

Jesus > Me

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[0 : 00] Amen. You may be seated. Children in the room, you are excused to your King's Kids class.! And if you would open up your Bibles to John chapter 3, we're going to be looking at John! Chapter 3, verses 22 through 36. You know, when we brought Pastor Zach Melgren onto the pastoral staff a few years ago, what became quickly evident was among a number of different strengths of his was a pronounced administrative gift. And so 18 months ago, I handed the reins.

He's denying it. So 18 months ago, I handed the reins of our staff meeting over to Zach, and he has been rocking it ever since. And so he is well organized. He leads us so well.

But what that meant is I had to come to terms with who I was and who I was not. I was going to either resist him or I was going to rejoice in him. Do you know who you are? And do you know who you're not?

There are these moments in our lives when we realize that someone else is better qualified for the job that we have. It's not always easy handing over the reins to someone else. And the reason why is because you can feel like someone's moving in on your turf, or maybe you feel threatened by someone who's more qualified. You know why that can be so hard? It's because you've got to admit that someone is better qualified than you. You're either going to resist it or you're going to rejoice in it. But to resist is to live in denial, isn't it? But to rejoice means you have to relinquish control.

This morning in John 3, 22-36, Jesus and his disciples, well, they show up and start baptizing at the same place where John the Baptist, JTB, and his disciples are baptizing. John the Baptist's disciples respond with some resistance. Who is this guy across the river? But John the Baptist rejoices because he knows who just came on the scene. In fact, this passage has a great verse in it that summarizes everything.

[2 : 27] It's verse 30 where John the Baptist says, he must increase but I must decrease. He's saying that Jesus is greater than me. When you become a Christian, Jesus comes onto the scene of your life.

And oftentimes, he'll come bringing peace. Other times, he'll come as a great disruptor. But when he comes, he's not coming for just part of your life. He's coming for all of your life.

And then you will be faced with the daily decision of unbelief or faith. The unbelief of resisting him or faith that rejoices in him.

And so, there are two moves to this passage that we're about to read. In verses 22 through 26, Jesus comes on the scene. He's met with some resistance. And then verses 27 through 36, John the Baptist rejoices because he knows that Jesus is greater than him.

He must increase but I must decrease. So, let me read John chapter 3, 22 through 36. After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

[3 : 44] John also was baptizing at Anon near Salim because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized for John had not yet been put in prison. Now, a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look! He's baptizing! And all are going to him!

John answered, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ but I have been sent before him.

The one who has, the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

He must increase but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

[4 : 51] He bears witness to what he has seen and heard yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God for he gives the spirit without measure.

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son is eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him. May God bless the hearing of his words. So two scenes. Let's look at scene one when Jesus shows up. In verses 22 through 24 the scene is set.

It takes place in the Judean countryside at a place along the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. It's at a place called Anon by Selim and this place was known for having a number of natural springs and so there was an abundance of water ideal for baptizing.

And so in verse 22 Jesus and his disciples arrive on the scene and begin baptizing. Quick note. If you look at down at chapter 4 verse 2 John the writer of this gospel wants us to know something.

[6 : 06] Although Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples. So what you need to know is that Jesus himself is not baptizing his disciples are and that's what's going on here in Anon but we're not told much of anything else just that they were baptizing.

Well in verse 23 things get a little more interesting. We learn that John the Baptist and his disciples were already there baptizing. So we have two baptism services going on on both sides of the Jordan.

Now isn't that interesting? In verse 24 we're told by John the gospel writer that this took place before John the Baptist was put in prison.

It's a time stamp. It's letting us know that what is happening here is happening early in Jesus' ministry. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever been to a battle of the bands?

No? Yes. Let's say that there's this battle of the bands this coming summer and it's up at the Milwaukee Summerfest grounds.

[7 : 20] Multiple bands rocking out same time multiple stages. The battle would come in in terms of how what kind of crowd each band would gather around it and so the bigger the crowd that band wins.

what we have going on in Anon here appears to be not a battle of the bands but a battle of the baptisms. Which baptism service will draw more people?

Will it be John the Baptist baptism or will it be Jesus? The Jesus baptism with team Jesus. Which baptism will draw more? So the scene is set. Jesus and his disciples are baptizing on the other side of the river of John the Baptist and his disciples.

So there's already some tension here right? But if you would now look at verses 25 and 26 this account moves from description to dialogue.

It's kind of slowing down. And what we have here if it was a movie scene is the camera now zooms in on a heated discussion.

[8 : 31] Verse 25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. In the original language that word discussion is actually a dispute a heated discussion.

So we have this heated discussion going on between John the Baptist disciples and a particular Jew. Now we're not told what exactly they're saying other than it's over purification.

How is one made pure in God's sight? And given that this was a heated discussion I'm guessing that this Jew is making some kind of case I'm guessing that this Jew is making some kind of case for purification according to the law of Moses.

But what we have here is more tension. In verse 25 there's already this kind of more of this tense kind of situation happening at the baptismal waters of Anon.

And then in verse 26 it's a rather abrupt move. The disciples of John the Baptist move from this heated dispute now to taking issue with Jesus.

[9 : 42] And the disciples Jesus' disciples baptizing on the other side of the Jordan and so they turn to John the Baptist and address him as rabbi in verse 26 and they're just looking to him hey what do we do?

So look at verse 26 and they John the Baptist disciples came to John and said to him rabbi teacher leader he who was with you across the Jordan to whom you you bore witness look he's baptizing and all are going to him it's like that they're saying hey this this guy of yours JTB whom you witnessed about he and his crew are baptizing on the other side of the Jordan and everybody's going to him we're losing the battle of the baptisms if you were part of John's crew this may have

been very discouraging to you to see people not coming to your site to be baptized and going to another site to be baptized and if you're in the room and you're like I can't relate with that you actually can relate with that because

I'm guessing at some point in time you've wondered why are these people going to that church and not coming to our church you've felt that before what we see going on here is that Jesus is a wonderful disruptor he comes on to the scene at Anon and he essentially puts John the Baptist and his disciples out of the baptism business he disrupts Is he disrupting your life?

Are you wondering why your life is the way it is? John the Baptist knows something that his disciples hadn't yet fully understood he knows that this one on the other side of the river this guy kind of overseeing the other baptism he knows who he is he's already said of this one on the other side of the river he who comes after me is greater than me because he was before me he's talking about the pre-existent nature of the second person of the trinity that he's always been the one on the other side of the river is the one whose sandal straps John the Baptist would not untie he's speaking about status the one who is on the other side of the river he wouldn't baptize with water and that's why I'm not guessing he wasn't baptizing with water there he baptizes with the Holy Spirit he's a game changer this one on the other side of the river

John the Baptist knew he cried out he said behold the lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world he's the savior of the world that's who John knows is on the side of the river but his disciples didn't seem to understand that and now Jesus is disrupting their lives maybe your life has been disrupted in some way and if you don't know this God of the Bible who is disrupting your life chances are you'll resist him chances are you'll want to blame him why are you making my life this hard but what if the one across the river is the one disrupting your life for your good will you resist him in unbelief or will you rejoice in him by faith what we see going on here is

[13 : 38] John the Baptist disciples seem to be a little standoff and resistant to Jesus and what he's doing but John the Baptist response and what we're about to see is the complete opposite and so would you turn with me now we'll move to the second move and I'm just going to summarize he must increase but I must decrease verses 27 36 what was taking place in Anon was not a battle of the baptisms but a passing of the baton this is what he was sent John the Baptist was sent for this was the necessary fulfillment of the coming of Jesus to take over John the Baptist knew that God would not establish his kingdom in the name of John the Baptist but in the name of Jesus Christ

John knew who he was in relationship to Jesus and knew who he wasn't so in verses 27 through 35 what we're given here is our four reasons essentially of why we must confess he must increase but I must decrease so let's look at each reason one at a time reason number one for why he must increase and we must decrease Jesus is our king we see this in verses 27 to 28 remember John the Baptist knew who he was and knew who he was not and in verse 28 he's responding to his disciples are like what do we do and in verse 27 and 28 John answered them a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven that's an interesting thing to say but in verse 28 he says you yourself bear witness that

I said I am not the Christ John knows who he's not I'm not the Christ now if you don't know Christ that word is another way of saying Messiah Messiah and if you don't know what the word Messiah means it means the anointed king so when you say Jesus Christ you're actually saying Jesus the Messiah now this anointed king of God was spoken of throughout the Old Testament highly anticipated this king would be descended from King David and would sit on David's throne over a forever kingdom now one of my favorite passages to talk about the kingship of Jesus is something that we often talk about around Christmas time but it is something we can talk about all the time and this comes from

Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7 it's on page 680 and 681 of your Bibles this Christ is a king listen to these words for to us a child is born to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder it's it's the government of a king and his name shall be called wonderful counselor mighty god everlasting!

father prince of peace of the increase of his government of peace there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore the zeal of the lord of hosts will do this what John the Baptist is saying is that I'm not him I'm not that guy I'm not the wonderful counselor mighty god everlasting father prince of peace this same king was pictured in Daniel 7 as the son of man the son of man comes to the ancient of days and the ancient of days gives the son of man dominion and glory in a

kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him goes on to say his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed John knows that the one across the river is that king who's bringing with him a kingdom that can never end and that's why verse 27 is so interesting a person cannot receive one thing unless it is given to him from heaven what

[18 : 25] John is saying there is that one can only recognize Jesus as this king as a revelation given from heaven it's given to you that's why his disciples don't fully recognize Jesus as the king but John the Baptist does just to make that point more let me turn you to Matthew chapter 16 16 verses 16 through 17 and this is where Jesus is asking his disciples do you know who I am who are people saying that I am so this is Matthew chapter 16 Jesus asks in verse 13 who do people say that the son of man is and they said some say John the Baptist others say Elijah and others Jeremiah one of the prophets and he said to them but who do you say that

I am Simon Peter replied you are the Christ the son of the living God and Jesus answered him blessed are you Simon Barjona for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my father who is in heaven to see Jesus as he is means God must reveal him to you so that you can see him John the Baptist he is I'm not the king but I was sent before him verse 28 his role was to go before the Lord and make straight his paths here's what that means for us none of us in the room is the anointed king of God none of us in the room has a kingdom everlasting kingdom but many of us in the room have been by God's grace brought into the kingdom of this king and we now have a new motto in this kingdom he must increase and

I must decrease because he is worthy so John the Baptist first reason why he must Jesus must increase and we must decrease is that Jesus Christ is the king and we're not do I have an amen reason number two Jesus is the groom verse 29 I find it really interesting that John the Baptist starts talking about Jesus here as a bridegroom bridegroom it's just another way saying groom you know like when we have weddings here the groom is standing right here and then the bride comes down in her splendor and meets the groom and it's a wonderful thing but what John the Baptist again is saying he knows who he is and he knows who he's not he says in verse 21 the one who has the bride is the bridegroom the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice therefore this joy of mine is now complete what

John the Baptist is saying he's like I am not the groom! I'm the best man and when the bride comes down to the groom and they take hands the best man rejoices woohoo this is good did you know that one of the ways that God speaks about his covenant people throughout the Bible is to call his people his bride we see it in Ezekiel 16 which is a very weighty passage full of strong language we see in the book of Hosea where God likens Israel to his bride we see it in Revelation 21 where the new Jerusalem comes down and God says this is the bride coming down to meet her husband but we see it in

Ephesians chapter 5 as well and that's where I want you to go right now Ephesians chapter 5 it's on page 1162 of your pew Bible in Ephesians chapter 5 I want to read you 25 through 33 and this passage if you're not familiar is instruction to Christian husbands about how they are to love their wives and Paul is going to point them to a very specific example of a particular groom and a particular bride husband love your wives as Christ the bridegroom loved the church his bride and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish in the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies he who loves his wife loves himself for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it just as

[24 : 01] Christ does the church because we are members of his body therefore man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh is that John the Baptist knows he's not the groom he's not the groom Jesus is the groom and he will present his bride to himself in sanctified glory that's why in verse 29 John the Baptist says therefore this joy of mine is now complete because at this moment he understands that his role as the one sent before Jesus is coming to a close the role of the best man which is John's role is coming to an end the groom has come for his bride and John the Baptist rejoices so what this is going on right here represents a major transition in salvation history a new covenant people is coming on the scene replacing

Israel this is the bride of Christ the church which means Jesus is our groom John knows who he is not he's not the groom Jesus is the groom but John also knows who he is he's the best man here's what that means for us church we're we're we're we're we're rejoicing we're rejoicing because we're the bride of Christ can I urge you towards something in light of what we just read in Ephesians 5 don't don't resist your groom's sanctifying love he cleanses us with his word to present us to himself in splendor that we might be holy and without blemish and we're to rejoice in that we're to rejoice in being holy as he is holy he's worthy he's laid down his life for you and me we are his bride so here we have the second reason why we must increase why he must increase and why we must decrease it's because

Jesus is the groom reason number three Jesus is from above and this has to do with his authoritative speech and we see this in verses 31 through 34 now there's some debate among scholars as to whether 31 through 36 is the words of John the Baptist or the words of John the disciple the writer of the gospel I'm at this point lean towards John the Baptist and so that's how I'm going to explain it so here still speaking of this one on the other side of the!

Jordan in verse 31 John the Baptist says this he who comes from above is above all he who comes from above is above all and John is emphasizing here the origin of Jesus he's from heaven from above not from earth and this matters because of what this one from above has to say verse 32 this one across the river speaks of what he has seen and heard in heaven and brings comes down and speaks that eyewitness and ear witness on earth he has one of a kind authority of speech because he's from above verse 34 this one across the river whom God has sent he utters the very words of God that's a huge claim because

God the father has poured out God the spirit without measure on God the son Jesus speaks the very words of God he is God it gives him full authority in what he has to say John the Baptist knows who he is and knows who he is not John knows he's not the divine son who is from heaven whose words are the very words of God himself he knows he's not that he doesn't have that kind of authority but John goes on to say this one whom you think that when he spoke!

[28 : 43] everybody listens like E.F. Hudden that's not the case in verse 32 he bears witness to what he has seen and heard yet no one receives his testimony some will but most do not the one who does receive his testimony verse 33 sets his seal to this that God is true that's interesting language set his seal verse 33 setting a seal is a picture of authentication it means that something is genuine it's when back in the day people would have signet rings or signet press and this seal would be pressed into hot wax upon let's say a document and that document with that seal would mean it's legitimate yeah I approve that I agree those of us who receive the words of Jesus as God's truth we set our seal!

on it it's not like we have much authority in ourselves but we're saying it's true I'm committed to this God's plan of salvation in Christ Jesus it's all true do you remember the first time that it dawned on you that Christianity was true do you remember the first time that started happening we build our lives on the words of

Jesus we're dependent on the words of Jesus if you would flip back in your Bible to Matthew chapter 7 Matthew we're going to look at Matthew 7 24 through 27 this is Jesus wrapping up this is his conclusion to the sermon on the mount best sermon ever preached so he's gone he's preached this sermon he comes to the end of the sermon and here's how he wraps it up everyone then who hears these words of mine think the sermon on the mount everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock note they hear his words and they do them is like a wise house but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it these above words

Jesus Jesus authoritative words from above and so what we do is we build our lives on his words and that little parable Jesus gives both groups of people hear what Jesus had to say it's the first group that builds their lives on it let's be doers of the word let's build our lives on it he is worthy! the third reason why he must increase but we must decrease is he's got the words of life reason four not only did Jesus come from above he is he's above all he's in control of everything back to John chapter 3 verse 35 the father loves the son and has given all things into his hand he's given all things into his hand the father loves the son all things into his hand in other words Jesus has all authority over all things this same writer of John wrote the wonderful book of Revelation and in

Revelation 5 6 and 8 we have this picture of God the father seated on a throne and he's holding up a scroll with seven seals on it and that scroll is none other than

[34 : 00] God's plan for all people in all time God's plan of salvation and human history and he holds up that scroll but no one is around to open the scroll and then Jesus comes on the scene and the first thing that he's described as by one of the elders around the throne behold the line of Judah and do you know what we then see a lamb that had been slain and that lamb who had been slain takes the scroll from God the father's right hand and for chapters 5 6 and 8 the lamb who was slain pops open each of the seven seals and when those seals open up global things happen judgment falls history is advanced you know what it is a picture of in his right hand he has authority over all things revelation chapter one begins with this vision of

Jesus something in his hands jingle jingle the keys of death and 80s he even has authority over death since he's first born from the dead you might say well it doesn't feel like Jesus is in control right now I'm watching the news looks like things are pretty crazy and chaotic doesn't feel like things are in control in his right hand well throughout the scriptures what is revealed in the scriptures is that things are not as they appear God's ways are not our ways Jesus is in fact on his throne reigning over all things all things are in his hand Aslan is on the move he will build his church in the gates of Hades will not overcome it John knew who he was not

John knew that the father hadn't given into his hands all things he knows that they have been given into Christ's right hand and he knows John knows that he is the one who has gone before the Christ the son here is what this means for us we are not in control Christ is in control all things are in his right hand and we must!

resist him but rejoice in his control so the fourth reason why he must increase and why we must decrease is that he is in control and we are not and that's really good news so here's the point we're not the king Jesus is our king and by his grace we have been brought into his forever kingdom we're not the groom Jesus is the groom and by his grace he laid down his life for us we are not from above Jesus is from above and he has the all authoritative words of God that we build our lives on and we are not above all Jesus is above all he is in control of all and we submit ourselves to him like John we must know who we are and who we're not we are not

Jesus the king the groom from above and above all what we are are those who confess with joy he must increase and we must decrease because he is worthy Jesus is greater than me when Jesus comes on the scene of your life will you resist him or will you rejoice in him verse 36 there are two ways to respond to this one who is now risen and reigning at the right hand of God he's no longer on the other side of the river you believe in him you receive his testimony and in the context of this passage to believe in Jesus means you make a confession he must increase but I must decrease now for some of you in the room I'm guessing that sounds like misery because in your mind you think the way to flourish is by living by another motto

[38 : 46] I must increase and everybody else must decrease but that's simply just not true what we set our seal on is that the way to abundant!

life eternal life that starts now to truly flourish is by realizing that Jesus alone because of who he is he's the king he's the groom he's from above and above all we realize he must increase and I must decrease that means he becomes our one consuming passion our all governing reality the controlling center of our lives the one that we treasure!

above all else he we treasure! him and he governs all of our other treasures! and you know what the irony is that it's in the dying to ourselves that we find this joy in Jesus do you know what the greatest obstacle to Jesus increasing in your life is you you you're the biggest obstacle I am too there's a warning in this passage if you're unwilling to receive his testimony to believe in his name to obey the son you will not see life because the wrath of God remains on you the way to escape that wrath is to turn to Jesus and to confess him you must increase and I must decrease even our eternities have been given into his right hand here's a practical application which we'll close on would you consider starting every day this week with a prayer and here it is

I'll read it and then I'll pray it Lord Jesus today you must increase and I must decrease because you alone are worthy you are my king you are my groom you are from above your words mean most to me and you are above all you alone are worthy you must increase and I must decrease let me pray that now Lord Jesus today you must increase and we must decrease we know who we are and we know who we are not you alone are worthy you are our king you are our groom your words are the words we build our lives on and you are reigning above all all things have been given to you and to

your right hand Lord Jesus may your name be made much of throughout the nations you must
increase amen