

Sunday Morning Message

April 24, 2022

He Must Increase, I Must Decrease

The Gospel According to John

Text – John 3:22 - 36

Congregational Reading – John 3:22 - 36

Introduction

(Review on the Map, the geography of Jesus' travels in John 3 from Jerusalem to Judea (presumably near the Jordan River; John's ministry in Aemon)



In the last message, Jesus was in or near Jerusalem having His discourse with Nicodemus regarding the new birth. In our text today, Jesus is moving back toward Galilee, but will be stopping by the Jordan River (presumably) to baptize. The remainder of chapter three, however is not about Jesus, it is about John the Baptist. However, it really is all about

Jesus, because John will once again declare to his disciples that the focus of all their attention should be upon the Lord Jesus.

Notice the statement made by John the Baptist in verse 30:

"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

That statement should be true about all of us as well. Jesus should be continually increasing in our lives, and as He increases, we will decrease. In other words, the will of God should be becoming more important to us as we grow in the Lord, and then our own desires will become smaller. Here is the strange part of the Christian life. If we are growing in the Lord, we are really becoming smaller. Our faith in Him gets bigger, but our own will becomes smaller.

Peter said:

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

If you are growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, the spiritual part of you will get bigger, but your flesh will get smaller.

The psalmist David said:

"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together." (Psalm 34:3)

May said:

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord," (Luke 1:46)

When we magnify the Lord, we see Him bigger. For Him to become bigger in our lives, we must become smaller. He must increase, I must decrease.

I. Jesus and His Disciples Move North and Minister (v. 32)

As Jesus' ministry and influence grows, so does the number of His followers. People are coming to Him; they are repenting of their sins and placing their faith in Him. They may not have yet known or understood all that would be involved with the gospel, but they believed the light that they had thus far been given.

Many of these folks who trusted in Christ, followed Him in baptism. Baptism is the outward symbol of an inward identification. It pictures the gospel – the death, burial, and

resurrection of Christ. It is the first step of obedience in discipleship. After a person places their faith in Christ, they should immediately follow the Lord in believer's baptism.

Peter calls baptism a "like figure" (ἀντίτυπον from ἀντίτυπος – *antitypos* – Adj, Nom, Sing, Neut – meaning an antiype – a representative counterpart).

"[21] The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:21)

Paul connects the outward symbol to the inner workings of salvation.

"[3] Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? [4] Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. [5] For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: [6] Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. [7] For he that is dead is freed from sin. [8] Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: [9] Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." (Romans 6:3-9)

John 4:1 – 2 tell us, however, that Jesus Himself was not the one that did the baptizing. His disciples, which at this point only included a few of the twelve, were the ones that baptized. Those verses also tell us that the number of people coming to Jesus for baptism attracted the attention of the Pharisees.

Practical Note – Whenever you make a move in your faith, it will get the devil's attention.

II. John's Ministry in Aenon (vs. 23 – 24)

Notice in these verses that John is still preaching repentance out in these remote areas, and people are still coming to hear him preach, and to be baptized. His baptism is the same as the baptism by the Lord's disciples.

Notice that he was baptizing in Aenon, because "*there was much water there.*" This verse proves that the mode of baptism must be immersion and not sprinkling. You do not need much water to sprinkle someone.

"[16] And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:" (Matthew 3:16)

"[38] And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. [39] And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:38-39)

One final note regarding baptism – Baptism does not save you. One can only be saved by placing their faith in Christ (See vs. 16 & 36)

"[8] For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

One of the thieves that was crucified with Jesus was gloriously saved because he asked Jesus to save him:

"[42] And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. [43] And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

Before we move from this verse, notice the reference to John the Baptist being placed in prison. King Herod had John put in prison and eventually killed him (See Matthew 14:1 – 12).

III. John's Clears Up the Confusion Regarding the Supremacy of Christ (vs. 25 – 35)

John makes it perfectly clear to his disciples that Jesus is the one that they are to worship and follow.

Practical Point – Churches need to be clear that our devotion and worship is exclusively toward the Lord.

v. 25 – a question about purifying – remember the wedding that Jesus attended in Cana where He took the six waterpots of stone and turned them into wine. The Bible tells us that water was for "the purifying of the Jews." Apparently, some of these disciples were trusting in baptism as an actual purification from sin. The pharisees had the same problem; they trusted in the outward act, rather than the inward condition of the heart (See Mark 7:1 – 16).

v. 26 further reveals the carnality of some of these disciples of John. They saw Jesus' ministry as competition with their own.

No Christian ministry is in competition with any other. We are all on the same team. God will surely cause some churches to have a broader influence than others, but all churches should be on the same page, doing the same things, and all supporting and encouraging one another.

Jesus' disciples also struggled with this mindset of competition:

"[49] And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. [50] And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." (Luke 9:49-50)

In vs. 27 – 37, John clears up any confusion about Who they all should be following and worshipping.

Jesus is the Christ	John was not
Jesus is the Bridegroom	John was just a friend of the bridegroom
Jesus must increase	John must decrease
Jesus is from above (Heaven)	John was from earth
Jesus had unlimited "Spirit"	John did not (though he was filled)
Jesus is entrusted with "all things"	John was not

Conclusion – A Final Invitation

John the Baptist statement in verse 36 gives a final invitation to his disciples to put their faith in Christ, and not him.

Have you placed your faith in the Son of God – the Lord Jesus Christ.

You must realize that you are a sinner.

You must understand that the payment for sin is death in Hell.

You must believe that Christ Jesus came to this earth to die in your place. He paid sin's price by shedding His blood on the Cross for your sins.

You must receive the gift of eternal life that He offers you. *"[23] For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Romans 6:23)