

He Must Increase

Rev. Lex DeLong / General

True Equity and the Greatest Love / Christ as King / John 3:22–36

If we hope to be purified from our sin and have eternal life, we must realize Jesus is preeminent, repent for Jesus is in charge, and rest, for only Jesus is enough to save you.

Notes

04/07 John 3:22-36, "He Must Increase," subtitle: Believe in Jesus Christ, Scripture: Acts 16:31-34

Jesus is meant to be central in every person's life. The purpose of any church, pastor or ministry is not to acquire a following of people for themselves, but to acquire a following for Jesus Christ.

After Jesus had spoken to Nicodemus in Jerusalem, we are told here in ch. 3 that Jesus and his disciples headed out into the Judean hills, it seems likely towards the Jordan river. In John 3:6 we were told that, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which was born of the Spirit is spirit." That is important to keep in mind as today's passage begins to contrast the baptizing ministry of John the Baptist with that of Jesus' ministry.

While John the baptist was baptizing likely somewhere in the hill country of Samaria and or south of the ancient city Beth-Shan, the text tells us that Jesus was also baptizing, although according to John 4:1-2, it was actually Jesus' disciples who were.

The Apostle John (the author) seems to be presenting a contrast here. On the one hand, the message of repentance that John the Baptist was preaching was to surrender their hearts to God, seemingly focused more on a sincere heart that should be bent towards living Godly, similarly to the pattern of Israel in the OT when they would repent of their evil hearts and ways, and turn back to the LORD. On the other hand, through the pericope

of Nicodemus, the author is introducing a different kind of repentance now through Jesus Christ, one that was also a change of heart, but unlike John the Baptist's message that seemed temporary, this was a repentance that led to eternal life.

The author mentions purification.

In ancient Israel, water was often used as an instrument for purification (e.g., Lev 17:15; 22:4–6; Num 19:11–12). [That purification was something that was required to be exercised regularly and repeatedly.] As a result, baptism in Judaism often was about ritual cleansing and may have involved multiple and regular baptisms. By contrast, John's baptism stressed transformation—a turning from sin—and thus marked a turning point in a person's life[1]

- [1]John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Mk 1:4.

Little is known at all about the discussion on purification. Whatever it was, it seems to be connected to John's and Jesus' baptizing.

Could it be that the question about purification leads John's readers to understand that purification from sin (eternal life) comes not through a man, but through a Savior, Jesus Christ. Purification comes not through water or any act of man, but wholly through faith in Jesus Christ. Purification comes not from any source on earth, but rather from God in heaven through Jesus Christ.

If we hope to be purified from our sin and have eternal life, we must:

Realize, Jesus is **Preeminent** (John

3:22-30)

- superior, surpassing, eminent above or before all others
- Christ offered the most complete repentance
- John's joy was made more full as Jesus was magnified in people's lives

Repent, Jesus is **in charge** (John 3:31-35)

- Jesus is above all (John 3:31)
- Jesus embodies God's truth (John 3:32-33)
- What Jesus offers is without limit (John 3:34-35)

Rest, Jesus gives **eternal life** (John 3:26)

- Eternal life only comes through Jesus
- Jesus is the only rescue

If we hope to be purified from our sin and have eternal life, we must **realize** Jesus is preeminent, **repent** for Jesus is in charge, and **rest** believing that Jesus alone is enough to save.

Do you want victory in your life, victory over sin's dreadful reign over you? There is only one way. Jesus says that He himself is the Way, He embodies God's truth, only He offers life (John 14:6).

- Jesus must increase, but we must decrease.
- Jesus is above all and can give without limit.
- Jesus only asks us to believe.