

**John Series: That You May Believe**  
**#12: He Must Increase, I Must Decrease**

Text: John 3:22-36

Jesus withdraws from the city of Jerusalem and begins to minister in the surrounding countryside. A dispute and John the Baptist's jealous disciples gave occasion for John the Baptist to give his final testimony concerning Jesus, and to repeat the glorious gospel Jesus had revealed to Nicodemus.

**I. Jealousy** (vs 22-26).

**1. A Dispute.** Jesus and John the Baptist were near each other and both were baptizing (Jesus through His disciples, John 4:2). Though Jesus and John were not rivals, a dispute broke out between John's disciples and a Jew. How easy it is for men to divide themselves over their leaders! The dispute was over "purification," and could have been about baptism.

**2. A Jealous Charge.** John's disciples seem to be filled with jealousy as they cry out to John that "all" are leaving him to go and follow Jesus. Their implication is that he will soon have no more followers. The spirit of competition easily rises up among churches, ministries, denominations, and Christians. This dispute started over doctrine, but turned personal. (1 Cor 3:1-9; 4:1-7)

**II. Humility** (vs 27-30). John the Baptist (who Jesus said was the greatest among those born of women) did not go along with the spirit or charge of his disciples. He showed his characteristic humility and used this occasion to give another testimony of Jesus Christ. (Phil 2:3 and following)

**1. Letting Go.** John resigned himself to receiving only what had been given him from heaven (God). He refused to fight for what God had not given him, but was satisfied and fulfilled with his assignment. Even if God's plan was for him to lose all his followers, go to prison and die of beheading, John wanted God's will. How often we fight, manipulate, twist, try and spin our wheels to get what God has not given us!

**2. Christ Not Me.** John immediately pointed away from himself to Christ. This is a sign of a man who has lost himself in Christ's glory and exaltation. Not I, but Christ! (Gal 2:20).

**3. Joy in Humiliation.** Christ is the Bridegroom! John saw himself as only the Bridegroom's friend – and this gave him JOY. It is with JOY that John declares, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Wiersbe shows the 3 "musts" of John 3:

The MUST of the Sinner (John 3:7) – must be born again.

The MUST of the Savior (14) – must be lifted up.

The MUST of the Servant (30) – must decrease.

**III. The Gospel** (vs 31-36)

**1. Testimony of Jesus' Divinity.** John testifies that Jesus is from heaven!

**2. Testimony of Jesus' Approval from God.** John testifies that the Father loves Jesus and has made it all about Him! The Father has poured the Spirit out on Jesus without measure.

**3. The Gospel Affirmed.** John affirms the message Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, that whoever believes in Christ has eternal life. Whoever does not believe (or obey!) the Son "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." What a gospel! **Belief produces Obedience.** No obedience to Christ, no saving faith in Christ. (fruit: Eph 2:8-10, Jn 15:5; wrath: 2 Thess 1:7b-10a, Rm 1:17, Ps 7:11)

**Application:** Repent of jealousy and pride! Humble yourself before God and receive what He has assigned you with joy. Decrease as Jesus increases. Believe on Christ and be free from the wrath of God!

**Scripture References & Quotes**

**1 Cor 3:1-9** – "1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human?"

**5** What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. "

**1 Cor 4:1-7** – "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

**2** Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. **3** But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. **4** For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. **5** Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. **6** I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

**7** For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

**Phil 2:3-11** – "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

**Eph 2:8-10** – "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

**Jn 15:5** – "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

**2 Thess 1:7b-10a** – "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels **8** in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, **10** when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed,"

**Rm 1:18** – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

**Ps 7:11-13** – " God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. **12** If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; **13** he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts."