

Being Number 1 at Number 2

John 3:25-35

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New Bethel Progressive Missionary Baptist Church

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Introduction: In sports, players play to win or be number 1, in the Olympics, they aim for the gold and many people in our society aim to reach the top of the corporate ladder and be in the highest position. At some point in our lives, we have each aimed to be number 1 in a certain area. However, in our spiritual walk, God wants us to not have the mentality of thinking we are above others (**Matthew 20:25-27**) (**Matthew 23:11**) (**Galatians 6:3**). Today, we will look at a man who aimed to be number 1 at number 2. From this study, let us learn to pursue the same attitude for our lives.

Verses 25-26

The Affinity

We see the affinity (attraction) towards Christ. The text tells us there was an argument between two religious groups (John the Baptist's disciples and the Jews) about purification. This ceremonial cleansing seemed to be what they were discussing. Jesus had taught that what went on in the heart was much more important than these washings on the outside. The spirit of man within was what had to be cleansed. Jesus looked on the inside of man while the law looked at the outside. The Jews' purification practices were at times traditions of the elders (**Matthew 15:2**) (**Mark 7:5**). In the midst of their debate, they were also concerned that the people were flocking toward Jesus Christ. The most essential thing is salvation (saving souls). Sometimes we get bogged down with things that have nothing to do with salvation. When Jesus came on the scene, John was well established. How do we know that? The text says "John's disciples", which meant he had a following and they addressed him as "Rabbi" or master. Now, Christ had His own following. In fact, more people were coming to Christ than to John. Christ was now number 1 and John had moved to being number 2 (“all are coming to Him”). Have we ever been in a similar situation? Notice that instead of being pleased about the people's lives being changed, John's disciples were displeased. As Christians, have we displayed a similar attitude when others experience success? Let us remind ourselves that we all have a specific plan and purpose on earth and that there is a time for everything (**Ecclesiastes 3:1**). What one Christian is anointed to do, another may not be able to do. It was now time for Christ's earthly ministry to begin and grow.

Verses 27-30

The Humility

We see the humility of John. John knew his purpose was to prepare the hearts of the people prior to Christ's coming just like the yellow light cautions and prepares us about the coming red light (**Luke 3:3-5**). John is not jealous of Jesus. He makes a profound statement that God is the giver of (good) things (**James 1:17**). When we are

blessed in life, we should give God the credit. When people **praise** us for our promotion (and how much we deserve it) etc, take that opportunity to tell where the blessing came from (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**). John uses the word “receive”. However, we can only receive something from someone when our hands are empty, not when our hands are full. If we are full of ourselves, our desires, our pursuits, we will not be a receiver of the good He intends to give. John gives an earthly example. The friend of the bridegroom is **equivalent** to the best man who organizes the details and helps with the wedding. The friend must step aside when the wedding actually begins. In the New Testament, the Church (the believers) is mentioned as the bride (**Ephesians 5:25-27**). John realized that the church (people) belong to Christ. As a leader, he was not only in tune with His purpose, but he was quick to **correct** their misunderstanding. John was not concerned about receiving glory for himself (or being number 1). He was content with being number 2. He says in verse 30, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Verses 31-35

The Superiority

Here we see John citing reasons why Jesus is **superior** to him. What are they?

(1) Christ had a heavenly origin (“from above”), which makes Him superior. (**John 3:13**) (**John 8:23**). In verse 31, it says Christ is “above all”. For Jews, it meant that He was above Moses, Abraham, the Law, the prophets, the angels, and traditions of the elders. What does it mean in our society? Above our family, job, etc.

(2) Christ knew what was true by firsthand **experience** of Heaven (vs. 32). In fact, in the book of Revelation, He is called the “faithful witness”. John could not reveal Heaven’s counsel like Jesus because John was from the earth and only knew earthly matters.

(3) Christ’s testimony always agreed with God (vs. 33).

(4) Christ was number 1 because the **Father** had granted that status to Him (read vs. 35) (**Matthew 28:18**) (**Colossians 1:17-18**). The text tells us that “all things” are in His control. Do we believe that?

Even though we are of the earth, we have been given the Spirit of God. Therefore, like Christ, we can “speak” and “testify” of Heavenly things, we can live in confidence because Christ has it all in His control. When we do this, we are making Him number 1 in our lives. As born again believers in Jesus Christ, we should do our best in the **position** God has placed us. Remember, only what we do for Christ will last.