

The Father Has Given All Things into Jesus's Hands

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jesus as the Son of God, full of grace and truth, who speaks and rules as God. It highlights the division that occurs based on whether individuals receive or reject the testimony of Jesus, ultimately leading to eternal life or remaining under the wrath of God. The message urges listeners to see the glory of Christ, believe in Him, and make God true by accepting His Word.

Scripture: John 3:16, John 3:31, John 3:34, John 3:35, 1 John 5:10, John 1:12, John 8:47, John 10:27

Topics: "Recognition of Christ", "Consequences of Belief and Rejection"

Description

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Transcript

God, we need to hear you. Your words are life, and we have our ears filled with many that are deadly. So crowd out now by your word all that would destroy us, and fill our minds and our hearts with the truth.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. Our heart's desire is that we would see the glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth, and receive grace upon grace as we see Christ magnified.

So come and help us all across these campuses, I pray, in Jesus' name, amen. Well, today we finish chapter three. That means that we've taken about 24 sermons to do three chapters, and by my computation, it should take us about five years to finish this book, which is a pace quicker than the Romans' pace, and should not discourage you in the least, because it's an inexhaustible book.

The reason I draw your attention to that, it does have a reason, is to emphasize that for us here, we value the Bible as the very Word of God, inspired, inerrant, and preaching through a book, beginning to end, not skipping any of the paragraphs or any of the verses, says something about our allegiance to its usefulness. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable. You don't skip pieces of it.

And so we work our way through and try to say by not skipping any hard text that it would be the very Word of God, and we should listen to it. So John said at the end of his gospel, these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life, have eternal life in His name. So that's why this whole book, and particularly John's gospel was written, and that's my goal in every sermon I preach, that we might see Christ magnified, lifted up, glorious, the only glory from the Father, and that seeing that glory, grace upon grace would fall on us, and all the ways that Christ blesses His people would bless you.

Jesus said, the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. There's no place to go.

And so my lingering in the gospel of John is an easy thing for me to do, because I love life. And if I ask what sort of life is imparted through the Word of Jesus in the gospel of John, the answer is joyful life. Because Jesus said in chapter 15, verse 11, these things I say to you that my joy might be in you, and your joy might be full.

That's really big. The joy of the eternal Son of God in the fellowship of the Trinity goes into you by faith, and then your joy is full. So if you want life, if you want joy, then listen to the Word of God.

Believe the Word of God. So, finishing up chapter 3, we are in verses 31 to 36. Notice the quotation marks of John the Baptist's speech from last time are closed in the ESV at verse 30.

They're not in every version, because in the original languages where this book was written, they didn't use quotation marks. Everybody's guessing, and me too. In fact, I'm not going to guess, because I don't know.

Should the quotation marks of John the Baptist be closed at the end of verse 30, or does he keep speaking to the end of verse 36? Or does John the gospel writer start speaking at verse 31, and now he's speaking to the end of verse 36? And the commentators are totally divided on this, and everybody's guessing, because you have to just judge from context whether you think John has stopped talking, and John the Baptist stops, and John the gospel writer starts. As I've reflected on that, what difference would this make? I tried to read it one way, then read it another way, and it does not appear to me to be a substantial issue here. So I'm not going to linger over this very long.

If John the Baptist continues talking about Jesus, then not a problem. If he stopped and John the gospel writer has started talking, he's talking with a view to what he just reported that John the Baptist said, and he's continuing on to make his comments about it. Either way, what we have is John the gospel writer's choice of what to put in his inspired book, and therefore, God's Word.

So what do we see in verses 31 to 36 of John 3? In general, what we see is John lifting up Jesus, either John, lifting up Jesus the way verse 14 of chapter 1 said he would be lifted up again and again and again. We have beheld his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth, and then verse 16, and we have all received from his fullness grace upon grace. So what's happening in these verses is another illustration of, by the Word of God, the Son of God being lifted up so that we would see his glory, and there's lots of glory in these verses, and seeing him as the Son of God, glorious, experience streaming into our hearts from that glory by grace, life eternal.

For the first time, if you get converted here now, an ongoing experience of life through the Word of God, if you've been a believer for some time. So that's in general what's happening here. It happens in every text in the Gospel.

That's why I'm reading every text. Show me your glory, because when I see it, I am transformed from one degree of glory to the next into it as grace flows toward me. However, let's get more specific.

What specifically is he doing in these verses? Let me give you a summary statement, and then we'll tackle it a piece at a time. Jesus is being held up as coming from God, being full of God, and speaking and ruling as God, so that the pathway into eternity divides into those who believe and have eternal life and those who disobey and remain under the wrath of God. That's what we see specifically in these verses.

So we need to unpack each of those steps. Jesus is being lifted up as from God, full of God, speaking and ruling as God, such that for every one of you tonight, the way will divide, and you will go one way or another way. And my prayer is that you will go into life and not remain under the wrath of God.

This is very serious, and I want you to feel it. This is not a light thing we're doing here. Verse 36 is one of the most serious, frightening, sobering verses in the Bible, because it holds out these two alternatives, wrath or life.

Wrath or life. And so the question right now is, will you hear? Will you hear Him? Because it says in John 10, 27, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. So whether you hear tonight shows whether you are His.

John 8, 47, whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear is that you are not of God. This is serious.

What I'm doing right now in echoing these words for you is really serious. If you blow this off, walk away from it, and never return to it, you stay under the wrath of God forever. If you hear God speaking to you, see Christ revealed as your Messiah, Lord, Savior, Treasure, Redeemer, Friend, and receive, you have eternal life.

That's what's at stake in this message. So I urge you, take heed how you hear. Number one, Jesus is lifted up as from God, from heaven, from the Father.

Verse 31, He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

Then drop down to verse 34. For he whom God has sent, sent, God sent, so he's from God. He who God has sent utters the words of God.

So three different ways of saying that Jesus is from God. Verse 31, from above. Verse 31 at the end, from heaven.

Verse 34 at the beginning, God has sent. Now, the relevance of that is the contrast that he makes with everybody else. Verse 31 in the middle, He who is of the earth belongs to the earth.

Now, literally, it sounds so funny, nobody translates literally, but literally it's just, he who is of the earth is of the earth. That's what it says. He who is of the earth is of the earth and speaks of the earth, from the earth, in an earthly way.

Now, that would include John the Baptist here. In context, the flow, he must increase, I must decrease. And either John or John is picking up on that and saying, he is from above.

I and the rest of us are from the earth. And there's a huge difference. A huge difference.

What do you hear if I translate it, he who is from the earth is from the earth. You hear anything from chapter 3? What about verse 6? Nicodemus didn't get it. When Jesus was trying to help him toward the new birth, he didn't get it.

And Jesus said, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. That sounds like, you're of the earth, you're of the earth. That same kind of talk.

And I think that's exactly what it means. Everybody except Jesus is just of the earth. We're just natural.

You're born of the flesh, you're flesh. You're merely human, you're merely human. Your origin on the earth, just earthly.

And there's another person in a class by himself, he's from heaven. And he came down. We originated here, and that's what our nature is.

In fact, I think in view of what that which is of the flesh is of the flesh means, namely, not born again, you can say a lot more about what it means to be of the earth. It means to be Adam-like. There is a humanity that's all flowing from Adam.

And we're all tainted with Adam. Sin, and we've all followed him, and we've lost our inheritance, and we're all by nature children of wrath. Listen to these amazing words from the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, 47, in relation to what Jesus says.

This is Paul's way of saying verse 31 and 34 of John 3. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven. Second? Weren't there a few million in between? No, not really.

Not when you're thinking two massive heads of humanity. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so are all those who are of the dust. And as is the man of heaven, so are all those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall bear the image of the man of heaven.

There are two categories of people, Paul is saying. Adam and Jesus. Earthly and from heaven.

And all of us bear the mark of one only or both. All of us are the children of Adam. Fallen in Adam.

Rebellious like Adam. Selfish like Adam. Speaking like Adam.

Feeling like Adam. Unbelieving and natural and disinterested in spiritual things like Adam. And then, God comes into the world pursuing these lost people, us.

Let me read another passage that moves towards this glorious intervention. This is the way Paul talks about it in Romans 5, 17 and 19. If because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign through life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Verse 19, for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. Everybody. So, by one man's obedience, many will be made righteous.

So the first Adam came, fell, and all of us in him go down with him and we're born rebellious. You don't have to learn rebellion. You don't have to learn to sin.

You are sinful. I was born sinning. You're born sinning.

And we're under the wrath of God because of it. And then a second Adam. He's from heaven.

He's not from the earth. That's the way Jesus is talking. He's from heaven, from above, sent by God.

And he's come to do something about that. To break into that. To become another kind of Adam.

If you would have him as your head, just like you share in Adam's sin, you can share in his righteousness. Just like you are united to Adam and all folded in to the fallen humanity, you can be united to Christ and be folded in to life. This is why he came.

Why he divides the ways. Let's go back to verse 31. John 3. He who comes from above is above all.

He who is of the earth, that's everybody else. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. That's Jesus and the rest of us.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. We need to be born again. And Christ came to make that possible by dying in our place so that when we're born again, it's just, it's righteous, it's good, and God can move into our hearts and save sinners, which is the only kind of people there is to save.

So, point number one. The glory of Jesus is shining here as the one and only man from heaven, the God-man from heaven, who came in to be a second Adam so that all of us who are just from the earth, from flesh, not born again, by nature children of wrath, might be made part of a new humanity with Christ as our Head, not just Adam as our Head. Number two.

Not only is He from God, He is, in this text, full of God. There is something very profound, very mysterious, very wonderful, at the end of verse 34 and the beginning of verse 35. Let me read it with you.

Read all of verse 34 and 35. You know, don't you? I'll remind you. Do your best to ignore verse divisions.

Okay? Do your best to ignore chapter divisions and verse divisions. They very often don't help us. They get in the way.

They were added like 1,500 years late and they're only there to help us get around so I can tell you where I'm reading in the Bible. So ignore them as much as possible. So here we are.

He whom God has sent, this is verse 34, utters the words of God, for He gives the Spirit, this is the Father, the One who sent Him, gives Him the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. So strip the verse division away between 34 and 35 and let's read it very closely.

God gives the Spirit to the One whom He sent without measure. The Father loves the Son. Two present tenses.

The Father is always giving the Holy Spirit without measure to the Son and always loving the Son. It didn't begin anywhere. Now I'm going to unpack for you here in the next few minutes the tip of an iceberg that is simply massive.

It's bottomless. I mean this is an iceberg in an ocean that has no bottom and the bottom of the iceberg doesn't exist. This is the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And I'm going to go beyond what you can see on the surface here and I'll just admit I could be mistaken about seeing here what I see here. I don't think I'm mistaken about seeing what I see in reality because many other passages of Scripture could be brought in. But the more I reflected on what is going on here, gives the Spirit to the One whom He has sent without measure.

The Father loves the Son. What is this? I think what's going on is this. There's an infinite difference between the way the Son of God receives the Spirit of God and the way you and I receive the Spirit of God.

An infinite qualitative difference. He receives it without measure. You and I have various measures of the Spirit given to us.

1 Corinthians 12 and so on. The way the Son receives the Spirit of God is measure-less. It cannot be measured.

Why not? Because it's infinite. God communicates, imparts, bestows His Spirit on His Son infinitely. As much as there is of the Spirit of God, the Son has.

As many ways as He can have Him, He has Him in all those ways. As fully as He can be known and enjoyed by the Son, He is fully known and enjoyed by the Son. The Spirit is.

Now here's the question. In John chapter 4 verse 24, Jesus says, God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth. So God, from eternity, has been Spirit.

Now we're told that God, who is Spirit, gives His Spirit to His Son infinitely. And you just kind of shake your head and say, that's hard to conceive. What is the Spirit of a Spirit? You like to think the Father must be something besides Spirit if He has a Spirit.

No, no, they're both Spirit. They're not material. So the Father who is a Spirit, not a material being, has a Spirit.

And He's giving Him infinitely and without any measure, measurelessly, He's giving Him, pouring Him out forever, always on His Son. Never had a beginning. There was no time when, oh, this wasn't happening.

Let's see, that would be a good idea to bestow my Spirit on my Son. The Trinity has never changed. It's just always what God is.

I think the answer is suggested, what is the Spirit of the Spirit, by the connection between 34 and 35. Namely, He gives the Spirit to His Son without measure. The Father loves the Son.

God who gives Him the Spirit without measure, immeasurably, is loving His Son in that. Could it be that the Spirit of God is the fully divine third person of the Trinity who personifies the love of God? That's what I'm holding out to you. The Spirit of God who is a Spirit is love, a person.

So much of the Father is bestowed in love upon the Son that that bestowment is carrying the wholeness of the deity and is God. As the Son is the eternal self-knowing of the Father, the Spirit, I'm suggesting, is the eternal self-loving of the Father, He knows Himself perfectly in the image of His Son. The exact representation of His own being, standing forth.

He knows Himself in the Son. My Son becomes the personification and the image of the Father. And there's so much knowledge of Himself in the Son, the Son stands forth with all the deity that is in the Father and never had a beginning.

This is just the way reality is. And, from all eternity, flowing from the Father to the Son, and we could add, from the Son back to the Father, there has always been not any indifference. The Father never contemplated Himself in the panoramic beauties of His Son and said, I'm not sure what to think about that.

Or feel about that. Always, from eternity, as long as there has been the Father contemplating Himself in the perfect deity of the Son, there has been infinite energy of love going back and forth between them such that it carries all that they are and becomes a third person. Becomes is a misleading word because it's always been this way.

This didn't happen. This is ultimate reality. This is just what we are given.

Nobody made Him. He didn't make Himself. He just is.

So, my summary. The second thing that John is doing besides saying that Jesus came from the Father, the Son came from heaven, from God, is to say that Jesus the Son is full of God. He is infinitely unlike us.

Not only that He's from God and we're from earth, but He's infinitely unlike us in that the Father is measurelessly, without any restraint, wholly, completely, all that He is in His Spirit poured out in love upon His Son so much so that that is the giving of the Spirit without measure. All that He is in this love for His Son is the person of the Holy Spirit. Real person.

I commend you to reflect on that as you read other parts of the Scripture. I can name a few for you. Try it out, for example, tonight in Romans 5. Say the first verses 4 through 8. Number three.

Not only is this text lifting up Jesus as from God and full of God so much so that the love and the Spirit that He's full of is God, but now He, the Son, the Sent One, is speaking and ruling as God. Verse 32. He bears witness to what He has seen and heard.

Bears witness. Bears witness. Word.

Word. Jesus is testifying to something. Very key word.

Because unlike me, I never was in heaven. I can't testify directly to what I've seen and heard in heaven. Jesus can.

That's where He's been forever in the presence of God. So He is coming into the world to be a firsthand witness to heaven. To God.

To the heart of God. The mind of God. The way God thinks about things.

This is awesome. Verse 34. For He whom God has sent utters the words of God.

When you hear Jesus, you hear God. Because He came from God and is filled up. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and opened its mouth and we're listening to God.

That's the speaking part. Now the ruling part. He speaks as God.

Now He rules as God. Verse 31. Verse 31.

He who comes from above is above all. What does that mean? Like elevation? Like stands on a mountain? I don't think so. He is above all.

Power. Authority. In every other way except sin He's above all.

Verse 35. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. That's why we sang that song.

I'm sure that's why Chuck chose that song. Ruling all things. All things exist for you, O Christ.

For by you and for you they were made. I love that song because it's so biblical. He's got the whole world in His hand.

He's got the itty bitty baby in His hand. He's got you and me, brother, in His hand. And to have something in your hand because God put it there like the galaxies, means you rule it.

You're in charge of it. Colossians 1. Verse 17. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1. Verse 3. He upholds the universe by the word of His power. So step back now. What's John doing? John the writer.

John the Baptist. Whoever's talking here. And we know it's at least John the writer because he's including it if it's John the Baptist.

What are they trying to do here? They are lifting up Jesus. Just like this gospel said would be done in chapter 1. Verse 14. They're lifting up Jesus from God, full of God, ruling and speaking as God so that we would behold His glory.

I pray that's happening right now. That by the eyes of your heart, through God's word, you are seeing magnificence. You are seeing splendor.

You are seeing glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full, and this is such good news, full of, what's the next word? Grace. Grace for sinners.

This majestic One is coming full of grace. He doesn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. That's the message of chapter 3. Especially verses 16 and 17 and here again.

So now, we're on our way. Taking our last lap. The ways divide.

When this Christ is lifted up as from God, full of God, ruling and speaking as God, who comes into the world to save sinners, the ways divide in this room right now. They divide between those who receive and those who don't receive. Let's go to verse 32.

Very strange. Very strange. Verse 32.

He bears witness to what He has seen and heard. He's speaking for God. He's seen and heard things from God in heaven.

He bears witness to what He's seen and heard, yet no one receives His testimony. Whoever receives His testimony sets His seal to this, that God is true. Does that frustrate you? If it doesn't, you're... Come here.

Tell me. Figure that one out for me, please. Nobody receives what He says, but the one who receives what He says lives.

Huh? This is the way John talks all the time. This is typical John. He's not stupid.

This is the very Word of God. My bafflement calls me in to meditate, not to throw stones. I am led back in the chapter to verse 11.

Jesus says to Nicodemus, who just couldn't get the doctrine of the new birth and the need for his own heart to be changed by the Holy Spirit. He said, we speak of what we know and bear witness what we have seen and you do not receive our testimony. Why? Because you must be born again.

And you're not, Nicodemus. And I take that back to verses 32 and 33 and I paraphrase it like this. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony unless they're born again.

No person from the earth can do this. No person who's merely flesh can do this. No person without divine intervention is going to do this.

Nobody receives this unless. And then you go back to the front of the chapter and you pull in the big doctrines that have already been laid out concerning. You've got it.

The wind blows where it wills. You don't know where it comes from or where it's going. And such are all who are born of the Spirit.

Then they receive. Now unto him who receives him. This is chapter 1, verse 12.

He came to his own. His own did not receive him. But to as many as received him, he gave power to become the children of God to those who have been born not of blood, nor the will of man, nor the will of flesh, but of God.

So there's a division. The division is there are people who don't receive, namely everybody. And there are people who hear the Word of God and they hear it as the Word of God.

They look at this sermon and they look at this text and they say, yes, yes. What does the yes mean? What does the yes mean here? It means, look at, what is this? At the end of verse 33, yes. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

What does yes to Jesus mean? God is true. What does no to Jesus mean? If you're sitting there saying, nope, nope, not real, not true, that all sounds like a bunch of religious mumbo-jumbo to me. No.

What does that mean about God? Well, I'll read it to you from the epistle. This is 1 John 5:10. Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony in himself.

Whoever does not believe God makes him a liar. That's the opposite of make him true. So here the ways are dividing.

Right now, we're done, we just need another minute. The ways are dividing. And one way is I see him lifted up.

I see the glory of God in what has been said. I see that he's from heaven. I see that he's full of God in the mysterious ways that the Trinity is.

I see that he is speaking and ruling as God. And I see that he's coming into the world to save sinners like me. And I say, yes! And you make God true.

God is true because he speaks for God. That's really big, not to make God a liar. But if you say no, then you're saying God's a liar and I'm out of here.

And verse 36 describes the two destinies of those two choices. Those who believe have eternal life and those who disobey the command to believe remain in Adam, under the wrath. Only one head, not two.

Inheriting sin, rebelling with him, receiving condemnation, instead of being united to Christ by faith so that his death becomes your death and his righteousness becomes your righteousness and you are forgiven, accepted, loved, and forever joyfully welcomed into the family of God. May God grant you to see. Let's pray.

Simply ask, Father, that you would give us eyes in our hearts. We have eyes in our heads and they're helpful, but they don't save us. But eyes in our hearts to discern spiritual glory in this Christ.

Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace to us right now. This is a day of grace. This is a moment of grace, whether on a video or in person.

This is a moment of grace. People have come to the South Campus, downtown, north, drawn by something providential. And this is a moment of salvation or not.

This is an aroma of life to life or death to death. This is a parting of the ways into life or in wrath. And so God, we love to see lost, blind, dead, natural, earthly people born again.

Would you perform this and draw us all to the Savior?

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/NsyuWhpNcEI.mp4>

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