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

Jesus Is Superior to John
Scripture: John 3:31-36
Code: 43-19

Now, we're going back to John 3 and we're going to be looking at verses 22 to 36 which we began last week…which we began last week. We keyed this passage with verse 30 where John the Baptist, who is the speaker, I believe, through this whole section says, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and that's kind of been the title we've used for these two messages, last week and this week. This is about Christ increasing and the minister decreasing. This is about fading recognition of the preacher and the increasing glory of Jesus Christ. It's a very important axiom, a very important maxim for ministry, He must increase, but I must decrease.

And I told you last time, that those words basically established the first law of ministry…the first law of ministry is humility. I must decrease, Christ must increase. He is to be exalted, I am to be diminished. In fact, if you kind of go a little deeper into the original language, what it says is that one, literally, that one being referred to Christ in this passage, is of necessity to be enlarged. Me, on the other hand, I must be diminished. And that is exactly what John the Baptist is saying and that is the first law for all who serve in ministry. The decreasing of the minister and the increasing of Christ. This is consistent with what Peter says in 1 Peter, "Humble yourselves, be clothed with humility," as he's writing to shepherds and ministers.

And the greatest model of this, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ in Philippians 2 who though eternally equal with God, thought it not something to hold on to but humbled Himself, took on the form of a slave and became obedient. In a sense, obviously, He hid His own glory for the glory of the Father. He was the ultimate model of a humble minister. We mentioned last time that as the church apostatized, as the church defects, as it falls into false doctrine as becomes more heretical, Christ is diminished and the ministers are elevated. And you can see a perfect illustration of the Roman Catholic Church. We talked about that last week in particular because everybody in the world was paying attention to the Pope and the cardinals and where Christ is diminished, the ministers are elevated. Where Christ is exalted, the ministers are diminished and they're lost. They're like stars, we said, who shine in the darkness only until the sun rises and then they fade completely out of view. But Roman Catholics aren't the only ones who elevate ministers and diminish Christ. There are many evangelical churches where the focus is inordinately on the minister, on the preacher and the pastor and there are many cases where that's the way the pastors want it. They see themselves as the ones to draw attention to. But where there is true ministry, in the Spirit, Christ will be all in all, Christ will fill all, Christ will be the blazing sun and the ministers will be diminished.

People who elevate themselves in ministry are graceless. And who wants to be a graceless minister? Why do I say that? Because James 4 records that God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud. God gives grace to the humble, but rejects the proud. I don't have any desire in my life to be a graceless minister. The path of humility, the path of exalting Christ is the only path that any faithful minister would desire to pursue.

Now all of this comes into clear focus in this passage of Scripture that focuses on John the Baptist. Remember now, John the Baptist was the forerunner to Jesus Christ, the last Old Testament prophet. There hadn't been one in 400 years before Him, the last and the greatest. In Matthew 11:11 Jesus said he was the greatest man who ever lived. He had the greatest calling, be a prophet, he actually had the greatest responsibility to not prophesy about a future Messiah, but to point to the Messiah who had arrived, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. The greatest man, the most privileged man with the greatest ministry of anyone who had ever lived in human history, and that covers a lot of folks, he was empowered, he was popular, he was influential, and yet it is from this man who reached even in the redemptive sense the absolute pinnacle of human elevation, it is from this man that we learn this great lesson of humility…He must increase and I must decrease…which that phrase, that axiom, that maxim coming out of the mouth of John the Baptist speaks of his true spiritual humility. He had every reason to think more highly of himself than he ought to think because of his privileged calling and responsibility, and yet He makes the statement…He, meaning Christ, must increase, He must be exalted, and I must be diminished.

Now we come back to that passage, let me read it to you and set it in your mind, verse 22. We get the setting in the opening few verses and then everything begins to focus on the humility of the minister and the exaltation of Christ. "After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea…meaning into the countryside…from the city of Jerusalem and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim," And by the way, that would be in the region of Samaria. So now we have the overlapping of the ministry of Jesus in John the Baptist. For a period of months, Jesus is doing the very same thing that John is doing, preaching repentance, preaching the arrival of Messiah, preaching the Kingdom, and baptizing people with a baptism of purification to symbolize their desire to be purified for the arrival of Messiah. So John and Jesus have overlapping ministries. John has deferred to Jesus, has left Judea where he was ministering east of Jordan in the Judea area, he is gone into Samaria, he has yielded the Judean territory up to the Lord Jesus but the two of them are carrying on this ministry simultaneously in two different places.

Now we know this is going on, obviously verse 24 says, because John has not yet been thrown into prison. There were a few months there where their ministry overlapped before John was arrested and thrown in prison for what he said about Herod and his illicit marriage. We're in that time, that overlapping of the two.

There is an arising issue at this point in verse 25, “Therefore there arose a discussion, or a debate, on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification, or about baptism. Now this would be a Jew who had connections with the baptizing work of the Lord Jesus. And this Jew who comes from the baptism of Jesus is connected to those who are John’s followers and they begin to discuss whose baptism is most important? Whose ministry is the most important ministry? That’s the nature of the discussion. John the Baptist’s followers are holding out for John’s priority and this Jew is, no doubt, communicating to them the work of Jesus, the preaching, the baptizing ministry of Jesus and this sends them back to John and we pick up the story in verse 26.

“John’s followers came back to John and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.’ John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses, that I said I am not the Christ, but I have been sent ahead of Him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears Him, or listens to Him rejoices greatly became of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full, He must increase, but I must decrease.’”

Now that’s the text that we looked at last week and I just want to kind of reaffirm it in your mind. These are very loyal followers of John the Baptist. They have repented under his preaching. They have reaffirmed their commitment to be obedient to God. They want to live holy lives. They want to be ready for the arrival of Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom. They owe a lot to John the Baptist, this great preacher. And they are bothered by this competing work and ministry that they’ve heard about that Jesus is doing. Jesus has taken over their territory in Judea. He’s doing His ministry where John was doing his ministry and they exaggerate out of the jealousy of their own hearts and they say at the end of their statement, verse 26, “All are coming to Him…all are coming to Him.” Well that’s the exaggeration of jealousy. And also, you notice, they make reference to Jesus without ever using His name which is another indication that they have some jealousy toward the one they recognize John was pointing to because they say the One whom you testified about.

So these are very loyal followers of John who are bothered by the fact that John is now up in Samaria, isolated in this unacceptable place, and Jesus has taken over their area in Judea. They’re jealous for John the Baptist. They want to provoke him to recognize that this isn’t right and to defend his stature and his place. And by the way, this is reminiscent of an occasion of another humble man, as humble a man as there was in the Old Testament. His name may be surprising to you is Moses. But back in Numbers chapter 11, a very similar situation happened. Two men in the camp of Israel when they were being led by Moses through the wilderness, two men in the camp, the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad, and the Spirit rested upon them. Which is to say they have God’s blessing on what they do. These two prophesied in the camp. All of a sudden in the camp, two preachers show up and they have the Holy Spirit resting on them which means they’re

speaking for God. They're truly representatives of God. So a young man ran and told Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are preaching in the camp." Not predicting the future, prophesying means preaching. There are two competing preachers, Moses. This young man is trying to excite Moses to jealousy. Perhaps he's so loyal to Moses, he thinks these men are in competition. "Then Joshua, the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth says to Moses, 'Moses, my lord, restrain them.'" So Moses buys the jealousy of the messenger and the young lad and says, "You need to stop these other preachers. You're the preacher, you're the man."

Then Moses responds in verse 29, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were preachers, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." You just can't make a humble man jealous. They couldn't make Moses jealous, not a stranger, a young lad, and not even his assistant who had been with him for years, Joshua. This is the principle of humility that is the first law of ministry. Moses says, "I wish everybody was a preacher. There couldn't be enough preachers. Competiveness in ministry is a very ugly thing. Competiveness among preachers is especially ugly. There's no place for it with humble people. Joshua tried to bait Moses into jealousy and couldn't do it. And the followers of John tried to bait him into jealousy and they couldn't do it either. And so back in John chapter 3, John the Baptist responds to their concern.

In verse 27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it's been given him from heaven." I told you last week, John recognizes that ministry isn't something you deserve, it isn't something you earn, it isn't something you are somehow worthy of, it isn't something you achieve, it's a gift from heaven. It's a mercy. I keep saying that, it's a mercy, it's a grace, it's something that God gives you when you don't deserve it. It's a gift of grace like every other good thing that God gives unworthy sinners. And John understood that, that he was not ever worthy of this mercy that he had been given.

And then he says to them again in verse 28, "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said I am not the Christ but I have been sent ahead of Him." You've known since you started following me that it was never going to be about me, it's not about me, and by the way, that has to be the attitude of every minister, it's not about me, it's never been about me. I didn't earn this. I didn't achieve this. I didn't gain this. This is a gift of mercy given to me and it's not about me, it's about Christ. It's about the one that I have given testimony concerning. The one I pointed to and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And believe me, these followers of John would have known about the baptism of Jesus when He came to the Jordan. They would have been told by John that John heard the voice of the Father, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." That John saw the Holy Spirit descend on him like a dove. He would have rehearsed that again and again. And so John is perfectly content to fulfill his function and to point to Christ. And that's why he says, "I must decrease," this is not about me. And then he uses an illustration, verse 29, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom. Christ is here pictured as the bridegroom and the people as His bride. John says, "The friend of the bridegroom, he stands and listens to the bridegroom."

What does that mean? He does whatever the bridegroom needs him to do. If you're a best man, you do whatever the groom needs you to do. And in those days, it was a long drawn-out event, maybe six months or a year of preparation, and you put yourself alongside the bridegroom and you did His bidding for that duration of time to make all the necessary preparations for the wedding. And that's his job. And he rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Everything the bridegroom tells him to do, he is eager to do. And finally, when the bridegroom shows up and the bride arrives and everything is ready to happen, his joy is made complete. And so John says, "So this joy of mine has been full." And then he says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." I'm the best man, it's not about me. The greatest prophet here is slipping into anonymity as the bridegroom, Christ, comes into full view.

All right, that was point one, I must decrease, from last week. All right, let's go to point two, "He must increase." He must increase. Now we're going to look at verses 31 to 36, this is a very important set of verses because of its focus on the preeminence of Christ and why He is preeminent. This is more than just…here's why I'm focusing on Christ…it's more than just that simple statement "He must increase." Embedded in verses 31 to 36 is a full, rich Christology. The doctrine of Christ is here revealed in very profound terms. And by the way, John gives five reasons why Christ must be the focus of ministry and not the minister…five reasons.

I was talking to Patricia, who can be very funny some of the time…and I said to her, I said to her, "So what did you think about the sermon?" She was in the first service. She said, "Well, the outline was in your Study Bible." Now look, I'm the only person who can preach directly out of the Study Bible because I put it there to start with. But of course it's in the Study Bible, we're trying to help you. So, you can't change this outline, okay? That's why it's there. So, you can cheat by following the Study Bible if you have one.

But John gives five…five priorities, five identifying features that established the supremacy of Christ and it is a rich Christology. I wish we had time to fully develop it, but we'll do that as we go through.

Now I want to add one other footnote here. I am fully convinced that the power to proclaim Christ comes from Scripture. It's not about the cleverness of the preacher. It's not about good illustrations. It's not about evoking emotion out of people. The power to convince people concerning the identity of Christ comes from Scripture. So what we're going to do this morning is start here and then use some comparative Scriptures to get a full sense of this presentation of Christ.

Now remember this, the whole gospel of John is written that you might know and believe that Jesus is the Christ, and by believing have life in His name. Okay? So we want you to believe that Christ is who He claimed to be because believing that brings eternal life and salvation. So that's going to be the focus all the way through and it's no different here, only here the testimony is not from John the Apostle, but it's from John the Baptist recorded by John the Apostle. So in a sense, John the Apostle

calls on testimony from John the Baptist that is consistent. And it's wonderful to think that John the Baptist so early at the very beginning and even before the ministry of Jesus, has a full understanding of who Jesus Christ is and why He is to increase.

John the Baptist then continues his testimony to these disciples of his who have come back and he affirms the preeminence of Christ. He's dispensed with himself in the previous verses and now he lifts up Christ. Number one reason for exalting Christ is He has a heavenly origin…He has a heavenly origin.

The New Testament establishes this, by the way, at the very beginning. You start in the book of Matthew and you can't even get out of the first chapter before you have word coming from heaven. You have a dream and an angel, Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, you'll call His name Jesus. He will save His people from their sins. Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, they shall call His name Immanuel which translated means God with us.

So the divine origin of the Son of God, Son of Man is clearly indicated in Matthew 1 in the account of Luke 1 the same thing takes place…an angel appears and identifies the child. You will conceive, Mary, in your womb, bear a son, call His name Jesus. He will be great, will be called the Son of the Most High, the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David. The angel says to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you, for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God.

Jesus has a heavenly origin. Now with that in mind, look at verse 31. "He who comes from above is above all." He who is of the earth…the earth, *ge*, g-e would be a transliteration. It simply means the planet, or earthly life. It doesn't have any moral connotation. If the word *kosmos* was used, world, that has moral connotations in the Bible, but the earth doesn't. So he's saying simply, any earthly human being is of the earth, from the earth, speaks of the earth, but He who comes from heaven is above all. And that's only one person, everybody else is of the earth. There's only one person who is from heaven. This is John the Baptist, the greatest human being who ever lived saying, "All of us fall into this category, we're all of the earth, from the earth, speaking from a human viewpoint. And therein lies our limitation. Therein lies the very purpose and reason for our humility. On the other hand, he says, "He who comes from above is above all." He says it at the beginning and the end of that verse. John was very human. He was very human. As strong as his testimony was to Christ, as strong as his testimony is in this passage to his followers who were trying to bait him into jealousy, he affirms that I am not the Messiah. He knows who the Messiah is. Yet when he was imprisoned and was languishing in prison, knowing he was very likely going to lose his life, Matthew records in Matthew chapter 11 that he sends his disciples to Jesus and he says, "Go to Jesus and ask him this question, 'Are You the expected one or do we look for someone else?'" This from John the Baptist? The man who affirmed Christ again and again and again, who was there at His baptism, who saw the Holy

Spirit descend, heard the voice of heaven, makes this firm testimony, the very man who gives us this Christology here, he has questions about Christ?

Well he's languishing in prison. What he anticipated to happen wasn't happening. Where's the Kingdom? Where's the power display, overthrowing the Romans, establishing the promises of David? Not happening. That is, I think, testimony to John's earthiness. Even the best of man, even the greatest of prophets live with elements of their fallenness that show up in doubts. But Jesus is of a completely different nature because He's of a completely different origin. He had no human father, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that's how a divine person passed into a human body. He has a heavenly origin. He is from above. And by the way, that is the same language of John 3, you must be born from above in the spiritual sense, regenerated by God to be a part of His Kingdom. Heavenly origin then becomes a very important part of Jesus' testimony, and I want to show this to you.

John 6:33, Jesus had just fed the massive crowd the loaves and the fish and was teaching the great sermon on Himself as the bread of life. But notice a few of the things that he says. In verse 33, John 6, "For the bread of God…meaning Himself…is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world." Verse 38, "For I have come down from heaven." Verse 50, "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven." Verse 51, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven." Verse 58, "This is the bread which came down out of heaven." That doesn't leave any room for doubt about the origin of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down from heaven. Clearly distinguishing Him from earth-born people, which constitutes the entire human race.

John then understands the divine origin of Jesus Christ. He is the uncreated Son of God who entered into human form in a human body in His incarnation. So that is the first point in John's Christology establishing the superiority of Christ, He has a heavenly origin. And by the way, chapter 8, you're going to find this as we go all through John's gospel, but chapter 8 verse 42, Jesus said, "If God were your father…He's talking to the Jewish leaders…if God were your father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God." I proceeded forth and have come from God. In chapter 17 He prays a prayer and says, "Restore to Me the glory I had with You before the world began." And speaks there of His preincarnate existence. In 17:8, "The words You gave Me I have given to them and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You." This is foundational to understanding Jesus Christ is not merely human. This establishes the deity of Christ…the deity of Christ.

John's got a second point in his Christology, reasons for exalting Christ, reasons that Christ must increase and the minister must decrease, and that is found, and it's a subsequent point, obviously as you will see in verse 32, what he has seen and heard, of that he testifies.

If He came from heaven, He has seen and He has heard things that we have not. This is to say the second point about Christ, what He knows, He knows from first-hand divine experience. What He

knows He knows from first-hand divine experience.

Now we know He knows everything because in chapter 2 verses 23 to 25 it said He knows everything. He even knows the thoughts of every human being, this is omniscience. Jesus is the only man who never needed to take any information from anyone else. He didn't need to be educated by other people. There was no need for that. Yes, He grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God, favor with man…there was an awakening to His divine knowledge as He grew legitimately as a baby and a child. He wasn't a one-year-old able to spout profound eternal theology. He was conformed to the development of a human being. By the time He's twelve, obviously it's crystal-clear that He…He has reached the point with a full adult sense of His mission which means that His knowledge was then complete. Did He choose to use all that knowledge? No, He restricted the independent use of His own omniscience in His humiliation. That's why He could say things like "I don't know the day or the hour when I return to establish the Kingdom." He put self-imposed limits on His omniscience. But He could limit His omniscience, no one could add to His knowledge. He could limit His development and that in the plan of God, but no information as outside that full omniscience.

This sets Him apart from us. Everything we know, somebody has to teach us. We need information from heaven given to us from someone from heaven. So Jesus comes, God spoke in time past by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and then He spoke, Hebrews 1, by His Son. Either God speaks to us through the prophets and through the writers of Scripture or He speaks to us through His Son, but He has to speak to us because we have no knowledge of heavenly things.

Back in chapter 3 verse 11, "Truly, truly…Jesus says…I say to You, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen." This is firsthand knowledge. And he calls these things in verse 12 heavenly things. So in referring to Jesus Christ, everything begins with an understanding of His heavenly origin and then moves to an understanding that He has knowledge of all things, He has complete omniscience, He knows everything that can be known and He knows it by first-hand experience, not because He acquired that knowledge or was taught that knowledge. There is a reference in the gospel of John to being taught of God, Jesus speaking of being taught of God meaning only in the sense that He was with God in eternity past, they shared a common understanding of truth.

For example, Jesus reiterates this a number of times. Maybe it would be good to look at chapter 5 verse 30, "I can do nothing on my own initiative, as I hear I judge, My judgment is just. I don't seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not deemed true. There is another who testifies of Me and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true. You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth, but the testimony which I receive is not from man but I say these things so that you may be saved." John is a lamp but I'm the light. In other words, Jesus says John gave you a testimony that he had received from God. I give you a testimony that comes from heaven itself. There's a sense in which it all originates with God. The difference is

John had to be taught this, Jesus knew it eternally. He is the omniscient one.

In the eighth chapter of John's gospel, just a couple of other verses, verse 26, "I have many things to speak and judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." Jesus says My knowledge is the knowledge that belongs to God, it is knowledge which we share. Verse 38, "I speak the things which I've seen with My Father." In other words, the common identification of these two members of the Trinity, eternally, which encompasses their omniscience.

Because He is of heavenly origin then, He has all heavenly knowledge. There is no preacher who can claim that by any means. We struggle at best to grasp the heavenly things, to understand the heavenly things, to articulate the heavenly things, and we're only scratching the edge of the surface.

By the way, at the end of that verse, a statement is made, "No one receives his testimony." Back in verse 11 he said the same things, Jesus said it there. "You do not accept our testimony." He said that to Israel and now John says no one receives his testimony. John the Baptist is affirming that what Jesus is saying, people are rejecting. It's not consistent with what they're used to. It's not earthly. It's not consistent with the system that they've developed. It's too heavenly. And Jesus said that, how are you going to understand heavenly things when you don't even grasp earthly things?

So, first of all then, John affirms the superiority of Christ because He is of divine origination. And secondly, because He is omniscient and knows what God knows and has known it for all eternity. Thirdly, and this is a very important aspect of His Christology. Anyone who affirms Christ, affirms that God is true. The truthfulness of God is bound up in the affirmation of Christ. Look at verse 33. "He who has received His testimony," there are some, "no one received His testimony," is a general statement, not an exclusive one, but there are some. "He who has received His testimony, that is the testimony concerning Christ, has set His seal to this, that God is true." That is such an economy of words to say something so profound. Does God speak truth? Is God true? You heard Kory sing what essentially says that, you are truthful. God is true, a God who cannot lie. He is truth personified. God is true. If that is so, then you must believe in Christ. Why? Because God sent an angel and said this child is Immanuel. This is Jesus who will save His people from their sins. Because God sent an angel, this is the Son of God, because God spoke at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Because God spoke at the Transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him."

If you don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then God lied. Understand? So don't come with some kind of patronizing statement about, "Well I believe in God, I believe in the true God, I just reject Christ." No, if you reject Christ, then you affirm that God is a liar. Contrary to that, He who receives the testimony concerning Christ, sets His seal to this, that God is true. You can't say God is true but reject Christ. You can't do that. The Jewish people think they affirm the God of the Old Testament. They talk about the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Old Testament Scripture,

they affirm that that's their God and that's the true God. But their God is a liar…their God is a liar because it is the God of the Old Testament who revealed every single prophecy directed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ's first coming. It is the God of the Old Testament who talk about the seed of a woman in Genesis 3, it's the God of the Old Testament who talked about one who would be crucified, pierced, wounded for the transgressions of His people, Isaiah 53. Every single prophecy in the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus Christ is a point at which you either validate God as speaking the truth, or lying. You cannot reject Christ and say God speaks the truth. It was God who said this is My beloved Son. If that's not His Son, God's a liar.

In 1 John chapter 5, John affirms this very important declaration with this statement, 1 John 5:10. This time he's writing in his epistle. "The one who believes in the Son of God," John is constantly going back to this theme, this is who He is and you must believe to have eternal life. "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in Himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar." Whoa-whoa, I would never make God a liar. You just made Him a liar if you reject what He said about Christ because you have not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. It's inescapable. You don't have the right to say I believe in God and that I believe God is true, and then reject Christ. If Christ is not who God said He is, we are really in serious trouble because the biggest promise that God ever made, the clearest identification that He ever spoke of was a lie. And if God is by nature a liar, throw your Bible away, throw your Old Testament away, run from it. You cannot reject Christ and affirm that God is true. If God is true, then everything He said about Christ is true and Christ is who He said He is and provides the eternal life that He declared He would give.

This becomes another of John's themes. Chapter 7, verse 16, "So Jesus answered them and said, very basic statement, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me." Reject Me, you're rejecting God. Call Me a liar, you're calling God a liar. We are connected. If I'm a liar, God's a liar because what I'm telling you comes from God.

Back in chapter 5 is maybe the most potent statement, chapter 5, you could pick it up say maybe at verse 19. Jesus is talking about His relationship to the Father, His Son can do nothing of Himself unless the something He sees the Father doing, common knowledge, common life, common action, common works, common words, whatever the Father does, these are the things the Son does. And He goes on to speak about this. And then He sums it up in verse 23, "So that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father." And then this, "He who doesn't honor the Son, doesn't honor the Father who sent Him." Reject the Son, and you've rejected the Father. That is why the writers of the epistles of the New Testament refer to God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, meaning that the God that we believe is the God who is one with the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't separate the two, and end up with anything other than blasphemy. It's blasphemy to call God a liar. And if Jesus is not who God said He is, then God is a liar and there is nothing more horrendous or horrific than that kind of blasphemy.

In the fourteenth chapter of John, the tenth verse, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. My works, My words all come from the Father. Believe Me, I am in the Father, the Father’s in Me.” This is essential to any grasp of the identity of Jesus Christ.

All right, now there’s a fourth principle in the Christology of the Baptist and it is this, and it speaks again to His Trinitarian relationships. This comes in verse 34. In verse 34, and it is this, “He possessed full Holy Spirit presence…full Holy Spirit presence.” Why do we exalt Christ? He has a heavenly origin. We have an earthly one. He knows what He knows from eternal omniscience. We have to be taught and are limited in our comprehension. Why do we exalt Him? Because He is the one whom the Father promised and whom the Father affirmed and to agree with God the Father we must embrace Christ. And then this, “He possesses the Holy Spirit in full presence.” Great statement in verse 34. “For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God…that’s the same point He was making in verse 33, probably should be added to verse 33, and then verse 34 should say…”For He gives the Spirit without measure.”

One of the ministries of the Spirit, of course, was to bring the words of the Father through the Son. Everything Jesus did in His ministry was the work of the Holy Spirit, that’s why in Matthew 12 when they called Him satanic, they said You do what You do by the power of Satan, He didn’t say you blasphemed Me, He said you blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because part of His incarnation was to become human, part of His incarnation was to restrict the independent use of His attributes. Part of His incarnation was to yield over His will to the operation of the Holy Spirit in His humiliation.

Now John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother’s womb, remember that? From the very time that He was conceived, the Holy Spirit took special care in the life of John, His ministry was empowered by the Holy Spirit. But not to this degree because He was given, that is Christ, the Spirit, without measure. What does that mean? Immeasurably. What does that mean? Infinitely to the level of His infinite deity. So what you have in Jesus Christ is God the Son who is equal to God the Father in His fullness and equal to God the Holy Spirit in His fullness. Astonishing terms. Without measure. Without limit. Without border. Without boundary.

Back in chapter 1 verse 32, John testified saying, “I’ve seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and He remained on Him and I didn’t recognize Him, but He who sent Me to baptize in water said to Me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’” So there symbolically is this coming of the Holy Spirit resting on Him. That’s only an external demonstration of what was an internal, eternal permanent union in the Trinity. In fact, in Colossians 2:9, it’s stated this way, “That in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

He is Son and Father and Holy Spirit all in one."

Why would you exalt the minister? John has a measure of the Holy Spirit. John has information given to him but John is an earthly man, not to be compared at all with the one who comes from heaven who knows everything from eternal omniscience, who gives perfect testimony establishing the truthfulness of God, and who has the spirit in infinite fullness.

And there's one final point that John makes that establishes the superiority of Christ and that is He has received all authority from the Father…He has received all authority from the Father. Verse 35, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand."

This is…John understands that the whole of redemption and the whole of creation, the creation of the material world, the immaterial world, the plan of redemption, all of it is about the Father loving the Son and creating a universe in which He can redeem humanity and give a bride to His Son, a love gift to His Son. John has a full understanding of the plan of God to create and then regenerate, to regenerate the heavens and regenerate the earth and regenerate fallen sinners and gather all that together and give it as an expression of His love to His Son. That's staggering truth to grasp.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul tries to capture some of this with amazing language. Ephesians chapter 1, one of my favorite passages anywhere in Scripture, starting in verse 20, talks about Christ whom He raised from the dead. And then says about Him, "He is far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. He's put all things in subjection under His feet, given Him as head over all things, He's head over all things, He's given the One who is head over all things to the church which is His body. He is the fullness of Him who fills…the church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The language is full, full, full, full, full.

God's eternal love relationship with His Son results in God giving to His Son all of His creation in its final form, the new heavens, the new earth, the redeemed humanity, love gifts to the Son. John understands this. Full Christology and so he closes with an invitation in verse 36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who doesn't obey the Son will not see life." By the way, why does it go from believing to obeying? Because to believe on the Son is a command. The gospel is a command, not a suggestion. It's a command. He who believes in the Son has obeyed the command. He who does not believe in the Son has disobeyed the command. And he who doesn't obey the Son will not see life but the wrath of God abides on him.

You have a choice. Eternal life, eternal wrath. Eternal heaven, eternal hell. John ends up a gospel preacher. Those are the last words to fall from the lips of John the Baptist recorded in Scripture and he's a gospel preacher. Believe and have eternal life, it sounds like the words of John 3:16, believe and have eternal life. Fail to believe in disobedience, you will not see life but you will see eternal

wrath, a preacher of the gospel, the last message and the voice of one crying in the wilderness goes silent…goes silent.

Not long after this John's sad ending came. Let me read it to you. Matthew 14. Herod had arrested John. Herod arrested him because John publicly preached against Herod's immorality and illicit marriage. So Herod arrested John, bound him, put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. That was the immorality. He had literally seduced his brother's wife and married her. And John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd because they regarded John as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came which was a good excuse for debauchery, drunken orgy, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod in a very seductive way. Pleased him so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

"Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests. He sent and had John beheaded in the prison and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl and she brought it to her mother. His disciples came and took away the body and buried it and they went and reported to Jesus. And the shining star was out and the voice went silent."

It's really sad, isn't it? Pathetic, ugly, horrible way for the greatest man who ever lived to end. His disciples buried his body and went and told Jesus. But this is how it is for the preacher. John died a satisfied man. His joy was made full, why? Because he had decreased and Christ had increased. And John's followers had no one else to turn to, so they went to Christ. He was a faithful preacher of Christ, faithful preacher of the gospel and a model of the first law of ministry, the law of humility.

Lord, we are again so grateful this morning for the joys that have been ours just in this hour or so together to contemplate Your truth and our Savior, sing songs and hymns and fellowship together even to give and to pray together and now to enjoy one another as we leave and to come back again tonight to be blessed by Your truth. We're so rich. We have the best the world can't offer, the best that heaven can offer. We're so grateful. Do Your work in hearts, Lord, give life to sinners, bring conviction of sin. Make Christ attractive, may He fill all our vision. May He be all glorious. May we never be able to get enough of Him. May we love Him more, serve Him more faithfully, seek to be more like Him. And we ask for His glory. Amen.

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