

**QUALITIES OF SPIRITUAL GREATNESS —
GIVING HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE**

John 3:22-36

(John 3:22-36), “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. {23} And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. {24} For John was not yet cast into prison. {25} Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. {26} And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. {27} John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. {28} Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. {29} He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. {30} He must increase, but I must decrease. {31} He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. {32} And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. {33} He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. {34} For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. {35} The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. {36} He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”



It is always right to honor God. **BUT IS IT SCRIPTURAL TO HONOR PEOPLE?** The Bible clearly teaches that individuals are not to honor themselves. **A LIFE VERSE WORTHY OF TEACHING OUR CHILDREN IS:**

(Prov 27:2), “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”

BUT SCRIPTURE CLEARLY INDICATES THAT GIVING HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE IS PROPER.

(Rom 13:7), “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; **HONOR TO WHOM HONOR.**”

NOT ONLY THAT, THE BIBLE DETAILS SEVERAL CATEGORIES where God expects honor to be given.

(1) WE ARE TO HONOR THE **ELDERLY**

(Lev 19:32), “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and **HONOR** the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.”

(2) WE ARE TO HONOR **THE ELDERS**

(1 Tim 5:17), “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double **HONOR**, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.”

(3) WE ARE TO HONOR OUR **PARENTS**

(Exo 20:12), “**HONOR** thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

(4) HUSBANDS ARE TO HONOR THEIR **WIVES**

(1 Pet 3:7), “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving **HONOR** unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

(5) WE ARE TO HONOR **THE PRESIDENT**

(1 Pet 2:17), “Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **HONOR THE KING.**”

(6) WE ARE TO HONOR **ONE ANOTHER**

- **(Rom 12:10)**, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in **HONOR** preferring one another;”
- **(NIV)**, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. **HONOR ONE ANOTHER** above yourselves.”

S **THIS PAST MONDAY** a discussion in staff meeting offered a good example of *honoring one another*. Renae Wells shared an inspiring story from the previous Sunday. Little three-year-old Riley Guttromson wore a black cowboy hat as she was leaving church. Renae complimented Riley on how fine she looked wearing that black hat. Jeanne Moffitt, Riley’s grandmother, told us Riley calls that hat the “**MR. MONTY HAT.**” Monty McLaughlin is Riley’s Sunday school teacher. All the little kids love Mr. Monty. Riley thought so much of Mr. Monty that she had to wear a black hat just like Mr. Monty.

S As Renae told that story, the “honor to whom honor” verse came to mind. **IT IS PROPER** to say to Monty, “Mr. Monty, you

are doing a great job.”

- (7) **FIRST AND FOREMOST WE ARE TO HONOR GOD.** The Bible has many verses that indicate we are to honor and glorify God (Matt 5:16; Matt 22:37). **MOST PEOPLE ARE VERY AWARE** of God’s commands to glorify Him.
- (8) **ANOTHER AREA OF HONOR** that is **NOT AS OBVIOUS** as the ones previously mentioned, is presented in Scripture. Many folks **ARE NOT AWARE OF THE VERSES** that tell us **GOD HONORS THOSE WHO TRULY HONOR HIM.**
- If you have ever watched THE MOVIE **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**, you might recall the Bible verse that was quoted as **ERIC LIDDELL** prepared to run the 400-meter race in the 1924 SUMMER OLYMPICS IN PARIS, FRANCE. Eric had originally been scheduled to run the 100-meter dash but ended up running the 400-meter instead. When he discovered the 100-meter dash had been scheduled on a Sunday. Because of his personal conviction regarding the 4TH COMMANDMENT, he felt he could not run on Sunday. He met with the Olympic Committee and asked for permission to run at some other time. In honor of Eric Liddell’s conviction, they allowed him to run the 400-meter race on Monday. He won the gold medal in the 400-meter race.
ERIC WAS willing to sacrifice his EARTHLY GLORY to give glory to God. As Eric was preparing to run for the Olympic gold, a verse is quoted from the Bible. In that verse God says:
(1 Sam 2:30), “. . . ‘Those who honor me I will honor,’ . . .”
 - LISTEN TO **JESUS**
(John 12:26), “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, **HIM WILL MY FATHER HONOR.**”
 - **(Prov 21:21)**, “He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth LIFE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, and **HONOR.**”

WHY TALK ABOUT HONOR? OUR TEXT IS A DEMONSTRATION of John giving honor to God and God giving honor back to him. JOHN’S WORDS WERE SPOKEN **BEFORE** he was thrown into **PRISON** (V. 24). The words where Jesus honored John the Baptist were spoken after John had been thrown into prison, but before he was beheaded. Listen to what Jesus said about John while he was under arrest.

(Mat 11:11), “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: /// notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Had I been in charge of deciding who had been the greatest in God’s Kingdom up to that time, I would probably have named someone other than John the Baptist. The list of possible candidates is long.

- (1) **ABRAHAM** (Abraham was called the *Friend of God* - James 2:23).
- (2) **JOSEPH** (Joseph is mentioned in the great faith chapter - Heb 11:22).
- (3) **MOSES** (Moses was the *meekest* man on earth in his day - Num 12:3).
- (4) **DAVID** (David is called a *man after God’s own heart* - Acts 13:22; 1 Sam 13:14)
- (5) **DANIEL** (Daniel is three times called *beloved* - Dan 9:23; 10:11,19)

Considering the list of potential **CANDIDATES** for the greatest person throughout the Old Testament, it is **A BIT SURPRISING** that Jesus placed John the Baptist **AT THE TOP OF THE LIST**.

- John the Baptist was pretty much a **RECLUSE** until he began his ministry. He lived in the **DESERT**. Once he started his ministry, he spent most of his time in the wilderness of Judea. John was a **RUGGED** individual. He wore the most unusual **CLOTHING** and had the strangest **DIET**. According to Scripture he wore a **CAMEL'S HAIR GARMENT** with a leather belt. He ate **HONEY** and **LOCUSTS** (Mark 1:6). What if your pastor was known as a man who ate grasshoppers?
- JOHN WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN CHOSEN as a candidate for **WHO'S WHO IN JUDEAN SOCIETY**. He would never have been voted **MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED**. John was pretty much a **loner**.
- **THE FOLKS WHO RESPONDED** most to John’s ministry were the *down and out*.
(Mat 21:31-32), “. . . THE **PUBLICANS** AND THE **HARLOTS** BELIEVED HIM: . . . ”

The *desperate* came to him in droves because they liked his message.

- John was miles from being *politically correct*. **HE SO UPSET THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT** they had him **arrested** and **imprisoned**. King Herod eventually had him **decapitated**.
- JOHN'S **RESUME** was not one that would have floated to the top for consideration for leadership at the local synagogue. **YET, JESUS CALLED JOHN THE GREATEST MAN EVER TO LIVE UP TO THAT TIME.**

S **AN INTERESTING THOUGHT TO CONSIDER**—in every generation there is likely a person that God would consider the greatest person of that generation.

- 1) **MOSES** was called the **meekest** man on the face of the earth in his day
(Num 12:3), “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”
- 2) OF **JOB** GOD SAID
(Job 1:8), “And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that **THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM IN THE EARTH**, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”
- 3) JESUS SAID OF **JOHN**
(Mat 11:11), “Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: . . . ”

CERTAIN QUALITIES HAD TO BE PRESENT IN JOHN'S LIFE FOR JESUS TO SAY HE WAS THE "GREATEST." According to Scripture John had to be a person of **HUMILITY**.

- (1) **(Prov 18:12)**, “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and **BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY.**”
- (2) **(Luke 14:11)**, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and **HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED.**”
- (3) **(Mat 18:1-4)**, “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, **WHO IS THE GREATEST** in the kingdom of heaven? {2} And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, {3} And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter

into the kingdom of heaven. {4} **WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL HUMBLE HIMSELF AS THIS LITTLE CHILD, THE SAME IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."**

- (4) **PRIOR TO THE LAST SUPPER** the disciples were debating concerning who was the greatest. Jesus got down on His knees, took off their sandals and washed their feet to teach them the true meaning of greatness.

The remaining portion of this message will focus on **FOUR QUALITIES OF SPIRITUAL GREATNESS** manifested in the life of John the Baptist. These four qualities are ones God desires to find in the lives of all His children.

- I. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO **FIND AND FULFILL GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR THEIR LIVES** (vv. 22-28)
- II. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO **REJOICE WHEN GOD'S PURPOSES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THEIR LIVES** (v. 29)
- III. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO **ARE SUBMISSIVE WHEN GOD MAKES COURSE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES** (v. 30)
- IV. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "BEING THE LIGHT" AND "BEARING WITNESS TO THE LIGHT"** (vv. 31-36)

I. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO FIND AND FULFILL GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR THEIR LIVES (V. 22), "AFTER THESE THINGS . . ."

S **AFTER WHAT THINGS?**

S **A CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE OF JESUS' FIRST WEEK OF MINISTRY** is found in chapters one and two of the Gospel of John.

- (1:19) • **THE FIRST DAY - JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS CONFRONTED** by a **DELEGATION** from Jerusalem asking who he was.
- (1:29) • **"THE NEXT DAY" - JESUS WAS IDENTIFIED** by John the Baptist as, **"The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."** (That was **DAY TWO**)
- (1:35) • **"AGAIN THE NEXT DAY"** - Jesus walked by John the

Baptist and was again identified as the *Lamb of God*.

ANDREW and **THE OTHER DISCIPLE** (probably John) followed Jesus to His lodging place. Andrew ran and found his brother **PETER** and brought him to Jesus. (That was **DAY THREE**)

(1:43) • **“THE DAY FOLLOWING”** - Jesus found **PHILIP** and told him to follow. Philip went and told **NATHANAEL** that he had found the Messiah. (That was **DAY FOUR**)

- **FIFTH DAY** - (nothing is stated)
- **SIXTH DAY** - (nothing is stated)

(2:1) • **“THE THIRD DAY”** - appears to mark the third day after Jesus had called Nathanael. In the chain of events, it represented the **SEVENTH DAY OF JESUS’ MINISTRY**. On that day Jesus attended a wedding in the village of **CANA**.

- From Cana Jesus went down to **CAPERNAUM** (2:12).
- From Capernaum Jesus traveled to **JERUSALEM** for the **PASSOVER** (2:13). While in Jerusalem Jesus **CLEANSED the temple** (2:15). He also performed some **MIRACLES** (3:2). While in Jerusalem, Jesus had **A MEETING AT NIGHT** with the man named **NICODEMUS** (3:1ff).

(3:22), “AFTER THESE THINGS . . .”

S JESUS’ **MOVEMENT AND ACTIVITY** WAS FURTHER DETAILED.

(V. 22), “AFTER THESE THINGS CAME JESUS and his disciples INTO THE LAND OF **JUDAEA**; and there he **TARRIED** with them, **AND BAPTIZED.”**

CONSIDER **THREE IMPORTANT FACTS**

#1. JESUS AND JOHN TARRIED IN THE SAME VICINITY

S Jesus journeyed into **JUDEA** (v. 22). That was the same region where John was located. The word **“TARRIED”** indicates Jesus spent a significant amount of time in that region.

S **A MODERN PARALLEL** might be a new church locating into an

area where an established church has ministered for years. If the established church was operating according to the *flesh*, a spirit of jealousy and competition could develop.

#2. JESUS AND JOHN PRACTICED THE SAME MINISTRY

(John 3:22), "After these things came **JESUS** and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, **AND BAPTIZED.**"

(John 3:23), "And **JOHN** also **WAS BAPTIZING** in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were **BAPTIZED.**"

S IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT JESUS HIMSELF DID NOT BAPTIZE:

(John 4:2), "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,"

S BOTH JOHN AND JESUS **PREACHED REPENTANCE AND BAPTIZED** THOSE THAT BELIEVED. They carried out **the same ministry** in **the same area**.

#3. JESUS AND JOHN WERE INEVITABLY COMPARED

(John 4:1), "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that **JESUS MADE AND BAPTIZED MORE DISCIPLES THAN JOHN,**"

(John 4:3), "**HE LEFT JUDAEA,** and departed again into Galilee."

S **THE CROWDS** that were following Jesus were **GROWING LARGER** than the crowds that were following John.

S Apparently John and Jesus were close enough in proximity that **REPORTS** between camps could be easily exchanged.

(V. 25), "Then there **AROSE A QUESTION** between some of John's disciples and the Jews about **PURIFYING.**"

S THE WORD FOR "**QUESTION**" is translated a variety of ways. The New King James version translates it as "**DISPUTE.**" The New International Version translates it as "**ARGUMENT.**" The issue being discussed among the disciples of John was "**A BIG DEAL.**"

S IT WAS SUCH "**A BIG DEAL**" that John's disciples **BROUGHT THE ARGUMENT TO JOHN** to get his impressions.

(V. 26), “And **THEY CAME UNTO JOHN**, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.”

S You can tell from their question that John’s disciples **FELT WOUNDED**. A spirit of **JEALOUSY WAS FESTERING**. They had become involved in **THE DETRIMENTAL ACTIVITY OF COMPARISON**.

S **ANY TIME** people begin comparing themselves to others, they are inviting trouble. There is no better way to cause a spirit of jealousy than to compare.

(2 Cor 10:12), “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

(1) **KING SAUL** caused a great deal of heartache and sorrow for Israel when he began to compare himself with **DAVID**.

(1 Sam 18:7), “. . . The women answered one another as they played, and said, ‘Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.’”

Rather than rejoicing because David had defeated Goliath, Saul began to seek ways to destroy David.

(2) **THE CHURCH AT CORINTH** was afflicted with turmoil in part because of a campaign of comparison.

(1 Cor 1:12), “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”

The church at Corinth was divided. Any time people begin to compare themselves with others, they are inviting trouble.

(3) **THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN WERE AFFLICTED WITH JEALOUSY**.

(John 3:25 NKJV), “Then there **AROSE A DISPUTE . . .**”

THE TENSION WAS SO ACUTE that John’s disciple went and talked to John about it.

JOHN’S REPLY

(V. 27), “. . . ‘A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.’”

S **JOHN WAS SAYING IT IS GOD** who determines the ministry a

person has, or does not have. God is sovereign over those matters.

- S **THE MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOHN** came to Jesus in **Matthew 20:21** asking Jesus to allow her two sons to sit at Jesus' right and left hand when He came in His kingdom. JESUS' ANSWER ADDRESSED **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY**.

(Mat 20:23), ". . . To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

- S **THE REASON** John refused to participate in his disciples' jealousy was he understood the sovereignty of God related to such matters. John understood that when a **TURTLE** is found on a stump, someone had to have put him there. In a like manner John knew that Jesus' increase was the result of God's sovereign plan.

ANOTHER WAY TO STATE IT IS JOHN HAD FOUND GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR HIS LIFE AND WAS FULFILLING IT. He knew that when a person had **TWO TALENTS**, it was because God had given those talents to him. He understood when a person had **FIVE TALENTS**, it was because God had given those five talents.

- S **JOHN KNEW "WHO HE WAS" AND WHAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED TO DO.** He also knew **"WHO HE WASN'T."** **(V. 28)**, "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him."

IN LIKE MANNER WE MUST KNOW "WHO WE ARE," AND "WHO WE ARE NOT." We must find God's will for our lives. God has a sovereign plan and purpose of each one of us. If we don't know whom God called us to be, we will always be trying to fill someone else's shoes. We will always be trying to compete with others. We will be driven by achieving more than others, rather than be driven by a desire to fulfill God's sovereign plan for our lives.

- I. GREAT ARE THOSE WHO **FIND AND FULFILL GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR THEIR LIVES**

GREAT ARE THOSE

II. WHO REJOICE WHEN GOD'S PURPOSES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THEIR LIVES

(V. 29), "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but **THE FRIEND** of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him,

rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

S IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE **MIDDLE EASTERN WEDDING CUSTOMS** of Jesus' day. John was comparing himself to "**THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM.**" *The friend of the bridegroom* would be the rough equivalent of ***the best man*** in a wedding in our culture. John understood he was not the groom. He understood he was not the center of attention at the wedding. In the culture of Jesus' day, the *best man* had greater responsibilities than in our culture. He was responsible for many of the details to be carried out. For example, the *best man* was responsible for guarding the wedding chamber. He was responsible for making sure the bride and groom were united in their marriage.

S **IN RELATION TO GOD'S KINGDOM**, John was like the *best man*. Jesus was the groom. The church was the bride. As the *best man* John's job was to make sure *the groom* and *his bride* would come together.

S **BECAUSE JOHN UNDERSTOOD HIS CALLING AND** because he knew **HE WAS BEING FAITHFUL** to God's calling, **HE HAD GREAT JOY**. He even had joy when his crowds were growing smaller, because he knew that he was doing exactly what God had called him to do. He *rejoiced* because God's purposes were being fulfilled in his life.

PAUL IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PERSON WHO UNDERSTOOD GOD'S WILL FOR HIS LIFE. AS A RESULT HE HAD THE ABILITY TO REJOICE IN GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS LIFE IN SPITE OF THE SUFFERING THAT CAME HIS WAY.

THE LITTLE **BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS** is a wonderful example. Paul wrote the Book of Philippians while in jail, awaiting trial and possible execution. While he was in jail, some of the local preachers were putting him down while lifting themselves up. Those preachers were afflicted with a spirit of jealousy and comparison.

PAUL WROTE OF THEM:

(Phil 1:15-16), "Some indeed preach Christ even **of envy and strife**; and some also of good will: { 16 } The one preach Christ **of contention, not sincerely**, supposing **to add affliction to my bonds:**"

PAUL REJOICED IN SPITE OF THEM:

(Phil 1:18), "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

The world didn't give Paul's joy to him, and the world wasn't going to take it away. Paul refused to get involved in fruitless expressions of comparison and jealousy. In the context of his suffering, Paul wrote:

- **(Phil 4:4)**, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."
- **(Phil 4:11)**, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I HAVE LEARNED**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith **TO BE CONTENT**."

SUPPOSE A **FRIEND**, or **CO-WORKER**, or **RELATIVE** EXPERIENCES GREATER SUCCESS than we do. **HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?** Would that stick in our craw? Would we feel compelled to pull them back down to our level? Would we **COMPLAIN?** OR WOULD WE **OBEY** God's Word found in the Book of Romans?

(Rom 12:15), "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

FALLEN HUMAN NATURE makes it easy to *rejoice* when others *cry*. It makes it easy to *weep* when others *rejoice*. How unlike Christ we are when such reactions are manifest.

CONSIDER SOME **NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

- (1) **A FARMER'S CROP** once did so well that he paid for his newly purchased land in one year. That was unheard of. When the farmer's success was shared, **ANOTHER FARMER** piped up and said, "Well, if I had received as much rain as he did this year, I would have had a good crop, too." That statement is an example of weeping when someone else is rejoicing.
- (2) **MOSES DEMONSTRATED HOW TO REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE**
(Numbers 11:26-29, NKJV), "But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was **Eldad**, and the name of the

other **Medad**. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." 28 So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" 29 **THEN MOSES SAID TO HIM**, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

(3) **JESUS DEMONSTRATED HOW TO REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE**

(Mark 9:38-41), "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. {39} But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. {40} **For he that is not against us is on our part.** {41} For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

(4) **THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN DEMONSTRATED A SPIRIT OF JEALOUSY.**

(V. 26), "And **THEY CAME UNTO JOHN**, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

- **WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE** some of John's disciples refused to leave John and follow Jesus? Was it **PRIDE**? Was it **JEALOUSY**? Why does a person remain in some religion today, even when they know in their heart of hearts it is not in accord with God's Word? Is it not for the same reason?

GREAT ARE THOSE

- I. **WHO FIND AND FULFILL GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR THEIR LIVES**
- II. **WHO REJOICE WHEN GOD'S PURPOSES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THEIR LIVES**

GREAT ARE THOSE

III. WHO ARE SUBMISSIVE WHEN GOD MAKES COURSE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES

(V. 30), "He must increase, but I must decrease."

S THE WORD "**MUST**" IS USED IN THREE DIFFERENT VERSES IN **JOHN 3**:

- (1) **(V. 7)**, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye **MUST** be born again."
- (2) **(V. 14)**, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so **MUST** the Son of man be lifted up:"
- (3) **(V. 30)**, "He **MUST** increase, but I **MUST** decrease."

S **THE EARLY DAYS** of John's ministry were filled with growth and popularity. People came out of the *woodwork* to listen to John. John was the talk of Judea. But right in the middle of John's ministry, his popularity began to wane. His popularity began to decrease. Rather than John's crowds getting larger, they grew smaller.

S **HOW EASY IT WOULD HAVE BEEN** for a proud and arrogant man to have become **ANGRY** with God. Well, John was not a proud man. John did not get angry. John was A **HUMBLE MAN**. John knew that Jesus' increase in popularity was God's plan. He also knew that his decrease in popularity was God's design, too.

S JOHN TOLD THE AUTHORITIES "**WHO HE WAS NOT**:"

- (1) HE WAS NOT THE **CHRIST** (1:20), "... I am not the Christ."
- (2) HE WAS NOT **ELIJAH** (1:21) (Thought he did come in the spirit of Elijah)
- (3) HE WAS NOT THAT **PROPHET** (1:21; Deut 18:15)

JOHN TOLD THE AUTHORITIES "**WHO HE WAS**:"

(1:23), "... I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah."

(John 1:27), "He it is, who coming after me **IS PREFERRED BEFORE ME**, whose **SHOE'S LATCHET** I am not worthy to unloose."

- JOHN KNEW "**WHO HE WAS**" AND "**WHO HE WAS NOT**." He **MADE NO ATTEMPT** to be more than he was, but neither did he attempt to show himself as less than he was. John didn't put himself down in the name of humility, and neither did he lift himself up in the name of *pride*. He neither exalted himself, nor diminished himself. He simply sought to be what

God had made him to be, no more and no less.

- **JOHN WAS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF ROMANS 12**
(Rom 12:3), “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, **not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**; but to **think soberly**, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

S GOD SAYS TO US ALL

- **(James 4:10)**, “**HUMBLE YOURSELVES** in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”
- **(1 Pet 5:6)**, “**HUMBLE YOURSELVES** therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”

S THE TIME WILL COME IN ALL OUR LIVES WHEN THE PROPER THING FOR US TO DO WILL BE TO GET OUT OF THE WAY! The most important thing John the Baptist could have done in our text was **GET OUT OF THE WAY**. Had he refused to do that, he would have fallen short of God’s call in his life. When God calls us to get out of the way, the most important thing we can do is get out of the way!

S KING SAUL is an example of a person who refused to get out of the way. Saul was the first king of Israel. A time came when God had David anointed to take the throne from Saul. When Saul discovered that God was through with him, he did everything in his power to prevent his removal. Rather than submitting to God’s will for his life, he spent the next 10 years chasing David all over the wilderness in an attempt to kill David. Saul refused to *decrease*.

S When God says it is time for us to “**DECREASE,**” the best thing we can do is to get out of the way and let God carry out His sovereign purposes.

GREAT ARE THOSE

- I. **WHO FIND AND FULFILL GOD’S SOVEREIGN WILL FOR THEIR LIVES**
- II. **WHO REJOICE WHEN GOD’S PURPOSES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THEIR LIVES**
- III. **WHO ARE SUBMISSIVE WHEN GOD MAKES COURSE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES**

GREAT ARE THOSE

**IV. WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
“BEING THE LIGHT” AND**

"BEARING WITNESS TO THE LIGHT"

(John 1:7-8), "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. {8} He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

(John 3:31-36), "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. {32} And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. {33} He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. {34} For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. {35} The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. {36} He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

S **JOHN SAID OF HIMSELF:**

- "I AM NOT THE CHRIST"
- "I AM THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM"
- "I MUST DECREASE"

S **JOHN SAID OF JESUS:**

- Jesus must **INCREASE**.
- Jesus comes **FROM ABOVE**; he is sent from God (vv. 31,34)
- Jesus is **ABOVE ALL**; he has all things in his hand (vv. 31,35)
- Jesus speaks things he has **SEEN** and **HEARD** from the Father (v. 35)
- Jesus gives the **TRUTH** to those who receive him (v. 33)
- Jesus gives the **SPIRIT** to those who trust him (v. 34)
- Jesus is **LOVED** by the Father for he is the **SON** (v. 35)
- Jesus can communicate **LIFE** which is everlasting (v. 36)

(Holman New Testament Commentary, pg. 60)

S **JOHN TESTIFIED THAT JESUS WAS SUPERIOR TO HIM IN EVERY WAY. JESUS IS SO MAGNIFICENT THAT THE DESTINY OF EVERY HUMAN BEING RESTS IN HIM.**

(V. 36), "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

IN LIGHT OF JOHN'S TESTIMONY WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

#1. ACCEPT JESUS AS PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOR

- S **(Acts 2:38)**, "... **REPENT**, and be **BAPTIZED** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
- S **THE FIRST STEP TOWARD "GREATNESS" IN GOD'S SIGHT IS TO CONFESS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR**

#2. AFTER ACCEPTING JESUS, DO FIVE THINGS

- 1) **FIND AND FULFILL GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE**
- 2) **REJOICE WHEN GOD'S PURPOSES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGH YOUR LIFE**
- 3) **BE SUBMISSIVE WHEN GOD MAKES CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE**
- 4) **BEAR WITNESS TO THE LIGHT**
- 5) **DON'T FORGET WHAT GOD HAS TOLD YOU:**
 - **(1 Sam 2:30)**, "... "Those who honor me I will honor,' ..."
 - **(John 12:26)**, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: IF ANY MAN SERVE ME, **HIM WILL MY FATHER HONOR.**"
 - **(Prov 21:21)**, "He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth **LIFE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, and HONOR.**"