

INTENTIONAL AND JOYFUL OBSCURITY

John 3:22-30

Introduction:

1. The Context (John 3:22-24)

A) The historical / redemptive context

> The ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus are overlapping

Their message is the same (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17)

Their impact is substantial

Delegation of religious leaders sent to interrogate John (John 1:19ff.)

Nicodemus, a religious leader, comes to interrogate Jesus (John 3:1ff.)

> John the Baptist is the last “Old Testament” prophet

All the prophets pointed ahead to the Christ

> Jesus is the Christ

All of history points to Jesus Christ

B) The immediate context (John 3:26)

> This overlapping of ministries has created a crisis for John’s disciples

John’s disciples believe that they are competing with Jesus for followers

2. John’s Response

A) Notice what John DOESN’T say

B) Notice what John DOES say

> A man can only receive what is given him (John 3:27)

John understands that all he is, has, and will accomplish is a gift from God

The apostle Paul understood this concept as well (1 Corinthians 4:6-7)

QUESTION: Do we understand that all that we are, have, and accomplish is a gift from God

This recognition results in humility

This recognition demands stewardship

This recognition produces contentment

> I told you that I am the forerunner, not the Christ (John 3:28)

John's example and teaching hadn't encouraged this attitude in his disciples

Their misguided ambition revealed a problem in them, not John

This same attitude was found in the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11-13)

This same attitude is found in the church today

John's response to his disciples is significant

He reminds them that he has not taught them to think like this

He redirects their attention to Jesus the Christ

> The groom, not the best man, gets the Bride (John 3:29)

In this illustration John pictures and reaffirms to his disciples that he is not competing with Jesus for followers – John came to get people to follow Jesus!

> He must increase but I must decrease (John 3:30)

In fulfillment of prophetic utterance the spotlight in redemptive history was on John the Baptist – but only for a while and for a purpose

His life and ministry would raise the hopes and expectations in Israel for the arrival of their Messiah

And when Jesus the Messiah arrives, John graciously and joyfully accepts the fulfillment of his life's ministry

People are following after Jesus – mission accomplished!