

# **“He Must Become Greater, I Must Become Less”**

## **John 3:22-36**

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**Teaching Aim:** To examine the ministries of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist in the Judean wilderness. To demonstrate how easily jealousy can creep into a ministry and remove our eyes from the mission God has called us to. To recognize the humility and joy John the Baptist demonstrated as he heard about the success of Jesus and His disciples. To understand, *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* (See **John 3:36**)

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)**

#### **Part I: The disciples of John become jealous of the success of Jesus (John 3:22-26)**

1. What would you say if you were asked, *“Who was the greatest prophet under the Old Covenant?”* Why? (See **Matthew 11:10-11**) According to **Matt. 11:11**, who is greater than this individual? How does that make you feel as a Christian today?
2. **John 3:22** begins with the words, *“After these things.”* After what things? Where did Jesus take His disciples to when He left Jerusalem? Note: Jerusalem is also in Judea.
3. This must have been an incredible time in history with both Jesus and John the Baptist preaching in the Judean wilderness. Multitudes journeyed out of the cities to the Jordan River to hear them speak. What were Jesus and His disciples doing as they ministered to people at the Jordan River? Have you followed the Lord in water baptism? Why?
4. Where were John and his disciples baptizing (**vs. 23**)? What major Old Testament city was near this location? (Hint: See Map) Why did John pick Aenon near Salim to baptize? What does this tell you about the Jordan River? What are the three main methods for baptism used by the Christian church today? Which of the three do you think is most biblical? Why?

5. John's baptism was a baptism for the remission of sin and a national baptism for the Jews. What was the purpose of John the Baptist's ministry? (See **Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1-2**)
  
6. The synoptic gospels talk about the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist. (See **Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9**) John fills in what the writers of the synoptic gospels left out. When was the Gospel of John written? Where do we find the events of **John chapter 3** fitting chronologically (**vs. 24**)? What event led to the beheading of John the Baptist? (See **Matt. 14:3-11**) What can we learn about John's character from this? What attributes of John can we apply to our lives today in this environment of political correctness? Are you willing to give your life for the truth of God's Word?
  
7. As we come to **verse 25**, at least one of John's disciples (and probably more) had left John to follow Jesus. Who were they? (See **Mark 1:16-20**) What dispute broke out between John's disciples and the Jews in **verse 25**? How did Jewish purification relate to what Jesus and John were doing on the Jordan river? (See **John 2:6**)
  
8. Following the conflict with the Jews, John's disciples approached him in a state of jealousy. What were they jealous about (**vs. 26**)? Should they have been? Was Jesus actually doing the baptizing as they implied? (See **John 4:1-3**) Why is it that today, even churches become jealous of one another? Aren't we all working on the same team towards the same goal (to reach people for Christ and to help them grow spiritually)?

## **Part II: John's humble response and elevation of Jesus (John 3:27-30)**

1. How did John respond to the concern from his disciples (**vs. 27**)? Was His attitude right? John's response is true when it comes to intelligence, giftedness and even spiritual giftedness. People often think of themselves more highly than they ought when in fact, their giftedness is from God. Why is it important for Christians to remain humble?

2. In **verse 28** John reminded his disciples that they were present when the priests and Levites questioned him about who he was? (See **John 1:19-23**) John immediately confessed to them that he was not the Christ. Why is this important to the current discussion? What was John's God given role? (See **Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1**)
  
3. A "*parable*" is an earthly story with a spiritual meaning. What parable does John share with his disciples in **verse 29**? Who is the Bridegroom in this story? Who is the best man? Who is the bride? This is a little different than what the Jews were used to in the Old Testament. Who is the Bridegroom in the Old Testament? Who is the bride? (See **Isa. 54:5**)
  
4. Every Christian should be looking forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb. When will this take place? (See **Rev. 19:6-9**) Note: The point John is making is that the bride belongs to the Bridegroom, the best man should be happy about that and John was.
  
5. John then speaks some of the humblest and most profound words in the entire Bible; what are they (**vs. 30**)? John's mission was to set the stage for the coming Messiah, not to make a name for himself. The same should be true for us today. Why is it that so many people today are trying to make a name for themselves and for their church, but not Jesus?

### **Part III: John verifies the ministry of Jesus and the way to salvation (John 3:31-35)**

1. In **verse 31**, John points his disciples towards the superiority of Jesus Christ. What is his argument? What can we learn about Jesus from the following Scriptures: **John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9**? Jesus has two natures; He is totally Man and totally God. In His human nature, Jesus is the divinely appointed Apistle sent by His Father. What can we learn from **Heb. 3:1**? What is the meaning of the word "*apostle*?" Why the capital "A" here?
  
2. Jesus is eternally God the Son (**vs. 32**). How would you describe eternity to a child? Note: Jesus shared things only He could, yet his own would not receive Him. (See **John 1:4-5, 10-11**) When John writes, "*and no one receives His testimony*," did he literally mean "*no one*?" What is the purpose behind the literary device known as "*hyperbole*?" (See Dictionary)

3. Obviously, many people did receive Christ, but many more did not than did. Have you ever become frustrated when you share Christ with others and they just don't want to hear it? Salvation is of the Lord and so long as there is breath there is hope. How can **2 Cor. 4:3-4** help Christians to understand the spiritual warfare they are involved with in evangelism?
  
4. John indicated he had received the testimony of Jesus and is witness to the truth of this testimony (**vs. 33**). In effect, what are people calling God when they don't believe the words of Jesus? (See **1 John 5:10-12**)
  
5. Some 39x in his gospel, John refers to Jesus as being sent from God. What else can we learn about Jesus from **verse 34**? What did John mean when he said, "*for God does not give the Spirit by measure?*" (See Commentaries) Note: God poured out His Holy Spirit on Jesus without measure; Jesus is Immanuel. After Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit on us.
  
6. An additional 7x in the Gospel of John we are told that "*the Father loves the Son.*" The amazing thing about the gospel is that we are God's love gift to His Son, and then the Son reciprocates that love by delivering us back as a love gift to His Father. (See **John 6:37-39; 10:27-28; 1 Cor. 15:22-28**)
  
7. **Verse 36** says, "*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*" What can we learn about the believer in Jesus Christ from **verse 36a**? What does this mean for you today? According to **verse 36**, mankind only has only two options; what are they? This is the only time in John's gospel that the "*wrath*" of God is mentioned. What can we learn from **2 Peter 3:9**?

### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- Following His encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus took His disciples to the Judean wilderness.
- Jesus baptized many people in the Jordan River; although it was not Jesus doing the baptizing, it was His disciples.
- John's baptism was a baptism for the remission of sins; it was a national baptism for Israel.
- John's disciples became jealous of the success that Jesus and His disciples were having.
- When John heard of the success of Jesus and His disciples, he celebrated realizing, "*He must become greater; I must become less.*" (See **John 3:30 NIV**)
- Jesus is from heaven and is above all; John was of the earth and earthly, a servant to Christ.
- "*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;*" everyone else will have to face the wrath of God unless they repent from their sin and turn to Christ. (See **John 3:36**)