**He must increase, but I must decrease**

*John 3:30*

**Introduction**

1. The citizens of the kingdom of God are characterized by humility:
   1. Condition of entrance – **Matthew 18:3**
   2. Condition of greatness (progress as a citizen) – **Matthew 18:1, 4; 23:11-12**
   3. Requisite total submission to the King as a citizen of the kingdom – **Luke 17:21; Colossians 1:13, 18; 3:17** (Preeminence)
      1. **Preeminence** – “be first, have first place…’that he might come to have first place in everything’ Colossians 1:18” (BDAG).
      2. His preeminence is God designed and appointed, but is manifested through the submission of us who place Him FIRST IN OUR HEARTS and allow HIS CONTROL IN OUR LIVES. **(cf. Galatians 2:20** – Paul let Christ show in his life – he hid behind Christ.)
2. An incredible example of such humble service to God and Christ with full deference and joyful submission is found in John the Baptist (**cf. John 3:30** – speaking of Jesus).
3. The Ministry and Attitude of John
4. His Ministry
   1. In prophecy:
      1. **Isaiah 40:3-5** – a voice, a messenger sent in preparation of the Lord’s coming – specifically to prepare for His reception, acceptance, and belief and obedience to His words.
      2. **Malachi 3:1** – refers to the messenger of Isaiah 40:3
      3. **Malachi 4:5-6** – refers to the same messenger as a type of Elijah who would turn the hearts of the people back to the old ways of the faithful (fathers).
         1. Type – not truly Elijah.
         2. **Cf. Luke 1:17** – Prophecy to John the Baptist’s father.
      4. Summation of prophecy – this one would prepare the hearts of the people to receive the coming Messiah (Lord). Such would be done by a message of repentance, return to the Lord.
   2. In fulfillment:
      1. All four gospels affirm the voice of Isaiah and Elijah of Malachi are John the Baptist:
         1. **Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-5; Luke 3:2-5; John 1:19-23**
         2. His denial of being Elijah was in a literal sense that the priests intended. Jesus affirms he was the Elijah to come – **Matthew 11:10-15**
      2. John’s appointment was preparing a path for the Lord in the minds of the people. His attitude reflected a full understanding of God’s will for him, and a joyful anticipation of the goal of his ministry with a desire for nothing more.
5. His Attitude
   1. John never intended to be viewed as something greater than he was, and never allowed such a perception:
      1. **John 1:19-20** – I am NOT the Christ.
      2. **John 1:24-27** – someone that ranks higher than I, and who I am unworthy of.
      3. **Cf. Matthew 11:11** – Jesus spoke highly of John, BUT JOHN NEVER LET HIS CALLING TO GO TO HIS HEAD.
   2. John’s attitude and actions were very much within the boundaries God had set for him:
      1. His appointment was to prepare a way FOR SOMEONE ELSE – SOMEONE GREATER – THE MESSIAH.
      2. **John 3:22-30** – John’s response to disciples who were worried about Jesus eclipsing his own recognition.
         1. **(vv. 22-26)** – John’s disciples concerned about Jesus baptizing, and the crowds He as drawing.
         2. **(vv. 27-28)** – Reaffirmation that he is not the Christ, and that what Jesus is doing is from God. (Also HIS, JOHN’S, place was from God – which he then leads into.)
         3. **(v. 29)** – All of John’s work was about the bridegroom, not himself. He has a spirit of joy, not jealously and resentment, about the arrival of the Messiah.
         4. **(v. 30)** – John’s noble quality of humility, and deference to Christ.
   3. Especially **John 3:30** :
      1. **Contentment** – with God’s appointment for him.
      2. **Joy** – concerning God’s will, and the One for Whom John prepared a way.
      3. **Humility** – concerning his willingness to step back from the publicity when it was time.
      4. **Understanding** – that all was for God’s glory in the first place, and for the focus to come upon the Messiah.
   4. We would all do well to learn from John.
6. “He must increase, but I must decrease”
7. Doctrine – Do we teach the Lord’s will, or our own?
   1. We are called to reflect the mindset of Jesus – ***“not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).***
   2. God’s way of saving man is through the doctrine of Christ:
      1. **Romans 1:16** – gospel of Christ.
      2. **1 Corinthians 1:14-18, 21** – Paul understood the importance of this, and showed the mindset of John regarding gaining notoriety by baptizing others.
      3. **2 John 9** – the doctrine of Christ is the realm we must abide in.
      4. Because He has the preeminence in doctrine – **cf. John 14:6** – THE ONLY WAY, TRUTH, LIFE.
   3. Those who teach contrary to this doctrine increase themselves, and decrease Christ:
      1. **Matthew 15:1-9** – tradition of the elders; TRANSGRESS COMMANDMENT; MADE COMMANDMENT OF NO EFFECT; HEART FAR FROM ME; VAIN WORSHIP.
      2. **Galatians 1:6-7** – preaching another gospel is perverting the true gospel.
      3. **Galatians 4:16-20** – The Judaizers pursued the Galatians for selfish reasons that damaged them spiritually. Paul had sought them for the Lord’s sake, that He would be formed in them.
      4. **Galatians 6:12-15** – those who teach otherwise glory in something other than the cross of Christ. (All false doctrine does is promote another’s will, thus, is a way for one to gain a following. INSTEAD, WE SHOULD GAIN A FOLLOWING FOR CHRIST BY PREACHING HIS WILL.)
8. Discipleship – Do we truly exhibit Christ in our lives? Do people know we’ve learned from Him? Do people know we follow Him?
   1. Jesus’ radical description of discipleship – **Luke 14:25-27, 33** – forsaking all to follow Christ.
      1. This very description is one which shows the increase of Christ, and the decrease of self.
      2. **Cf. Mark 8:24** – deny himself.
   2. False discipleship elevates ones own will – **cf. Matthew 7:21-23** – lawlessness.
      1. The world values this.
      2. The world promotes a nobility in being in control of your own life, and doing what YOU want – Christ wants full surrender.
   3. True discipleship increases Christ by full submission to His will:
      1. **John 8:31-32** – abide in My word.
      2. Abiding in His word includes allowing it to envelope oneself to the degree of taking complete control of one’s life – **cf. Galatians 2:20** – discipleship is Christ living in you.
      3. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31** – discipleship is living to glorify God in everything. (**cf. Colossians 3:17**)

**Conclusion**

1. We should learn from the attitude and mindset of John the Baptist – “He must increase, but I must decrease”
2. Our lives are for the purpose of glorifying God.
3. Christ is the focus of our lives. We should live to promote Him, and elevate Him in everything.
4. We should learn to hide behind Christ.