

He Must Increase

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²⁷To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. ²⁸You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of Him.’”

²⁹The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰He must become greater; I must become less.

³¹“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³²He testifies to what He has seen and heard, but no one accepts His testimony.

³³The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands. ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

- John 3:22-36

The Timing

“After this” — probably some months later

This period of time is not recorded in the other Gospels.

“After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.”
- Mark 1:14

“Before John was put in prison” — This story is not even found in John and so it shows that he was “filling in the blanks” for us.

The Place

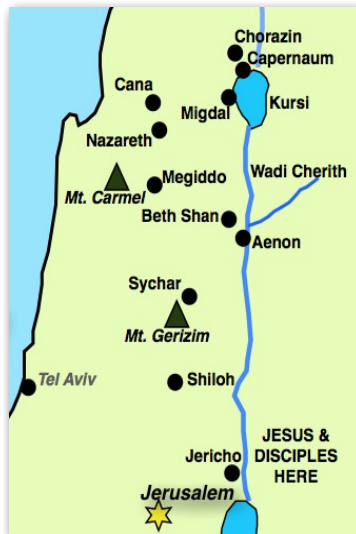
Jesus stays in the Judean countryside while His disciples were baptizing people. (Jesus doesn’t baptize!)

“The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but His disciples.”
- John 4:1,2

John is baptizing to the north — Aenon near Salim. *Why is that important?*

It is where Elijah had stayed for a time.

“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ³“Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. ⁴You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.”
- 1 Kings 17:2-4



It is the place where Jesus goes near the end of His ministry.

“Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here He stayed ⁴¹and many people came to Him. They said, “Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true.”

- John 10:40,41

The Conflict (Some things never change!)

This issue surfaced because of baptism.

John’s followers were beginning to follow Jesus, and John’s disciples weren’t happy about this.

John’s Response

1. He stressed God’s sovereignty.

“To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.” - John 3:27

2. He reminded his followers of his purpose.

“You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of Him.’”
- John 3:28

3. He illustrated his role in the kingdom.

“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”
- John 3:29

4. He stated his life’s goal!

“He must become greater; I must become less.”
- John 3:30

Why should Jesus become greater?

a. Jesus is from heaven (and John is only from the earth) - John 3:31

“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”

b. Jesus can talk about heaven; what he saw and heard. Unfortunately, nobody listens to Him.

“He testifies to what He has seen and heard, but no one accepts His testimony.” - John 3:32

c. Jesus speaks the words of God.

“For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God...”
- John 3:34

d. Jesus is loved by His Father who has given Him all authority.

“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands.”
- John 3:35

e. Jesus is the only way to eternal life.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”
- John 3:36

So Ask Yourself:

Have you considered the concept of God’s wrath?

Are you willing to accept and live out God’s plan for your life?

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