

John 3: 22 – end

‘Centre Stage’

**Introduction ...**

From our New Testament reading – perhaps the ‘Cult of Celebrity’ is not as modern a phenomenon as we tend to think!

It’s John’s Gospel that makes it clear that the ministries of John-the-Baptist and Jesus overlapped. It’s not that John the Baptist stopped when Jesus started.

**John’s attitude to Jesus ...**

We can’t be sure why that was the case.

Did John-the-Baptist sense that God was asking him to continue?

Was it that such a momentum had built up for John ... people were still coming for baptism ... so should he carry on ... or turn them away ...?

Was he ‘right’ to continue or not?

There was a danger in doing so ... the danger of rivalry ... and whilst John-the-Baptist tried to guard against the rivalry ... his followers did not always listen.

In **Acts 19**, we read of people receiving the Baptism of John ... and there’s some evidence from as late as the 8<sup>th</sup> century that there were groups who styled themselves as followers of John-the-Baptist.

**Followers ...**

This can alert us to a common human tendency. Not many of us become ‘the cult figure’ ... akin to John-the-Baptist ... but sometimes followers of a cult figure are very loathe to change allegiance ... to move on ... even when their leader encourages them to do so.

It’s said that the followers of John Calvin became much stronger (and narrower) Calvinists than Calvin himself ever was!

John-the-Baptist – despite his uncertainties about Jesus – was clear about one thing – saying:

**I am not the Messiah ... He must increase but I must decrease.**

## **Application ...**

How might that apply to us?

Well, there may well be people today who we admire, who influence us in our faith and attitudes ... there may be historical figures or church traditions that have great meaning for us.

But all the time, we need to keep a right perspective.

Where is Jesus within those influences?

Have we allowed God to speak to us – especially through the Gospels ... to shed a light on those influences?

Perhaps it's time ... in the words of John-the-Baptist – for those influences to decrease to make room for some that are more Christ-centred ...

It might be the way we think of our own church tradition compared with others ...?

It might be how we think we live a Christian life ...?

It might be how much we point others to Jesus ...?

We'll have a short time of silence to reflect:

***... have we become, in some ways, followers of something or someone other than Jesus?***