

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Witness of Christ John 3:31-36

We are always hearing things from people that perhaps might impact the present or future quality of our lives. Certainly some of those things can be quickly dismissed and other things might not be so quickly dismissed.

In yesterday's AV Press there was a report entitled "AV's transit future bleak." Let me read for you a few excerpts from this article. *"If population and jobs predictions hold true, by 2030 the Antelope Valley could be exporting the equivalent of a large city every morning to employment centers to the south. A report by the Southern California Association of Governments forecasts the north Los Angeles County region to grow to more than 1.2 million people in 2030. At the same time, the report estimates the region will offer 263,000 jobs – a potential imbalance that would mean 4.6 north county residents would be competing for every local job position."* This is the witness of SCAG, the Southern California Association of governments, and of course if they are ignored this could result in a great deal of difficulty for the people of the Antelope Valley, particularly in terms of their commute. And, of course, if their report is heeded it may bring about some very positive benefits for all of us living in the Antelope Valley.

But the difficulties or the benefits that we might experience depending on how we respond to the SCAG report cannot be compared to the difficulties or benefits that we will experience depending upon how we respond to the witness of Christ.

This leads us to the passage that we will be considering this weekend. But before we introduce the passage we will need to do a little review. In **John 3:22-30** the Apostle showed us the continuing unwavering support of John the Baptist for Jesus and his public ministry even though Christ's ministry had begun to surpass His own. What were the final words of the Baptist to his disciples in **John 3:30**? **"He must increase but I must decrease."**

Did John the Baptist support Jesus? Yes! Did he continue to support Jesus even after Jesus had begun His public ministry? Yes! Did he continue to support Jesus even after he saw his ministry being eclipsed? Yes! Did he continue to support Jesus even though he knew that his ministry would continue to be eclipsed by Jesus? Yes! The life of John the Baptist was all about Jesus. This comes across very clearly in **John 3:22-30**.

We are now ready to consider **John 3:31-36**. The Apostle in John 3:31-36 is giving us his reflections on the conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples in John 3:22-30.

Let us read **John 3:31-36**, **"He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. (32) What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness. (33) He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true. (34) For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. (35) The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. (36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

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How do these reflections of the apostle John on the conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples fit into the flow of the passage?

The reflections of the apostle explain to us why it is necessary for people such as John the Baptist to respond *positively* to Christ.

I would hope that as we consider these reflections of the Apostle and understand the significance of what he is saying that we will once again understand why the witness of Christ beyond the witness of any other witness should be respected and responded to in a positive way. What is the very first reflection?

The apostle first of all reflected on the heavenly *origin* of Christ. Let us read just the first part of **John 3:31**. What does it say? "**He who comes from above.**" Who is John referring to as having come from above? He is of course referring to Christ. We know this because he has already established this point earlier in the gospel.

Remember how the gospel began, "**In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.**" And then later in that same chapter John went on to say in **John 1:14**, "**And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.**" When John says to us in **John 3:36**, "**He who comes from above;**" he is obviously referring to Christ.

But why would he once again introduce the heavenly origin of Christ here as he reflects on what had just been said in **John 3:22-30**? We see the reason in the next phrase. Let us continue to read the verse, "**He who comes from above (who was in the beginning with God and was God) is above all.**"

The reason why Jesus the incarnate Word must increase while the Baptist must decrease is because Jesus alone is from above and therefore above *all*. Hopefully this is the very same reason why we will continue to give Christ first place in our lives. May God give us the grace when push comes to shove to say the same thing as John the Baptist, "**He must increase but I must decrease.**"

The apostle then goes on to further enhance the exalted position of Christ by pointing out to us our earthly origin. Let us continue to read **John 3:31**, "**He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth.**" The word for "earth" conveys the idea of being finite and *limited*.

Hopefully each one of us would immediately acknowledge what I have just shared with you is true. Why would we want to exalt ourselves if we truly recognize that we are finite and limited? The answer of course is we wouldn't. Unfortunately, we so often times do not spend nearly enough time reflecting on the very things that we see the Apostle John reflecting on here in **John 3:31**.

What might be one of our limitations? Let me read this verse for you, "**He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth.**" What does John mean when he says that people of the earth and from the earth speak of the earth? When John tells us that those who are of the earth speak of the earth he is saying that their personal experience has been limited to the *earthly* sphere.

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The witness of SCAG that is predicting such a bleak future on the Antelope Valley Freeway is limited in exactly this way. It is not as if they have received a revelation from the throne of God. But though this is true of us this is not true of Christ. And this leads us to the second thing we find the apostle John reflecting on in light of the conversation that he recorded between John the Baptist and his disciples. What is that second thing?

The Apostle secondly reflected on the witness of Christ (John 3:32-36). At the end of **John 3:31** the apostle had pointed out the limitation of those who are of the earth and from the earth. And what was that limitation? Those of the earth and from the earth speak of the earth, or in other words he is saying that their personal experience is limited to the earthly sphere. But this is not true of the witness of Christ since He is from above and therefore above all so John is then led to share a number of truths concerning the witness of Christ.

He tells us that Christ bears witness of what He has *seen* and heard (John 3:32). Let me read this verse for you, "**What he has seen and heard, of that he bears witness.**" The witness of SCAG may not be based on a conversation they had with God but this is not true of Christ. His witness is based on what He has seen and heard as God the Son. He is not sharing with us things that are based on the conjecture of those who are finite and limited He is sharing with us things that are based on the eternal decrees of God Himself.

What else does the Apostle tell us about the witness of Christ? He tells us that people in general do *not* receive His witness (John 3:32). Let us continue to read **John 3:32, "What He has seen and heard of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness."**

This is somewhat surprising. People it seems are very gullible as a whole and willing to believe the most absurd things. But John is telling us that people in general will not receive the witness of Christ the only begotten Son of God. This would be laughable if it were not so tragic. But everyday the truth of this statement is continually verified.

Certainly John the Baptist and His disciples were not seeing the mass rejection of the witness of Christ. This is clear in **John 3:22-30**. But by the time the Apostle was writing the words that he does here in **John 3:32** times certainly had changed.

Unfortunately, people in general still are unwilling to accept the witness of Christ. They are still more willing to accept the words of false teachers, charlatans and con-artists rather than the words of the One who is from above and who is therefore above all. However, though this is true of the vast majority of people, it is not true of all. This leads us to another thing that John shares as we reflects on the witness of Christ.

He tells us that the people who receive His witness testify that God is *true* (John 3:33,34). Let us now read **John 3:33-34, "He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true. (34) For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure."**

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Yes it is true that the vast majority of the world has rejected the witness of Christ even though He bore witness of what He had seen and heard. But this is not true of all. Hopefully, each of us this weekend represents that small portion of the world that has received His witness. Hopefully each one of us this weekend represents that small portion of the world that has set his seal to this, that God is true.

What does this mean when it says, "**He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.**" In antiquity the seal was used to authenticate that a certain form of communication was authentic. When we receive the witness of Christ we are not only setting our seal to this that Christ is authentic or true but also that God is true.

Why? Let me read for you the rest of **John 3:34**, "**He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true for He whom God has sent speaks the words of God.** If we reject the witness of Christ we are rejecting the witness of God because the words of Christ are identical to the words of God. If we receive the witness of Christ we are receiving the witness of God. When we receive the witness of Christ we are communicating, like a seal would communicate in antiquity, that Christ's witness are the very words of God. This certainly separates the witness of Christ from every other witness.

But can we be assured of this? John goes on to answer this question. Let us continue to read **John 3:34**, "**For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.**" When Jesus came down from heaven and spoke of the things that He had seen and heard He did this through the Spirit whom the Father supplied to Him and God supplied Him the Spirit without measure.

The Spirit being given to Christ without measure guarantees the truth of Christ's words. There was no situation and there was no circumstance that ever moved Christ to speak a word that was not the very word God Himself was speaking.

Let me read for you **John 5:19**, "**Jesus, therefore answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'**" Jesus was able to say what he said in the verse that we just read because He had been given grace without measure.

The apostle in **John 3:31-36** is reflecting on the conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples that he recorded for us in **John 3:22-30**. The apostle first of all reflected on the heavenly origin of Christ we saw this in **John 3:31**. From there he began to reflect on the witness of Christ. As he reflects on the witness of Christ he first tells us that Christ bears witness of what He has seen and heard in **John 3:32**. Secondly, he also tells us generally speaking that no one receives His witness. This truth is also shared with us in **John 3:32**. Following this he tells us however that those who do receive His witness testify that God is true. Certainly this would be far better than calling God a liar by choosing to reject the witness of His Son.

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This leads us to the last thing that John tells us about the witness of Christ. He tells us that how a person responds to the witness of Christ will determine how God will respond to them (John 3:35,36). Let me read for you **John 3:35-36, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. (36) He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."**

How does the verse begin? John tells us that the Father loves the Son. And because He loves the Son He has entrusted all things into His hand.

When John says that God has entrusted all things into His hand this is certainly true. He has given Christ authority over Satan and demons, over human ailments and handicaps. He has given Him authority over the wind and the waves. He has given Him authority over the body and the soul. He has given him authority over life and death. God has placed all things in His hands. But of all the things that God has placed in the hands of His Son the one thing that appears to be uppermost in the mind of John in this context would be the gift of eternal life. What is eternal life? Eternal life comprises all the wonderful things that come to us as a result of our spiritual union with the life of Christ

Who will receive this gift and who will not receive this gift from Christ? Those who believe the words of Christ will receive this gift. Let me read for you **John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life."**

However those who do not believe the words of Christ will not receive this gift. Let me read for you the rest of **John 3:36, "but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life."**

Notice the word "obey." The witness of Christ should not be seen by the world as simply a statement of fact but rather as Christ Himself calling them to act. And certainly this is how we should we present the gospel not simply as simply as series of biblical truths but as a call to action.

It is not enough for us to simply say that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God who through His death, burial and resurrection opened a door to heaven that whoever will might enter. No, we must then as the ambassadors of Christ call people to go through that door. If they choose to go through that door by faith then they have obeyed Christ and will receive the gift of life but if they choose not to go through that door they then have not obeyed Christ and they will not see life.

And this of course they will suffer the consequences of that decision. What is the consequence of that decision? Let us continue to read the verse, **"But the wrath of God abides on him."**

This is no small thing. The wrath of God indicates a settled indignation that will negatively impact not only how the person lives in the here and now but also in the hereafter.

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CONCLUSION

A lot of people are bearing witness to a lot of things but the witness of Christ is far more important than any other.

Why? Because receiving His witness will bring to us far more blessings than the blessings brought to us by receiving any other human witness. And rejecting his witness will bring to us far more problems than rejecting any other human witness.

There are a lot of people bearing witness to a lot of things but there is no witness that is more important us to hear and to positively respond to then the witness of Christ.

How will *you* respond to the witness of Christ?