

Title: It is all about Jesus!

Passage: John 3:31-36

Introduction:

Verse 31-36 seems to be a theological reflection on verses 22-30. It is John the evangelist's explanation of why John the Baptist had to decrease and why Jesus had to increase. It is about why Jesus must be high and lifted up. It is about why Jesus must be glorified above all. It is about why Jesus should be the focus of all of life and ministry. And therefore, it is about why people must know Jesus. When you walk out of church tonight, there 3 things you must do:

1. Worship Jesus- He is above all
2. Listen to Jesus- He speaks God's truth
3. Submit to Jesus- He is the source and way of Eternal life

Why should you Worship Jesus? He is above all. (v31)

³¹ He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

Immediately as you read verse 31, you might start thinking about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. John 3:6, Jesus says, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"*. Jesus and John is talking about origin. Every human is born through the flesh. We are from the earth. Natural. Earthly. In Genesis 3:19 God puts it this way in his conversation with Adam, *"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."* Paul agrees with them when he says in 1 Corinthians 15:47-48 talking about the resurrection body, *"⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven."* Since we are of earth, that means we are limited. We are limited creatures. We are finite in understanding. And even though John the Baptist and all those before him did great things and spoke great things, they are still only from the earth and limited in their understanding to what God reveals to them. They are limited to their earthly life which doesn't last long.

John the Baptist spoke as one from the earth, he called people to repent and to be baptised in the water, but he could never fully reveal the fullness of the heavenly things nor could he offer all there is from above. Only the one who is from above can. The one from above is Jesus.

Because Jesus is from above, he knows first hand the heavenly things and therefore can bear witness and testify about those things, (v32). But there is more to what John is saying here. He is not just saying that Jesus' understanding is greater. Rather Jesus is far superior than humans. He is on another league. You might have heard the idiom, "out of this world". When someone eats an amazing meal, when they hear incredible music, when they watch Usain Bolt sprint 100 metres in 9 seconds or when they see first hand the fastest horse for the Melbourne Cup, and remember "

they might say, this meal is out of this world, the lyrics and melody of this song is out of this world, Usain bolt is not human he must be out of this world, that horse is out of this world. They don't literally mean that these things are not from the earth, but it's as if their greatness is not human and earth-like. It is as if they must come from some other planet.

Jesus is out of this world literally. He comes from above. And his origin and title and who he is, far surpasses human imagination. Not only does he know and speak of heavenly things, but he rules with heavenly authority and has heaven like characteristics. Or in other words, he has God-like characteristics. And that should be obvious since he is God. Although Jesus is fully man, although he possesses a human nature, he is also fully God. One with divine nature. His origin is heavenly. And we as humans can never fully comprehend his greatness. How can finite humans fully understand an infinite being? Thankfully we have God's word because he reveals to us heavenly things through it. Colossians 1:15-17 says, *"15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together"*. Notice... all things were created for him. All things, whether in heaven, and on earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, everything was made for Jesus. In Ephesians 1:20-23 it says, *"20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."*. Jesus is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named. That's why he is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. (Revelation 19:16). In theological terms, he is preeminent. Meaning he is far superior. He is the king of kings, the lord of lords, who is from above and everything was made for him. He is out of this world. Few verses down in verse 35, it says that *"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand"*. Everything belongs to him. He reigns over all. Therefore, he is deserving of everything. He is deserving of all recognition, praise, submission. He is the centre of all creation and time. And that speaks powerfully into our modern society which is very self-centred. We live in a self-centred world which says that everything is about you. That mentality runs in the church. People think the church exists for them and their needs. But the church and all of creation exists for Jesus. And that is why John the Baptist, why every prophet, minister, ministry must decrease and he must increase. He is worthy of all worship and praise. And in essence that is the message that John the Baptist and all faithful preachers proclaim. Because of who Jesus is, because he is from above, Jesus is to be worshipped. Worship Jesus because he is above all.

Listen to Jesus- He speaks God's truth Point 2:

³² He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. ³³ Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

John lays out 4 reasons why we can know for sure Jesus speaks God's truth

1. In verse 32- He speaks God's truth because he has personally seen and heard of the heavenly things. If you remember from our very first sermon on John, he eternally co-existed and pre-existed with God. In fact, he is God himself and that's why he can speak these truths. It is as if you asked a Melbourne directions around the city. You wouldn't question them if they were from Melbourne and lived in Melbourne their whole life. They know first hand how to get around the city. Jesus is from above and therefore can speak truths about it.

2. First half of v 34, We know for sure Jesus speaks God's truth because God sent him. The triune God from all eternity appointed the second person of the trinity, Jesus, to complete a divine mission. Jesus completely and perfectly says and does all that God says and does. John 5:19 says, *"¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. "* In John 6:38, *"³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. "* And finally, in John 8:28-29, *"²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.""* Jesus is perfectly obedient to the Father and He perfectly utters the words of God. He doesn't say anything else which is not from above.

The 3rd reason why we know for sure Jesus speaks God's truth is found in the second half of verse 34, because the Father gives the Son the Holy Spirit without measure. Throughout redemptive history, God empowers his workers to accomplish the task that he has given them, but the Son on the other hand has the Holy Spirit without measure. John the Baptist testified that he saw the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus in 1:32-33, verse 32 says, *"And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him."* This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 11:2, *"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord."* And Isaiah 61:1, *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me"*. This is God's anointed one. What we have here is repetition of these truths in slightly different words.

And finally, we know he speaks the truth's of God in verse 35, because he is the beloved Son of God. The argument made in verse 34 is further developed and reinforced in verse 35. He is God's one and only son whom he perfectly and infinitely loves. He is the begotten son whom God has given all things into his hands. Not just the Holy Spirit without measure, but all things. It is a more general description. The relationship between Jesus and the Father is perfect. John 5:20, *"For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing."* and in John 17:23-24 in Jesus' high priestly prayer, *"²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world"*.

I used to work for a retail company called Uniqlo which sold clothes. Every day I would go in and we would have a staff meeting before the shift began. In the meeting, we were

informed about all the changes made around the store and about the new products that had come in. They would explain to us how the clothes are made, where they were made from and how great they were. Obviously, they want us to sell their products. The new products would have multiple tags which had information about all the science behind keeping you extra cool or warm during the particular season. After the meeting you would have 10 minutes to look at a white board which showed the sales of the whole week, how many products were sold, what were the top 10 products for male and female and how many were sold for each day. We had to write it on a note pad and be aware of the trend. As an employee, as one sent by the company to sell goods, I would be able to truthfully tell you first hand the top 10 products sold for male and female, I would be able to tell you truthfully how much revenue they made, I would be able to tell you truthfully how the products were made and anything about Uniqlo because I was equipped with the information and resources to do so. But that would be the limit to the truths of Uniqlo. I wouldn't be able to tell you the net-profit. I wouldn't be able to explain to you why or why not particular people were hired or rejected. I wouldn't be able to tell you all the nitty-gritty details that only the CEO knows. My relationship to the CEO isn't good enough. If I was the Son of the CEO I could know. Dad wouldn't mind telling me. Especially if he loved me infinitely.

The eternal Son of God has the Holy Spirit without measure, he has been given all things by his loving Father, and the Father has sent him to speak truth into this world. There is no reason to doubt his truthfulness. But, people do. People reject him. "yet no one receives his testimony". If I told you how much a shirt cost at Uniqlo and you didn't believe me, you would be claiming that I was a liar and I wasn't a staff member. If you receive Jesus' testimony, you affirm the truthfulness of God. (v33) But if you reject Jesus, then you say he is a liar. If you reject the message of the gospel you reject him and call God a liar. Different religions and cults try to find out what God has to say through different means apart from Jesus. Maybe you try to find out what God has to say apart from his Son. Maybe you look up to man's knowledge and intelligence. God has spoken and he has spoken through his Son.

1 John 5:10-12 puts it nicely and opens up our third point,

"¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

It is only appropriate for John the Baptist to decrease and Jesus to increase. Jesus speaks God's truth perfectly. He is the eternal logos. The perfect reflection of God's truth. Listen to Jesus, not to man, Jesus.

Finally, Submit to Jesus, because he is the source and way of eternal life Point 3:

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Verse 36 neatly summarises all that has been said. Jesus is the only way to have eternal life. John the Baptist in chapter 1 introduced him as *“the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). Earlier in John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Sin is a real problem. Every single person is tainted by sin. Every single person has and will rebel against God. Your neighbour, your brother and sister, your son and daughter, your husband and wife, your father and mother by nature is sinful. And therefore, is deserving and will be punished for their sins. Left to their own goodness and righteousness, they would be condemned before God’s judgement throne. But there is salvation. This is the good news, Jesus the lamb of God has bled and died on the cross to save sinners. He came as a ransom for many. For those whosoever believes in him. Jesus saves. What great news. The only thing you need to do, and everyone else in this world needs to do, is heard the message of the Gospel and come to Jesus recognising your sinfulness. Come in humility. Come before the throne of grace and accept Jesus. Believe in him and what he has to say. But, Believing does not just mean knowing. John flips the positive statement, *“whoever believes in the son has eternal life”* and puts it negatively, *“whoever does not obey shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”*. Believing leads to obedience. Trust and obey for there is no other way. Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was a German theologian in his book *“the cost of discipleship”* talks passionately about the problem with the church during his time and it speaks powerfully today. The problem in our generation as well as his generation is that people preach a cheap gospel. A gospel which is all love and happiness. He says, *“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Isn’t that true in Christian church today. Sin is a problem. It is disgusting before God yet it isn’t taken seriously. Holiness and commitment is brushed over. Many proclaim freedom in Christ. I am saved by grace through faith, therefore I don’t need to go to church, I don’t need to work on my holiness, I am justified. Bonhoeffer continues and says that, “costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his gods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him... It is costly because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it condemns sin... above all, it is costly because it cost God the price of his son.”* Jesus Christ is the price that was paid for sins. And he bids believers to follow. To obey. To follow Jesus is to obey. True discipleship is marked by obedience. *“Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”*. Do you submit to Jesus Christ as your Lord and saviour? Do you obey him? There is only one way. To trust and obey. Belief is marked by obedience. Do you believe in a cheap grace, a grace which costs Christ his own life and your whole life as a commitment to him?

Jesus offers salvation. Something of eternal worth. Obedience is not a huge price to pay. It is worth it. But sin tells you that your sinful life and the world’s pleasures are greater than being in eternity with Jesus. Don’t believe it. There is nothing greater than being with

Jesus for all eternity. Christ bids us to believe and to follow. What he offers in himself is infinitely greater than anything you can imagine. John the Baptist can't offer eternal life. The prosperity preachers of this world can't offer eternal life. Oprah can't offer eternal life. They all must decrease. Jesus must increase because he offers the greatest of them all. Himself. And he calls you to submit to him. Submit to Jesus, because he is the source and way of eternal life.

Conclusion:

There are 2 options laid out in front of you this evening. Either Worship Jesus, listen to him and submit to his Lordship, loving and obeying him. By doing that you accept his free gift of eternal life. Or you can reject him. Hate him. Call him a liar. Rebel against him. Ignore his words. And therefore the wrath of God will remain on you because of your sinfulness.