

John 3:31-36 "Life or Wrath, Which Will it Be?"

JOH 3:31-36 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. 33 The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. 34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands." 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

What we have before us this morning is a continued response from John the Baptist to some of his followers who felt that Jesus Christ was gaining more favor with the people than John.

JOH 3:26 "They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan - the one you testified about -well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

John points out in no uncertain terms that this is the way it's supposed to be. John understood that his ministry was given to him by God to announce the coming of the Messiah, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world.

He had no ambition to start his own religion or gain notoriety for himself. His was a ministry of pointing to someone greater than himself, the Son of God. And he took great delight in that as he emphasized that his ministry was one attending to God's will as he acknowledged that Jesus must increase while he decreases.

JOH 3:29-30 "The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less."

But John the Baptist continues as he explains why Jesus must increase.

JOH 3:31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

Here John contrasts the difference between himself and Jesus. He is saying that he is from the earth and therefore belongs to the earth. Jesus, on the other hand, is from above, which is to say, from heaven, and therefore is greater than all.

Now, when John says that he is from the earth he is not saying something denigrating about himself. He is simply saying that he is a human being who belongs on the earth since this is the place that God created for man to inhabit.

In essence it can be said that we are all of the earth in a most literal way.

GEN 2:7-8 "*the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground* and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed."

Paul points this out when writing to the Corinthians.

1CO 15:47 "The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven."

And so, there is nothing bad in being of the earth. The problem comes with sin being introduced into the earth to where being earthly can now be identified with the curse of sin.

But here in our text John the Baptist wants to make sure that his listeners understand that the Son of God is not of this earth, though He has become part of it by being born of a woman. Since Jesus Christ is not of this earth then where does He come from and what does this intimate about His very nature?

Again, this all has to do with John decreasing and Jesus increasing.

As to where Jesus is from our text tells us that He is from above which infers that He is from heaven. But, this does not infer an ontological question of Christ's origin, that is, the nature of His existence, since we know that Christ is eternal, being the second person in the God-head.

This is simply an explanation that His origin compared to that of man, a creature of His creation, is not of the same kind, since Christ did not originate when He was conceived, but was in the beginning with God as John points out in the beginning of this gospel.

And so, John is not as concerned with where heaven is as much as he is concerned with the fact that it is where God has chosen to presently reside with His people. And this is the point he is making here. Jesus is from above, that is from heaven, and therefore since God comes from there, Jesus must be God, which is why John makes the statement at the end of verse 31, "The one who comes from heaven is above all."

The Scriptures make it clear that God is above all and that Christ is God, who is above all.

ROM 9:5 "Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen."

If Jesus Christ is not God than Jesus Christ cannot save anyone from the penalty of their sin, since only God can forgive sin. In fact, this is exactly what the Jews understood and why they believed Jesus blasphemed when He made such a claim.

MAT 9:2-7 "Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home."

Jesus was saying to the Jews, whether it's forgiving sins or healing men, only God has the power and authority to do such things. 'So, which one do you want me to do in the case of this man? Do you want me to forgive his sins or heal him? Let me choose. I'll do both. Your sins are forgiven and for good measure, get up off of your mat and go home.'

Jesus made it clear that He was none other than the God who told Israel, I am your salvation. The prophet Isaiah declares what the John the Baptist has been declaring about Jesus Christ.

ISA 12:2-6 "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the

LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. 5 Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, the God of their salvation, the Lord who has done glorious things.

In fact, it was this same prophet Isaiah who made it clear who this God is as He would take on flesh and be born of a woman for the salvation of men.

ISA 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

And of course we know that this is exactly what was told to Joseph just before he was about to divorce Mary because he found out that she was pregnant, and it wasn't his child. But the angel came to him and said this child is of the Holy Spirit.

MAT 1:21-23 "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and **they will call him Immanuel**" -**which means, "God with us."**

Jesus is **God with us** in the flesh. Fully God and fully man. All throughout the New Testament we have this testimony.

PHI 2:5-7 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."

COL 1:15-17 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

HEB 1:7-8 "In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." 8 **But about the Son he**

says, "*Your throne, O God*, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom."

The next time a Jehovah's witness or a Mormon comes to your door and explains that Jesus Christ is not the one true God, just point them to these passages. There is only one God and Jesus Christ is Him along with the Father and the Holy Spirit who make up the three persons of this one Holy and merciful God.

John the Baptist cannot make it any clearer to these Jews who are all upset that Jesus is getting more attention than John. It's because Jesus is the God who made heaven and earth and has come into this earth to save sinners and who is called Immanuel, God with us.

It is this God and Savior who must increase in the eyes of people as John must decrease in the eyes of people. And yet, this very God who has come into the world, who knows the mind and will of the Father, is not going to be accepted by His people.

JOH 3:32 "He [Jesus, the Son of God] testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony."

Here John the Baptist continues on this theme that Jesus is from above, from heaven. If Jesus is from above than it stands to reason that He has personally seen and heard from the Father who is from heaven.

And therefore, if anyone knows the will of the Father it must be Jesus Christ. And if this is the case then it would behoove us to listen to Him because He knows what He's talking concerning our eternal destinies.

Later in this gospel Jesus will remind His disciples that since He has come from the Father He can relay to them all that God the Father wants mankind to know about His salvation.

JOH 15:15 "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Jesus could not have made it clearer that He is from above and that His message is from above. And His message is that if men will not trust Him as Lord and Savior, then they will die in their sins. If they trust Him as Lord and Savior, they will live. We see this a little later in this gospel.

JOH 8:21-30 "Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." 22 This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, "Where I go, you cannot come?" 23 But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." 25 "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied. 26 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." 27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." 30 Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him."

Back to our text.

JOH 3:32 "He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony."

That last portion which says that no one accepts his testimony is not an all inclusive statement as we just read, "Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him."

What John the Baptist means by this is that no one, outside of being born from above, or born again by the will of the Father, can have eyes to see or ears to hear. And therefore, all men in their natural state of being children of wrath cannot and will not accept Christ's testimony.

And yet, the message of hope still remains as our text points out.

JOH 3:33 "The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful."

Notice that John doesn't say that the man who has accepted it has eternal life, but that he has certified that God is truthful. Now, it's a given that all men who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior have eternal life, but what is more important is that it proves God to be true.

As important as our personal eternal life is in Christ, it is Christ who is to receive all glory for that life we have. It is His

faithfulness and truthfulness which takes precedence, without which we would still be in our sin.

Again, what better reason for Jesus increasing and John decreasing as the focal point. God must be lifted up in all things and man must humble himself before his God by accepting the truthfulness of Jesus who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me."

JOH 3:34-36 "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

God the Father sent God the Son who was then given the power of God the Holy Spirit to accomplish the will of the Father in this earth.

Notice that John says, that the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God. Jesus didn't come into this world with His own agenda, unless we can say that His agenda was identical to that of the Father's.

The Son of God came into this world to speak that which He heard and knows about the plan of the Father, and the Father wants us to listen to the Son. This is what the Father said to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration.

MAT 17:5 "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"***

Why should we listen to Him? Because He is sent from the Father who spoke to Him and has given Him the task of saving men from their sins.

But notice at the end of verse 34 it says that "God gives the Spirit without limit." This is in connection to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Up to this point all messengers from God had the Spirit in measure. They were given a portion as the Spirit of God came upon them.

But all of the servants of God up to this point in redemptive history did not have the Spirit of God take up permanent residence in their lives. Jesus Christ is the first man who shared in this special

relationship with the Spirit of God. But more than that, the Spirit of God did not limit Jesus in accomplishing His ministry.

The Spirit was given without limit in Christ. He was given all authority and power and His ministry allowed for all the gifts of the Spirit to be used without limit. This cannot be said of even believers after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Yes, we are indwelt by the Spirit of God, but we cannot say that the Spirit is given to us in terms of His power and authority, without limit. In fact, are we not told that the Spirit gives gifts to His people and yet not all people have all the gifts?

And even among the apostles, who demonstrated all of the gifts in their ministries, they were still limited to what the Spirit of God decided to do in their ministries. Paul for example could not always heal people at his own discretion. If God willed it it happened.

This is why we're told in 2TI 4:20 "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I [Paul] left Trophimus sick in Miletus."

If Paul had all power and authority of the Holy Spirit to always do what he chose to do he would never have left Trophimus sick in Miletus. He would immediately have healed him. And for all we know, he may have tried. But God chose not to heal Trophimus on that occasion. And this is why we're told in Ephesians:

EPH 4:7 "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

We have access to the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit, but we cannot claim for ourselves, as Christ could, that we can practice an unlimited power and authority. That belongs to God alone, which is why Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure.

COL 2:9-10 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."

We are given a measure of fullness in Christ, but only He has all the fullness of God since He is God. But that should encourage our hearts because we are not left on our own when it comes to serving and living for God. We are given a fullness which has access to our unlimited and all powerful God.

This is what the apostle John meant when he wrote earlier in this gospel.

JOH 1:16 "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another."

And we continue to receive blessings and grace from God as we seek Him and love Him above all.

1CO 1:4-9 "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way - in all your speaking and in all your knowledge - 6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

Back to our text.

JOH 3:35 "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

Now to a Jew of that day that is a revolutionary statement. From a Jew's perspective the Father is the One they look to and depend upon for grace and mercy and direction. But what John the Baptist has just said to these people is that this Jesus, whom you're complaining about, is the One the Father has put in charge. In fact, the Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands.

This is to say that whatever Jesus does, the Father does. Whatever Jesus says, the Father says. Whatever Jesus desires the Father desires. And we know that what Jesus desires is to "do the will of My Father in heaven."

What John was saying to these Jews was that they now need to seek Jesus, (not John the Baptist), as if they were seeking the Father, because Jesus and the Father are one; one in nature, in desire and power, since they are the One true God.

This is the Jesus we know and love; the Jesus who is fully God and fully man and who has accomplished our salvation.

PHI 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

But what happens when people will not bow their knee and confess that He is the only Savior? Well, John the Baptist has a word for his followers in our text.

JOH 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

It's an either/or proposition. There is no gray area when it comes to salvation. You either have it now or you don't. We can't dictate to God the terms for our salvation. We can't make up our own way of salvation. And unfortunately many attempt to do this as they choose their own path outside of God's way of salvation.

MAT 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

There is life for all who believe in the Son of God and who place their faith in Him alone for their salvation. But for those who reject the Son of God there is only one thing that remains for them and that is God's wrath.

And what John means by this is that God must punish men for their sin. He must enact justice since sin must be paid for by men. We have violated a holy God and He cannot wink at sin. It must be paid for.

But praise God it has been paid. The work that Jesus came into this world to accomplish has been accomplished by our faithful Savior who died in our place and has given us His righteousness if we would but place our faith in His work on the cross for us and His glorious resurrection from the dead.

When He said on that cross, "it is finished", He meant it. Sin has been paid for once and for all, but unless we accept that free gift by faith in Christ we will pay for our own sin, and the wrath of God will abide on us.

That's not an option. I want His wrath to turn to peace in my life and it has, just as it has for all who have embraced our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the message of hope we need to share with the world in truth and love.

ROM 5:9-11 "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."