

"He Must Increase"
The Gospel of John Chapter 3:22-36

Christ and His disciples come away from Jerusalem. The Son's purpose in teaching was best accomplished away from the crowds and the Jewish opposition (Lk. 9:10). Jesus Himself did not baptize (Jhn. 4:2).

There were a group of seven springs where John was baptizing, providing abundant water. The Greek word *baptizo* means to immerse or overwhelm. The evangelist also notes (verse 27) that the Baptist had not yet been thrown into prison. This informs his readers that there was a period of time when Jesus and John had concurrent ministry (Matt. 4:11-12).

A dispute arises between an apparent follower of Christ and John's disciples. This incites jealousy among them. They complain that everyone is going after Christ and soon no one will be following the Baptist!

John's perspective is God's Kingdom first (Matt. 6:33). He has aligned his will with God's will (Matt. 6:10). He is not the Messiah (Mk. 1:2-8; Jhn. 1:23-28). He illustrates by way of comparison to the friend of the bridegroom. Jewish custom dictated that the friend of the bridegroom would escort the bride from her parents' home to the bridegroom's house. Great joy would occur upon hearing the bridegroom's voice. John has pointed sinners to Christ, the bridegroom. The church (Greek *ecclesia*, called out ones) is Christ's bride (Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2:19; 2Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27)!

Christ must increase, John acknowledges. John must decrease in God's plan (Acts 2:23). The herald must step aside for the King. The servant never supersedes the Master (Jhn. 13:16). When our relationship with Christ grows, He is magnified. He must increase; we must decrease (Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:9-17; 1Cor. 3:1-11; 2Cor. 5:17). We are not our own (1Cor. 6:20).

John's testimony was true, because it had proceeded from God (Jhn. 1:33; Jms. 1:17). Jesus was from above (Jhn. 3:13). The Baptist had weaknesses and doubts; Christ did not (Matt. 11:2-3).

The Holy Spirit comes by the Father (Jhn. 14:26) and the Son (Jhn. 15:26). The Spirit is given to the Son without measure, because the Son is infinite God (Jhn. 1:1). Believers also receive the Spirit (Acts 10:44-48).

Everything is predicated on the love of God, the evangelist John concludes (Jhn. 3:16; 1Jhn 4:8, 16). The centrality of belief in the Son is reiterated. He who has the Son has life. He who does not have the Son does not have life (1Jhn. 5:11-13). This is both simple and profound!