

The Gospel of John

He Must Increase

John 3:22-36

It has been perhaps six months since we last saw John the Baptist. At that time, he had announced the Messiah's presence, causing many of his followers to turn and follow Christ. We see him here near the end of his ministry, witnessing its purpose come to fruition.

The Setting

- Just after the first Passover of Christ's ministry – vs. 22
- Jesus and His disciples were in the countryside of Judea – vs. 22
- John the Baptist was at Aenon ("spring") near Salim ("peace"), a site believed to be about fifty miles north of Jerusalem

John the Baptist's Status

- His popularity was declining and more and more turned to Christ.
- His ministry is roughly one year long, and it has been perhaps six months since Christ's baptism
- His declining ministry led some of his followers to begin to quarrel – vs.25
- Not too long after this, John is imprisoned by Herod Antipas.

John's Message

- A debate about ceremonial purification had risen, perhaps a sign of the frustration of John's followers seeing Christ gain popularity. – vs. 25
- John's followers come to him thinking Christ is usurping John's ministry – vs. 26
- John's perspective is that his followers were God's and not his – vs. 27
- John reminds them that he is not the Christ, but is the forerunner – vs. 28
- John illustrates by comparing the situation to a wedding – vs. 29
 - The Bride (perhaps the church)
 - NOTE – I think we need to be careful and not stretch John's analogy too far. If the Bride is literally the church, then John must be outside of the church. I do not think this is the point of the illustration. The illustration centers around the Bridegroom and His Friend, the Bride is ancillary at best.
 - The Bridegroom (Christ)
 - The Friend of the Bridegroom (John the Baptist)
 - The Bride is the Bridegroom's, yet all present celebrate
 - The Friend has the high honor of serving the Bridegroom

- The Friend is happy in his part even though it is not his own wedding
- THE KEY TO SERVING GOD – vs. 30
 - To serve Christ we must humble ourselves – Philippians 2:5-8
 - To serve Christ we must lift up Christ – Philippians 2:9-11
- Christ is superior in the origin of His ministry and His Heavenly message – vs. 31-32
- Those that receive Christ are “sealed” and safe in God's Truth – vs. 33
- Christ spoke the words and message of God in limitless power and authority – vs. 34-35
- The dividing line of the Gospel – vs. 36
 - The crux of the matter is belief in Christ – NOTHING ELSE!
 - Those that believe on Him will have eternal life
 - Those who refuse Him will face the wrath of God

John, with his ministry in decline, still has the focus right. The main thing to him is accomplishing the will of God, which he was doing. He had prepared the way for the Messiah. He knew that the salvation of mankind was at stake and was thrilled to play a part in God's plan.