

# 'The Supremacy of Christ' Ch. 3:22-36

by Charles Alexander

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's decrees and man's condemnation, and the need for repentance and faith in the face of God's longsuffering and the inadequacy of the Old Covenant.*

**Topics:** "Christ Supremacy", "Eternal Destiny"

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## Description

Charles Alexander preaches a powerful sermon on the unique role of Christ as the divine Son sent from above, speaking the words of God with the Spirit without measure. He emphasizes that Christ's testimony is the ultimate truth, and those who receive it bear witness to the truth of God. John the Baptist's testimony highlights the incomparable love of the Father for the Son, who has been given all things into His hand. The eternal destiny of all beings hinges on belief in the Son, with everlasting life for believers and the wrath of God for unbelievers.

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## Transcript

Let no-one suppose that the decrees of God are the cause of man's condemnation and final doom. As well charge God with man's sin as charge Him with being the cause of man's condemnation.

"As I live, saith the Lord-God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the, wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel 33:11

Man's sin and man's condemnation are entirely of himself, and both are, in the sight of a holy God, deplorable.

John Howe, one of the greatest of the Puritans, and one of the purest of Calvinists, preached and wrote on Luke 19: 41-44, under the title "The Redeemer's tears wept over lost souls". We commend the reading of that portion of Howe's works to the Reformed movement of today in Britain and America. It might do more good than entire shelves of "reformed" theology now choking the market.

The agony of Jeremiah at being appointed bearer of the message of God's vengeance upon Israel, an agony which led him to curse the day of his birth (Jeremiah 20: 14-18), sprang from the same prophetic source. as the tears of Christ, as He wept over Jerusalem, only in the latter case we have the very fountain divine from Which there flowed that holy stream of repudiation of man's sin in the, very moment when Eternal Love was preparing to atone therefor.

Perhaps something of this bitterness of intermingled sorrow and justice entered into the mysterious agony of the Son of Man in the Garden:

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death". Matthew 26: 38

There is something wrong with the type of mind which can contemplate unmoved the appalling fate of the wicked, or give it a cold, clinical treatment in the pulpit as though theology was a mental exercise of the classroom.

That the sin of Adam was the sin of the whole human race, we have not the slightest doubt. "Imputed guilt" is a doctrine tenable according to Holy Scripture only in so far as it is based upon the revealed fact that not Adam alone, but the entire race was tested, and was on probation in him. His fall was ours, in a sense more mysteriously real than is usually contemplated. Paul makes it clear in Romans 5, especially in the words of verse 12 -

"By one man sin entered into, the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men for that (margin, in whom), all have sinned".

In his inspired reasoning Paul tells us that even in the period of time when mankind was without the revealed law of God, sin and death reigned, for man was adjudged guilty of the primary sin of rebellion against His God and Creator (compare Romans 5:13-14 and Romans 1:18-20). The "heathens" are without excuse even though their sin is not "after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (i.e. against the revealed Word of God).

It is necessary to emphasise these things because of the prevailing ignorance and misconceptions. The early Reformers had no difficulty in proclaiming the gospel indiscriminately to all hearers, exhorting all men everywhere to believe and repent. It was left to subsequent generations of orthodox theologians to elaborate systems and philosophies of redemption which increasingly took account of opposing errors which it was more concerned to refute than to establish positive truth. The plain sense of Holy Scripture was increasingly obscured through fear of being identified with the subtleties of the erroneous theologies.

The terrible sin of unbelief, nowadays covered over and almost forgotten in much which passes for "reformed" theology and "reformed" preaching is nowhere more radically dealt with than in the Saviour's own words.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved". (John 3:19-20).

We are far from trying to explain the hidden wisdom of God whereby He determines all causes and appoints all results. That there is deep mystery involved, who can deny? But who on the other hand would dare to simplify?

If by sovereign act the Lord "sweetly compels" and draws some to salvation, why not all? To require of justice divine a universal act of amnesty to all sin and to every sinner, would imply that God was under necessity to save all and this would relieve all men of the solemn obligation to repent of their sins. In the end it would destroy the righteousness of God and along with it the meaning and purpose of moral creation, and God would be the only sinner in His own universe.

As God's decrees are secret and known only to Himself, we are all of us under obligation to consider our ways, turn from wrath and, seek the Lord while He may be found.

Always and everywhere God clears Himself of all blame for the deplorable end of the wicked. "All day long have I spread forth my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Romans 10:21)

Again, to Israel through Isaiah, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:4)

Consider then the longsuffering of the Lord with Israel throughout their long history of constant rebellion against Him; consider also His age-long patience with the sinfulness of the heathen world. His exemplary judgments upon the old world at the Flood followed 120 years of patience and warning. The immense period of time between Abraham and Christ was marked with a patience and longsuffering referred to by Paul in his sermon to the Athenian philosophers -

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent". (Acts 17:30)

The whole of Paul's sermon on Mar's Hill should be closely studied as a model of reasoning and presentation of divine truth and encouragement to all men to believe. How else can the gospel be preached?

Consider too, the longsuffering of God towards us, His people, in our sinful departures from Him and our carelessness and lassitude in divine exercises.

Why does God not strike sooner and more frequently? Because, says Peter, "He is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance".

The Calvinist, of all preachers, delivered as he is from the slavery of a ministry in which all depends upon himself, his own arts and methods and personality, should have no difficulty about preaching a robust doctrine of repentance and faith, to all his hearers.

He knows, or ought to know, that "he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God".

Seeming contradictions are resolved in the depths of God's wisdom. They exist only in our own minds, in our dim conceptions of truth, and our inability to contemplate two sides of truth at one and the same time. We must hold to both and act upon both, and beware at all times of making the Holy and Righteous One a party to the sin of man or the cause of man's impenitence. There is no greater blasphemy than that.

Christ's words in this chapter are peculiarly terrible to the Pharisee. He (the Pharisee) believed that Messiah would come only for the destruction of the heathen and the exaltation in earthly honour and splendour of the Jewish race. There are not a few in the dispensational and premillennial camps who are victims of the same error and are prepared to relegate the Church of the Firstborn in order to make way for Jewish exaltation and the return of the Law of Moses.

Ebrard writes: "It was the presumption of the Pharisees to desire not to be saved but to be judged" so sure were they that the judgment of God would find them approved.

The solemn passage which we have just traversed casts a baleful light upon all such presumptuous self-righteousness:

"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.. He that believeth is not condemned. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God". John 3:17-18

How these words lay the axe to the root of the tree of all pharisaic and self-righteous pride! Let us not weaken the force of them by excusing unbelief on the grounds of the. total depravity of man. Christ never did this - nor should we.

Herein is eternal condemnation certified in three propositions:

1. The love of darkness;
2. The hatred of the light;
3. The reason for this condition in man - his deeds are evil.

The just judgment of God decrees that we get our preference, darkness or light, in eternity, and thus (as Hengstenberg justly concludes) "the eternal laws of God's being are fulfilled ... We do not disappoint God".

#### THE QUESTION OF BAPTIZING

The discourse of the Lord with Nicodemus is now ended, and so is His temporary residence in Jerusalem or its vicinity. He moves into the surrounding province of Judea with His disciples. John the Baptist has moved from the Jordan to the wilderness of Beersheba to the south of Judea, to escape the wrath of Herod and his wicked paramour (as John's predecessor and pattern, Elijah, earlier fled from Ahab and Jezebel to the same desert region). "Aenon near to Salim" we have in an earlier chapter shown to be En-Rimmon in the wilderness of Beersheba and not a town in Samaria, as many commentators erroneously teach. The rectification of this topographical error leads to important theological results as we have earlier shown, and do not now repeat (see former installments of this Exposition).

John's ministry is near its end. Israel has rejected him as three years later it would reject and crucify the Christ of whom John was the herald. Neither came as the Jews falsely anticipated. Neither of them proclaimed an earthly kingdom for Israel, much less a deliverance from the gentile yoke. The ministry of this Jesus of Nazareth and of His strange ambassador seemed more taken up with sin and its consequences than any ecclesio-political resuscitation of the Jewish nation.

Then there was this question of baptizing. What relevance had .this to Jewish hopes and prophetic theorising? What strange addition was this to the Law of Moses which they had always regarded as a complete end in itself, the nation needing no more for its complete identification as the people of God and the heir to all the promises, than its conformity to the strict letter of the ordinances?

This was the question of "purification" which arose between John's disciples and the Jews (John 3:25). What need for this new and extra baptism in water if the lustrations of the Mosaic code were already strictly observed?

Again, what means this further complication (more puzzling to John's disciples than to the Jews) that this Jesus of Nazareth should now be setting up a new baptism, seemingly on His own account, and so

drawing a multitude of disciples after Himself?

These questions were quickly resolved by John the Baptist, both for the Jews and for his own followers, but, in doing so he gave voice to his last and most profound utterance in theology.

"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized" (verse 22).

Later, in chapter 4, verse 2, John the apostle makes it clear that Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples.

The ministry of the Saviour was always kept carefully apart from that of the Baptist, hence His ministry in Judea while John was at Aenon. There must be no clash or appearance of personal difference, yet no open collaboration, for once the King has appeared in person, what need of an ambassador or a herald?

But why did not the Saviour Himself baptize?

Because the baptism itself was only a symbol of that true inner baptism of the Spirit which He only, as the Second Person of the Godhead, had the right to bestow.

If the Lord Himself had baptized with water, the action would have vested the rite with a significance which it was never intended should belong to it, and would have given it a sacramental value of extreme and dangerous potency. Jesus baptizing in water would have been Jesus against Himself and water vying with the Spirit for the dominion over the souls of men. It would have been a reintroduction of LAW and LETTER, of externalism and servitude, over soul and conscience. Because this has not been clearly perceived, sacramentalism and sacerdotalism have prevailed in the Christian era and helped to create the monstrous apparition of Antichrist.

Evangelicals (and amongst them a very large number of Calvinists, "Baptists" themselves not excluded) have frequently been ensnared by the same error, and the false interpretation of John 3:5 has added to the confusion.

To invest baptism with anything more than a symbolic significance is to underwrite the age long error of Rome. Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant - it is not the New Covenant itself nor yet the actual inauguration of it in the soul and experience of the believer.

To require a person of special position or authority in the church to perform the act in order to make it valid is an error as dangerous as its companion error, that the Lord's Supper cannot be truly or competently observed without the operating and presiding presence of an appointed man.

The believers at Damascus were still attending the synagogue when Paul received his baptism there, probably at the hands of Ananias (See Paul's own account in Acts 22: 12 - 16). There is not the slightest hint in that passage or in Acts 9:10-17, that Ananias was anything other than a private Christian with no special office among those believers who were meeting with their fellow countrymen in the synagogue in the heart of a purely gentile city. He was, says Paul, simply "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which resorted thither". This seemed to be "qualification" enough for any man to perform the office of baptist.

The water is nothing, but the submission of the believer to baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). We may not require more than that without imperiling the entire meaning of the ordinance.

Hence the Saviour did not personally baptize. Reserved for Him was that baptism which He only could bestow. "I indeed baptize with water", said. John. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire". (Luke 3:16)

#### INADEQUACY OF OLD COVENANT

The inadequacy of the Old Covenant, with its external ablutions and lustrations, all unable to confer anything more than a ritual "purifying" was brought into question by the dispute between John's disciples and the Jews. John's disciples were not qualified to give any satisfaction to the Jews upon that point, for they belonged to that same Old Covenant which was shortly to be done away. The Jewish disputants therefore carried the question to John himself, saying that "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth and all men come to him" (John 3:26).

John's reply was, as usual, to show the pre-eminence of Him to whom he bore witness and this time he added particulars to which only deity could correspond.

John confined himself only to his relationship to the Messiah and not to the "question of purifying" which occasioned the visit.

That question of purifying raised the whole issue of the permanence of the Mosaic Covenant and that question could not be finally resolved till the atoning death of Christ abolished the ancient code with its ordinances and disciplines and diverse washings and purifyings. Then there began to be revealed what was fully displayed at last in the ministry of the apostle Paul, namely, the full glory of the New Covenant.

The temporary structure of the Law belonged to the time of immaturity and minority. Only through Christ could the Holy Spirit be given as a Spirit of Adoption, conferring upon the soul of the believer the full light and experience and privilege of that "adoption of sons" by which we cry "Abba, Father".

This the Law could not do. It held in bondage and could not confer liberty of conscience. It imposed the discipline of outward washings and "purifyings" which could not make those "perfect" who came thereby. This was the problem agitated between the representatives and boasters of the Law on the one side and the poor disciples of John on the other. The answer did not lie with the latter. They knew not then that a Kingdom of Grace outside the Law was coming in which the least citizen would be greater than John the Baptist himself - not greater in faith or in spiritual attainment, but greater in privilege, standing and knowledge as being in a relationship with God through Christ, of which the prophets and righteous men of old time never dreamed.

Such a calling, and such a grace, now the common inheritance of the believer in Christ, could not be experienced without such a "sealing" of divine grace as should elevate the soul in a free and glorious participation of God's light and favour which only the Holy Spirit could impart.

Hence the word of John, the Baptist - "I indeed baptize you with water: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire".

Again, the words of the Saviour Himself - "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed", and "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, cut of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive".

The pentecostal outpouring with its cloven tongues of fire and its rushing, mighty wind, was the public inauguration of this new and everlasting Covenant in the soul of man. As it was necessary at the inauguration of the Old Covenant of the Law at Sinai, to announce the terms of that covenant to the accompaniment of an awesome display of divine omnipotence - the earthquake, wind and fire; as it was necessary when that covenant was enforced and ratified at Horeb (Sinai) with Elijah, to promulgate its terms afresh with the same terrifying physical tokens; so at Pentecost, the Church (and world) must know that God had taken away the first in order to establish the second, and it was necessary that this should be with the like tokens of fire and tempest.

### PSEUDO-PENTECOSTALISM

The Church must resolutely resist all attempts of pseudo-pentecostalism to disrupt her peace by insisting on an individual experience of "tongues of fire" and visible manifestations of miraculous signs. God only gave the Law once, and only once does He mark the incoming of the New Covenant with visible signs to demonstrate the fact of it and to confirm the authority of those twelve men to whom the new dispensation was committed.

The apostolic period must end the "signs". "Signs" were for unbelieving Israel, as their Old Covenant fell, never to rise again (1 Cor. 14:22). Let them know thereby that the thunders of Sinai have given place to the display of God's power in the soul of man, by reversing the verdict of sin and through the Gospel restoring man to the favour and companionship of God.

The inauguration of the New Covenant in the heart of the believer is testified, not by outward sign, but by the Holy Spirit "bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God".

To demand a personal "Pentecost" of every believer subsequent to salvation is a dangerous delusion and the history of this delusion is strewn with tragedy and disappointment, broken lives and broken churches, and the eclipse of all expository power and value in preaching. The "Pentecostal" pulpit is notoriously devoid of substance.

Likewise, the softer tones of the "Convention" gathering are delusive in so far as they propagate the error that "conversion is not enough" and "regeneration is not all". To insist that there is a new act of consecration which brings down the Holy Spirit in an altogether new endowment of power and grace, and that this inducement is what Christ promised in John 7:39 - this is false, and hostile to true worship, spiritual liberty, and the exposition of the Word of God. The history of this delusion likewise is strewn with disappointment, tragedy and often (in the case of the more extreme forms of "holiness" teaching) with broken churches and broken Christian testimonies.

We put in a plea for Christian sanity, and a sense of reality in facing the spiritual needs of the Lord's people in this hour of extreme gravity.

"ALL MEN COME TO HIM"

Our task in the exposition of the remainder of our chapter is now ready to proceed.

The question of "purifying" had brought the Jewish disputers to John (V.26) with their report, no doubt intended to be embarrassing, that the new preacher was making disciples faster than John "And all men come to him."

John (the apostle, and writer of this Gospel) has a peculiar purpose in recording the exact words of the disputers. These words are identical with those of Christ Himself, several times repeated in this Gospel, telling that the object and achievement of His work would be to draw all men unto Himself.

(see John 6: 37, 38, 65; Chap. 12: 32)

The Jews spoke better than they knew when they said, "All men come to Him", for they spoke under the government of a divine compulsion by which even so evil a man as Caiaphas later on declared that Christ should die for the people.

"Behold these SHALL COME from far: and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of SINIM ... Lift up thine eyes round about and behold: all these gather themselves together and COME TO THEE".

(Isaiah 49:13-18)

Yes, even from Sinim, the land of China, of sages of ancient civilisation and of the most numerous of the tribes of men, should come (and have come in age after age), those whom Christ draws to Himself.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me". John 12: 32

John's peerless reply to the Jews is far more than a personal essay in humble detachment. As always it is a theological exercise of supreme marvel and importance.

"A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said; I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him".

Verses 27-28.

"A man" is a reference to himself as "a man from the earth", having nothing which proceeds from himself but receiving all from above. Let all men (and especially preachers) be content with what God has apportioned to them in office and in achievement. In the end they are, like John, only "a man".

Distinctly John warns these men in his reply that as he was sent to herald the coming of Messiah, He of whom they now spake, to whom "all men" were coming, must be so identified - but giving heed to this was no part of their programme! How blind was Israel to the truth!

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease". Verses 29-30.

John the Baptist dwelled deep in the Old Testament. Here (in his reply) is Psalm 45 (and the Song of Solomon). The bride is Zion, the New Jerusalem, the prophetic Israel, the Church. The bridegroom is Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son. The friend of the bridegroom is John, the official who prepares the scene for the nuptials and then, having fulfilled his task, graciously bows himself out and leaves the glory of it all to Him to whom it belongs.

Curious indeed that out of John's personal reference to himself and his unique office, perverse inventiveness has fabricated an intermediate class of believers who will everlastingly be known as "friends of the bridegroom" - a sort of second-class citizenry in heaven condemned never to attain to the full blessedness of those born in happier times. To such depths has theology fallen in our times, failing even to observe that there is only one "friend of the bridegroom", namely John. The Bible does not speak of another.

John knew better than this as he spoke of his joy in hearing the bridegroom's voice. This joy he shares with us, and with all the election of grace from Old Testament and New, as he borrows language for himself and for all, from the Song of Solomon 2, Verse 8 - 14.

"The voice of my beloved! behold, HE COMETH, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills ... My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle (dove) is heard in our land...."

It is the time of the New Covenant! The winter of Old Testament servitude is over. The voice of the bridegroom speaks at last. It is springtime in the history of the redeemed Church. The flowers of grace appear. The love song of the birds fills the air. It is time to rise up and begone from the shadows and restraints and confinements of the Law.

"Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away".

FROM ABOVE AND ABOVE ALL

"He that cometh from above is above all" (v. 31). The words used by John are of peculiar force -

"O ANOTHEN ERXOMENOS". ANOTHEN is the same word used by the Lord to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born from above..." (verse 3).

"Anothen" denotes the heavenly and divine origin of the One who comes, and in this case must be deliberately regarded, as it was intended by John to be regarded, as spoken of one "who has possession of the divine nature" (Hengstenberg). Already before the New Testament dawns, this great and enlightened Old Testament man, John the Baptist, discerned by divine inspiration the truth which the Church still ponders and prostrates herself before - that her Saviour and Lord is none other than the Eternal God :cote down from the throne of omnipotence - God without qualification, modification or reserve - He who possesses the Divine nature.

By contrast, what is man - even the best and most enlightened and faithful and gifted of men? John says, "He (that) is of the earth (is) earthly and speaketh of the earth". He is describing himself and all ministers of the Word. One who is of the earth and was never in heaven, who has his origin in a lowly and earthly state, cannot speak of heaven or of heavenly things, except as this is imparted to him by One who has come from above and is above all. Hear, all ye preachers, especially you who enjoy name and fame among men, and delight in earthly success and human adulation!

Repeated for emphasis are the words at the end of the verse, "He that cometh from heaven is above all". Let this be remembered. Almighty God reveals Himself in Christ alone, who "comes from heaven" and is above all, beyond the reach of all created power and dignity, far, far above the pride and boasting and pomp of a world where sin and death reign. Hence, according to the text, Christ is the Almighty God

Himself who comes from heaven and is above all.

"Of the earth" denotes a natural child of Adam - "of the earth, earthy" (1 Cor. 15:47). The "second man" is not of the earth at all. He is 'the Lord from heaven' (same reference).

Psalms 10:18 "That the man of the earth may no more oppress". The Hebrew for man here is ANOSH which, as Hengstenberg observes, "has the subordinate ideas of feebleness and weakness, still more plainly noted by the addition 'of the earth'".

"And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth and no man receiveth his testimony" - v.32.

That is, Christ who has come down from above, speaks directly of God and of heavenly things, for heaven was ever His abode, in the bosom of the Father, and He speaks therefore of what He has Seen and heard of God's eternal wisdom and purpose - nay, He is Himself that wisdom, knowledge and power, truth and holiness, which are of the nature of the Godhead.

This is one of the most powerful of all passages in the Divine Word, in demonstration of the absolute deity of Christ, the Eternal Son. He is a party to all the secret thoughts and acts of Almighty God, as an equal in the Holy Trinity, enjoying and possessing all that God is. One word of Christ, says Rudolf Stier, is worth all the thought and speculation of men. The mystery of God is fully unfolded in Him and by Him.

"Unless their words come from Him, all human witnesses are blind and dumb" (Hengstenberg). The prophets are subordinate to Him who is the fount whence their prophetic spirit flowed.

The ensuing words, "No man receiveth his testimony" argue much for the fallen state of man. No man is capable of receiving His testimony of things eternal and divine, and this, not only because "we are the earth, earthy" but because there is no longer in man, by reason of his fallen nature, a faculty to receive the divine wisdom.

"All men come to him", said the Jews who thought to inform John the Baptist of the fact that his (John's) ministry was suffering by reason of this new preacher who had arisen. But John knew better, and told them so in these warning words, "No man receiveth his testimony".

That unsubstantial 'coming to Him' upon which the Jews seized was not what they supposed. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Only divine grace can overcome man's incapacity to "come" and to receive the testimony of Christ.

There are those who, in the sovereign mercy of God, do in fact come and receive, and these are the representation of all humanity, the elect part, of the whole. The rest is dross and chaff. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" asks the Lord in the prophets.

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

Faith receives the testimony of Christ and in doing so bows before the God of truth and bears witness to Christ who is the truth.

That "God is true is the whole revelation of God in Christ. "Who makes Christ a liar makes. God also, whose Word Christ is". (Hengstenberg)

John the apostle who wrote down these words, dwelt for a whole lifetime upon them and at the end of his days inscribed these solemn words (1 John 5:10):

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

## THE SPIRIT WITHOUT MEASURE

The remaining three verses of this chapter are the summary of John the Baptist's testimony to Christ and they are beyond all measure transcendent in the presentation of Christ in His peerless merit and worth, dwelling eternally in the mystery of the divine Being.

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him". (v. 34)

Prophets and righteous men of old were "sent" with the message of God, and the holy apostles of the Lamb were likewise "sent" in a brimming measure of the Holy Ghost, but this is different. Here is One who is sent from heaven, who was, is, and ever shall be in that abode of deity, sent "from above" as the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, the Messenger (Angel) of the Covenant, as in Malachi 3:1. This "sending" of Christ is unique, and is not in that partial and spasmodic operation of the Holy Spirit experienced by the ancient prophets, but in fulness and completeness - the Spirit without measure. The earlier revelations, of God were partial and incomplete. Men of the earth were the chosen channels. He who now comes is the Word itself, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, made unto us in His very self - "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption" (see 1 Cor. 1:30).

Paul elsewhere, describes this unique office of Christ in that passage which has justly been described as perhaps the greatest "period" in the Greek language - Hebrews 1:1-3:

"God who at sundry times and in diverse manners (in many separate parts and ways and occasions) spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets (that is, in the scriptures of the Old Testament), hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, (that is, the full, final-and complete revelation of God in Christ, made, at one time, in one Person, once and for all) whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds...."

In His humanity, in fulfillment of His office as Mediator between God and man, who was Himself both God and Man in two separate and distinct natures united in one glorious Person - in this humanity Christ was endowed with the Holy Spirit "without measure", in a fulness and completeness of revelation and purpose which left nothing else to be revealed and nothing else to be done for the unfolding of the divine nature and purpose.

When He "speaks the words of God" He does so directly, and not as the prophets, mediately. They were channels of the divine communication: He IS the divine communication. They received the Word in part, at sundry times and in diverse manners: He IS the Word imparted, whole and entire, the veritable unveiling of deity.

"The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand" - v. 35.

This is the crowning fact, and key to the mystery of all being. Would we know why God does a certain thing? It is because He loves the Son. This is the reason behind the election of grace; behind creation

itself. For this reason the world was made and history directed ceaselessly in its course to its great consummating goal. "The Father loveth the Son and hath given, (from all eternity) all things into his hand".

John the Baptist, with a foot in both covenants, was in a clear position to make known the love of the Father for the Son. Had he not heard the very voice of God at the baptism in the Jordan declare from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"?

The giving of all things into the hand of the Son is noted frequently in the New Testament. John the apostle observes at the Supper on the dark betrayal night - "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God...." (John 13:3).

Paul writes, "He hath put all things under his feet" (1. Cor. 15:27), citing Psalm 8:6.

(compare Hebrews 2:8-9)

The Lord Himself declares "All things are delivered unto me of my Father..." (Matt. 11:27), and again, "I have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1. 18). And yet again, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

It is part of the eternal act of deity that to the Son should be imparted the Father's name, power and wisdom. The eternal destiny of all intelligent creatures, men, angels and devils, depends upon Him of whom John finally declares,

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him". (v. 36)

All destiny is thus determined in the Son. All the decisions of history and conclusions reached in this world, are His. Jewish unbelief is clearly in view in this final declaration of chapter 3. After that the unbelief of the gentile world is denounced. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the gentile" (Romans 2. 9).

There is an unbelief which places the soul finally beyond the boundary of the divine mercy - a sin which has no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come.

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