

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 39

John 3:31 ***“He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all. ³² And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. ³³ He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”*** John 3:31-33)

PERTINENT THINGS ABOUT JESUS

INTRODUCTION

In the writings of men, particularly when they are dealing with problematic areas, there is a staggering amount of supposition, theorizing, conjecture, and hypothesizing. Pointed analysis is exceedingly rare, and what few are given are peppered with neutralizing words like “if,” “could be,” “possibly,” etc. Those point to the fact that human knowledge is fragmentary, and that a lot of critical factors are unavoidably omitted in worldly wisdom. Notice, however, how differently the Scriptures speak. There is a revealed certainty that staggers the spiritually uncultured mind—i.e. “*He that*” (Matt 10:37; 1 John 2:4), “*everyone*” (Matt 7:21; Gal 3:10), “*all that*” (2 Tim 3:12; Jude 1:15), a condition that “*is*” (Rom 6:7; 1 Cor 6:17), and one that “*was*” (Rom 4:20; Gal 2:8; 4:29). The Word of God not only speaks of conditions and circumstances that **can** exist, but of those which **do** exist. Our text is a case in point. It will reveal certain realities that will determine how we think about those involved. This kind of reference is necessary to establish a person in the faith. An individual cannot be built up with possibilities. Modern motivational preachers and teachers are fond of referring to, what they call, “possibility thinking.” In such a case, a theoretical possibility is either held out to the people, or is developed by the individual himself. Then, relying on self-strength and ingenuity, the person is encouraged to set out to fulfill that desire. While there may be some small fragment of life when that has some application, this is not the manner of Divine reasoning. When shaping our thinking, Scripture – in this text, John the Baptist – will appeal to **where a person is from**, and how that bears upon what he says. When referring to who speaks, he will point out the source of his information, and the bearing that has on our response to what is said. These things, when received, will determine how a person thinks. In such a case, human analysis will be involved, but God will supply the mental and spiritual elements that are required for proper appraisal and analysis. The human intellect is not the basic component. We are to beware of any appeal to thinking that depends upon natural resources and abilities – whether that of another man, or of our own.

HE THAT COMETH FROM HEAVEN IS ABOVE ALL

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John is establishing the superiority of Christ and of what He says. These are things

the flesh refuses to acknowledge, and therefore it rejects what the Lord Jesus Christ says.

HE THAT COMETH FROM ABOVE. The first thing to observe about Jesus is that He “*came*” to earth. Thirteen times the Scriptures state that Jesus referred to His entrance into the world as when “*I came*” (Matt 10:34; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32; John 6:38,42; 8:14; 12:47; 16:27,28; 17:8). Paul wrote, “*Jesus came into the world*” (1 Tim 1:15).

Ponder the gravity of His statements: “*I came down from heaven*” (John 6:38). “*I came out from God*” (John 16:27), “*I came forth from the Father*” (John 16:28). In His Gethsemane prayer to God He said, “*I came out from Thee*” (John 17:8).

This means that Jesus coming into the world was the result of a Divine initiative. No one from earth petitioned God for someone from heaven to come to earth. The purpose belonged exclusively to God. The time of Christ’s entrance was set by God. The reason for Him coming was established by God. The duration of His stay was set up by God. What was to be accomplished during His stay was cast in stone by God. The time when He was to return was also established by God. All causes and effects of Jesus coming from above were put in place by God. Nothing regarding the purpose and work of Jesus was established by men. He did not come to implement the plans of men, or to ensure that the desires originating with them would be fulfilled. His purpose was not to give success to the plans and purposes of men. It was not to make men comfortable in “*this present evil world.*” Instead, He came to deliver us from this world, and prepare us for the world to come.

Of course, it is one thing to have an intellectual awareness of these things. It is quite another to build your life around them, and live in the persuasion of their reality – which is what it means to “*live by faith*” (Heb 10:38). Satan has succeeded in tempting unstable men to create methods and techniques to correct and direct human behavior, and then ask God to bless them. It all may seem innocent enough to some, but when you recall that Jesus came down from above, the whole picture is changed. The fact that He “*came from above*” means there are resources “*above*” that are not part of the earth’s system, or “*this present evil world.*” Further that God sent them to us through Jesus means they are indispensable, not optional.

IS ABOVE ALL. The text does not say that the One who came from above was above all, but that He “*IS above all.*” Even when He walked among men, He was superior to them. He had authority they did not have, for God “*loved the Son and hath given all things into His hand*” (John 3:35). No man has the right to reject what Jesus says, attempt to escape His presence, or conduct his life as though Jesus was not, in fact “*above all.*” Jesus of Nazareth never met a person He did not have the right to command!

The epistles affirm Jesus has been exalted “*far above all principality, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*” (Eph 1:21). If Jesus commands something to be done, there is not a person or a circumstance that is not to yield to Him. Salvation provides both an environment and the right for the saved to rely upon that fact.

HE THAT IS OF THE EARTH. While what follows is true of all men, John is particularly referring to himself here. He is explaining why Jesus is to be preferred above himself. John was “*of the earth*” in the sense of being among Adam’s progeny. This alone made John inferior to Jesus, even though he was superior to all of the men that came before him (Matt 11:11).

IS EARTHLY AND SPEAK OF THE EARTH. The message of John, when compared to that of Jesus, was “*of the earth earthly*” – not “*earthly*” in the sense of coming from

the earth, but rather in the sense of dealing with life in the earth. Remember that Jesus told John that being born again was in the category of *"earthly things"* (John 3:12). In this case, *"earthly things"* involved the body, and were performed in the earth. Those things were essential, but they were inferior to unseen realities.

HE THAT COMETH FROM HEAVEN (John 6:38,41,42,51,58). This time John says Jesus came *"from heaven,"* implying that He brought words and benefits down from heaven for us. Jesus spoke of inheriting the earth (Matt 5:5), *"the world to come"* (Mk 10:30), and obtaining everlasting life (Lk 18:20). He spoke of a spiritual resurrection, and the resurrection of the dead (John 5:25-29). He spoke of a time when He would be seen coming in all of His glory, the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels as well (Lk 9:26), and when He would confess men before the holy angels (Lk 12:8). He declared that God would give the Holy Spirit to those who asked Him (Lk 11:13). None of these were *"earthly things."*

John did not speak of these things. He did not refer to the existence of Jesus before He came to earth, or what He would do after He died. He made no reference to Jesus suffering for sin, rising from the dead, or ascending into heaven. This did not mean he omitted anything in his message. His purpose pertained to men in the world, and what they should do to prepare for Jesus.

JESUS TESTIFIES WHAT HE HAS SEEN AND HEARD

³² *"And what He hath seen and heard, THAT He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony."*

Remember, this is what John the Baptist is saying about Christ. While men spend a lot of time in speculative thinking and philosophical speaking, Jesus never indulged in such things. Men are too prone to talk about things concerning which they have very little, if any, knowledge. The God of heaven even asks, *"Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"* (Acts 4:25). While this text speaks of man's aggression against Jesus, it speaks of the general classification of *"vain things."* Other versions read, *"futile things,"* ^{NASB} *"useless,"* ^{CJB} and *"folly."* ^{NAB} ***"Vain things" lead nowhere, bring no benefits, and are in no way productive.*** The amount of time that men spend in such things is staggering. However, the Lord Jesus did not spend a single second on such things, either in thought or in deed.

WHAT HE HATH SEEN. Jesus spoke of things that He had seen – and what sights they were! He *"beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"* (Luke 10:18). Before coming to earth, He was with *"the Father"* (John 17:5), and therefore said, *"I speak that which I have seen with My Father"* (John 8:38). He confessed that He had *"seen the Father"* (John 6:46). He declared, *"For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel"* (John 5:20).

Why would anyone spend an inordinate amount of time exposing their mind to the wisdom of men, when they could be taught by Christ (Eph 4:20-21)? By saying He *"testified"* of these things, He was confirming that what He had seen was intended to be divulged to those who followed Him. They were things that would shed light on matters that were otherwise confusing. What He made known was absolute truth – unvarying and liberating.

WHAT HE HATH HEARD. Jesus also made known what He had heard – not heard from men, but heard from His Father. Speaking of His faithful witness Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen"* (John

3:11). He said of His verbal communication, *"And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak"* (John 12:50). He not only knew what God had said, He knew what His Father was doing.

Jesus did not withhold from His disciples what His Father told Him. Therefore He said, *"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you"* (John 15:15). In that word Jesus accented what God is doing—i.e. *"What his Lord doeth."* There is, therefore, no legitimate reason for those claiming identity with Jesus to be ignorant of what God is doing – particularly what He is doing in salvation.

This is why human religious agendas are so wrong. They may have the appearance of being valuable and wise, but that is nothing more than a delusion. If Jesus did not speak of His agenda, but of what His Father is doing, how foolish it is for men to speak otherwise. With unwavering consistency, you will find that the messengers Jesus sent out declared in no uncertain terms, what God is doing. They made known what pleases God, and what displeases Him. They revealed what He has provided, and what is to be rejected. The reason for Christ's death was delineated, and what He is doing now was expounded. How God intends men to live was made clear, and why it was imperative. They clarified the day of judgment, the destiny of the faithful, and the unfaithful. If you were to remove from apostolic doctrine the things that God has done, is doing, and will do, there would not be much left. Yet, these are things which men have been unusually ignorant, both historically, and in this present time.

NO MAN RECEIVETH HIS TESTIMONY. Other versions read, *"no one received His testimony,"* ^{NKJV} *"no one accepts His testimony,"* ^{NIV} *"no man takes His witness as true,"* ^{BBE} *"His testimony is not accepted by anybody,"* ^{NJB} *"how few believe what He tells them!"* ^{NLT} *"no one accepts His proof,"* ^{IE} and *"yet no one accepts His testimony [no one receives His evidence as true]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This appears to contradict what John's disciples had reported to him: *"all men come to Him"* (John 3:26). However, coming to Jesus and believing His witness are two entirely different things. John's own disciples who were reporting to him were not at that time following Jesus, and carefully listening to His witness. When compared to who Jesus was and what He was saying, not many people were taking Him seriously. They wanted to hear what he had to say, but there is no evidence that they eagerly received what He said. Through the prophet Isaiah God said, *"when I called, was there none to answer"* (Isa 50:2). Isaiah cried out, *"Who hath believed our report?"* (Isa 53:1). John wrote, *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"* (John 1:11). Jesus said to the Jews, *"But now ye seek to kill Me, a Man that hath told you the truth"* (John 8:40). One of the great tragedies of our day is the proportionately small number of people who are willing to listen to Jesus, embracing His words, hiding them in their hearts, and living in strict accord with them. John said that circumstance existed in his day as well.

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"³³ He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

These words have some rather alarming implications. They are God's assessment of how people are to respond to His Son.

HE THAT HATH RECEIVED HIS TESTIMONY. Other versions read, *"received His witness,"* ^{NASB} *"has accepted it,"* ^{NIV} *"takes his witness,"* ^{BBE} *"accept what he says,"* ^{CJB} *"believe Him."* ^{LIVING}

What does it mean to receive Christ's testimony? It means to believe and act upon what He has said – which is what He has seen and heard. Whatever subject He has addressed, that is what is to be believed about that matter, and the hearer's life must now be shaped around what He has heard and believed. Here is a sampling of things about which Jesus spoke.

1. Being His disciple (Lk 14:26,27,33).
2. Sin (John 8:34).
3. Righteousness (Matt 3:15; 5:20; 6:33).
4. Loving one another (John 13:35).
5. Hell (Mk 9:45).
6. The devil (John 8:44).
7. The end of the world (Matt 13:39).
8. Day of judgment (Matt 10:15; 12:36).
9. Doing what He says (Matt 7:24-27) .
10. Rewards (Matt 5:12; 10:41; 16:27).
11. Readiness (Matt 24:44; 25:10).
12. Faithfulness (Lk 16:10-12).
13. Eternal life (John 17:3).
14. The world to come (Lk 18:30).
15. His own words (Matt 24:35).
16. The cares of this world (Matt 13:22).
17. Unfruitfulness (John 15:2).
18. Being chosen (John 15:19).
13. Eytternal life

The words that now follow only apply to those who have received what Jesus has said – who have not doubted it, shunned it, or failed to inculcate it into their living.

In referring to Christ's *"testimony,"* John is emphasizing that Jesus bears witness to something that is of another order – something about which we would know nothing if

He had not given His testimony. It is to be further understood that men cannot ignore this testimony, or live without giving it due regard. There really is no such thing as a salvation that allows for the ignoring or spurning of the word of Christ. It is not enough for a person to say he believes every word in the Bible, or that he believes what Jesus said is the truth, if he does not live in strict accordance with that word. Such a life is not honored by God. The individual who will not hear Jesus will not have faith, will not be honored by God, and will only be known in heaven as an enemy.

HATH SET TO HIS SEAL. Other versions read, *"hath certified,"*^{NKJV} *"set his seal to this,"*^{NASB} *"sets his seal to this,"*^{NRSV} *"has made clear his faith,"*^{BBE} *"confirms,"*^{CEB} *"has affirmed,"*^{CSB} *"is attesting,"*^{NJB} *"discover,"*^{LIVING} *"has solemnly declared,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"acknowledged,"*^{ISV} *"come to stake his life on this,"*^{MESSAGE} and *"set his seal of approval to this."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Think of *setting a seal* being like placing a notary seal on an official document. When that document is notarized, it becomes a living document, and is used for its intended purpose, whether it is a license, a will, or some sort of contract. The meaning is made clear by the next clause, which directly relates to how Christ's Word is used.

THAT GOD IS TRUE. Other versions read, *"that God is truthful,"*^{NIV} *"that God is trustworthy,"*^{NAB} *"God is a fountain of truth,"*^{LIVING} *"God is real,"*^{IE} and *"That man has definitely certified, acknowledged, declared once and for all, and is himself assured that it is Divine truth that God cannot lie."*^{AMPLIFIED}

This certification is not casual or theoretic. It is not taking an official, but impractical, position. The person who receives the testimony of Jesus does something with that testimony. Jesus likened such a person to a man who built his house upon a rock, the result being that the house withstood the threats of beating rain and stormy winds (Matt 7:24-25). That person was not only exposed to the words of Jesus, he believed them and built his life upon them. His life proved that he had received the words of Christ, confirming that he was persuaded that God sent Jesus, speaks through Him, and upholds all who cleave to Him with purpose of heart. He believes what God has said about Jesus in *"the record"* He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). God has not misrepresented Jesus, but set Him forth as absolutely essential to eternal life. Yet, those who do not receive Christ's testimony, conforming their lives to it, have, by their very actions, suggested that God has lied in what He has affirmed about His Son – and God will so regard them. By their rejection of what Jesus has said, they have aligned themselves against God Almighty, and have become His enemies. Such are *"condemned already"* (John 3:18), and shall, if they do not repent, *"be damned"* (Mk 16:16), because they have *"not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved"* (1 Thess 2:10).

It is most unfortunate that an ignorance of Christ Jesus is so prevalent in the professed church. You see from our text how John regarded those of his time who lived without a due regard for Christ: *"no man receiveth His testimony"* (John 3:32). Men may allow for a heartless religion, but God will not. Among men, it may be common to wear the name of Jesus while living in stark contradiction of what He has said. But such people will not be honored or received by God.