

The One From Above Is Above All

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[0 : 00] Well, it's hard to believe that we're already at Palm Sunday today and that already this Friday is Good Friday and then next Sunday, Easter Sunday.

It sure doesn't feel like Easter, especially with all that's going on in our world right now. Some of the things that we've been having to do for this COVID-19, as well as even just the weather that we've been having.

We've had quite a cold week this past week. But we want to prepare our hearts for Easter. This is one of the most significant events, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

And we want to get our hearts ready. And what better way to do that than to focus our attention on the one who it's all about, on Jesus. And so we're going to do that this morning as we continue to look at the story of Jesus from the Gospel of John.

So if you have your Bible with you, please open it up to the Gospel of John. And this morning we're reading from John chapter 3, starting in verse 31.

[1 : 17] 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. He testifies to what he has seen and heard. But no one accepts his testimony.

Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God.

For God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

But whoever rejects the Son will not see life. For God's wrath remains on them. So how did we get to these verses?

[2 : 29] Well, if you remember back to last Sunday, we were listening in on a conversation between John the Baptizer and John's disciples.

And if you remember in the story, they were quite concerned. Because everybody was, instead of going to John the Baptizer, they were now going to Jesus.

And so John's disciples were concerned. But we remember that John the Baptizer had seemingly the opposite reaction. He rejoiced. He was happy.

He said, Yes, this is good. Jesus must increase. And I must decrease. He must have more of the people's attention. And I must have less.

Because I am not the Messiah. He is. Jesus. And so we're coming to these words on the heels of that. And John has some wonderful things to say from these verses about Jesus.

[3 : 38] About who he is. So we're going to look this morning at six wonderful truths about Jesus. And I hope that this is something that the Lord will use to stir your heart to worship this morning.

And for this week ahead, as we prepare to commemorate Good Friday and to celebrate Resurrection Sunday. So the first thing that we see about Jesus, John tells us in verse 31.

He must become greater. I must become less. And then John says this. 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.

Do you hear what John is saying here? There's a big difference between John the baptizer and between Jesus. They are both men.

[4 : 44] They are both having people come out to them. They are both teaching the people. They are both baptizing. But there's a big difference between John the baptizer and between Jesus.

John, in the words of John, is one who is from the earth and belongs to the earth. He's just an ordinary human being just like any one of us.

He is from the earth and belongs to the earth. But Jesus must become greater. And John must become less.

Because Jesus is the one who comes from above. He is the one who comes from heaven. And so Jesus stands apart from John the baptizer.

Jesus has already mentioned this in his conversation with Nicodemus earlier on in the chapter.

[5 : 54] If you look back to verse 13. Jesus said this to Nicodemus. He said, No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven.

The son of man. And if we look back even further in John's gospel, back to the beginning, we're reminded of how this all started.

John started by telling us that Jesus is the word. The word who was with God and was God in the beginning before anything else was made.

The one who in verses 9, 10, and 11 came into our world. Who became flesh and dwelt among us. So, yes, John the baptizer must decrease. He must fade into the background. And Jesus must increase. He must get more of the people's attention.

[6 : 51] Because he is greater. He is from above. From heaven. Not only is Jesus from heaven.

But John says he is above all. I love that phrase. The one who comes from above is above all.

He says it twice. Again, in verse 31. The one who comes from heaven is above all. Why must Jesus increase and John decrease?

Because Jesus is above all. And I love that little word all. In the original language it's actually plural. Kind of implies above all things.

Above all people. Above anything. Everything. He is above all. John is speaking about how Jesus is supreme.

[8 : 02] There is no one. There is nothing that is greater. And of course this fits with what John has already told us earlier in the gospel.

Back near the beginning. Jesus is the word. Who was God. Back at the beginning.

Not only is he God. But through him all things. There is that little word again. All things were made. And without him nothing was made.

That has been made. And so yes. If that's true. And it is. Jesus is truly above all. He ranks highest. It only makes sense for John the baptizer to fade into the background. And for Jesus to gain the spotlight. He is worthy of it.

[9 : 06] Not only is he from heaven. From above. But he is above all. He ranks higher than anything. And than anyone. The third truth.

That we hear about Jesus in these verses. Comes in verse 32. The one who comes from heaven is above all. Says John. He testifies.

To what he has seen. And heard. So the one who comes from heaven. That's Jesus. Testifies. To what he has seen.

And heard. These words are interesting. We might wonder. Some of the people might be wondering. As they hear of this man.

Teaching. And performing signs. And baptizing. Out in the Judean countryside. Where does he get all of this from? Where does he get his material?

[10 : 08] Where does he get this teaching from? What does John tell us? He tells us that Jesus speaks.

He testifies. He bears witness. To what he has seen. And heard. To what he has seen. And heard. We might say that Jesus speaks. Out of his own personal experience. And this is not the first time that John has said something similar.

Or recorded something similar. If we look back to his conversation with Nicodemus. He said something very similar there. In verse 11. Jesus said to Nicodemus. Very truly I tell you.

We speak of what we know. And we testify. To what we have seen. So Jesus speaks. From personal experience.

[11 : 11] He testifies about what he has seen. And heard. And probably the big question as we hear those words. That statement is.

Well. What has Jesus seen? What has he heard? What does John mean? As he writes this? We might think.

Perhaps. Is it referring to what Jesus has seen and heard in heaven? Before he came down? Or does it refer to what Jesus sees and hears. Kind of through his own divine nature or power. Just like he saw Nathaniel sitting under the fig tree. Or does this refer to some kind of special relationship. That Jesus has with his father. Where his father is revealing or showing things to him. [12:13] Speaking to him. And he hears what the father is saying. To be honest. At the moment. As we work through the gospel of John. I'm not entirely sure.

Just what it is that Jesus has seen and heard. From which he speaks. Or when he saw and heard it. But as we go forward in the weeks ahead.

Jesus will have more to say. About this. And so we'll listen carefully. As we work through the gospel of John. So that we can understand just what Jesus means.

When he says that he speaks. What he hears. And what he has seen. The fourth truth. That comes to us.

Here. In this passage. Is in verse 34. I'll just read it starting from 32. So we can kind of get the sense of it.

[13:17] He testifies to what he has seen and heard. But no one accepts his testimony. Whoever has accepted it. Has certified that God is truthful.

And here it is. For the one whom God has sent. Speaks the words. Of God. Now this is a wonderful truth.

About Jesus. And it's crystal clear. Let me read it again. Verse 34. For the one whom God has sent. Speaks.

The words. Of God. Let those words just sink in for a moment. Do you hear.

What John is saying. About Jesus. It could be easy for us. To take these words for granted.

[14:15] There's a big difference between. Between. Ordinary men. Ordinary people. Like you and me. And Jesus. There's even a big difference between.

John the baptizer. A prophet. A prophet. Of the Lord. And Jesus. You and I.

As we. Open our. Our mouths. What comes out? The words of men. The words of people. Now. John the baptizer was a prophet.

And so he spoke. The word of the Lord. In a way that we. We don't do. Uh. Ordinarily. Every day. But there's a big difference between Jesus.

And us. Jesus. Speaks. The words. The words. Of God. I mean. Think about this for a moment. There Jesus is.

[15:17] Out in the Judean countryside. And people. And people. Are coming to him. And he is. Opening his mouth. And words.

Are coming out. And those words. That are coming out. Are. The very. Words. Of God. God. That's what this is saying here.

For the one. Whom God. Has sent. Speaks. The words. Of God. You or I. Maybe at one time.

Or another. Have maybe had this thought. Wouldn't it be wonderful. If God. The creator. Of this. Universe.

Spoke. To me. And if he did. We might wonder. What would he say? What would he say?

[16:13] Well the amazing thing is. That he has. Spoken. To us. And we actually have his words.

Recorded. Right here. In our Bibles. The very. Words. Of God. To people.

To you. To me. This is amazing. This is wonderful. God has spoken.

When Jesus. Opens his lips. And words come out. It's. It's God's. Words. That come out. God. God. And so.

The big question is. How will we respond. To what Jesus. Has to say. And we're going to come back to that. Question.

[17:08] In a moment here. The fifth. Truth. That we see about Jesus. Verse. 35. The father.

Loves. The son. The father. Loves. The son. Now. It's a very simple. Phrase. And it could be easy. For us to just read that.

And in its simplicity. Just pass right on by. To the next thing. But let's stop. And pause. For just a moment. And reflect on that. The father. Loves. The son.

Jesus. Has. A real. Relationship. With God. His father. A relationship. Characterized.

Described. As. As one of. Love. The father. Loves. The son. And. In this gospel. More than in. Some of the others.

[18:04] Perhaps. We see. Just. Just how much. Not how much. But we see. We see a lot more. Of what this relationship.

Between Jesus. And his father. Looks like. He's going to tell us. A lot about it. And so. In the weeks ahead. We're looking forward. To hearing. More about this.

We want to understand this. For this morning. We see only one. One little aspect. Here. The father. Loves the son. And this is truth six. And has placed. Everything. In his hands. So in this loving relationship.

Between. God the father. And God the son. God has done something. He has. He has. It says. Placed everything.

[18:57] Into his hands. He has given his son. A wonderful gift. And I think at this point. John. As he writes this. Is. Kind of. Stepping back.

And. And reflecting. On the bigger picture. Of what God is doing here. Because. At this point. In the story. It sure doesn't seem. As though Jesus. Has everything. In his hands. In fact.

As the story goes on. We will see how Jesus. Gives up. What he has. And. Even surrenders. His own life. And his own body.

To death. But in the greater story. In the larger story. Which is what I think. John is pointing to here. The father loves the son. And has placed everything.

In his hands. The way that this story. Is going. Yes. Jesus has come down. From heaven. But he is going back. Up.

[19:51] To heaven. And there will be a great. Moment. Of. Consummation. A great moment. In which. God. Gives the most amazing. Gift of all.

To his son. And that's the gift of everything. All. Things. Into. His hands. What does that mean? What does that look like? We might think of. The world. The universe. Everything in it. And how. Someday. God will bring. All of that. Into submission. To his son. To his chosen. King. How it will. All.

Belong to him. Everything. He will. Rule over it. As a good. And righteous. And just. King. And. His people. Will be.

[20:47] For him. Like a bride. And all of this. Is. Is for you. My son. I'm doing it. Because. I love you. And I want to give you.

This. Good gift. The father. Loves the son. And has placed. Everything. In his hands. And while we may not see it.

At this moment. In the story. This. Is. What. Has. Happened. And is happening. And ultimately. Will happen. In the fullest. Sense. This.

This is the story. Of our world. Up until now. We've seen. Six truths. About Jesus. The first of them. Kind of starts. At the beginning. Of the story. Jesus. Is the one. Who has come. Down. From heaven. The last of them. Seems to do.

[21:43] With. Kind of. The end. Of the story. God. Has. Is. Putting all things. Into his hand. And in a.

In a sense. In the middle. In between. Here Jesus is. Walking. Among us. In human flesh. And he's speaking.

He's bearing witness. He's testifying. He's. Giving the very words. Of God. To people. To people. Like you and me.

As I said. Earlier on. The question is. How. Will we. Respond. To the testimony. Of Jesus. To the words.

That Jesus. Has spoken. Let's look back. Again. To verse. 32. John. Says there. The one who comes.

[22:40] From heaven. And testifies. To what he has seen. And heard. But no one. Accepts. His testimony. This is kind of.

An interesting. Statement. Jesus. Has come. And he's. Bearing witness. He's. Speaking. The very words. Of God. To people.

And. It says. No one. Accepts. His testimony. Testimony. Now. This. Doesn't mean.

Literally. No one. As in. Not a single person. And. And we. We know that. Simply by the context. Because the very next thing. John says. Is. Whoever has accepted it.

Has certified. That God is truthful. And so. Some. Have. Accepted. His testimony. We see this. Same kind of a. An interchange.

[23 : 35] Back. In Jesus. Conversation. With Nicodemus. In. Verse. Eleven. Jesus said. To Nicodemus. There. Very truly. I tell you.

We speak. Of what we know. And we testify. To what we have seen. But still. You people. Do not accept. Our testimony. And we see this again. If we go.

All the way back. To John. Chapter one. Where things. First started off. In the gospel. This is. The general pattern. He was.

In the world. And though the world. Was made through him. The world. Did not recognize him. He came to that. Which was his own. But his own. Did not receive him. Yet.

To all. Who did receive him. To those who believed. In his name. That's back in. Chapter one. Verse. Eleven and twelve. And so. On the whole.

[24 : 29] I think what John. Means to say. Is on the whole. People. The world. People. People. People. No one. Accepts.

His testimony. Most people. Do not receive. His words. As. As truth. But some do. Some do. Whoever. Has accepted it. Has certified. That God. Is truthful. And this is. Kind of the general. Verdict. Of our world. We could think back. To other teachings.

Of Jesus. Where he talks about. How. The road. Is. Narrow. That leads to life. And broad. That leads to destruction. And.

Only a few. Find. The road. That leads. To life. On the whole. Man. People. Do not. Accept.

[25 : 24] The testimony. Of Jesus. They do not. Receive. His words. As though. They are. The very words. Of God. And. And. And.

And. And. And. Take them. Into their heart. But some do.

Some do. Some do. Believe. Some do. Receive. The words. Of Jesus. As such. As we come down. To verse 36. What we realize. Is that. Our response. To the words. Of Jesus. To the testimony. Of Jesus. Is. Absolutely. Critical.

It's the most. Important thing. In fact. It. It is. The difference. Between. Life. And death. It's the difference.

[26 : 21] Between heaven. And hell. Look down. In verse 36. John says this. Whoever believes. In the son. Has eternal life.

But whoever rejects. The son. Will not. See. Life. For God's. Wrath. Remains. On them.

Whether. Whether or not. We. Believe. In the son. Accept his. Testimony. His words.

Embrace. Them. As true. Put our trust. In them. Respond to them. In. In the. From the fullness. Of our hearts. Or not.

Makes the difference. Between. Eternal life. And eternal punishment. God's. Wrath. Remaining.

[27 : 20] On us. Says John. Let's. Think for a moment. About that word. Wrath. Wrath. Wrath. Wrath. I wonder what.

You think of. When you hear the word. Wrath. Wrath. What does. God's. Wrath. Mean. Probably the best way. To explain it.

Or to understand it. Would be to simply. Look back to. The scriptures. At how they tell. The story of God. In our world. And God. And the children. Of Israel. We see very clearly.

A picture of his wrath. Throughout there. But many in our world. I would think. Don't have a. A right view. Of God's.

Wrath. Perhaps the picture. That they have. Is. Is. Of this. This angry. Dictator. God. Who.

[28 : 15] Is. Throwing. Fits of rage. Because. Things are not going. According to his plan. On. The earth. Which he has made. And so.

To just. Give himself. Some. Relief. He. He lashes out. At people. In wrath. And anger. For those of you. Who.

Have seen. Star Wars. You might think. Of Kylo Ren. When things don't go his way. He just throws a temper tantrum. And starts hacking everything up. With his lightsaber. And. Just. Going after people.

People. But that's not the picture. That we get from the bible. Of God's wrath. And so what does God's wrath look like? We could. Very simply go back to.

I think one of the best places to see it. Is Genesis. Chapter 6. You all know the story. Of. The flood. And Noah's Ark. Why did God send a flood upon the world?

[29 : 15] The flood. Was an outpouring. Of God's wrath. But let's hear the. The Lord's own words. As to why he.

Poured out his wrath. Upon the world. At that time. I'm reading from Genesis. Chapter 6. Verse 5. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race. Had become on the earth. And that every inclination. Of the thoughts of the human heart. Was only evil. All the time.

Verse 11. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight. And was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become. For all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah. I am going to put an end. To all people. For the earth. Is filled with violence. Because of them. Thankfully.

[30 : 18] The Lord. Was gracious to Noah and his family. And spared them. But this is a picture. Of. What's going on in the heart of God.

As he. Is about to pour out his wrath. His wrath. Is. Is an anger. Yes. But it's a. It's a good. Anger. It's a righteous. Indignation. That he has. Towards what is evil. What is wicked. Towards. People. Committing acts of. Violence.

Against one another. And acting. Selfishly. Towards one another. And hurting. Others. God's wrath. Is.

Is. It's. It's his. His. His love. Or his. His goodness. Looking at. A sinful. World. It's the desire.

[31 : 14] He has. In his heart. To set things. Right. And to bring. Justice. To sinners. Whoever. Rejects.

The son. Will not. See. Life. For God's. Wrath. Remains. On them. So. When John. Says this. He's talking about.

The status. Of people's. Relationship. With God. If they. Reject. The son. They will. Continue. To be. In that.

Status. Of having. God's. Wrath. Upon them. Of having. The. The ultimate. Sentence. Of. Divine. Justice. Upon them. Notice. That it says. For God's. Wrath. Remains. On them. They are not.

[32 : 12] They will not. Face. God's. Wrath. Simply. Because. They rejected. The son. They will face. God's wrath.

They were destined. For wrath. Even before that. Even before. Jesus came. Into our world. Because of our. Wickedness. Because of our.

Sin. But let's not miss. The good news. That is so clearly. Stated. In this verse. What John says. Is this.

Whoever. Believes. In the son. Has eternal. Life. And the implication. Which follows. Is that. God's wrath. Will no longer. Remain. Upon them. His desire. To bring. Justice. Upon. Their lives.

[33 : 10] Will be. Diverted. It will be taken. Away from them. God. This is the good news. As a gift. Of love. As we already talked about. In this. In John chapter 3. Because God. Loved. The world. He gave his son. His son.

Came. To die. On a cross. And bear. The wrath. Of God. That we deserve. So that we could be. Freed. From the punishment. That was coming. To us. And instead. Receive this wonderful gift. Of life. And not just life.

But eternal life. Life. That lasts. Forever. This is the good news. Of the gospel. People. And so.

[34 : 09] As we bring this to a close. I simply want to ask you. As you hear the words of Jesus. The one. From heaven. The one. Who is above all.

As you read them. Here. In the pages of your Bible. How will you respond to them? Most of us are Christians. Are born again. We believe in Jesus.

Jesus. But I want to encourage us all. This morning. Not just to. Accept. The words of his. That we love.

Or that we like. It's easy to accept. The words. About. Love. The words. About. Comfort. The words. About. Rest. The words. About our. Thirst. Being quenched. The words. About. Eternal life. We love those words of Jesus. But what I want to encourage us.

[35 : 06] And. And. Challenge us with. This morning is. Do we accept. All the words of Jesus. The whole testimony. Of Jesus. Including the difficult words of Jesus.

The words about. Taking up our cross. Daily. And following him. The words about. Suffering. The words about.

Obedying. And. Fighting against. The sinful desires. Of our hearts. There are many difficult words of Jesus.

Do we accept. Those. Too. They are. The words of God. For us as well. Finally. As we. Seek to apply these words.

To our lives. We want to. Not only apply them. To our own lives. But we want to apply them. To others. What John has said here. From God.

[36 : 07] These words. Are. The true. Verdict. Of what is going on. In our world. Most. In our world. For people. For everyone. In our world.

For us. who you are, but I want you to think of your friends, your family members, your neighbors. These words hold true in their lives as well. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

These are sobering words, but they are the truth about what is happening in our world and in people's lives.

As the people of God, it has been given to us to call people to put their trust, their faith, in the one who is from heaven, in the one who is above all, in the one who speaks the very words of God.

[37 : 21] And so I want to encourage you this week. Who can you call up? Who can you connect with? Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for your words.

Thank you for your love. Thank you for sending your Son down into our world. Thank you that you have exalted him to the highest place and given him the name above every name.

Lord, we bow in our living rooms now with joy in our hearts because we love you.

We know you. We know your Son. We believe in him. And we are receiving eternal life. Lead us, Lord, in the week ahead.

And show us who we can speak to. To draw their attention to Jesus. We know and we trust that they do need to hear from what you've said to us this morning.

[38 : 27] We pray and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.