

**John 3: 31-34; “Christ is above All”, Sermon # 23 in the series – “That all may honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.**  
**In the Morning Worship Service.**

John the Baptist is still speaking here in these verses, describing Christ the heavenly Bridegroom. He is describing our Lord Jesus as being appointed by God to be of the highest rank among men; above all people in His Lordship. What John is emphasizing in his teaching to his own disciples is the great difference between Christ and all other men. It is a difference which you and I need to be convinced of, for it will help us to understand ourselves better, and our need of Christ to save us. As we grow in our understanding of this truth, it will be a help to us to bear our own testimony of Christ to people around us. John is stating here that Christ, in coming into this fallen world, had a mission to accomplish and a testimony to bear. We now joyfully know that Christ did accomplished that mission. He came to redeem our souls back from the pit of destruction. And He bore His testimony concerning the Father and concerning Himself, in perfect love and humility, to the glory of God. He did these things in order that you and I might be saved from our sins, and come to know God by believing this, His testimony. The proof that John gives to his disciples and to us, that Jesus is worthy to be above all men in rank, is found in these 3 declarations of truth concerning His unique Personhood. 1<sup>st</sup> – Jesus is a unique Person among men, and above all, in that He came from heaven. (verse 31) 2<sup>nd</sup> – He is above all in that He testified of what He had heard from the Father. (verses 32 and 33) And 3<sup>rd</sup> – He is above all because He has been given the Spirit without measure. (verse 34)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Jesus is above all in that He came from heaven.**

Verse 31 says: “He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth.” “He who comes from heaven is above all.” Jesus is above all men in that He came from above; as the Divine Person, the Son of God. It is so very important that each of us understand that our Lord Jesus is unique in that He had existed as God the Son before He became a man. No other person who has ever lived has ever had this distinction. No other person is fully God and fully man. No other person has these two natures of God and man which make up His being. It was only the Lord Jesus Christ who was made this way in His mother’s womb; not by the seed of Joseph with Mary, but by Holy Spirit’s working; by His forming and fashioning the Son of God there in Mary’s womb. O how we ought to glory in the virgin birth! All other men descended of Adam, born into this world, are sinners by nature because Adam’s sin has been passed on to all of them. The first man Adam was formed out of the earth; out of the dust of the ground. But the Lord Jesus came from heaven; He came from above. He was sinless. This is why Jesus is of a greater rank than all other people, not only because He was a sinless man as He walked this earth in His public ministry, but because He was, and He is, God made manifest in the flesh.

Let me speak for a moment about the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Redemption was the plans which were made among the Persons of the Divine Trinity which became the basis for the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Redemption was the agreement entered into by the Father and the Son in eternity past, before time began, and before the earth was ever created. The Father and the Son, knowing what would most tend to their own glory in the creation of man; knew also, that in giving Adam free will, and leaving him to work through for himself the requirement of the Covenant of works, he would not be able to stand. “Then why give it?”, you ask. There were good and wise reasons. This trial of Adam’s obedience consisted of one good and positive commandment which He (God) would give to Adam to keep for a time of probation. When I say that this was a positive command I mean that it was not intrinsically a moral command like, “Thou shalt not kill”. It was a command to be kept simply

because God said it was to be kept. This command, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given to Adam and Eve for their good, and for the testing and proving of their obedience. Even though God foreknew that Adam would not be able to stand in his own righteousness, it was very essential that all men see the truth of the matter. It had to be clearly demonstrated that Adam as our Federal Head could not handle the knowledge of good and evil by himself, even though at that time, he had free will. And, I hope that you understand that neither would any of us have been able to handle that knowledge by ourselves. The Father and the Son knew that even though they would create Adam upright, and even though he would be told that he could eat of the fruit of all of the other trees in garden, that left to himself, he would not be able to obey that commandment; they would not be able to confirm themselves and all of their posterity in eternal life by their own obedience and their own works. This was God's decretive will that this be the case. This was decided before time began.

Turn with me over to Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—In Him.” The NAS says, “that He might sum up” all things in Christ. Blessed be God that it was so, and is so, and will be so to all eternity. All spiritual blessings abound to every believer and to Christ's Church as a whole because of what God the Father and God the Son purposed together to do before the foundation of the world. Our being saved was of His choosing, even then. Our adoption was predestined because we would never have been able to find favor with God, the distance between us was so very great because of Adam's sin, and because we confirm Adam's sin ourselves every day, when we are outside of Christ. God was so very wise; He was so very prudent, to make known His will to us; His good pleasure was to gather together all those chosen by the Father, to have them redeemed by the Son; that all truth and all grace and all blessing might be found coming to us, in Him, through Him, and by Him. O how precious a truth this is; that salvation was God's initiative and not of man's working or his thinking that He could perfectly persevere to the end of his life, after Adam fell. He could never have done it. And you, dear Christian cannot do it either. All of your sanctification as well as your justification has been founded upon the purposed grace of God for you, dear believer, from before the world began.

And so I hope that you can see why it was, that God would have it this way. The Triune God had already decided that all things should be summed up in Christ. God would have you to know that He had something much greater and better in mind than your being able to live to Him by your own wisdom and by your own strength, trying in vain by yourself, to please Him. He would have you to see the greatness and glory of His plan in His Son, Jesus Christ; that He would be above all. Therefore, let us receive this truth, that in eternity past the plans were made for the redemption of a people for God's own possession. And these plans were not that men would become righteous before God by their own wisdom and strength, but according to the grace and mercy that God would demonstrate in Christ. The love, the wisdom, and the glory of God are all demonstrated, and proved experientially, in Christ. This is where, according to the wisdom of God, the Covenant of Grace would first come into play; at the foundation of the world, when Adam sinned. It is true that the first couple were banished from the garden of Eden after they sinned. And it is also true that God placed the flaming cherubim there to keep Adam and Eve from being able to re-enter it, symbolizing to them, and showing them, that the way of

the Covenant of Works, of any person's trying to justify themselves by their keeping God's commandments, was blocked up forever. But what is so very merciful and marvelous is that, even before they had left the garden, the Father had the pre-incarnate Christ take the form of a man, and "come walking in the garden in the cool of the day"; not only to tell them of the consequences of their sin, but also to give them a promise of grace. It was a promise that He Himself would fulfill several thousand years later, when He would come into this world in His incarnation; coming to obey God's law perfectly; coming to suffer and die for our sins. "This covenant of grace is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation through the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery of it was completed in the New Testament" (LBCF – Chapter 7, Paragraph 3) in the coming of Christ to fulfill that promise Himself." This is what is so very wonderful, so very beautiful, about Christ's being above all. It is that He, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Great Godhead, came down from heaven to earth. He was not earthly in His heart and mind, but rather heavenly. In being heavenly, He perfectly represented the Father's Person and perfectly did the Father's will on behalf of sinful men who would trust in Him. You dear Christian, trusting in Him, will become more heavenly minded, as you live your life for Him, but it will all be by His grace.

Christ, in coming from above was above all. Even John the Baptist who was such a great preacher of repentance and faith in Christ, speaks of himself here as being "earthly" and "speaking of the earth" in comparison to the words which were spoken by Christ. There was none greater than John, born among women, and yet when he thought about Christ, he thought of His Lord's glory and His perfections. This is how we ought to think about Christ as well; we ought to think about the greatness of His glory and the perfections of His Person. He is perfect, pure, and holy, and He obeyed God's law perfectly where we have broken it; often in our hearts, if not in our words and actions. We should always think of Christ as unique, in a class all to Himself, because He is the all-glorious One who alone could bring us to God. He is the One who has the ability to read your heart as a book, dear Christian. And He alone knows how His grace can be bestowed so that you are able to repent of your sins, and mortify them, and forsake them. He alone can subdue your iniquities and bring you to greater holiness. Therefore, do not boast in men, but let your boast be in the Lord, for in the Lord Jesus Christ you have the One who is above all others. He well deserves the name of Friend. In Him you can boast all the day long.

**2ndly - He is above all in that He testified of what He had heard from the Father.**  
(verses 32 and 33)

"And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony." "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true." The Lord Jesus came into the world to bear witness to the truth, He says in John 18, verse 37. "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." We have already seen that is important for all men to understand the truth that Christ is above all in His Person. Here in these words of John concerning Jesus we find that it is just as important a truth for all men to come to understand that Christ came to testify to what He had seen and heard from God the Father Himself. Jesus' speaking what He had seen and heard from the Father is called here, His testimony. The greatest testimony which Jesus bore in His earthly ministry was concerning heavenly things; things which fallen, sinful people like ourselves would not know if Jesus had not have revealed them. These are truths and realities concerning the Father and concerning Himself as the Savior of sinners, and how it is that a person like you or me can be saved by faith in Himself. But He also bore testimony to the fact of what men were like by nature, apart from His grace. "No one received His witness", John the Baptist said. John's disciples had said, "All were coming to Him"; that is to Jesus. But John Himself knew the truth. Very few were receiving His testimony, even when they said that they believed.

Look back over to John Chapter 2, verse 23. “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.” “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone would testify of man, for He knew what was man.” To testify is to tell what we know. But Jesus did not need to be told by any man what man was like, because He knew all men. He knew that there would be some people who would see the sign miracles that He did and they would believe in His name; that He was someone great. But in order to see Jesus as “above all”, and to savingly believe His testimony takes a revelation of the truth to a person’s soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. Back in Chapter 3 verse 11, when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, that very religious, but unsaved ruler of Israel, He said to him, “You must be born of water and the Spirit.” He was meaning that a person must be born from above; regenerated in their heart, raised from the dead spiritually, and given life and understanding. “We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive our witness.” Sometimes we do not realize how helpless and without strength people are, who do not know the Lord. If we knew this truth better as Christians, we would pray so much more.

Turn over to Matthew Chapter 11, verse 25 – “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’” “Even so, Father for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son, except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” This is the testimony of the Son concerning what He had seen and heard from the Father. God is sovereign to whom He reveals the truths of eternal salvation. These truths were delivered by the Father to the Son to give to all men in general, but to God’s elect and chosen people in particular, that they might be saved. They were hidden from “the wise and the prudent”, that is those persons who thought they were wise enough in themselves to do what God commanded. But they did not want to believe that their self-righteous hearts needed to be changed. They needed to be born from above. And until God the Father sovereignly had mercy on them, these things of truth and their need of grace from Christ were “hidden” from them. But notice that they are testified to by Christ Himself. “No one knows the Son, except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” The Father and the Son work together in perfect harmony in the saving of any person from their sins. It is not the sinner’s decision that saves them from their sins. It is God’s decision to have mercy and savingly to open the heart to receive the truth; the testimony of Christ to these things.

Once the truth is revealed, then the sinner sees it; and because of the Holy Spirit’s working, they will then respond in faith believing in the gospel. When a person is truly receiving the testimony of Christ’s word, which is found in the Bible, they will come to Christ not only to find an escape from hell, but they will come to find spiritual rest in Christ; to cease from all of their own wisdom and all of their own works in their trying to please God, and they will want to learn of Christ as a disciple. “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” The person who has received Christ’s testimony will willingly and joyfully take this yoke up. They will want to plow together with Christ through the pages of His word. They will see all of their obedience in relation to His finished work. They will pray to have more of His life to be seen in their life.

Let me ask you now, are you finding rest for your soul? Or does the burden of your heart seem too great to bear? Then you must come to Jesus; believe His testimony, that salvation is of the Lord, and you will find rest for your soul. Believe His testimony and you will be able to take His yoke upon you. For love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-

control are what He works into your heart. They are His enabling graces to do the Father's will. The fruit of the Spirit are His grace which you will know by faith, believing the testimony of His word. His commandments will not seem burdensome to you. Have you set your seal to this; have you certified that God is true? If you abide in Christ's word then you are truly His disciple. The testimony of John was that Christ was above all. Is this how you see Him? The testimony of the Father is that Christ is above all. Do you believe this testimony? How great and important a thing it is to believe the gospel, and then go on to learn Christ's word and keep His commandments by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you. 1<sup>st</sup> John Chapter 5, verse 9 says: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son." "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son." George Hutcheson, the puritan, says this: "Whosoever does receive Christ and his doctrine will find that they have to do with a true God, who cannot lie nor will He disappoint them; for so it is imported "that God is true," and will prove Himself so to such."

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – Christ is above all because He has been given the Spirit without measure.** (verse 34)

Verse 34 says: "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure." The prophets in the Old Testament times, along with John the Baptist, spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, carried along by Him. They had different measures of the Spirit given to them. Witness Elisha's wanting a double-portion of Elijah's spirit for his own ministry. In the New Testament times we are to pray for more of the Spirit it says in Luke 11: 13 But we should understand that in Jesus Christ our Lord there is a fullness of the Spirit which is a great fountain of blessing for His all of His people. This began in the Incarnation when by the Spirit of God the Divine Logos, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Divine Trinity was joined together with a true human nature and a body. It is the Holy Spirit Himself who became the bond between the Deity and the humanity of Christ. Even from His birth the Lord Jesus had the Spirit without measure. But when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan at the commencement of His public ministry, this became increasingly evident to men. It says it was while Jesus was praying in Luke 3: 21 – that, "The heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in you I am well pleased.'" In closing this message let us remember that there is a fullness in Christ of which every believer receives, and grace upon grace every day of their Christian life, all the way to glory. In terms of spiritual gifts we are given them according to the measure of Christ's gift, it says in Ephesians 4: 7. But in our hearts, as we pray and ask for more of the Spirit in order to do God's will and to be more pleasing to Him, there will be times when He is pleased to pour out in our hearts exactly what will help us to glorify Him in that particular situation. Lo, He is with us always; but let us pray for more of His precious influence upon our everyday activities. Remember Jesus was raised on high to a throne of grace. And He ever lives to make intercession for us. So let us ask Him for every good thing we need to glorify His name and satisfy our heart, day by day. For even now, Christ is above all. Luke 11: 9 says – "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened." "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone?" "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?" "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"