forms.

2. In **1 Corinthians 3:5-7**, the Apostle Paul applied this principle to the growth of the church. The unstated question from the Corinthians was, “Who should get credit for the increase in God’s church in Corinth, Paul, Peter, or Apollos?” Paul’s answer was,

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So, then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”

3. The principle was applied in another way in **1 Corinthians 4:6-7**.

“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”

4. Do we live our lives recognizing that God is the blessed controller of all things? When something pushes into our lives, the blessing is we know it comes through the loving hands of our heavenly Father. Whether that thing is a blessing or a test, it still comes from Him. Remember **James 1:16-17**?

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

II. Because Jesus is the Promised One (v. 28-29)

“You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ 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. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” (John 3:28-29)

A. He must increase and I must decrease because God the Father has given that to Him. He must increase and I must decrease because the Lord Jesus is the Promised One. John’s sole purpose in life was to be the forerunner and prepare the way for the Messiah to come.

B. To make his disciples understand, John used an image that we think we understand, but in truth we do not. A best man at today’s weddings does not have anywhere near the responsibility the best man had at a wedding in our Lord’s Day. The best man arranged the wedding and was responsible to make sure every detail was taken care. He was the one who ultimately brought the bride from her father’s house to the groom and made sure the wedding took place.

1. John said to his disciples and to us that this was his job. His purpose was not to be the center of attention, the groom. Rather, he was to make the preparations, to prepare the way for the bride and groom to come to the wedding and to be joined in marriage.

2. We read John's marching orders in **Isaiah 40:3-5**

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low. The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth. The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'"

John understood his role and he was determined to fulfill it and not usurp a role that God had not given him. Jesus was the one who came to die for our sin. He is the One who was God in human flesh. John was to prepare the way for Him so that He might fulfill His mission on planet earth.

C. We can learn much from John here.

1. The bottom-line principle is that God assigns us our roles and we should be happy to operate in them. John the Baptist knew his role was to exalt the Lord Jesus. He did not chafe in his God given role.

2. I cannot help but think about a guy named Barnabas. Remember how he paved the way for the Apostle Paul to come to prominence. He brought him to the apostles when they were not excited about talking to him. Barnabas also sought him out in Tarsus and brought him back to Antioch to minister there. When the ministry begins, it is apparent whom God gifted to be the lead minister and who God called to play second fiddle. Barnabas was willing to be the second man, if that was what God wanted him to do.

3. This does not mean we should not have godly ambitions. Paul certainly had them. Yet, it does mean that when we understand what role God has intended for us, we need to be willing to fulfill that role or to do that job so that He might be glorified in us.

III. Because it is God's Ultimate Plan (v. 30)

A. **(1)** He must increase and I must decrease because it is God's will. **(2)** He must increase and I must decrease because the Lord Jesus is the Promised One. **(3)** Finally, He must increase and I must decrease because it is God's Ultimate Plan. John finishes his discussion by laying out this truth, "***He must increase, but I must decrease.***"

B. We understand these words as a summary of John's ministry. The Lord Jesus must continue to increase because my ministry was and is all about Him. He is to be the preeminent one. He is to be glorified. His ministry is ongoing, while my ministry will be fading into the background.

C. But we can apply these words to our lives. He, the Lord Jesus, must increase and we must decrease. Not that we choose to decrease. It is that He becomes so much more important in our lives than the things that used to concern us. He must be center stage. He must be seen. Our works must be seen as His works being done through us. We want to be the voice, but He must be the face that people see!

1. Spiritual growth happens as long as He continues to increase and we as a result decrease.
2. The problem comes when we draw a line in our lives and say, "*Lord, you can have this much of me and no more!*" The moment we do this, we quit growing and our joy in walking with the Lord also stops growing. He made us. He bought us back at an incredible price. All we can do is say, "*Lord, we are yours. Do with us what You will!*" We must say with John, "***He must increase, I must decrease!***"

C. Let me read to you what God the Son thought about John the Baptist, who made this His life's goal.

Matthew 11:7-11 *"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist."*

I don't know about you, but I would like to have the Son of God say that about me.

None of Self and All of Thee

None Of Self And All Of Thee

Not too fast

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The top staff uses treble clef and 3/4 time, with dynamics 'Not too fast'. It contains four lines of lyrics: 1. O, the bit - ter pain and sor - row That a time could ev - er be, 2. Yet He found me; I be - held Him Bleed - ing on th'ac - curs - ed tree, 3. Day by day His ten - der mer - cy Heal - ing, help - ing full and free, 4. High - er than the high - est heav - ens, Deep - er than the deep - est sea, 5. When I proud - ly said to Je - sus "All of self, and none of Thee," 6. And my wist - ful heart said faint - ly, "Some of self, and some of Thee," 7. Bro't me low - er while I whis - pered "Less of self, and more of Thee," 8. Lord, Thy love at last hath con - quered "None of self, and all of Thee," 9. All of self and none of Thee, All of self and none of Thee, 10. Some of self and some of Thee, Some of self and some of Thee, 11. Less of self and more of Thee, Less of self and more of Thee, 12. None of self and all of Thee, None of self and all of Thee, 13. When I proud - ly said to Je - sus, "All of self, and none of Thee," 14. And my wist - ful heart said faint - ly, "Some of self, and some of Thee," 15. Bro't me low - er while I whis - pered, "Less of self, and more of Thee," 16. Lord, Thy love at last hath con - quered, "None of self, and all of Thee."

mf

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Rit.

ff