

Approximately 35 minutes Expository



Title: He Must Become Greater - John 3:22-35

Opening Prayer:

Father God, we come before You in the name of Jesus. Thank You for Your holy Word. Thank You for the truth, power, and life that we find in the Scriptures. Lord God, as we open and study your Word today, please open our hearts. Help us to understand what You are saying. Help us to see Jesus more clearly, love Him more deeply, and follow Him more faithfully. Lord God, please remove any distractions, pride, and unbelief from each one of us. Let Your Holy Spirit teach us today. And if there is anyone hearing this message

who does not yet know you Lord, please draw them to salvation this very day. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Quick Historical Setting:

John chapter 3 takes place early in the ministry of Jesus. John the Baptist is still preaching, still baptizing, and still calling people to repentance. Jesus has begun His public ministry, and His disciples are also baptizing people. So for a short time, the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus overlaps.

This is important because many people loved John the Baptist. He was powerful, bold, and fearless. He preached in the wilderness. He confronted sin. He called people to get ready for the Messiah. But John always knew he was not the Christ. He was the **forerunner**. He was the voice. He was the one preparing the way for Jesus.

Now in John chapter 3, the moment comes when John's followers begin to notice that more people are going to Jesus. And that creates a test. A test of jealousy. A test of humility. A test of whether John really meant it when he said Jesus was greater.

This passage teaches us something powerful: true ministry is not about building ourselves up. 🙌 It is about pointing people to Jesus. John shows us what humility looks like, and Jesus is shown as the One who came from heaven, speaks the words of God, and gives eternal life.

Verse-by-Verse Message:

Here is God's Word.... **John 3:22-36**(NIV)

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon 🙌 : EE-non near

Salim, 👉 : SAY-lim because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. ²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.) ²⁵ An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

²⁷ To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine,

and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less.”

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³ Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.

After this, Jesus and His disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where He

spent some time with them, and baptized.

John 3:23 says, ***23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon*** 🖐️ : ***EE-non*** ***near Salim,*** 🖐️ : ***SAY-lim*** ***because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.***

There is a simple but beautiful truth here: people were still coming. God was still working. John was still serving faithfully. Even though Jesus had arrived, John did not quit in bitterness. He kept doing what God had called him to do until his assignment was complete.

🖐️ That is a good word for us. We do not need to compare our calling with someone else's. We just need to be **faithful** where God has placed us.

- Some people are called to plant.
- Some to water.
- Some to preach publicly.
- Some to serve quietly.

- Some are seen.
- Some are unseen.

👉 But all of it matters if it is done for Christ.

Verse **24** reminds us, ***“This was before John was put in prison.”*** John still had a little time left in public ministry. But the spotlight was beginning to move away from him and onto Jesus.

Then the tension shows up. ***Verse 25*** says, ***“An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.”***

Verse 26 continues, ***“They came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.’”***

You can almost hear the jealousy in their voices. Vs.26 **“....Everyone is going to Him.”** In other words, 🙌 “John, aren’t You concerned? Jesus is becoming more popular than you.”

But John was not upset. Why? Because John understood his role.

Listen to his answer in **verse 27: “....A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.”**

- What wisdom. What humility. John says,
- “Whatever ministry I have, God gave it.
- Whatever influence I have, God gave it.
- Whatever platform I have, God gave it.”

🙌 And if God chooses to raise someone else up, that is His right.

That is a needed word today. So much pain comes from comparison. A lot of sinful behavior starts with jealousy. So much division comes from people wanting recognition. But John understood that ministry is not possession. It is stewardship. 🖐️ It belongs to God.

If God gives you five people to influence, **be faithful**. If God gives someone else five thousand, 🖐️ rejoice that Christ is being made known. The issue is not our name. 🖐️ The issue is **His name**.

Then John says in **verse 28, “You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’”**

John is saying, *“I already told you who I am not.”* That is important. Sometimes one of the greatest acts of humility is knowing what you are not. John did not pretend to

be more than he was. He did not try to take a title that belonged only to Jesus.

- He knew he was the messenger, not the Master.
- The servant, not the Savior.
- The friend, not the Bridegroom.

Then he gives a beautiful picture in **verse 29**: ***“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”***

What an image. John says, **“I am not the groom. Jesus is the Bridegroom. The bride belongs to Him.”** In that culture, the friend of the bridegroom had an important role, but he did not confuse his role with the bridegroom’s role. His joy was not in taking the spotlight. His joy was in seeing the wedding come together.

That is exactly how faithful ministry should work.

- The church belongs to Jesus.
- The people belong to Jesus.
- The glory belongs to Jesus.

Any true servant of God should rejoice when people get closer to Christ.

John then speaks one of the greatest lines in all of Scripture. **Verse 30: "He must become greater; I must become less."**

That is the heart of the Christian life.

- Not just for preachers.
- Not just for leaders.
- 👉 For every believer.
- He must become greater in my thoughts.
- He must become greater in my decisions.
- He must become greater in my speech.

- He must become greater in my ambitions.
- He must become greater in my home.
- He must become greater in my ministry.
- He must become greater, and I must become less.

The flesh says, “Promote yourself.”

👉 The Spirit says, “Exalt Christ.”

The world says, “Build your brand.”

👉 The Bible says, “Lift up Jesus.”

This does not mean we hate ourselves in an unhealthy way. It means we stop living at the center. 👉 Jesus takes first place. Pride shrinks. Christ grows. Self fades. Jesus shines.

That is the road to joy. John said, **(Vs.29)** **“....That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”** Why was he joyful? Because he was not fighting for center stage. He was

content to stand in the shadow if Jesus was glorified.

Then the passage shifts upward into the greatness of Christ.

Verse 31 says, ***“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.”***

John the Baptist was a prophet, but he was still earthly in origin. Jesus came from above. Jesus came from heaven. Jesus is not merely another teacher among teachers. He is not just one voice in the religious crowd. He is above all.

That means Jesus has **absolute authority**.

- His words are not suggestions.
- His truth is not opinion.
- His message is not one option among many.

👉 Jesus came from heaven. He speaks with **divine authority**.

Verse 32 says, **“He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.”** Though many rejected Him, His testimony was still true. Truth does not become false because people reject it. Jesus speaks what He has seen and heard from the Father.

Verse 33 says, **“Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.”**

To receive Jesus is to agree with God.
To reject Jesus is to call God a liar.

👉 There is no neutral ground.

Verse 34 continues, **“For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.”**

This is glorious. Jesus does not speak partial truth. He speaks the very words of God. And unlike prophets who received measures of the Spirit for specific tasks,

👉 Jesus has the fullness of the Spirit without limit.

Everything we need is found in Him.

- Perfect truth.
- Perfect power.
- Perfect revelation.
- Perfect salvation.

Then **verse 35** says, ***"The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."***

👉 Everything.

- All authority.
- All judgment.
- All power.

👉 All things are in the hands of Jesus.

That means your life is safest in His hands.

- Your future is in His hands.
- Your salvation is in His hands.

- History is in His hands.
- Eternity is in His hands.

And now the passage closes with one of the clearest salvation verses in the Bible.

Verse 36 says, **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”**

Notice the seriousness of that verse.

- It does **not** say whoever is religious has eternal life.
- It does **not** say whoever tries hard has eternal life.
- It does **not** say whoever is baptized, confirmed, moral, or sincere has eternal life.

It says, 🖐️ **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.....”** (Vs.36)

Salvation is in Jesus.

Life is in Jesus.

Forgiveness is in Jesus.

Hope is in Jesus.

But the verse also gives a warning: (Vs.36)
“.....**whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.**”

That means apart from Christ, a person is not moving toward life but remains under judgment. That is why the gospel is urgent. That is why 👉 Jesus must be preached. That is why John was willing to decrease. Because eternal destinies are at stake.

Application:

This passage leaves us with three powerful truths.

- First, **humility is the mark of a true servant.** John was not threatened by Jesus being exalted. He rejoiced in it. If Christ is being glorified, we should be glad.

- Second, **Jesus is above all**. He is from heaven. He speaks the words of God. The Father has placed everything in His hands. He is not just important. He is supreme.
- Third, **eternal life is found only in the Son**. Not in religion. Not in good works. Not in self-improvement. 🙌 Only in **Jesus Christ**.

Invitation to Be Born Again:

Maybe you are listening today and you know about Jesus, but you have never truly come to Jesus.

Maybe you have been around church, around religion, around Bible talk, but you have never been born again. You have never repented of your sin and placed your trust in the Son of God.

Listen carefully: 🙌 Jesus Christ loves you.

He died on the cross for your sins.

He rose again from the dead.

He is alive right now. And He is able to save you completely.

- You do not need to clean yourself up first.
- You do not need to earn His love.
- You do not need to carry your guilt one more day.

👉 Come to Jesus.

Believe in the Son.

Trust in Him.

Turn from sin and surrender your life to Christ.

The Bible says, **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life....”** (Vs.36)

That promise can be yours right now.


If you want to be born again, call on Him from your heart: Let us Pray....

“Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner.... I believe You died for my sins and rose again..... Please forgive me. Please save me.... I turn from my sins and place my trust in You alone..... Be my Lord and Savior..... Give me eternal life and help me follow You.... In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

“**If**” you prayed that and truly meant it by faith, that is not the end. That is only the beginning.

Now go and walk with Jesus.

- Read His Word.
- Pray.
- Fellowship with believers.

 Tell someone that you have trusted Christ. God is good all the time!!!

Closing Prayer:

Father God, thank You for Your Word today. Thank You for the example of John the Baptist, who showed us what true humility looks like. Lord God, keep us from pride, jealousy, and self-promotion.

Thank You for Jesus who came from heaven, who speaks Your words, and gives eternal life to all who believe. Strengthen every believer hearing this message.

And Lord, for those who may have just now called out for salvation in Jesus, give them assurance, peace, and boldness to follow You. Surround them with grace and truth. Let their new life in You grow strong.

We love You, Lord God, and we thank You for what you did to give us eternal life. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

