

The Best Man and the Bridegroom

John 3.22-30

From the other Gospels, we know Herod Antipas had John the Baptist put to death in prison, but John records an exchange with his followers before his arrest. His goal was to put the focus on Jesus, not himself. It's a lesson we can apply in our lives today: Jesus must increase; we must decrease!

- Everything we have has been given from heaven. (27-28)
Principle: ALL we have is from God.
For John: His 'forerunner' role was given to him by God.
For us: We have all been 'gifted' by God for His service.
- Our greatest joy is in our association with Jesus. (29)
Principle: A Best Man keeps the focus on the bridegroom.
For John: He relishes in his close association with Jesus.
For us: Our goal is always to magnify Christ.
- As Jesus increases in our lives, we decrease. (30)
Principle: In the Christian life, the 'increase' of Jesus is primary.
For John: His role was completed; Jesus' was just beginning.
For us: Our role isn't important; gaining followers of Christ IS!

*I listen; He is the One who speaks;
I am enlightened; He is The Light;
I am the ear; He is The Word.*
(Augustine)



1. In John 3.22-36, John the Baptist, whose ministry prepared the way for Jesus, and who was a major character in the first chapter of this Gospel (cf. 1.6-8, 15, 19-37), appears in the narrative of John for the final time. This event is not recorded in the other three Gospels. We know John was arrested early in Jesus' ministry (Matt. 4.12; Mark 1.14). The account of his arrest and subsequent death is recorded in Matt. 14.3-12, Mark 6.17-29, and Lk. 3.19-20. What precipitated his imprisonment and martyrdom? What did he publicly speak against? Considering Jesus' high endorsement of John and his ministry (see Matt. 11.9-11; Luke 7.26-28), how involved and outspoken should Christians today be about leaders who promote evil?
2. The situation that prompted John's comments in John 3.27-36 was his disciples' concern that people were not following him, but were instead following Jesus (22-26). The issue surrounded "purification" (v25) – most likely a reference to John's baptism versus baptisms by Jesus disciples. Can you hear the implicit concern in the voices of John's disciples in v26? How does a similar concern about numbers of attenders or the size of ministries afflict Christianity today?
3. John alludes to his ministry, and his role *vis a vis* Jesus, in three succinct responses. What is the gist of his statement in v27? How does his reminder in v28 show this? John had been as famous as a "rock star" before Jesus arrived on the scene: How difficult would it have been to play 'second fiddle' after initially being so famous?
4. How does John characterize his role in relation to Jesus' role in v29? All of us are aware of roles at weddings: How would you describe a good 'best man'? Have you experienced a bad 'best man'? What did he do? What kind of 'best man' would a groom want on his wedding day? How does this translate into our role with Christ?
5. The statement in v30 is simple and uncomplicated, yet its meaning is profound, and impacts each of our lives in a deeply personal way. How can Jesus "increase" in your life? What would it mean for you to "decrease"?