**Until we measure ourselves against God, we will always over-estimate our own righteousness, & under-estimate our sin.**

We will convince ourselves that, compared with other people, we are pretty good/moral/ethical people. We’ll also over-estimate our knowledge of the truth, & under-estimate the depths of our spiritual ignorance.

This is why God asked Job a series of questions comparing Job’s limited knowledge/understanding w/ God’s infinite wisdom.

E.g. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth! Tell Me, if you have understanding (Job 38:4).

Then God prompted Job to evaluate his own righteousness against God’s, by asking=>

“Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it” (Job 40:2).

To which Job answered God=> “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth” (Job 40:4).

Job was the most righteous man alive, and yet the human arrogance of even this righteous man ran so deep in his nature, that God had to confront him like this, before Job was able to evaluate himself honestly/accurately.
Job had to measure himself against God, before he realized how terribly short he fell of God’s divine standard, both in terms of his knowledge/rightness.

Only then was he able to evaluate himself realistically, as he looked at his sinful pride through God’s eyes.

In our text today, John the Baptist will compare himself w/ the Second Person of the Godhead—Jesus X. Not because John was overestimating his own spiritual status, but because his disciples were doing so.

John used this comparison to teach them about Jesus’ absolute supremacy over all men, including John himself.

If we will compare ourselves w/ X’s perfection as John did, we will humbly exalt our Savior/Lord for all His perfections.

Our text points out 3 aspects of Christ’s supremacy over all other men=>

* Christ is from heaven, man is from the earth
* Christ knows the truth, man actually rejects the truth
* Christ is as perfectly true, as God Himself is true.

* Christ Is From Heaven, Man Is From the Earth

[John 3:31]=> “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.”

Initially, John the Baptist’s words, “he who is of the earth” refer to John himself; but by extension, they also refer to every man.
John knew that, being “from the earth,” he was “of the earth,” and spoke as one who was subject to earthly limitations. He/we are part of a race of creatures who came from dust because God formed our first father’s body from dust and blew into it the breath of life. John didn’t mean that his being “of the earth” was evil/“worldly” in an immoral/wicked sense. He just meant he was limited by his inherent earthliness.

This earth is the isolated realm in which we have our being, and from which we learn the nature of physical reality. We draw our whole way of life from the earth. That which we come to view as true/real/reliable, is founded on it, & it teaches us to think in those terms, even though the whole universe is really just a temporary reality.

Peter wrote=> “The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Pet 3:10).

Man speaks “of the earth” because that is all he knows, so it even becomes the source of his words/ideas/thoughts. He cannot speak of the angelic realm, or of heaven itself, having no personal experience w/ either one.

Even John (like every other prophet) “spoke from earth” (from an earthly perspective) when the H.S. was not inspiring his words, or when his own fallen nature gained control over his speech.
Pastors who are committed to proclaiming the Word of God accurately are painfully aware that, because of their earthly orientation/limitations, they need the Spirit to govern their speech, lest they contaminate God’s truth with earthly/worldly wisdom, and with their own mistaken ideas.

**Jesus, by contrast, “comes from heaven”—heaven being His home, & the place that is in keeping w/ His eternal nature.**

John makes the point twice in verse 31, that Jesus is “above all,” emphasizing His absolute superiority, His sovereignty, His supremacy.

He is over all creation, the first-born of every creature. Jesus Himself is the Creator, and He existed long before creation, as the Word, who was with God, and who was God.

He is our Emanuel—God with us—come to earth from the highest heavens, to rescue those who, apart from Him, would spend eternity in lowest hell for their sins. And someday He will display Himself as King of kings & Lord of lords.

He is subject to our human limitations, only to the extent that He emptied Himself of His own divine prerogatives. He voluntarily condescended to lower Himself to our humanity in order to become our Substitute, and atone for our sins through His death as a Man.
But by virtue of His own divine nature, Jesus is high above us, & deserves to be exalted by us w/ our every breath.

It’s not just that Jesus “came from heaven” (although Jn 3:13 does say He “descended from heaven”), but that Jesus was/is continually coming from heaven.
That’s the actual wording John used here.
There is an essential/unbroken connection between Him and the other 2 Persons of the trinity, in heaven.
Jesus came down to earth w/ every Christophany=>
   His appearance to Adam in the Garden, His appearance to Moses in the burning bush & the pillar of cloud/fire, His appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus. And now He comes to earth through the H.S.’s indwelling believers.
But Jesus came from heaven in a special sense at His incarnation.
   He took on Himself our nature that He might witness to man of God’s character, in a way we could best understand it.
   He who was God over all, from whom seraphim must hide their fiery faces, made Himself subject to human parents.
   He came to earth to live as one of us, & to suffer/die as one of us, that He might save those of us who believe in Him.
He who is God by nature, stooped down to earth in seeking to save the lost, washing away their sins w/ His blood, shed by a sinful/murderous act of man. Because of the great disparity between Jesus—God incarnate, above all others—and fallen mankind w/ all his weakness/limitations, Jesus is fundamentally superior to the entire human race. God had sent other prophets/messengers, but every one of them shared our own flawed nature. But when God ultimately sent His own Son as the remedy for our sin problem, He sent us His very best. He sent One who was the very “radiance of His [own] glory and the exact representation of His [own] nature” (Heb 1:3).

Any man who realizes this, should instantly fall before Him in gratitude/praise.

Christ is from heaven, man is from earth. There could be no reasonable response to such a wonderful Savior/Messenger, but to exalt Him in worship, & to believe on Him for the salvation of one’s soul. Now we come to a 2nd aspect of Christ’s supremacy over all men=>

* Christ Knows the Truth, Man Rejects the Truth

[Verse 32]=> “What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.”
Jesus is superior to John the Baptist & to every other man, because He has direct knowledge of heavenly things. He personally had seen them from eternity past, and what He had seen came back to His mind as a man. By the age of 12, Jesus was already awakening to all of Scriptural truth, and to the facts that God was His Father, & therefore He was God’s only begotten Son. He had heard the decrees of God before time began, by which the Father determined to send Him to earth, to die for men’s sins. And now, X’s testimony of heavenly things should be accepted as the personal witness of the most reliable possible Source. He has had first-hand experience w/ heavenly truth, to which no other person could ever be privy, and which we could never know apart from His testimony. Only He can speak authoritatively about such things. If sinful man were in his right mind, he would seek eternal truth from X, realizing that only He is from heaven, & that He is our only direct link w/ heaven’s ultimate truth. Other prophets “spoke” of heavenly things, but only to the degree that God had revealed such truths to them.
According to Peter, some of the OT prophets studied their own inspired writings, trying to understand their own prophecies about X’s sufferings, & the glory that would follow.
Peter also added that even angels longed to look into these matters (I Peter 1:10, 12).
But prophets/angels received only limited revelation.
Jesus, on the other hand, had first-hand knowledge, having dwelt throughout eternity in the bosom of the Father, & knowing intimately the mind of God, because He is God Himself.
Jesus X was/is omniscient.
You couldn’t ask for a better Messenger from heaven than the Son of God, who was present in heaven before the creation, and was daily His Father’s delight.

**What specifically was it that Jesus had seen/heard, & to which He testified?**

1) That He was to come & provide atonement for sin as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29).
I.e., He would be what John announced Him to be.
And now, by His death, Jesus has taken away the sin that had condemned mankind, and because of which God had banned us from His fellowship.
His death opened the way for a reconciliation between God/man, & for the justification of believers, so that they might commune w/ the Lord.
This is the wonderful testimony of Jesus, that a sacrifice for sin has been made, so that if you/I place our faith in that sacrifice, the blood of X will cleanse us from all our sin (I Jn 1:7).

2) That man can now come to God, because the Temple’s veil has been torn in two, allowing us direct access to Him through the risen X.

We saw this portrayed visually in Jn 1, as X told Nathanael: “You will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (1:51).

The insurmountable gap between guilty people, and an offended God has been re-connected by a stairway, & Jesus Himself has come down from heaven, that we might fellowship w/ God, once again.

3) X testified that God so loved the world of mankind, He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him shall never perish in hell, but will have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

Life on a higher level (eternal life) is now w/i man’s reach.

4) That the key to these blessings is personal faith in X crucified.

For all who believe in Him, the condemnation is removed. Jn 3:18 said, “He who believes in Him is not judged.”

So the bottom line is this=> Jesus came to testify that you/I can be saved, in spite of our sinfulness, and in spite of our human limitations.
Ironically, John says that, in a bizarre twist of events, no one receives X’s testimony.

With such extraordinary good news, you would expect the whole world to come running to Jesus, seeking forgiveness/cleansing from sin.

Here you had the only Man w/ direct access to God in heaven, & w/ heavenly knowledge far superior to anything anyone else has ever had.

His testimony to mankind was incredibly good news, & He taught it w/ the authority of an eyewitness, saying=>

“He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world” (8:26).

But unbelievably, no one received His testimony!

John was exaggerating a little when he said “No one”—we know that at least X’s 6 disciples had received/believed in it.

But just below the surface of John’s hyperbole, there was truth that Jesus Himself verified in principle, when He said to Nicodemus=> “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know & testify of what we have seen, & you [pl] do not accept our testimony” (3:11).

In spite of the fact that X was absolutely believable & deserved all men’s trust, few believed His testimony.

The world still rejects Jesus’ testimony—in fact, no one accepts it until/unless his heart is opened to it, by H.S.
Why?  1) Because men are earthly, the Messenger/His-message are heavenly, & there’s no point of contact between them, other than X (whom they reject).

Man’s thinking is earthbound, and eternal things (such as God and salvation) are not priorities for him.

*The worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word* (Mk 4:19).

I pray that if you are an earthly-minded person, distracted by things of this world that are causing you to ignore X’s testimony, the H.S. will open up your mind before it’s too late.

2) Some people are too wise/sophisticated to even believe in God, & beyond that, that God came to earth as a man & died for men’s sins (if sin is really even anything more than an old, religious myth).

These “wise ones” will readily believe almost anything else.

Even the most outlandish/far fetched theory cooked up by man’s fallen mind/imagination.

Yet they become dismissive, at the mere mention of salvation based on God’s grace, received through simple faith in Jesus X.

It is today, as it was in Paul’s day, when he looked at the Church & wrote=> “*Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble*” (I Cor 1:26).
Almost none of those pure-bred sophisticates were/are called by God to repentance/faith.

3) Many religious folks are too proud to receive Jesus’ testimony. He testified of a Savior, and they don’t feel they need a Savior, being so admirably religious, or so commendably moral, themselves.

But 4) The real reason, which applies to every sinner, is that he simply loves his sin too much to find Jesus’ testimony attractive, knowing that if he receives it, he’ll have to forsake his sin.

That’s why X Himself said=> “The Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (Jn 3:19).

So the 2nd aspect of Jesus’ total supremacy over man is that He (and He alone) has virtually full knowledge of the truth; Man does not know the truth, his ignorance of it destroys him, & yet when it’s presented to him, he rejects it.

This brings us to the 3rd aspect of Jesus’ supremacy=>

* Christ Is as Perfectly True, as God Himself Is True

[Verse 33]=> “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true.”

I.e., receiving X’s testimony is an act of faith tantamount to declaring God Himself to be true.

In Jn 1, the Apostle wrote=> “As many as received [same word] Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God,
even to those who believe in His name, / who were born, 
not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of 
man, but of God.”

So here in our own text, the word “received” refers to someone 
who has believed in X’s name by believing His testimony, 
& who thus has become born again. 
At some point in his life he has embraced Jesus by faith, 
believing what God has revealed about Him, & 
having heard/believed His own heavenly words.

But John adds that by receiving X’s testimony, this believer 
has also “set his seal” to the fact that God is true.

I.e., in forming a relationship w/ Jesus X by faith, he has come to 
know God Himself, as the ultimate, in all that is true.
Moreover, his placing his faith in X has become his solemn 
declaration that God is true. 
Through X, he has experienced God as truth in a way he 
ever could have before, due to his human limitations. 
His receiving X was his initial declaration by faith, that 
God is true. 

“To set one’s seal” means to solemnly affirm the truthfulness of a 
statement:  In this case=> That God is true. 
In a day when many people could not even write their own 
names, placing one’s seal on a document was the 
equivalent of signing it. 
Not only were you declaring it to be true, you were doing 
so thoughtfully/publicly/officially/permanently.
By receiving Jesus’ teachings, a believer accepts & signs-off on them as God’s teachings, & he accepts them as true. He declares His belief, that Jesus’ words are God’s words, and that they are true because God is true. Jesus, having come from heaven, & having seen God firsthand, testified that God is absolutely true. By receiving/accepting Jesus’ testimony, the believer solemnly affirms, in essence, “I believe that.”

But it’s not really that he believes God is true because Jesus said He was, but rather that Jesus is just as true as God Himself is true, because Jesus X is God.

And now, having become born again through faith in Jesus, this believer has personally experienced God’s truth, as he never could have, while trapped in the errors/deceptions of sin.

The Spirit of God w/i, now testifies to him that God is true. Jesus came to earth as “the radiance of [God’s] glory, the exact representation of His nature,” & the believer’s soul has basked in the light/warmth of that radiance.

By contrast, refusing to receive X’s testimony silently expresses the belief that God is not true, that He is a liar, & that everything He has revealed to man about Jesus X, is also a lie.

I Jn 5=> “The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe
God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son” (5:10).

Moreover, refusing to receive this Son of God’s love (this living gift of mercy God sent into this world) can only result in God’s wrath abiding on the one who rejects Him, calling God Himself a liar.

There can be no hope for such a person, unless he relents/repents.

**Someone: What should all this mean to me personally?**

It means that Jesus, being high above you, deserves for you to exalt His name, by receiving His testimony in God’s Word, and setting your seal to it.

This is more than agreeing to the principle that Jesus saves those who place their faith in Him.

* It is declaring, “I place my faith wholly in Him, and therefore I am saved.”

* It is grasping this truth personally, & committing to it.

* It is taking Jesus’ testimony & focusing it like a laser beam on your own soul.

You might say, “I could probably do that, but I’m going through a hard time in my life, I’m disappointed in God, and I’m not sure I can believe in Him like that right now.”

Actually, this is a time when you need Him most, and when you can exalt Him best, by your unwavering faith in Him.
This is the time when you should drop anchor in the stormy/troubled waters of your life, not being able to see that anchor because of the depth of the waters, but simply trusting it to hold until the storm passes over, because you have no other hope than your anchor=> Jesus X.

This is trusting your faith more than you trust your feelings, because those feelings are rising/falling waves on a storm-tossed sea.

This is setting your seal to the truth that God is true, and that God Himself was making you a promise you can rely on, when Jesus said=> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (Jn 14:18).

When you believe in X, you set your seal to the testimony of Jesus, & the absolute truthfulness of God.

God’s Word says=> “God is Light [truth], and in Him there is no darkness [i.e., deception/error/evil] at all” (I Jn 1:5).

You say, “I believe that, & would sign a statement to that effect, even staking my own life on it, if necessary.”

You believe that God has faithfully fulfilled all His promises & prophecies in the OT, and that He will keep all His promises to you, as a believer today.

That’s based on the fact that your faith in Jesus X has brought you into the heavenly reality of God Himself.

You may have talked about God before being born again, but now you really know Him;
And you know that you know Him.

* His Word says=> “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life”
  (I Jn 5:12).

  You believe that, & you believe that you have God’s Son, so you believe that you personally have eternal life.

* Jn 3:18 says, “He who believes in Him [X] is not judged.”

  Because God Himself has said this, you know that it’s true, & you know you have believed in His Son, Jesus X.

  So you rest in that truth, enjoying a sense of forgiveness/spiritual well-being.

**All of this brings a believer to his knees, exalting Jesus X as his Savior/Lord.**

* Because He is from heaven, though you are from the earth.

* Because He has heaven’s truth, which man’s foolishness rejects

* Because you know that He is just as perfectly true, as God Himself is true.
“The Supremacy of Jesus Christ”
May 19, 2013

Text: John 3:31-33

1. Until we measure ourselves against God, we will always over-estimate our own righteousness and under-estimate our [8 sin].
   Job 40:2, 4

2. If we will compare ourselves with Christ’s perfection as John did, we will humbly [12 exalt] our Savior and Lord for all His perfections.
   Our text points out three aspects of Christ’s supremacy over all other men…
   * Christ Is From Heaven, Man Is From the Earth
     [John 3:31]

3. This earth is the realm in which we have our being and from which we learn the [14 nature] of physical reality.
   II Pet 3:10

4. Jesus, by contrast, “comes from heaven,” heaven being His home and the place that is in keeping with His [16 eternal] nature.

5. It’s not just that Jesus “came from heaven,” but that Jesus was and is [22 continually] coming from heaven.
   Jn 3:13

6. Because of the disparity between Jesus (God incarnate, above all others) and fallen mankind with all his weakness and limitations, Jesus is fundamentally [18 superior] to the entire human race.
   Heb 1:3

* Christ Knows the Truth, Man Rejects the Truth
   [Verse 32]

7. Jesus is superior to every other man because He has direct [20 knowledge] of heavenly things.
   I Pet 1:10, 12

What specifically was it that Jesus had seen and heard, and to which He testified?
*8. That He was to come and provide atonement for sin.
   Jn 1:29; I Jn 1:7
*9. That man can now come to God because the Temple’s veil has been torn in two allowing us direct [14 access] to Him.  

Jn 1:51

*10. That God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him shall have [16 eternal] life.

Jn 3:16

*11. That the key to these blessings is personal [12 faith] in Christ crucified.

Jn 3:18; 8:26; 3:11

12. The world still rejects Jesus’ testimony; in fact, no one accepts it until and unless his heart is [14 opened] to it by the Holy Spirit.

Mk 4:19; I Cor 1:26

13. The real reason which applies to every sinner is that he simply loves his [8 sin] too much to find Jesus’ testimony attractive.

Jn 3:19

**Christ Is as Perfectly True, as God Himself Is True**  
[Verse 33]

Jn 1:12

14. By receiving Jesus’ teachings, a believer accepts them as God’s teachings, and he [16 accepts] them as true.

Heb 1:3; I Jn 5:10

15. Jesus, being high above you, deserves for you to [12 exalt] His name by receiving His testimony.

Jn 14:18

16. When you believe in Christ, you set your seal to the testimony of Jesus and the absolutely truthfulness of [8 God].

I Jn 1:5; 5:12; Jn 3:18

17. All of this brings a believer to his knees, exalting Jesus Christ as his [14 Savior] and Lord.