

“He must Increase, I must Decrease!”

I. **INTRO:**

A. After a performance of *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*, the audience gave conductor *Arturo Toscanini* and *the Orchestra* a prolonged ovation. Toscanini, filled with emotion, turned to his musicians and whispered, “**I** am nothing, **you** are nothing.” Then, in almost adoring tones, Toscanini said, “But **Beethoven** is everything!”

1. Likewise, **we** must recognize that **Jesus is everything!**

B. When **Jealousy** knocks on your door do you open it? - How do you handle it?

II. **THE ARGUMENT! (22-26)**

A. (22) He remained with them - *spent time with them*(NIV) - [Meant: to rub hard *or* rub through]

1. The idea is 1 of *rubbing shoulders w/others long enough to get into their lives.*

2. Imperfect tense, Jesus **kept** “*spending time w/them & baptizing.*”

B. One of Jesus’ top priorities was **disciplining** 12 men.

1. This required time, & He took the time.

C. (23) **They came** - “*they kept on coming*” Imperfect indicates.

D. (25) A debate concerning which baptism is valid, Jesus’ or John’s?

E. (26) **All are coming to Him** - Jealousy 101.

1. They’re asking, **What are you going to do about it John, *the used to be, baptizer?*** [His ministry is growing & yours is shrinking, **How come?**]

2. There was no real rivalry except in people’s minds.

3. Understand both ministries were operating on the **same turf!**

a) Mt.3:1 **In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea**

4. Jesus ministry had been up in **Galilee** up to this time, now he moves into **John’s domain.**

a) Reminds us of the strife between the **herdsman** of **Abram & Lot** in Gen.13.

(1) Abram said, **Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.**

III. **THE AFFIRMATION! (27-36)**

- A. **4 ways** to keep from **Jealousy**: *See the Big Picture; Be Secure in who you are; Have Joy to the Full; Have Pure humility.*
- B. **[1] SEE THE BIG PICTURE!** (27)
- C. **God** is in charge, not **man**!
- D. **A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.** Quotes a proverb
1. If someone is prospering or displaying gifts superior to yours its because **God has given it** to him/her.
 2. **What a tragedy when God gives us something we are lusting for...that isn't best for us.** Ps.106:14,15(Numb.11) **But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness** (for meat), **And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request** (quail), **But sent leanness into their soul.**
 3. Old German Proverb, "**Jealousy eats nothing but its own heart!**"
- E. Get the **Big Picture**...& the **Big Picture** is **God** gives each man his gifts...**take it up with God** if you have a problem!
1. **God's** in control of the blessing department!
 2. **Recognize & accept what God has given to you;**
Recognize & accept what God has not given to you.
- F. John knew a teachable moment when he saw one. But, **How to squelch jealousy?**
1. **When Jealousy** knocks on your door do **you** open it? How do you handle it?
 2. **What if, like John, you are Outdone, Outclassed, or Eclipsed?**
 3. **What kept John from bitterness?**
 4. He informed them **you can only receive what is given to you from heaven!**
 - a) He knew **he** was *from earth*, but **Jesus** was *from heaven*.
 - (1) *Earthling vs. Unearthly/Otherworldly*
 - b) **If all ministry is from heaven**, then do we have a right to be jealous of another man's *ministry, gifts, abilities, accomplishments?* [*Imp insight into John's character*]
- G. His response threw **cold water** on his **inflamed disciples**, quenching the conversation & their competitive spirit.
- H. **So far:** [1] See the Big Picture.
- I. **[2] BE SECURE IN WHO YOU ARE!** (28,29a)
- J. All work is **significant**, but only one is **preeminent!**
- K. **Jesus** = Word; **John** = Voice. **Now, Jesus** = Groom; **John** = Best man.

L. So, why would you pick this guy as your **Best Man**?

1. He wasn't *dressed for success* w/camel hair & a leather girdle [that was so last century]
2. He wasn't your *politically correct campaign manager* (with his abusive rhetoric).
3. He wasn't going to make the next *cooking show* w/his *strange diet*, living off the land eating *insects, locusts, & wild honey*, like **Bear Grylls** of TV's *Man vs. Wild*?
4. He was an *unconventional eccentric hermit* living in the wilderness. **Yet**, had a *uncompromising message* of repentance to prepare peoples hearts for the Messiah.
 - a) He was not chosen for **outward** fashion, but **inward** character.
5. He was *John* the unsung hero, an enigma of a man, **sent to:**

Clear the way; Prepare the way; then Get out of the way for Messiah

 - a) **Clear the way** - to remove obstacles from minds & hearts so they'd be ready to receive Messiah.
 - b) **Prepare the way** - to promote repentance on the part of the nation so He would be accepted.
 - c) **Get out of the way** - to step aside once the Messiah had been introduced.
 - (1) This the **toughest** part of his *job description*, & undoubtedly the reason Jesus called him a great man.
 - (2) Mt.11:11a **Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.**
 - d) You might think, oh to be the *Best Man*!...**No!** to be *the Bride* of Christ!
 - (1) John couldn't be bride, he died before Christ went to cross(he was OT)
 - (2) We are the Bride of Christ, not just the friend!
 - (3) Let's finish Mt.11 **not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

M. So far: [1] See the Big Picture; [2] Be Secure in who you are.

N. **[3] HAVE JOY TO THE FULL!** (29b)

O. Joy comes from *being obedient*, not from **getting glory!**

P. The friend of the bridegroom - Best man, a **liaison** between the bride & the bridegroom.

1. He would **arrange the details** of the wedding. Send out **invitations**.
Make the **announcements**. **Preside over** the wedding feast.
His special duty...was to **guard** the bridal chamber.
2. He would **let no one into** the bridal chamber except the **bride**, who would secretly slip away from the celebration (7 day feast) to join the groom.

3. Sometime later when the union was consummated, the **groom** came out & announced the fact w/a **shout**.
4. **Key:** Upon hearing the groom's voice, the friend of the bridegroom would be **happy & relieved**. His **job** was done. His **joy** was full. He could now **step out of the way!**¹

Q. **This joy is fulfilled** - rejoices greatly; my joy is **filled to the full!**

R. **So far:** [1] See the Big Picture; [2] Be Secure in who you are; [3] Have Joy to the Full.

S. **[4] HAVE PURE HUMILITY!** (30)

T. **Humility** calls attention to *Christ*, not *self!*

U. **Moses** dealt with the same thing in **Numb.11:25-29** (read)

V. The **Asaph** wrote(Ps.75:6,7) **For exaltation** comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But **God** is the Judge: He puts **down** one, And **exalts** another.

1. **Jealousy** & **Envy** are often used interchangeably, but there's a **difference**.²
 - a) **Envy** begins w/**empty** hands, mourning for what it *doesn't* have.
 - b) **Jealousy** begins w/**full** hands, but is threatened by the *loss of its plenty*. (its the pain of losing what I have...to someone else)
 - c) **Envy is when:** a **peer** is promoted; a **newcomer** passes you on the way up the corporate ladder; when you're a **senior** sitting on the bench, & a **sophomore** is in the starting line-up; when a **new business** starts up & overshadows yours overnight
 - d) **Jealousy is when:** **loyalties** shift; when close friends abandon us for others; when **retirement** comes & our authority is handed to a replacement.
2. **Jealousy** & **Envy** are like *muggers in a dark alley* waiting to do us in; rob us of our joy; work us over; & leave our spiritual lives for dead.
3. **Are you going to let it happen to you?** - Only way to stop it is to walk down **another street**, the well lit street of **Humility**, a street lit not by its **own** light, but by the light of **another**, *whose sandal we are not worthy to untie!*

W. (30) **Jesus** must become **greater & greater**, while we must become **less & less**.

1. Its what the **Rev. Richard Baxter** (1615–1691) said on his deathbed, when someone was remembering the good which many had received by his preaching and writings, Mr. Baxter replied, "I was but a **pen** in God's hand, and what praise is due to a **pen?**"

¹ William Barclay; Gospel of John; pg.143

² Charles Swindoll; Killing the Giants; pg.23

2. **Pointer Illustration:** Growing up, my teachers/nuns had a **3' long wooden pointer** (in Catholic school was used for others things, Smack!!!) . When a teacher used one(properly), you didn't stare at **the pointer**, but at **what** it was pointing to.
- John** was just the pointer, **Jesus** was what he was pointing to.
 - The bible** is just a pointer, pointing us to God.

- X. (36) John ends with an “**alter call**” that would shake even the most complacent off the proverbial fence!
- Y. If **baptism** were **necessary for salvation**, then this is the place for the bible to say so; but nothing is said. Instead, the emphasis is on **believing**.³
- Z. **So, was this just a discussion about which baptism was right? No**, John taught his disciples that their relation with **God's Son** had **eternal consequence**.
- Those who believe & obey Jesus have eternal life; those who don't are in sin & have the abiding wrath of God on them.
 - Wrath** (ὀργή *orge*) - denotes God's abiding opposition to sin.

AA.**Wrath** was removed on the cross...for those who **believed**.

- Wrath of God abides on those who do not believe** - “you are not like a city **ready to be** attacked, you are a city **already** besieged.”
 - You do not stand at the bar of justice **awaiting** your sentence; Your sentence is **passed already**, you are now this day condemned!
 - BUT...he was believes in Him is NOT** condemned!

BB. Every young student knows of **Isaac Newton's** famed encounter with a **falling apple**. Newton discovered and introduced the laws of gravity in the 1600s, which revolutionized astronomical studies. **But** few know that if it weren't for **Edmund Halley**, the world might never have learned from Newton. It was Halley who challenged Newton to **think through** his original notions. Halley **corrected** Newton's mathematical errors and **prepared geometrical figures** to support his discoveries. Halley **coaxed** the hesitant Newton **to write** his great work, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Halley **edited** and **supervised** the publication, and actually **financed** its printing even though Newton was wealthier and easily could have afforded the printing costs. **Historians call it one of the most selfless examples in the annals of science**. **Newton** began almost immediately to reap the rewards of prominence; **Halley received little credit**. He did use the principles to predict the orbit and return of **the comet** that would later bear his name, but only **AFTER** his death did he receive any acclaim. And because the comet only returns every 76 years, the notice is rather infrequent. Halley remained a devoted scientist who **didn't care who received the credit** as long as **the cause was being advanced**.

³ Warren Wiersbe; Outlines of the NT.