

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **From John to Jesus**

Scripture: John 3:22-36

Code: 1506B

Turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 3 as we examine our lesson for today. We are studying the gospel of John which really involves studying the life of Christ. This morning we come in our study to John 3 and our verses for this morning are verses 22 to 36. I say this often, nevertheless I say it in truth, this also is a very critical portion of Scripture because it is a transition. It is a transition between the old economy, the law/works age of Israel and the new economy, the grace/covenant of Jesus Christ. And here this particular portion of Scripture directed at Israel primarily, but for us as well, directed at Israel to show them that the old economy was fading away and a new one was arriving with Jesus Christ. And this portion of Scripture basis its content on that thought, the transition from the old covenant to the new.

Now John in his gospel has given all kinds of evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and the bearer of a new covenant. He has given all the evidence imaginable that Jesus is indeed Messiah of Israel, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, God of very gods, God in a human body. He has given the evidence of witnesses who said He was when they saw Him and talked with Him. He's given the evidence of the miracles of Christ that only God could do such things. He has given the evidence of the person of Christ in the first chapter of his gospel as he painted the person of Christ in all of His deity. He has just recently in the first 21 verses of chapter 3 shown how we know Christ is God by His words. He is the bearer of a message from heaven.

And so, John has been trying to convince us that Christ is God, not one of many gods, not quote/unquote "a God" but God of very Gods, that He is God. That's John's message.

Now Israel didn't get the message. Why? Because they didn't want the message. Ignorance is only a byproduct of unbelief. And we talked about that last time. The Jewish people were still hung up on law/works, they were still endeavoring to earn their way to God. They had even blown it at that point because the Old Testament was indicative in many cases of the fact of grace. But they were still strapped to law. And that's what Nicodemus said when he said it's impossible for me to be born again, I'm too far gone on the law route, I can't turn around, start all over on this grace thing, it's too new. I can't do it. I'm too far gone, I can't go back and be born all over again and start anew.

But what he didn't understand was that it wasn't a human effort that brought it about, it was a divine miracle. But nonetheless, they were till bothered by the externals in the old economy. In fact, the Jewish people interestingly enough were jealous of Christ's success. The Pharisees were very

jealous of it. The disciples of John the Baptist, and I don't know how many there were but I can imagine there many, many, many, many, many, thousands of them who had been baptized by John because all Israel flocked to Him. They were jealous of Christ, and we'll see that in a minute. They did not receive Christ, they refused to believe in Him. And the reason was because He was preaching about their sins and they didn't want to face their sins. We'll see this further in the gospel as the Pharisees were unwilling to examine their own lives and see themselves as they really are, and so are the other Jewish people. And so Israel had not believed. He came unto His own, His own received Him not. They did not want Him.

Ultimately at the end of His life they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." They refused Christ. They were ignorant because of unbelief. And so John has been laying the proof out but unbelief has been holding them back from accepting it.

Now at this point this is an important fact. They had accepted the ministry of John the Baptist, definitely they had. In fact, the Bible says all Israel went out to John, and all men perceived that John was a prophet. They had whole-heartedly and totally accepted the ministry of John the Baptist. And the reason was because he was an Old Testament prophet, he was a part of the old economy. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets. There hadn't been one in 400 years. When this one arrived they were really happy to have one around. And the people flocked out to him, repented supposedly of their sin, went through a ceremonial cleansing symbolized by baptism...baptism was only the symbol and John baptized people as a symbol of their repentance and cleansing. And Israel was going to hear this prophet of God named John who was out in the wilderness dressed in camel's hair and eating grasshoppers and he was a unique person. But he was a devastating dynamic person, powerful preacher. And he had great following and most important, the people believed that he was a prophet. That's very important. They wanted a prophet, what they didn't think they needed was a Savior, see. They were looking for a king, not a Savior. They could take a prophet or a king, a Savior they wouldn't take.

And so, here is John, accepted totally by the people, proclaiming Christ, but Israel does not believe Christ, and interestingly enough they didn't even believe John when he talked this way, which is strange. And so in this passage we have, very important now, get this, the overlapping of the ministry of John with the ministry of Jesus and a final confrontation that gives the transition its clarity. This passage points to the transition from the old to the new. And as I said, it is especially directed to Israel that they might see that the old Jewish law/works structure is gone, Christ came to bring a whole new thing. The old priesthood is gone, all believers are now priests. The old sacrificial system is gone, Christ is the perfect sacrifice that ends them all once and for all. The problem of access to God is removed, every man has boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies before God. Christ brings a whole new approach to everything in terms of God and John and Jesus overlap in this transition as John represents the old and Jesus the new. And here the transition comes in these verses. And verse 30 is the key because in verse 30 John says, "He must increase and I must decrease." I

representing the old fade out of the scene as Christ moves into the full view of everyone.

Now this is John the Baptist's last testimony in these verses and John the Apostle records the testimony here of John the Baptist, remember they're two different people. This is John the Baptist's last message. His ministry is done after this. Christ moves into the forefront, John fades away. In fact, he faded away and lost his head. God designed that that would be the end of his life and for his testimony for Jesus Christ, he lost his head all because the king decided that he'd give Salome anything she wanted if she would do a dance, and she did a dance and her mother told her to ask for John's head, and she got it on a platter.

And so, John the Baptist's life was coming to an end. You say, "That's too bad," not really, he just got promoted, glorified. But John the Baptist, of course he had for the full experience of glorification because he's an Old Testament saint he'll wait for the resurrection that comes at the end of the Tribulation, that's another sermon. Anyway, in the transition here John the Baptist fades away and Jesus Christ moves into the forefront. And so this passage the Holy Spirit uses as a bridge across the transition. Jesus and John are not rivals because the object of John's preaching is Jesus and Jesus is the climax of the old and the author of the new. And so John the Baptist gives the transition.

Now it's very important, it's a very important fact, it's very important...some people have said, "Well why do you have to have John the Baptist hanging around in the new economy?" Well, as a transition period there because the full new economy doesn't come till Christ dies and rises again, obviously. And this transition is very important. If John died and then Jesus came, who is going to point the people to Jesus? God had to allow that overlap so that somebody could say, "There He is, the Messiah of God right there, go after Him."

There had to be that overlap where John the Baptist and Jesus ministered at the same time so that John could point to Christ. Not only that, John had to be carrying on his full, total, Old Testament style prophetic ministry. Why? In order that the people would believe what he said. He had to be a full-blown Old Testament prophet in order for the people to come out and listen to him when he said, "Follow after the Lamb of God." If he was less than a full prophet, the people wouldn't have considered him a prophet, he wouldn't have had no ministry at all. So he had to come with a full prophetic ministry, including an Old Testament purifying type of baptism in order to focus attention on Christ. And Christ had to be there at the same time. So the transition was made beautiful. The Holy Spirit never misses a thing, beautiful, beautiful transition. And so it is John the Baptist who gives here his last message and this last message comes as a confrontation between the disciples of John and a disciple of Jesus, we'll see that in a moment.

So John has no problems. John knows where his ministry is and here in this passage in his last message he points to Christ again. And he says, "Don't follow me, I'm not the one. There He is." We come to the setting for our message, really, in verses 22 to 24, we'll set the stage and then we'll

go into the details.

Verse 22 tells us how everything is set up now. All right, the Passover is over. Christ finished in the Passover week cleansing the temple, talking with the Jews talking with Nicodemus, all the things that He did during the Passover. Now we come to this point, verse 22, "After these things," that is the things of the Passover, "came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judea and there He tarried with them and baptized." And, of course, Christ literally did not do the baptizing Himself, chapter 4 verse 2 says the disciples did it, but here it signifies Christ's approval of it.

All right, what's happening? Christ retreats from Jerusalem. One Bible commentator said Jesus in complete frustration because He was not received as Messiah beat it out of town. Oh, no way...no way. Christ was not frustrated and did not run away from it because He had been mocked and not accepted. There were three reasons basically that I believe He went out to Judea. Number one, He wanted to be with His disciples. Number two, He wanted to preach and baptize. Number three, and this is really the key, He wanted to bring about a confrontation with John and Himself with some lasting results. He wanted to set up a ministry at the same time as John's so that John could send people to Him and bring it to a head finally. And we'll see how this works. He was really setting up a confrontation. And so He tarried and was baptizing.

And incidentally, you say, "What kind of baptism was Jesus doing?" He wasn't doing the Old Testament baptism of John, He wasn't doing the Roman 6 baptism of the New Testament which is burying us, you know, symbolically in His death and in His resurrection, that couldn't be because He hadn't died and rose again. You say, "What kind of baptism is it?" Well it's a little of everything. Baptism was simply a sign of cleansing. And as people came and Jesus preached and they believed, He merely baptized them as a symbol of cleansing. But beyond that it had a prophetic character. This was a prophetic baptism picturing the full Christian baptism that would come after His death and resurrection. And we see that first occur in Acts 2:41 when Peter and the disciples baptized those 3,000 people in one day. Did you ever figure that out? I know a guy who wrote his thesis on the mathematical possibility of baptizing 3,000 people in one day by 12 disciples. Anyway, that was the first real Christian baptism. Prior to that the baptism of Christ was prophetic, pointing toward that.

Now in verse 23 we find out what sets up the confrontation. Jesus is in Judea and He's probably near Jericho at the ford of the Jordan River. And up north from there a little ways John also was baptizing in Aenon, and that means a place of abundant springs and Salem which means peace, Jerusalem, near Salem which was up north a little bit from where Jesus was and he was there because there was much water there, the Baptists love that verse because that's good evidence for immersion. There was much water there and they came and were baptized.

Now here is the confrontation. You have Jesus in one place preaching and baptizing. John in another place preaching and baptizing. Naturally somebody is going to say, "Why two, are they

different? If they are, who is number one?" That's exactly what Jesus wanted to happen. And sure enough, just like clock work it does. Now again, this is a very important overlap. The ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John need to be happening at the same time so that John has somewhere to point. Now you'll notice that back in verse 22 it says, "Jesus tarried there." As best as we can figure out the chronology because of what we find out about in the next chapter, Jesus was probably there for about six months, so this was a protracted ministry. It took six months, now watch this, it took six months for the shift to take place. The crowds were over here with John, John the Baptist. Jesus arrives and little by little, little by little the people start moving across to Jesus. Over a six-month period John's crowds have thinned out. And Jesus' crowds are growing. And this is a great blessing to John, this is the whole point of his ministry, get them over there where Jesus is.

And so, John is a fabulous example of humble faithfulness. He wasn't just saying, "Oh, my ministry is crumbling, the crowds are falling down." So many people measure their ministry on how many bodies they have, you know, in one room. Are you having a successful ministry? Oh, my, the ministry is tremendous, we had 200. Oh? That's a ministry? Two hundred what? We had 200 bodies in our room, 400 ears, 200 noses and 400 eyes. Well that's not a ministry. The ministry is not measured by the number, the ministry is measured by the effect. And so John's ministry was totally successful. You know why? His crowds were diminishing and going to Jesus...beautiful, that's what he wanted them to do. He wasn't trying to get a crowd, he was trying to get rid of a crowd...imagine that. And John is a tremendous example of humility. Here he was, just up there and the people were leaving and he was just carrying on.

Now in verse 24 it says, "For John was not yet cast into prison." You say, "Well why is that there? It's obvious that he couldn't be in prison if he was in Salem there in Aenon." Well the reason that's there is because of this, important point, in Matthew and Mark all of this account here at the Passover isn't even in those gospels. In Matthew and Mark you have Christ's temptation followed immediately by the imprisonment of John. So when John the Apostle here says John's not yet cast in prison, he's just telling us that this fits in the slot between the baptism, temptation of Christ and the imprisonment of John. He's just telling us chronologically so we know that Matthew runs up this far then we jump to John, fill the slot in, go back to Matthew and continue. And so this is merely a chronological statement so that we don't get confused by reading Matthew and Mark and finding the imprisonment of John happening immediately after Christ's temptation which happened a long time ago before this.

All right, so he takes care of this. So all the people are moving over toward Jesus Christ. You say, "That's really wonderful, they're all going over there and believing." No, they didn't believe, they just went over there. That was their problem. John got them over there, that's all he was responsible to do. He wasn't responsible for faith, He wasn't responsible for their unbelief. He wasn't responsible for their sin. He was only responsible to point to Christ. That's all. And he did his job and they went. You'll notice at the end of verse 26 that it says all men come to Him. They started moving toward Jesus Christ. Now "all men" there is not used in an exclusive way but in a general way, and we'll

mention that in a moment.

All right, now I want you to see three things in this text as we begin it at verse 25, we set the stage. Number one, John the Baptist, the end of the old, verses 25 to 29, this is the fading John the Baptist. Then in verse 30 the transition. Then in verses 31 to 36, Jesus Christ the beginning of the new. So you have John the Baptist, the end of the old, the transition in the middle, Jesus Christ the beginning of the new. Three simple phases in this particular passage.

Now let's look at John the Baptist, the end of the old, and let's see how the end was magnified in this confrontation. Jesus is baptizing in one spot. John's baptizing somewhere else. All right, and naturally the dispute comes. Verse 25, "Then there arose a question or a dispute between some of John's disciples and...and your Bible may say THE Jews, the best manuscripts say A Jew, whatever, I feel it's best to assume that it was one Jew...John's disciples...and this could be many caused all Israel flocked after John...John's disciples and a single Jew started having an argument about purifying." Now the symbol of purifying was baptism, it's obvious what was going on. The Jew and the disciples of John were hassling over whose baptism was the greater. They were talking about this whole thing. And the Jew may have been a disciple of Jesus, it doesn't say that. He may not have been. He may just have been a Jew looking for an argument and he started it. And so they were disputing. And the disciples of John were probably saying, "We're number one...we're number one," you know. And the disciple, or the one Jew who was taking the other side would have said, "Wait a minute now, Christ is number one." And they were arguing and since these men had come to John and believed in John, they were really upset about this and fascinating truth, fascinating, to show you the character of unbelief. It's hard to believe this. Here were John's disciples who had been with him and they didn't even know that he himself had been pointing to Messiah, or they knew but didn't believe. Here they...they're defending John the Baptist against Messiah and all John's been doing has been pointing to Messiah. That's the character of unbelief that makes no sense at all. Unbelief produces ignorance.

All right, you come to verse 26 and these disciples ran back to John. I could just see them. They had this argument so they ran right back to John the Baptist. "And they said unto him, `Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan...who's that?, Jesus Christ...to whom thou bearest witness." Isn't that unbelievable? The one you've been telling us to go see, well guess what, everybody's going over there. Tragedy. What a ridiculous statement. You know that one you've been telling us to go to, everybody's going to Him. You see, that's the ignorance of unbelief. It doesn't make any sense at all. "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptize and all men come to Him." John, you're losing all the people to that Jesus. And they were really dissatisfied, they were jealous. They were hanging on to the old economy, they were envious of the crowds that Jesus had. And so they run to John and they try to set up a little jealousy in John.

Oh, there's no way. That John, he's absolutely unbelievable. There's not a jealous bone in his body. Not only is there not jealousy, down at the end of verse 29 he says, "Really? My joy is fulfilled." You know, that's what I've been waiting for. This is a tremendous illustration of humble faithfulness.

There's another great illustration of this in Numbers chapter 11. Moses had this same problem. This is interesting. Numbers 11:26, listen, this is in the wilderness wanderings. "Now there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other was Medad, Eldad and Medad, and the Spirit rested on them." God's Holy Spirit came upon these two guys, "And they were of them that were written but went not out unto the tabernacle and they prophesied in the camp." Here comes Eldad and Medad and, man, they were preaching and they were really going at it, dynamic. "And there ran a young man and told Moses and said, 'Moses, Eldad and Medad are preaching in the camp.'" You say, "Well what's the big deal about that? "They're hogging your territory, Moses." "And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men answered and said, 'My lord, Moses, forbid them, don't let them preach in your territory.'" You know, they're hogging a little bit of the glory.

"And Moses says unto them...verse 29...'Envious thou for my sake?'" You jealous for me? Listen to this. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." Not only am I not jealous, says Moses, I'm blessed. You couldn't set up a jealousy with a real servant of God.

You remember the Apostle Paul in prison, Philippians 1:14 to 18? You know what happens there? Paul says since I've been in jail there's a lot of people who really became confident in my bonds. Since I've been in prison, boy, people are going around preaching. And he says they're preaching all over everywhere where I used to preach. And you don't see Paul saying, "I don't like it, I want to get out of here. I want to get back there, they're hogging my area." Paul just says, "Listen, some of them are even lousy," he says, "They even preach Christ of contention." They don't even have the message right but he says at the end, he says, "That's all right, if it's got to be that way I just rejoice that Christ is preached." You can't set up jealousy in the heart of a true servant of God.

I read a fabulous story this week and I can't recount all the details. About a pastor, this is true, just read it this week, and he had a great church and it was growing very well. And then his ministry began to wane and a new pastor came in just down the street and all the people started going over there. And so little by little the people went over to this other church. And so Sunday night service kept dwindling and dwindling and dwindling. And finally, one Sunday night this pastor who was a very godly man stood up and said, "Well, folks," he said, "evidently God has His hand on that young man down the street. Why don't we all go down tonight and join them?" So he packed up his whole congregation, they walked down the street and went in the back and sat down and became a part of that church. He said, "Wherever God's doing the blessing, that's where I want to be." That's amazing. There wasn't the least bit of jealousy in the heart of a true servant of God. No man really

can be jealous of his place.

And John expands this, look at it in verse 27, this is terrific. "John answered and said, `Listen, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.'" You know what he was saying? You say if I've been successful, God made me successful. If my ministry is over, then God's turning it off. If Jesus Christ is receiving people, then they're coming to Him because God's sending them there. I don't need to stand back and be jealous of what God's doing, I just say God's doing what He's doing and that's the way it ought to be cause nobody ever received anything except God gave it to him. Any ministry that you have, any ministry that I have, God's given me. And if God designs to change that ministry, praise His name, that's up to Him. But I'm only available to be used by God in any kind of ministry He wants me to be used, and that's the way it must be with you. And it doesn't matter the quantity or whatever of your ministry, it's merely that whatever you have, God gave it.

John says, "You can't make me jealous of that, it just means God's given Him this ministry. If God gave me the call and the power to be a prophet, that's great, I'll operate as a prophet. If God gave Him the call and the authority to be the Messiah, then that's God's design and that's the way it is." Isn't this a beautiful, beautiful character, John the Baptist? Man, what tremendous spiritual stature this man had, tremendous.

The principle applies in every way. God's sovereign authority grants the ministry. That's the way it is. Paul hits this right on the head in 1 Corinthians 4:7 he says this, listen, "For who makes thee differ from another? And what hast thou that that didst not receive? Now if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hast not received it but earned it?" Everything you have is God's gift to you. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "I am what I am by the grace of God," see. It's all a gift. It's all a gift. If you have a successful ministry, it's of the grace of God.

You say, "Boy, is that good to know? Am I happy to know that. Because I don't have any ministry and evidently God never gave me any." Hold it right there. Don't think another thought. You're not off the hook because Paul hits that one right on the head, too. In 1 Corinthians 8, I think it's verse 2, he says this, "If any man think that he knows anything," you think you know where you are and you're doing all that God could possibly give you to do, which is nothing. He says, "You know nothing as you ought to know." If any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing. Isn't that something? What is that saying? That's saying when you think you've arrived, brother, be sure of one thing, you haven't. You say, "Well, you mean God's got a greater ministry for me, where is it? I've never seen it." And what did James say, "You have not because you ask not." It's there. Nobody gets there, nobody arrives, nobody can say...here I am at the end of my life, I've done every single thing God wanted. Oh boy. I don't care where you are, you're not there yet. And so just principle is tremendous. God gives you a ministry, it's a God-given ministry. There's no room for jealousy.

Now watch how John illustrates this, this is terrific. Verse 28 he says, "Listen, fellows, you heard me say that I am not the Christ but sent before Him." I've been telling you all along to go over there and see Jesus Christ, He's the Lamb of God. I've been telling you. What are you trying to start a jealousy thing for? I've been telling you all along He's the one. Tremendous truth.

You know what the character of any great ministry is? Not how many people follow the minister but how many people follow Jesus Christ. Any time you run into a ministry where people are constantly attached to the minister, watch that ministry, something is wrong, and I mean that seriously. Something is wrong. Any really God-blessed, God-given ministry makes disciples of Jesus Christ, not disciples of some man. And John's ministry was a joyous ministry because he had sent a whole nation to Jesus Christ. Now they had problems when they got there, but he did his job. He did his job.

And then in verse 29 he illustrates this tremendous truth. This is a beautiful illustration. He says, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." We all know that, the bride and the bridegroom, they're the ones that are getting married. "But the shoshpen(?) or the friend of the bridegroom...in Hebrew...the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears Him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

You say, "What is this all about?" Well John says I am the best man, see. In Hebrew weddings it's very interesting. The shoshpen(?) or the friend of the bridegroom took the hand of the bride. Not for long. His job was to put the hand of the bride into the hand of the bridegroom, a little ceremony that ended up the marriage. And then they were sent into the bridal chamber, the party was over, everybody went home. That was the climax of the wedding. When the shoshpen took the hand of the bride, placed it in the bridegroom's hand and his job was done, he just faded out. That was it. And John says that's me. Jesus Christ is pictured here as the bridegroom, Israel like a bride. John says I've taken the hand of the bride, put it in the hand of the groom, I'm done, goodbye. I'm going to sit around and say, "Oh, I want to be the groom." I want to go, I'm done and it's my joy to do that. The best man doesn't stand around crying, at least not normally. It may have happened. But he did his job.

Now notice it says this, very, very interesting, it says, "He rejoiced greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." Do you know the bridegroom in a Hebrew wedding couldn't speak until he had received the hand of the bride. And when he spoke, that signified the union. John says I put the hand there, I heard Him speak, I'm leaving. That's the end of my ministry. John says I'm fading out, that's all. It's all over. Are you sad, John? Sad? I'm blessed. I mean, what could be more wonderful than a fruitful ministry? I mean, God said, "John, turn the hearts of the people to God. John, bring them to Christ. John, point to Jesus." I did it, they went, terrific. What else could I ask for? I'm ready to go. John was blessed. Oh the characteristic of a true minister who takes the people and hands them over to Jesus Christ, that's what it's all about, isn't it? He was glad.

So, the end of the old. Now look at the transition. John says it in verse 30, here's the transition. "He must increase but I must decrease." The friend of the bridegroom, I've had my day, goodbye. Fading out. Now he says Jesus Christ is coming into the view, full glory. Notice that word "must," in accord with God's eternal plan, He must increase. No option. The friend of the groom fades away, the luster of the star is lost in the glow of the morning sun. The old covenant fades out, the new is here. The shadows retreat and the real substance arrives. So we see the old fading, we see the transition.

Now let's look at the last point, verses 31 to 36 very briefly. Jesus Christ the beginning of the new. And now John...I believe John the Baptist continues to talk. Some people say it's John the Apostle here, I don't see any reason to believe that. There's no break in thought. There's no break in continuity. There's no indication at all. This is John's last message. And John the Baptist presents the beginning of the new by presenting Jesus Christ. This is a fabulous testimony.

John says to these disciples who were came there to get him jealous, see. They came there to stir him up. And now he's going to lay it on him like you never heard. He's going to tell him, "Listen, Jesus Christ is all and all, I am zero, I am nothing, get out of here, go to Jesus Christ." That's what he says in essence here. And what he does here is give a testimony that has five reasons for the supremacy of Christ. These are very important. Underline them as you go, they're in the five verses, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35...five reasons for the supremacy of Christ.

John is going to tell them now...you think I'm something, brother, let me show you five supremacies of Christ. Number one, Christ has heavenly origin, verse 31, "He that cometh from above is above all." That's a pretty simple statement. John says, "Listen, he's straight from heaven. Me, well I'm of the earth earthly and I speak of the earth. I'm nothing, I'm just a human being." And then he ends up the verse by saying, "He that cometh from heaven is above all." Same thing he said at the beginning. See him contrasting himself with Christ?

Now don't ever forget this, John the Baptist was no slouch. Jesus said in Matthew 11:11, important verse, Jesus said, "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Do you know that he was the greatest human being that ever lived in this world? John the Baptist? He was great. But he says in the comparison to Christ, I am zero. You know how the rest of Matthew 11:11 goes, fabulous verse, listen, "John the Baptist the greatest human being, nevertheless for not withstanding, the least in the Kingdom of heaven is...what?...greater than John." And is Jesus the least in the Kingdom? Far from it. But the least little speck of heaven is the greatest of the greatest...is greater than the greatest of earth. John's the greatest human being, he doesn't measure up to the littlest speck of heaven. Imagine what he must be in comparison to the greatest thing in heaven, the Son Himself. John's saying I'm nothing. Sure I'm the greatest man, big deal, that doesn't even make me the lowest in heaven and in God's Kingdom.

All right, so number one, he says Christ is supreme because he has a heavenly origin. Incidentally, this is a good passage for you to keep in mind in dealing with someone who has got some kind of hangups about whether Jesus is really God. Second reason that he presents the supremacy of Christ, verse 32, he says, "Christ knows what is true first hand." He says in verse 32, "And what hath seen and heard that He testifies." And incidentally, no man receives His testimony.

Jesus gives truth first hand. And John says, "Brother, in that He's got it over me. I am strictly second hand, I've never been there. Jesus gives it first hand. He saw it, He heard it, He made it happen." True, pure truth from the very throne of God. An immediate and eternal witness, all things divine, the full revelation of God is in Christ, He gives it all because He has experienced it. And so John compares the testimony of Christ which is direct from heaven firsthand with his own secondhand testimony. And he says nobody believes, nobody receives the testimony. And when he says no man there he doesn't mean...there's two ways to use "no men" and "all men." Whenever you see that in the Bible, all men or no men, it can either be totally exclusive or generally exclusive. In other words, it can be a general statement or an absolute statement, and that's the question. For example, in the Bible it says "All men perceived that John was a prophet." Now that doesn't mean that everybody who ever lived thought he was a prophet, obviously. The Bible says the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men. Well we know that all men aren't saved. The Bible says in Christ shall men be made alive, pantos, well everybody who has ever lived isn't going to be made alive in Christ, it's a general term. Or sometimes an exclusive term, here it's general. He's merely saying the general consensus, nobody listens. We know it's general cause in the next verse he says some do believe.

All right, so he says Christ speaks direct words firsthand experience. Third great supremacy of Christ, oh this is tremendous, verse 33, His testimony agrees with God. And when a human speaks, it may or may not agree with God. Every time Jesus speaks He agrees with God, look at it. Verse 33, "If you receive His testimony then you are sealing the fact that God is true," see. Cause Jesus and God agree. And you know that's a real interesting point because so many people don't understand that. Have you ever talked to somebody that says, "I believe in God, I certainly do believe in God, but I'm not sure about all this about Jesus." Have you ever...many people like this, right? Many believe in God but they won't accept Jesus Christ for who He is.

Listen, you can't separate those two. If you believe in Jesus Christ, then you believe the truth about God. And if you believe the truth about God, you must believe in Jesus Christ. Why? Because God said that is My beloved Son. Now either you believe it or you don't. So don't say, "Well, I believe in God, and I certainly have been a believer in God, all my life I've been a believer in God." I hear this all the time, it's ringing around in my head. No you don't believe in God unless you believe in Christ who is the full expression of God. If you believe in a God less than the true God, you don't believe in God at all. So a man who believes the truth about God and rejects the truth about Christ is kidding

himself.

All right, then fourthly, John shows the supremacy of Christ in verse 34 by saying this, "He was sent by God with full Holy Spirit presence." Now we know the prophets were sent by God. But not like Jesus, John says. And John says, listen, I can look back at my own case, Luke 1 says this, that I was filled with the Holy Ghost from my mother's womb. Listen, God really prepared me for my ministry. The Holy Spirit was in me from the beginning. But even that can't compare with the fullness of the Spirit that operated in Jesus Christ, I only experienced it in a limited way. That's verse 34, "For He whom God hath sent speaks the words of God always, inevitably, for God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." In other words, there's no limitation of the Holy Spirit's power on Christ. You know, the Holy Spirit dwells within us but is limited, right? He's limited by our sinful nature. He's limited because we're not divine. Christ divinely was the embodiment of the Godhead, doesn't the Bible say that? He was the fullness of the Godhead...what?...bodily. The fullness of the Spirit of God was in Him. John says, "Sure it's remarkable the Holy Spirit filled me, but He is the fullness of His expression." So again that comparison...the supremacy of Christ in the relation of the Holy Spirit to each of them. The greatest man had the Holy Spirit but God in Christ, the full Holy Spirit totally without limitation.

So he has said this, Christ is supreme because He had a heavenly origin. Christ is supreme because He knows what He knows firsthand. Christ is supreme because His testimony agrees with God. Christ is supreme because He was sent from God with the full Holy Spirit presence. Fifth and last, climax of all of it, he says Christ is supreme just because God said so and gave Him all the supremacy. That's really beautiful, verse 35, "The Father loves the Son and hath given...how much?...all things into His hand." He's supreme because God made it that way. God may have given me a ministry, says John, God may have given me a dimension to operate but God gave Christ all authority, all power is given unto Me, He said. So John shows the five supremacies of Jesus Christ. In all things He's supreme.

And so the transition is complete. John fades away. Jesus moves in to the full light. The world's greatest man has reached the end of his life. He exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, fades into the background, soon to lose his life, a life physically lost, spiritually a life that counts for God for all eternity. He fades out. But John doesn't fade away before he gives an invitation. Every great sermon always has an invitation. We saw it in Christ's message to Nicodemus, we see it here in John the Baptist's message. Here's the invitation, verse 36, he can't resist this invitation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." I don't need to explain that, that is obvious. You believe on Christ, receive Him, put your faith in Him, invite Him to take over your life, you have the gift of everlasting life but "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." There's the choice.

What you do with Jesus Christ is up to you. The choice, eternal life or the wrath of God. The key, believing in Christ.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for thoughts of this particular passage.

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