

Living in Light of Jesus' Superiority

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John 3: 31-35

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So this is the 35th message that we've done in chapters 1 to 3 of the book of John, and there's still one more next week. At this rate, we'll finish the book of John in 2027. All right. And so, now listen, I don't say that as a badge of honor, I don't say that to separate myself. I really don't care about any of that stuff. I say it, though, for this reason. I was told early on by a pastor way more seasoned than me. He said, "You worry about the depth of your ministry and let God take care of the breadth of your ministry." It's like, "Okay." And he also said, "Most Christians will not grow past their pastor, so take people as deep and as far into God's word as you can." I was like, "Okay." So that's what I'm doing. Also, we're doing this because we're going slowly because 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God," meaning every word in the Bible came from God himself as the ultimate source.

So my job is never to come to the Bible as an editor and go, "Hmm, which do I want to preach? What here do I want to preach on and which part am I going to skip?" That's not my job. "Which parts do people want to hear about? That's what I'll focus on. What are the parts people don't want to hear about? I'm going to pretend those aren't there." Not my job. My job, God determined what I preach by putting these words here. So my job is simply to allow the Bible to use me to proclaim what it says. So giving attention to every sentence, every phrase, every word is my way of saying all of this is important. Because it's all important, I need to make sure we all know what it says, what it means and how it should change our lives. Make sense? So strap in. We're going to be in John for a while, but it'll be worth it. And some of you tell me, like at the door or in emails, you say, "Like this has been blowing my mind, like I've read the book of John numerous times, but I've never really understood it." Well, praise God. That's that's not me. That is God himself working in our midst during the preaching of His Word. So now let's go back to uh two weeks ago. We looked at verses 22 to 30 in John chapter 3, and in that passage, we saw that there was a debate that had broken out that quickly became a competition between John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' ministry.

So both are preachers, both are baptizing. Thousands are flocking to to hear both of them but um but more people were beginning to follow Jesus and leaving John the Baptist's ministry. Jesus' ministry is becoming more popular and the followers of John the Baptist see this is a problem. They don't like this. They're getting jealous. So they defend his honor against what seemed to be Jesus, who had become a rival in their minds.

So John the Baptist, who Matthew 11:11, Jesus says is the greatest man who ever lived. He he shows us why he's great and what he said to his followers. And this response of greatness was a response marked by deep humility. It was his humility that made him the greatest man who ever lived because he understood this one thing. He understood how to live and how to think about himself in light of the real greatest man who ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So John 3:30, John the Baptist says, in response to all of this, "No, no, guys, you don't understand. He must increase. I must decrease. He's got to get the attention. I've got to fade away because really all of reality is about him, not me." In our text, John 3:31-35 tells us why John

would say that. It explains why those words, why that desire of John the Baptist to decrease is the most obvious response all of us should have to who Jesus really is. Our time together today will help all of us live our lives in light of Jesus' superiority. Superiority. This is the truth in this text goes against everything our culture and everything our sinful hearts tell us is true. So just, I'm just warning you about that up front. Jesus is superior to everything and everyone. Period. You, me, everyone without exception.

So if that's true, how should we think about Jesus? How should we live our lives in light of His superiority, His supremacy, His majesty, His utter greatness? How should we live in light of that? How do we live knowing we can never rival Him, never surpass Him, never in a million years be a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of all that He is. See, many see a mountain and they're like, I'm going to climb that. They see a goal and they're like, I'm going to reach that. They see a challenge, I'm going to conquer that. They see a person and they start comparing themselves, like how do I measure up? Am I stronger? Am I more advanced? Am I better off? Well, what do you do with someone who can't even ever be approached? You can't even get close to Him, let alone conquer Him when you compare yourself to Him. And the words not even close don't even scratch the microscopic edge of the surface between all that He is and all that we are. The distance between Jesus and any person ever pales in comparison to the distance between us right now and the farthest star in the universe. And that includes any pastor, athlete, celebrity, businessman, president, musician, queen, king, anybody, ever. It's a really good thing for every one of us to decrease considerably and for Jesus to increase exponentially, and our text today is going to tell us why that is. It'll establish the supremacy, the superiority of Christ and why the only right thing to do is to decrease, decrease greatly, before Him. Our text is going to give us six truths, six descriptions, six reasons why Jesus is not only superior to John the Baptist, who we've we've been seeing, but He is superior to everyone and to everything.

So let's start with point **#1) Receive Jesus' superiority humbly. Receive this truth. Jesus is superior. Receive that with humility.** Receive it, accept it, embrace it. Jesus is superior. Our text will make it clear beyond any shadow of any doubt why Jesus is superior to all. There has not ever been a single person who can say about themselves what is said in this text about Jesus. Let's begin to grasp the utter magnitude of His superiority, starting in verse 31, where it says, "He who comes from above". Stop right there. He must increase first because of His superior person. His superior person. This is this phrase, "He who comes from above," has a ton of truth packed into it. It is a reference to Jesus being eternal, to existing before He came here, living in heaven, face to face, with God, as God, according to John 1:1. He came from heaven and, listen, nobody else can say that. You didn't exist before you were conceived. God, according to Zechariah 12:1, formed your spirit. He brought you into existence in your mother's womb. Before that, you didn't exist. But when Jesus was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb, He had already existed. Isaiah 9:6 says He is everlasting, which means that He has no beginning and no end. John 17:5 says that He was with the Father before the universe, before anything was created, which means there's never been a time when Jesus didn't exist, making Him a superior person. He alone is from heaven, where God lives. He alone has no beginning and no end, making Him unique because this man Jesus is the eternal God.

Second, He must increase because of His superior position. Look at verse 31 again. "He who comes from above is above all." Above all is a comparison idea, meaning He is higher, holier, more exalted over how many things? What does it say? What is it? All. All things. Everything, every person, every idea beneath His feet, under His thumb, incomparable, at a level all by

Himself and a class all by Himself. In contrast to Jesus, John the Baptist and everyone else, verse 31 are those who are "of the earth belong, who belong to the earth and speak in an earthly way."

In other words, we are from the earth, we're not from heaven like Jesus. We're human, we're not deity. We are finite, limited, created, weak, inferior to all that He is. And this includes, notice verse 31, what we say. We speak in an earthly way. Even the words of John the Baptist, let alone the rest of us, are human and limited, often truth mixed with air. Yes, our words can be true. Our words can be candles in the darkness, but our but but compared to Jesus, our words are candles compared to the Son. And just in case we missed it the first time, notice John repeats himself in verse 31. "He who comes from above, from heaven, is above all. He who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in earthly way." Notice the repetition. "He who comes from heaven is above all." Just in case we missed it, just in case we're not clear, Jesus has a superior position repeated. He is above all. And He's a superior person, as God compared to everyone on earth and everything in existence.

Third, He must increase we must decrease because He has a superior proclamation. Superior proclamation. Look at verse 32. "He bears witness to what he has seen and heard." This one superior person, this one superior position, this one "bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives His testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal on this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent." That's Jesus. God sent Him. "For He whom God has sent utters the words of God." That first phrase, verse 32, where it says, "He bears witness to what he has seen and heard," that phrase is saying that when He speaks, He speaks as the authority on whatever He says. He's not giving secondhand knowledge that He learned because somebody else taught Him, which is kind of like everything that we know. No what the ideas that what Jesus saw and heard in heaven, where He came from, what He saw and heard is what He says. This is firsthand information. He is an expert. He is the expert, the expert on God. So if I want to know about Australia, probably not good to talk to somebody who's never been there, never seen it. The best thing for me to do is talk to someone who's been there, who lives there, maybe grew up there. The idea then is that if you want to know about God, Jesus was there and Jesus is God, which means He's not guessing. He's not giving his opinion. He's not crossing his fingers. I hope what I'm saying is true. He's not spreading lies or making mistakes when He speaks. What He says is the way things really are. He's not one guy in a lineup of religious leaders spouting off their spiritual ideas. What He says He says as one who knows, who is certainly factually true, which means this elevates His proclamations about God, reality, heaven, human beings, right and wrong, true and false. It elevates what He says above every other message, every other thing that you have ever heard. And notice verse 34. That is because Jesus "utters the words of God". He's a conduit, a pipeline, from the mind of God, parroting His words. Deuteronomy 18:18, God promises. I'm going to put my words into the Messiah's mouth so that when Jesus speaks, you hear the voice of God. To listen to Jesus, remember John 1:1 says that He's the Word of God, so to listen to Him is to listen to God. I'm doing the daily words this week, which is covering John 11 to 16. And as I'm preparing for all of that, listen, Jesus says this multiple times, this idea. So John 12:50. He says, "What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me." I'm speaking the words of God. John 14:10. "The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his work when I speak." Which means this; nothing truer, nothing more factual, nothing more in line with reality could ever or has ever reached your ears than the words of Jesus, than the words of the Bible, because Jesus words are the words of the one true God, the only God that exists.

And this is true, fourth, because of Jesus' superior power, his superior power. Look at verse 34 again. Why does Jesus speak the words of God? Verse 34, "For he whom God sent," that's Jesus, he "utters the words of God" because, fourth, "he gives the spirit without measure." So first, do you see the trinity here? You've got the Father sending the Son, you've got the Son being sent, you've got the Son uttering and speaking the words of God. And then you have the Spirit, notice, empowering Jesus when he speaks. Well, what's going on here? He gives the Spirit. What is going on here? Well, in the Old Testament, the Spirit was given to people like prophets or artisans, builders, uh kings. He he was given to to people to do a job. So once the job was over, he left. But, for Jesus, what's being said here is that His assignment was never over. The Spirit came to Him in His baptism and the Spirit was never removed. When when Jesus um, with Jesus, the Spirit comes to Him and remains and never leaves. And notice also, not only does the Spirit show up and never leave, but He's given to Him, notice, without measure, without limit, completely, to the max, to the fullest extent possible. Not a little bit given to this guy for a little bit, a little bit of time. No, given to Him in His fullness. That's another reason why every time Jesus speaks, He speaks the word of God. The power of the Spirit working in him and through his life was the guarantee that everything Jesus said is true, everything Jesus said is trustworthy, unlike every human being you have ever met or will ever meet or will ever hear from. He is in a superior position because He has superior power, He has superior proclamation and, fifth, He has a superior pedigree.

Verse 35. Notice what it says. "The Father," what, "loves the Son." "The Father loves the Son." Jesus' family line starts with God, His Father. Only He can say that. Jesus alone, Jesus only, is the Son of God. We're we're children, Christians are children of God by adoption. He is the Son of God by nature. As the Son, Jesus, is everything God is, truly and eternally God. In John 17:24, Jesus says that "the Father has loved him since before creation." As an aside, Christian, you are loved by God because you are united to the one who has been the object of the Father's love for all of eternity. And because you're united to Him, not only does He love you, but because you're united to Christ, He loves you as much as He loves Christ. This is His pedigree. It is superior to every being in existence because He's the Son of God.

Sixth, and finally, Jesus should have an elevated, an exalted place, in all of our minds and all of our hearts, because of His superior property. Superior property. What do I mean by that? Look back at verse 35. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." So look up at me for a second. Now look around. Look around the room. One, 1000, two, 1000. Okay. Back to me. Everything your eye fell on, Jesus says, "That's mine." In fact, everything your eyes have ever fallen on and ever will fall on, Jesus says, "That belongs to me." And when He says it, He's right when He says it because the text says, "He has been given all things." Because the Father loves the world, John 3:16, it meant that He gave. He gave His son as a sacrifice, punished for and to pay for our sins. Well, the Father loves the Son, verse 35, and out of His love, He gave, notice, He gave every last thing to the Son.

So Jesus owns everything. He has control over everything. That's what it means. Putting it into His hands, means He controls everything. He's sovereign. He's king. Nothing can hold Him back. No one can protest against Him. No one can sue Him and take Him to a higher court of appeal. Whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, whether we even know it or not, everything and everyone belongs to Jesus. He has authority over everything, so to picture Him as a kind of limp-wristed, weak, effeminate hippie is not the right guy. He has been, is now and forever will be the Creator and owner of how many things in verse 35? How many things? "All

things." And that word "all" is incredibly relevant, right? Because that that word "all" includes you.

So to think of Jesus as just another religious leader, just another teacher, just another prophet, just another holy man, that's to have the wrong guy. What makes Him different then the then the Buddhas and the Muhammads and the Joseph Smiths and the popes? Well, He's no mere man like every other religious leader. He's superior in his person since He came from heaven, the eternal God becoming a man. He has no rivals, no equals, no conquerors. He is superior in his position as above and beyond all things, including all human beings. His message, His proclamation, should never be put on par with anyone who has ever or will ever live. He is the authority, the only one to ever only speak truth, to only ever speak the words of God because He came from God and because He is God. His power is superior because it comes from, it comes to Him in infinite fullness from God, the Holy Spirit. His power is the guarantee that everything Jesus said is true and trustworthy. His pedigree is as the only son of God, in a class by Himself. And His property is superior because it just happens to be, well, everything and everyone that has ever or will ever live. So in those six ways, He is superior to all. Now maybe you have, but I've never met anyone truly important in life, like a president or a king you know you know, the top of the top of the top of the world's elite. Never done that. I'm sure that when that happens, there's awe and respect and humility that is to be shown when you are with them. But now after these six descriptions of the superiority of Jesus, do you see why every last knee will bow down before Him? Every single one. There's no exception. You see why every tongue will confess, will agree, will proclaim that He is Lord of all. Do you see why that is? No one of the elites is God, though they might think they are. Every one of them has an equal or someone greater to them. What they say is never from God, never 100% true, never anything other than secondhand knowledge, at best. Their power, their influence, may be great in this world, but it pales in comparison to the power of the Holy Spirit, God, the Holy Spirit. They may be from noble families, but not one of them is the Son of God. And they may have a ton of property, but they don't own everything, even though many of them might think that they should. All of that is why every single person within the sound of my voice should receive Jesus superiority with incredible humility, awe, wonder, amazement, face down in the dirt. You are so far above me. You are so far beyond me. You are so clearly superior to everything that I am. Jesus, You should have nothing to do with me. I don't know anything about what's going on with the elites in this world. Nothing at all, and yet the ultimate elite, the most elite imaginable says, "Here, I'm going to tell you about me. Here, I want you to know me." It's unbelievable. Is that how you think about Jesus or do you still treat Him like He's he's just like one of us, someone whose words, someone whose deeds you can just kind of take or leave?

That's not the real Jesus. The real Jesus is superior and because He's superior, we should all, point #2) ***Respond to Jesus' superiority accordingly. Respond to that superiority accordingly, appropriately.*** In other words, you, me, we should all respond to Him as He is. It's easy for us to to not think of Him in these six ways, to think about Him and to interact with Him in ways that suit our own thoughts, that suit our own desires. We must all respond to Him, though, as He actually is, as He's described in our text. In other words, if Jesus is God from heaven who became a human, if He is the King overall, if He's the if He only and always speaks the truth because He's empowered by God, the Holy Spirit, and if He is also God's Son, and if He is also owner of all things, if that is who He really is, what should you, what should I, what is it that we should do with that?

Because we don't interact with anything like that until we interact with Him. Well, our text gives us three responses that we should all have in light of who this Jesus really is. And the first is that we should respect His authority. We should respect His authority. Why do I say that? Well, Matthew 28:18 says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him." And we can see this in our text. Again, look at verse 31. It says that "He is above all things." Verse 35 says, "The Father has given all things into his hand," his control. Guess what? The all things, includes you. The all things includes me. That means there's no pocket of independence where we can disrespect Jesus' authority without notice or without consequence. Listen, when He increases and we decrease, what that will look like is we will respect His authority. Jesus is the head of the church, meaning He's the leader, He's the authority. So to be as practical as I can, this starts with how you and I treat what He says. Do we allow His word, the Bible, to define the way we think about everything? Do we allow His word to dictate our decisions? Do you see yourself as the subject because He is your King? Do you see yourself as His slave because He is your master? Do you see yourself as His servant because He is your Lord? Listen, He is the authority whether we like it or not, whether we live like it or not. That's what He is. And if we really grasp verses 31 to 35, what it says about Jesus, we will respect His authority. That's what real Christians do. They respect Jesus' authority.

Second, real Christians receive His testimony. They receive His testimony. Look at verse 33 again. Actually, look at verse 32 again. "He bears witness to what he's seen and heard," this one who is God from heaven, above all, "He's the one that bears witnesses," hears what's true, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true." So to receive His testimony, to accept what He says as true and, accordingly then, to commit your life to Him is to, in the words of this text, set your seal of approval on this fact, that God speaks the truth. So when an ancient person wanted to give complete approval to a document, they would take the seal of their ring and they would, they would smoosh it into some some wax on that document and, by doing that, they were saying this. "I agree with everything in it. Everything in it is true and binding." So receiving Jesus' words as truth doesn't make God true. To receive Jesus testimony, is to simply be in line with reality. Receiving His testimony is acknowledging that what God says through Jesus is right, that people are not misled or tricked or brainwashed or naive, wrong or stupid when they believe in Jesus. When that happens, they're simply aligning themselves with what is fact.

So when you receive Jesus' words as true, you are at the same time affirming that God is true and everything he said about Jesus, which means, third, if Jesus is all of that, then we should reject His rejectors. Reject His rejectors. Verse 32. "He bears witness to what He has seen and heard, yet no one receives His testimony." The one who came from heaven, the eternal God becoming a man, the one who is above all men in all things, He says what He knows as the authority on all that He says, and yet no one receives His testimony. So the way John is constructing this paragraph, this is what he's saying. By emphasizing the absolute superiority of Jesus to everyone and everything, all of that leads to this conclusion. If He is all of this, then to reject Him is the most insane thing imaginable. It's insanity. Since Jesus is who this text says He is, to reject him as utterly insane. In light of all this, notice the craziness. Verse 32 says, "No one receives His testimony." This is hyperbole, obviously, because verse 33 says what? People do receive His testimony. What this is talking about is people in general. The massive humanity is insanely uninterested in the one who is superior to all things. So rejection, tuning me out, getting up, walking out, angry emails, angry reviews, all of that is an expression of the insanity of rejecting the one who is God overall and Savior from all sin.

The majority of people who hear about Jesus say no. They reject Him. The one who is superior to all... Believing, No, I'm superior, my opinion is superior, my position is superior, my position is one as judge over this, Jesus, I know the truth. It's not Jesus. That's insane. And just as to receive Christ is to admit that God is true, so to reject Him is to call God a liar. Now why do I say that? Because that's what first John 5:10 says. Says, "Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar." Why? "Because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son." So what is the testimony that God has given concerning His Son? What is it that God says? Well, in one sense, everything the Bible says about Jesus is what God says, but but are there places where God directly says, "This is, this is who my Son is." Actually, yes. Mark 9:7 says, "This is my beloved Son; listen to Him." So so those who reject that Jesus is the Son of God, those who refuse to listen to Him, they are implying by that rejection that God is wrong when He said that, that He lied about Jesus, that that's not true. What about the prophecies about Jesus from God through prophets in the Old Testament? What about God's testimony through an angel to Joseph? Matthew 1:21 where he says, "You shall call His name Jesus because He shall save his people from their sins."

So is Jesus really God's Son, as God said he is? Is he really the promised Messiah, as God said he is? Does he really save people from their sins, as God says he does? To say yes is to affirm that God is true. To say no, to walk away, to turn up your nose, to reject Jesus is to say God lied in those texts, and in all the hundreds of other texts about Him, too. You see, there is no neutral ground. There's no having God while at the same time rejecting Jesus. You know, I'm spiritual, I like God, but I don't believe in Jesus. That means you don't like God. You don't have God at all because God and Jesus, as we've been seeing, they're kind of a package deal. To have Jesus is to have the Father. To reject Jesus is to lose the Father. We'll see this theme over and over again. Here's Jesus, again, talking about this. John 5:23. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." Wait a minute. No, I honor God. I worship God. I serve God, but I just don't believe in Jesus. No, you don't because to honor God is to honor Jesus too. And the Father loves the Son. Verse 35. Right? But if you don't love the Son, if you don't believe in Jesus, then you don't love what God loves. Which means you don't have God either. It means that you're His enemy, a rejector. And when it comes to receiving Jesus, when it comes to believing in Him, following Him, when it comes to these things, enemies of God should never have any influence on any of us when it comes to Jesus. They may know a lot about a lot of things, but on this issue, should I follow Him? Should I receive His testimony as true? Should I give my life to Him? Their opinions of Jesus should be rejected outright. That's what I mean by reject the rejectors. Reject what they say about Jesus because it is automatically false because it doesn't agree with Christ. They don't have what the Father loves. They don't fear Him. They reject Christ. But here's what people do who go to church. Here's what people do, especially young people who grew up in church. They go, Well, I know all this stuff about Jesus, but, man, the world just hates Him and maybe I should follow them instead. Maybe they got it right. They begin to judge Jesus by the prejudiced opinions of his enemies. Well, no, the prejudiced ones are in the church. No, the prejudiced ones are both because Jesus said what? You're either with me or what? Against me. There is no neutral ground. Nobody is neutral on this thing. You're either for Him or against Him. So here's what people go to church do. Well ya know well, I mean, hearing those stuff, Jesus, Savior, died for my sins, blah, blah, blah. But, man, all these people over here, they seem to be the enlightened ones, they're the neutral ones. They don't have a dog in this fight, so they're probably right and there's more of them than there are of us, and they're kind of cool. These people are idiots. They're just kind of weird, these Christians. And so I think

I'm going to go over here instead." And John goes, "That's insane because you're missing the point." This isn't about who are the followers? The issue is who is Jesus? And he is superior to all. So you receive his testimony. You reject the opinions of those who reject him. The truth about Jesus is never received from polling the elites or from counting how many people reject Him verses how many people follow Him. Truth, fact, reality is ultimately found in the one who is superior, supreme, enthroned over all people and all things, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, who proved everything I'm saying is true when He rose from the dead.

So how do we humbly live our lives in light of this superiority of Jesus? First, we respect His authority, we receive His testimony and we reject the opinions of those who reject Jesus because they don't have the truth about Jesus. Jesus has the truth because Jesus is the truth, sent by the Father who is truth defined, and empowered by the Spirit who is called, in John 14, 15 and 16, the Spirit of Truth, which means nothing is true, nothing at all is true that disagrees with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nothing, which is why this paragraph ends the way it does. If all of this is true and it most certainly is, verse 36, "Then 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." By not believing, by rejecting, they set themselves up as God's enemies. Because Jesus is a big deal. He is the biggest of deals imaginable. His superiority is unrivaled. His glory is unattainable. Therefore, He is at the core of the eternity-defining decision that every single one of us must make. He does not ever allow us to treat Him like a painting or music or a film. Oh, that's nice. That was good. That was interesting, and then move on to something else. He forces us to respond. And the only response, in light of all that He is, the only response in light of the truth, is verse 36. "Believe in him." We'll pick it up next week, verse 36. Let's pray.

Jesus, your authority is unrivaled and, for Christians, our our life is an outworking of that authority over our lives. And so as we we've considered your authority and if there are things in our lives that would that would defy your authority, give us insight into that. Help us to see that clearly, but also give us the courage to to remove ourselves from it and get back in line with who you are and what you want for us. And for others, it's it's bowing the knee for the first time. It's turning from rebellion and trusting in you, in life and death, committing their lives to you. And so, Jesus, it would be evidence of your presence, your grace, the work of your Spirit, to do that work in each of our lives as a result of our time together. So please, please do this for each of us, I pray, for the glory of your name. Amen.