

## Pt 18 He Must Increase – John 3:22-30

A sermon series in the Gospel of John, by Pastor Byron Chesney at Porchlight Baptist Church [www.pbcknox.com](http://www.pbcknox.com)

### John 3:22-30

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

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

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

We pick up in the middle of John chapter 3 and the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus has ended.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

We see that phrase: “**After these things.**” We know this is referring to the things we have been studying the last few times concerning Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the night and Jesus teaching him that he must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. All that took place in Jerusalem, as Jesus was there for the Passover and that is where Nicodemus apparently lived. Now, we see Jesus and his disciples have departed the city of Jerusalem and are now out in the countryside in Judaea. Jerusalem is in Judea by the way.

...and there he tarried with them, and baptized. Interestingly enough, this is the only place in the Bible where we read of Jesus baptizing; however, according to the next Chapter in John, we see Jesus himself actually did not do the physical baptizing of anyone: **John 4:1-3** When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) 3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

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

The location of Aenon (Ainōn) near Salim (sal-ime') is a little hard to pin down. You can go online and Google it and you will find “suggested” places for the location. Most people believe it was about 4 miles Northeast of Jerusalem along the Jordan River. Some believe it is the same place mentioned in **Genesis 33:18** And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city.

In John MacArthur's commentary\* he states: *The exact location of this reference is disputed. The phrase may refer to either Salim near Shechem or Salim that is six miles south of Beth Shean. Both are in the region of Samaria. Aenon is a transliterated Hebrew word meaning "springs," and both of these possible sites have plenty of water.*\*John MacArthur Bible Commentary, John 3:23

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

We know the reason John was cast into prison, it was because of his stand against King Herod having sexual relations and marrying his brother's wife. Interestingly enough, John (the Gospel writer) does not give the account of John's imprisonment and death. The Gospel of Matthew is the only one that goes into detail about it. You can read it in **Matthew 14:1-12**.

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

There was some kind of dispute between the disciples of John the Baptist and the Jews concerning purifying. The Bible does not go into detail about what all it was about. It may have had something to do with Jesus and his disciples baptizing men who had already been baptized by John.

Look at **Acts 19:1-6**

- 1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
- 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Whatever the questions were about purification, we don't know. It could have been the Jews questioning John's authority of baptizing people. They may have looked at his baptism as some type of purifying and then Jesus comes along and is baptizing people. Was John's baptism real? That could be a possible reason for the questioning.

Or, it could have been some concern from John's followers about the popularity of Jesus' ministry. They may have been jealous or afraid their religious practices were going to be done away with.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

What do you think the motive was for these men to come to John about this? Were they trying to get him riled up? Were they trying to place a wedge between John and Jesus? Were they just wanting to controversy? There are an awful lot of people that just aren't happy if they are not embroiled in controversy. They always have to have some kind of stink stirred up.

John's ministry had been wildly popular for many years and since Jesus came on the scene, John's ministry is dwindling in numbers.

That is another thing many people get all wrapped up in – numbers. There is a common misconception that the more people you can gather together, the more successful you are. Whether it is how many people are in the pews, how many cars are in the parking lot, or how many dollars are in the offering plate. It's sad and pathetic. Sadly, churches have fallen for that lie and are modeling themselves after the world's theology. The truth is, God's theology is the complete opposite of the

world's. He does not measure the success of a Church based on numbers. He measures it to how closely a Church lines up with His Son, Jesus. As Paul put it in his letter to the church at Ephesus: **Ephesians 4:13** 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:

Fortunately, John the Baptist did not play the world's measuring games. He understood the importance of Christ and His ministry. His answer is one of the most humble in all of human history:

**27** John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. **28** Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. **29** He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease.

John the Baptist doesn't seem to have one selfish bone in his body. He isn't the least bit worried about his ministry because he had done what he was sent to do and that was to prepare the way. He wasn't jealous of Jesus or concerned that his disciples would start following him, in fact, that is exactly what he wanted to happen.

**He that hath the bride is the bridegroom:** friends, the bride is the Church. You and me, we are the bride of Christ. That makes Christ the bridegroom. When I married my wife, she was the bride, and I was the bridegroom. When Christ comes back for His Church, the Church is his bride and He is the bridegroom. And, friend, you better be wearing your wedding garment or you will have no part in the marriage feast. When the King comes and presents His son Jesus to the wedding party, if you aren't wearing a wedding garment (clothed in Christ), you will not be part of the ceremony. The Bible says that those not wearing a wedding garment will be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth! (**Matthew 22:13**)

I like the part where he talks about being the friend of the bridegroom. John compares himself as a friend to the bridegroom. We would call this the Best Man. At the wedding, the Best Man is only there to assist the groom. The Best man is not to be noticed or stand out. The Best man is in the background, he's a nobody, he's only there to help. The groom is the center of attention on his wedding day, not the best man. It's not the job of the best man to draw attention to himself to get others to look at him.

John is saying, I'm nothing more than the best man at the wedding. Christ is the bridegroom, and He should be getting all the attention.

**30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

If you underline things in your Bible, please underline this verse: **He must increase, but I must decrease.**

John the Baptist was the epitome of humbleness. I don't think we can quite grasp just how popular he was. He was so popular that he didn't even have to go to where the people were, he could just hang out in the wilderness and preach, and they would flock to him. Even the religious leaders of the day, the Scribes and Pharisees came out to hear John preach. In fact, one of the most blistering sermons you will ever read was given by John and directed toward the Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Matthew 3:7:** *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

You better believe this upset those guys. John the Baptist upset King Herod so much for preaching about his incestuous affair that he had John imprisoned and then later beheaded.

If anyone had hit the "big-time" if you will, it was John the Baptist. He was the hottest preacher of the day. And then along came Jesus...

Now to most self-inflated, huge ego, narcissistic popular preachers of today would have had their cages rattled when Jesus showed up. This would be a big damper on their service. It might mean they will drop off Oprah Winfrey's book list.

A few points about John the Baptist:

### **1. John the Baptist's ministry was not about himself; it was about Jesus:**

**John 1:22-27** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? **23** He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. **24** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. **25** And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? **26** John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; **27** He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

Have you noticed with some preachers everything they say is about themselves? If you leave the church service and you know the preacher more than you know Christ, something is dreadfully wrong. John said, "**I'm nothing but the voice of one crying in the wilderness!**" He didn't say, "you mean you don't know who I am? Haven't you heard about my preaching? Haven't you seen the crowds that I draw?"

**2. John the Baptist didn't compete in his ministry:** In our opening text that we read his disciples came to him and said: **26** And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. **27** John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

He did not say, "Well, we've got to do something about this! This is my part of town. He's got no business over here stealing my crowd away! He must be a compromiser! There's no way he's doing it as good as I do!"

No, John simply said "**a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.**" No competition, no backbiting, no jealousy, no getting on the phone and tearing down some other man's ministry on Facebook or Twitter.

### **3. John the Baptist praised others and not himself:**

**Mark 1:6-8** And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; **7** And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. **8** I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

He did not say, "well, I'm older and wiser and have been doing this much longer and there's no way he can do it as good as me." No, he said "**He is much mightier than I am and I'm not even worthy to stoop down and tie the man's shoe laces.**"

That is the opposite of how men act today. Everyone wants to be in the spotlight and have praise heaped on them. If they see someone else getting more attention, they get jealous and start trying to make themselves look better.

#### 4. John the Baptist was a man of prayer:

**Luke 11:1** And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

Throughout your Bible you will find that God blesses when His people start praying and he with-holds blessings when His people do not pray. John the Baptist was born to announce the Saviour of the world. He had the Holy Spirit in the womb. If anyone could have done without praying, looks like it would have been John. Nope, John saw the need for prayer.

#### 5. John the Baptist wanted to lift up Jesus and not himself:

Again, our opening text: **30 He must increase, but I must decrease.**

Jesus said in **John 12:32**: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

What did John say? **"He must increase!"** In other words, Jesus must be lifted up above all. Pay no attention to me, just look unto Him.

I am saddened today by the number of people that think they have to be the center of attention. Some go to great lengths to be noticed. I know some people that get mad if the Pastor doesn't mention their name while preaching. Some always want to be coddled and made to feel important.

If you feel the need to be more important than Jesus, then I'd like to ask you to go ahead and leave. That's right, if you think this service is about you and everyone is here this morning to hear about you and learn about you, then go ahead and exit the building. This service is about Jesus this morning! **HE MUST INCREASE AND WE MUST DECREASE!!!**

He is to be exalted this morning! He is to be lifted up this morning! He is to be praised this morning. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, AMEN! Thank you, Jesus!