

Time Audit Chronicles: John the Baptist's Final Testimony

(John 3:22-36)

Prologue: John's Humility and Jesus' Supremacy

The Presswood family gathered in the cozy living room, the warmth of the soft lighting creating a comforting atmosphere, as they read John 3:22-36. The gentle crackle of the fireplace added to the peaceful setting, while Ariel listened intently, her heart full, as John the Baptist boldly affirmed Jesus' supremacy and spoke of the eternal life available through belief in Him. Ariel, who had been reflecting on the nature of humility and the incredible message of salvation, was deep in thought. She pondered what it truly meant to put others before oneself, and how John the Baptist's example could inspire her to live selflessly. Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, stood on the couch, her small voice ringing out as she declared, "Jesus must increase, and I must decrease!" She giggled as she looked at her stuffed animals, imagining them as a crowd listening to her, just like John the Baptist.

"Daddy," Ariel asked, her brow furrowed in curiosity, "What does it mean when John says, 'He must increase, but I must decrease'? Why would John want to fade into the background?" She leaned forward, her eyes searching for understanding.

Ryan smiled, recognizing the importance of this moment. He felt a deep appreciation for John the Baptist's humility and was eager to share this with Ariel. This was a beautiful opportunity to explain how John's actions were part of a much greater story. "That's a great question, Ariel. When John says that Jesus must increase and he must decrease, he's recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that John's purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus. John knew that his role was temporary—that his mission was to point people to Jesus, not to draw attention to himself. His humility shows us that true greatness in God's Kingdom comes through serving and pointing others to Jesus, not seeking fame or recognition for ourselves."

Ariel thought about this. "So, John wasn't jealous of Jesus. He understood that Jesus was the one everyone needed to follow, and he was okay with stepping aside so that Jesus could be the focus."

"That's right," Ryan said. "John's statement shows true humility—he understood that Jesus was the center of God's plan, and John was just a servant, preparing the way for Him. Let's use the Time Audit Machine to go back and witness John's final testimony, where he publicly acknowledges Jesus' supremacy and the eternal life that comes through faith in Him."

The Journey Begins: John's Ministry Continues (John 3:22-26)

The Time Audit Machine powered on, and with a flash of light, the family found themselves on the banks of the Jordan River once again. The cool breeze carried the scent of fresh water and earth, while the sound of the gentle river flowing mixed with the voices of people gathered to be baptized. John the Baptist was still baptizing people, but now there were some questions and concerns arising from his disciples. As they watched, some of John's disciples approached him and said, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." (John 3:26). They were concerned because Jesus had also begun baptizing, and it seemed like people were starting to follow Him instead of John.

Ariel observed the scene carefully, her eyes narrowing as she watched the expressions of John's disciples. "It looks like some of John's disciples are worried that people are following Jesus instead of them. They don't seem to understand why this is happening," she said, her voice tinged with curiosity and empathy.

"Yes," Ryan said. "At this point, John's disciples were focused on numbers—how many people were coming to be baptized by John. They were concerned about losing followers to Jesus. But John was about to make it clear that his purpose was never to compete with Jesus or draw attention to himself."

Ariel was puzzled. "But why wasn't John concerned that people were following Jesus? Wouldn't that have made him feel like he was losing his followers?"

"That's the beauty of John's humility," Ryan said. "John wasn't concerned about gaining a large following for himself. He knew that his role was to prepare the way for Jesus, not to be the center of attention. And he understood that the work of the Kingdom of God isn't about building our own fame—it's about pointing people to Jesus."

John's Response: "He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease" (John 3:27-30)

John responded to his disciples' concerns with great clarity and humility. His voice was steady and filled with conviction as he said, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him." (John 3:27-28). John acknowledged that everything he had, including his ministry, was a gift from God. He went on to say, "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." (John 3:29). John used the wedding imagery to explain his role: he was like the friend of the bridegroom, someone who prepares for the bridegroom's arrival and rejoices when the bridegroom, Jesus, comes to claim His bride, the church.

To help Ariel understand this better, Ryan added, "In Jewish culture, the friend of the bridegroom had a very important job. He made sure everything was ready for the wedding and then stepped back to let the bridegroom take center stage. John saw himself as that friend—he was there to make sure the people were ready for Jesus, the true bridegroom, and he was overjoyed when Jesus began His ministry."

Then John made his powerful declaration: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30).

Ariel smiled as she heard John's words, her eyes lighting up with understanding. "John knew that Jesus was the Bridegroom, the one who came to claim His people, and John was just the friend—the one preparing the way for the true Savior. He wasn't jealous or upset; he was joyful because he knew his mission was being fulfilled. He wasn't jealous or upset that people were following Jesus. He was happy because Jesus was doing what He came to do."

"Yes," Ryan said. "John's statement, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' reveals true humility. John knew his role was to point people to Jesus, and that his own ministry was always meant to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming Messiah. John was perfectly content to decrease in prominence as Jesus increased in His work."

Ariel reflected on this. “John wasn’t worried about his own fame. He was focused on the Kingdom of God and the work Jesus was doing. He didn’t need to be the center—Jesus was the center.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “John’s example teaches us that the Kingdom of God isn’t about us—it’s about Jesus. We are called to serve, to point others to Him, and to humble ourselves so that He can be glorified.”

Eternal Life through Belief in Jesus (John 3:31-36)

John then spoke of the supremacy of Jesus in clear terms, his voice filled with reverence: “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.” (John 3:31). The crowd around him grew quiet, their eyes fixed on John as they took in the weight of his words. John was emphasizing that Jesus, who came from heaven, is above all others and is the Savior of the world.

Ryan paused and explained further, “At that time, people were used to hearing from teachers and prophets who were just like them—earthly men with earthly wisdom. But Jesus was different. He came from heaven, and His authority was divine. That’s why John said Jesus is above all.”

John continued, “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.” (John 3:32). Though many rejected Jesus’ message, John affirmed that Jesus’ words and testimony were from heaven and carried eternal truth.

Then, John pointed to the most important truth of all: “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.” (John 3:36).

Ariel’s eyes widened, her voice filled with awe. “So, John is saying that eternal life comes through belief in Jesus. If we believe in Jesus, we have eternal life, but if we reject Him, we remain separated from God. It’s such an important choice—one that changes everything.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “John is emphasizing that belief in Jesus is the key to eternal life. It’s not about our own efforts or good deeds—it’s about trusting in Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Through faith in Him, we are reconciled to God and receive the gift of eternal life.”

Ariel reflected on the importance of this message. “So, Jesus is the only way to have eternal life, and our belief in Him is the key to receiving it.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “And this message of eternal life isn’t just for the future—it’s for today. When we believe in Jesus, we begin to experience the abundant life He offers, both now and forever.”

Reflection: Humility, Supremacy, and Eternal Life

Back in the garage, the Time Audit Machine powered down, the hum slowly fading into silence. The dim light of the garage seemed calming compared to the bustling scene they had just left. The family sat quietly, each of them reflecting on the significance of John the Baptist’s testimony, their hearts filled with a renewed sense of purpose. Ariel turned to her father, feeling the weight of the lessons learned. Alice, still holding Mr. Fluffernutter, knelt down low, her voice soft as she said, “I must decrease.” She then raised a small toy figure, her face beaming with joy as she whispered, “And Jesus must increase!”

Her stuffed animals looked on, and Alice imagined them cheering, their little imaginary world filled with happiness and purpose.

“John really showed us what true humility looks like,” Ariel said softly, her eyes thoughtful. “He knew that his job was to prepare the way for Jesus and that Jesus was the one who should increase, not him. He was happy to step back and let

it Jesus be the focus. It makes me think about how I can be more like that—putting Jesus first in everything.”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “John’s humility teaches us that the Kingdom of God is not about seeking glory for ourselves—it’s about pointing to Jesus and making Him the center of everything. John understood that Jesus is the Savior, and his purpose was to prepare the way for people to believe in Him.”

Ariel smiled, feeling the peace of this truth. “And when we believe in Jesus, we receive eternal life. It’s not about our own efforts—it’s about trusting in Him.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “Jesus is the way to eternal life, and when we believe in Him, we experience the abundant life He offers now and forever.”

Takeaway: John’s Testimony and the Supremacy of Jesus

In John 3:22-36, John the Baptist affirms the supremacy of Jesus and humbly acknowledges that his role was to prepare the way for the Messiah. John boldly declares, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” pointing to the truth that Jesus is the center of God’s redemptive plan. John also highlights that eternal life is found through belief in Jesus. Those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God receive the gift of eternal life, while those who reject Him remain separated from God. John’s testimony points to the essential truth that Jesus is the way to salvation and the eternal life He offers.

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Interactive Reflections

1. John the Baptist said, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” What are ways you can make Jesus the focus in your life rather than seeking attention for yourself?
2. John was happy to let Jesus take center stage. How do you feel when someone else gets credit or recognition? Can you find joy in their success, like John did?
3. Eternal life comes through believing in Jesus. What does it mean to you to trust in Him fully?
4. Think of someone you know who doesn’t know Jesus yet. How can you point them to Him through your words or actions?
5. John compared himself to the friend of the bridegroom, rejoicing when the bridegroom arrived. How can you find joy in seeing others draw closer to Jesus?

Songs or Poetry

Children's Hymn: "He Must Increase"

(Chorus)

*He must increase, I must decrease,
I'll point to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
His light must shine, His name I'll raise,
Forever and always, I'll give Him praise.*

(Verse 1)

*John the Baptist showed the way,
Pointing to Jesus every day.
Not seeking fame, not seeking pride,
His joy was found with Christ by his side.*

(Verse 2)

*When I feel small, I'll lift my eyes,
To Jesus, reigning in the skies.
For in His love, my heart will rest,
His name alone must be confessed.*

(Repeat Chorus)

Mr. Fluffernutter's Perspective

"Hello, my hoppy friends! It's Mr. Fluffernutter here, ready to share some bunny wisdom. So, guess what I learned today? John the Baptist said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* At first, I thought, 'Whoa, does that mean I need to eat fewer carrots so Jesus can have more?' But then Alice explained it to me—it's about letting Jesus take the spotlight!

John the Baptist didn't want people to focus on him. He wanted them to see how amazing Jesus is. So now I'm thinking, maybe I don't need to be the fluffiest bunny in the room—maybe I should hop out of the way so others can see how great Jesus is too!

What about you, fluffy friends? How do you think you can help others see Jesus? Hop into the comments below and let me know!"

Ariel's Journal Reflection

"Today, I learned something really powerful from John the Baptist's words: *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* At first, I wondered why John wasn't upset that people were following Jesus instead of

him. If it were me, I might feel left out or forgotten. But John wasn't upset at all—he was overjoyed because he knew his mission was to point people to Jesus.

That made me think about how often I want to be noticed or praised for the things I do. Do I want others to see me, or do I want them to see Jesus through me? John's humility inspires me to live in a way that makes Jesus the focus.

In modern times, it might look like giving credit to someone else instead of trying to take it for myself, or being kind to someone who needs encouragement rather than seeking attention for myself. John's example reminds me that my life should point to Jesus, not to me."

Alice's Reflection with Mr. Fluffernutter

Alice sat cross-legged on her bed, cradling Mr. Fluffernutter. "Okay, Fluffy," she began, her voice serious. "John the Baptist said '*He must increase, but I must decrease.*' What do you think that means?"

She tilted her head as if waiting for Mr. Fluffernutter's reply, then giggled. "I know, it's a big thought for a little bunny, huh? But I think it means that Jesus is the most important, and we should let Him shine brighter than us. Like today, when I let Ariel have the last cookie, even though I really wanted it. That's kind of like letting Jesus increase, right?"

Mr. Fluffernutter stared back with his button eyes, and Alice nodded. "Yep, I thought so too. So, tomorrow, we're going to think of one way to make Jesus the star. Maybe we can tell someone about Him or help out when no one's looking. What do you think?"

After a pause, Alice grinned. "Great idea, Fluffy! Let's hop to it!"

KJV Scripture

- **John 3:27:** "*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*"
- **John 3:29:** "*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.*"
- **John 3:30:** "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"
- **John 3:36:** "*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.*"