

THE ATTITUDE OF JOHN

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Our readings in the book of John will hopefully lead us into a deeper knowledge of and greater appreciation for this great gospel account. Like every book of the Bible, John is simply chock full of information and sources of amazement and wonder. Of the many characters mentioned in this book, John the baptizer is unique in many ways. Although his death is not recorded in John (cf. Mt. 14; Mk. 6), it is likely that very early in the book he has been shut up in prison by Herod and executed.

(Note: John 5:32-35. John is spoken of in the past tense by Jesus). However, although the record of him is brief, John had a tremendous impact through his work. In John 3:25-31 an interesting conversation transpires between John and his followers.

His disciples reveal to him that Jesus (“He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness”- vs. 26) was baptizing “and all men come to him.” (We know, of course, that Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples- John 4:1, 2). John’s followers seem a little uneasy, if not jealous of Jesus and the following He was amassing. John repeated to them that he was not the Christ, but that he was sent before Him to prepare for Him.

He illustrates his delight in what Jesus was accomplishing in a best man/bridegroom relationship. Jesus was the groom and John was, as it were, the best man (vs. 29). He stated that he (John) must decrease and that He (Jesus) must increase (vs. 30). He then spoke of the superiority of Christ (vs. 31).

We are at once impressed with the attitude of John in this conversation. He recognized his role and its diminishing aspect and rejoiced in the fact that his work was ending and Jesus’ work was just beginning to flourish. Unlike his disciples, there was no jealousy or envy on his part. He was thrilled that people were beginning to abandon him and follow the Lord.

Two other brief points regarding this passage:

- 1) John pictured himself as the best man. Those who would call themselves after him are in essence claiming marriage to the best man and not to the groom.
- 2) John was the only one called “the Baptist” in Scripture; yet he said, “I must decrease.”