

“Knowing and Believing”

May 26, 2013

Text: John 3:34-36

**Today we will consider the last words of John the Baptist
spoken/recorded directly from his mouth.**

Our text is an example of how boldly/clearly John proclaimed the gospel, unlike preachers whose gospel message is so vague/apologetic, it confuses many & saves none.

As Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it=> “There are many who muddle the Gospel, who teach philosophy, who preach a mangle-mangle which is neither Law nor Gospel.”

By contrast, John the Baptist will clearly explain in this text that those who believe in Jesus X have eternal life.

But with unabashed clarity, he’ll then add, regarding the nonbeliever=> *“He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

John means that there are only 2 kinds of people—
believers/nonbelievers.

The whole issue turns on whether/not a person believes in Jesus w/ a faith that brings him into obedience to God.

So why doesn’t everybody just believe in X & receive eternal life?

1) Some would plead ignorance—“I don’t believe because I don’t know enough about what I’m supposed to believe.”

They may trust that ignorance of the truth will excuse them from the wrath of God that John talks about in our text.

But it won't; John said God's wrath already abides on them.

If you were a person like that, I'd tell you to get a copy of the Bible & read it very carefully, for your eternal soul's sake.

Rom 10=> *"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ**"* (Rom 10:17).

Don't leave yourself in the position of ever having to stand before God and explain that you didn't read His revealed Word because you weren't interested enough to spend the time on it.

2nd, People don't believe in Jesus, because of indifference (they just don't feel that it really matters very much).

They sense their hearts are not right w/ God, but they've decided not to bother w/ that till the end of their lives, then make things right just before they have to face Him.

But given the fact that God's wrath abides upon the unbeliever even now, I would ask, "Doesn't that trouble you?"

It troubles me for you, even if it doesn't trouble you.

It concerned God enough to send His Son to die on behalf of people like you."

A 3rd reason why people don't simply believe in Jesus=>

Their pride says, "I don't think I really need a Savior.

"I do my best to be nice to other people, and I even go to church whenever there's a lull in my busy schedule."

Folks like this understand why prostitutes/drug-addicts need a Redeemer to die for their sins.

But they think that, while basically good people like them might need a Savior to top off their own righteousness w/ a touch of God's grace for good measure or for eternal insurance, it's really not a necessity, considering their own good character.

They must think God is a very cruel/severe Father, if the atonement of sin could have been managed by some less horrible means than His only begotten Son's crucifixion, and yet God sent Jesus to Golgotha's cross anyway.

4) The most basic reason why many don't believe in Jesus for salvation from their sin=> they love their sin.

They don't want Jesus or anybody else "saving" them from it.

In the back of their minds, they may actually hope that when they're older & no longer find much pleasure in that sin, they can step away from it, believe in Jesus, and cheat the devil out of their souls, in the bottom of the 9th inning.

But meanwhile, they are enjoying the pleasures of sin up to the hilt, satisfying their bellies, & giving no thought to the eternal joys of spiritual union w/ God.

Nonbelievers have all sorts of reasons for not placing their faith in Jesus X, but the truth proclaimed by John remains=> Until they do, they will never see eternal life, and the wrath of God Himself will always abide on them.

Today's text is an extension of the passage we considered last time, where John described 3 aspects of X's supremacy:

- * He came from heaven, whereas man is from the earth
- * He knows all God's truth, whereas man rejects the truth
- * He is as perfectly true, as God Himself is true.

This morning we'll examine the last 2 aspects of X's supremacy mentioned by John, which we should know about.

John the Baptist teaches that, in addition to the first 3 aspects of X's supremacy, we must know that=>

He speaks for God, and He acts for God.

Then in response to our knowledge of Jesus' supremacy, John will call us to believe in Him for the salvation of our souls.

So this text is divided into knowing about Jesus,
& believing in Jesus.

These are the culminating thoughts of John the Baptist's ministry.

*** Knowing About Jesus**

The 4th aspect of X's supremacy John wants us to know, is that=>

Christ speaks for God—In addition to His having come from heaven, His knowing all God's truth, & His being as perfectly true as God Himself is—X speaks for God.

Verse 33 said that a believer affirms (*sets his seal to*) the fact that God is true, and now verse 34 adds=>

[John 3:34]=> “*For* [because] *He whom God has sent* [X] *speaks the words of God; for* [because] *He gives the Spirit without measure.*”

This verse can be understood by our asking 2 questions=>

Q# 1—How does the believer know/affirm that God’s words are true?

Ans: Because he knows that=>

* He whom God sent (Jesus) speaks the truth (which we saw in verse 33 last time).

* The words X speaks are God’s own words (vs 34).

So here you have a syllogism=>

* Jesus speaks the truth

* Jesus speaks for God

* Therefore, God speaks the truth because God is true.

Q# 2—How does X know to speak God’s words? Through the H.S.

Because God gives Jesus the Spirit w/o measure, X always & only speaks God’s words by inspiration of the H.S.

Someone: But Jesus *is* God. Why wouldn’t He speak the words of God Himself w/o the Spirit’s help/inspiration?

Ans: Because in becoming a man, He emptied Himself of His own divine prerogatives and imposed upon Himself our weaknesses/limitations.

We cannot speak the words of God unless they're first revealed to us, so when X became a man, He gave up the ability to do that on His own (He became like us).

Only under the Spirit's inspiration did His words become God's words.

But from the time of His baptism, He received the Spirit w/o measure, so that *every* word He spoke was a word from-God/of-God.

A hypothetical question: What would Jesus' ministry have been like if God hadn't given Him the H.S. w/o measure?

It would have been like the ministry of every other prophet, who received the Spirit's enablement/power *by measure*, as required for the particular ministry to which he was called.

E.g. Paul wrote (I Cor 13:9)=> "*For we know in part and we prophesy in part.*"

Why? Because the H.S. hadn't given the prophets the full, measureless understanding of God w/ which to speak.

He didn't give to the prophets what He did give to Jesus.

It wasn't the H.S. Himself who was measured out to the prophets.

That would be impossible—for Him or any other person.

You can't proportion a person out, and the H.S. is a Person, the 3rd Person of the Godhead.

Rather, the degree of His enabling power was measured out, to each prophet according to God's predetermined purpose.

Ironically, this is seen very clearly in the life of Samson, who was capable of amazing feats when the H.S. came upon him “*mightily*”—i.e., in great measure.

Judges 15:14=> “*When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the **Spirit** of the LORD came upon him **mightily** [i.e., in large measure] so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. / He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and **killed a thousand men** [Philistines] with it” (15:14-15).*

How on earth did Samson do that?

Did they line up w/ their hands behind their backs,
just waiting for him to conk them on the head?

No, he did it by the power of the H.S.

Whenever Samson disobeyed God or forsook his vows (e.g. by cutting his hair), he was w/o the Spirit’s enablement and supernatural power, so he became weak.

In stark contrast to all other prophets, Jesus lived a sinless life, and God gave Him the Spirit w/o measure.

He never grieved/quenched the Spirit w/ sin in His life.

Nothing He ever said/did was w/o the Spirit’s inspiration/power, after being anointed by H.S., at His baptism, so He spoke the words/wisdom of God infallibly/invariably.

This is exactly as Isaiah had foretold in Isa 11=>

*“The **Spirit** of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, The spirit of **counsel***

and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2).

Everything Jesus accomplished (& continues to accomplish still),
was/is empowered by the H.S.

Isa 42:1-- “*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit** upon Him; He will bring forth **justice** to the nations.*”

How will He bring forth justice?

By the power of God’s Spirit.

Even Jesus’ preaching was empowered by the H.S.

Isa 61=> “*The **Spirit** of the Lord GOD is **upon** me, Because the LORD has **anointed** me To **bring good news** to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To **proclaim** liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners” (61:1).*

In Lk 4:18, Jesus quoted this verse as He preached in

Nazareth, and then in verse 21 He applied to Himself.

Jesus was anointed by the H.S. to completely fulfill His office as our eternal Prophet/Priest/King in a way, and to a degree, never granted by God to any other man.

When Peter explained the power of Jesus’ ministry to

Cornelius, he said this=> “*You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God **anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for **God was with Him**” (Acts 10:38).*

Christ acts for God—This is the 5th/final aspect of Jesus’

supremacy over all other men, which John the Baptist declares.

[Verse 35]=> *“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”*

Having empowered Jesus through the H.S., God gave Him authority over “all things” to use that power as the universal Ruler of all things.

* That means absolutely everything, but Scripture specifically declares Him to have authority/power over all men.

He has power to give men eternal life, justify men, glorify men, or judge men, punish men, & to put down men who are His enemies.

* I Pet 3:22 says that angels also have been subjected to Jesus.

* In addition, Jesus Himself says in Rev 1:18=> *“I have the keys of death and of Hades.”*

And Phil 2:10 says every knee will bow to Him *“in heaven and on earth and under the earth”* (X has power/authority over everyone/everything everywhere).

The Father has entrusted all this authority to the Son because of His love for Him.

In Jn 17, Jesus says the Father has loved the Son since before the foundation of the world, and because of that love, the Father has given His Son glory (17:24).

Jn 10:17 adds another reason for the Father’s love of the Son=> that He has died & raised Himself back to life for the salvation of all those the Father has given Him.

So the 5th/final reason for Jesus' supremacy over all other men is that He acts on God's behalf, as no other man ever could.

This is what we should know about Jesus=> He is supreme because He came from heaven, has all heavenly knowledge, is as true as God the Father is true, He speaks for God through the power of the H.S., and He acts for God because the Father (out of His love) has given Him all authority.

But knowing these truths about X's supremacy is not an end in itself.

Knowing them must culminate in our believing in Jesus.

As I said at the beginning, knowing-about, and believing-in Jesus is to result in man's salvation through faith in Him.

So that brings us to the 2nd part of this text=>

*** Believing in Jesus**

This is what John has been working toward all along.

His goal has never merely been to inform us, but to give us facts about Jesus in which to believe, for the salvation of our own souls, & for the glory of His name.

[Verse 36]=> *"He who **believes** [pres. tense—w/ ongoing faith] in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not **obey** the Son will not see life, but the **wrath of God** abides on him."*

John divides all men into 2 groups (believers/nonbelievers) & shows the eternal destiny of each—either eternal life, or the eternal wrath of God.

This is John the Baptist's solemn declaration to all men that it is absolutely essential that they believe on Jesus X.

He makes it inescapably clear that eternity for them will be perpetual, never-ending life/death, in heaven/hell depending on whether/not they believe in God's Son.

The 1st group is made up of believers, whom John says already have eternal life—they've had it ever since they believed in X, becoming born again.

Eternal life is a present possession for them, not just a future hope.

It is based on knowing Jesus X personally by faith, & is gained the moment a person casts his burden of sin/guilt on Jesus, entrusting his eternal soul to Him.

Jn 17:3=> *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*

Eternal life is the life of the age to come which a believer experiences here/now through his living relationship w/ X.

But it is a life that will be consummated in eternity.

This 1st group of people have come to know who Jesus is.

But beyond that, they've come to know Him personally & have thus received eternal life, by placing their faith in Him.

The 2nd group is made up of unbelievers who don't obey our Lord, because they don't believe in Him.

This word “*obey*” essentially means to become persuaded. They are not persuaded that X is who John has said He is. They have not placed their faith in Him, & in refusing to do so, they have remained in disobedience, never giving their hearts to X, nor obeying Him as their Lord.

Saving faith is inherently obedient to X, so that Scripture says those who do not believe in Him “*do not obey the gospel of God*” (I Pet 4:17), and Rom 11 calls them “*disobedient to God*” (11:30).

Rom 2 adds that they=> “*do not obey the truth, but [do] obey unrighteousness*” (Rom 2:8).

The mark of a true believer is his loving obedience to his Lord, Jesus X.

I Jn 2—“*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments*” (2:3).

The mark of an nonbeliever is disobedience to Jesus X.

Because of the profound significance of verse 36, let’s carefully plumb its depths for the next few minutes by asking several questions.

Q#1—Who exactly are these disobedient spiritual criminals?

Unfortunately, they constitute most of the world’s population.

But sadly, they even include many people in Xn churches.

People who have heard the gospel repeatedly, but have refused to obey its command to believe in Jesus X.

Their sinfulness does not result from lack of knowledge,
but from willful disobedience to God in spite of the
knowledge He has given them.

Many of these believe in God, & that the Bible is God's Word.

Most are nice people of good character, and have
reputations for being compassionate/generous.

They are religious, attend church, pray/sing like angels,
while they're there.

They truly believe that Jesus came to earth to save sinners,
& some will even argue w/ vehemence against heresy.

And yet, in spite of all this, they have not actually believed
in Jesus.

**Q#2—Why is their sin so bad that God's wrath abides on
them?**

God revealed His perfect Law to mankind, & man rejected it.

Being a God of justice, He had to punish man's disobedience.

But God had graciously devised a plan by which He could
mercifully forgive/withhold punishment from man,
and still uphold His own justice.

Not only that, He would adopt sinners as His own children,
out of His amazing grace.

This plan would be costly for God—it would require the
death of His only begotten Son to atone for man's sin.

But God's only expectation/requirement/command for man,
was that he believe in His Son, receiving/trusting

Him for his salvation from sin, and submitting to
Him as his Lord.

Man's rejection of God's Law demonstrated the wicked rebellion
w/i his heart; but the rebellion demonstrated in man's
rejection of God's gracious gift of a Savior, was far worse.
This is the sin that ultimately condemns everyone, as Jesus
said in John 3:18=> *"He who does **not believe** has
been **judged already**, because he has **not believed** in
the name of the only begotten Son of God."*

The unbeliever's worst display of hatred for God is his unbelief.
God is willing to forgive even that, as an act of mercy/grace.
But the unbeliever says to God in essence, "I would rather
forever rot in hell, than humble myself before You,
and accept Your mercy in Jesus X."

There could be no more vile/despicable/hateful insult to the
infinite holiness/compassion of God, than that.

If I have just described you, may God, by His Spirit, in His
amazing mercy/goodness/grace, open your eyes to the
grossness of your sin, and cause you to mourn over it w/ a
contrite heart, and then reach out to Jesus for forgiveness.
May the Lord say to your heart, *"This is My beloved Son
with whom I am well pleased. Hear him"* (Mt 17:5).

May you, by the enablement of the H.S. stop ignoring His
voice, thinking your rejection of His gracious offer
isn't a major issue, or that God will always be willing
to put up with such arrogant/inexcusable rejection.

Q#3—What punishment does God impose for sin like that?

John the Baptist's words answer that: *"He who does not obey the*

Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

1st, John says, the disobedient/unforgiven sinner *"will not see life."*

John means that he will never sense/experience eternal life firsthand, never enjoy it, never enter into it, or possess it, never to know its blessings.

Having been spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins all his life, he will continue in that state of spiritual death right on into eternity, w/o end (Eph 2:1).

Eternal life belongs only to those who have obeyed God by their believing in X, which leaves nonbelievers with nothing but an existence of spiritual death, forever, having rejected X, who alone could have saved them.

2nd, John says of those who don't obey God by believing in Jesus, that the wrath of God already abides on them.

The great preacher/evangelist George Whitfield used to raise his hands as he was preaching, and cry=> "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!"

My words a minute ago were addressed to you personally, when I said, "If I have just described you...."

But frankly, I can't bring myself to do that while talking about God's wrath.

It's such a fearful concept, I'm uncomfortable even putting it, and the people I care about, together, in the same sentence/context.

The wrath of God is not just a force/principle, it is the personal anger of One who, although He patiently withholds it, His holy anger never subsides/dissipates, w/o its being just propitiated.

It's His settled indignation/opposition to unforgiven-sinners, their sin, and all that is unholy.

As John the Baptist said, it abides on them even now, so that as they sleep peacefully in their beds tonight, God will be watching over them w/ anger in His heart.

They are what Eph 2:3 calls the "*children of wrath.*"

Because God's wrath doesn't break out against them w/ violence to punish them immediately, they prob. aren't even aware of it.

But the day will come when it will inexorably confront them, & they will find it overwhelming, literally breath-taking.

That will be the consummation of God's wrath in the final judgment, which John called "*the wrath to come.*"

The ultimate expression of God's wrath toward unforgiven sinners will be the lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

That's what caused Whitfield to cry, "O, the wrath to come."

Hell is not a remedial institution, but an institution of justice.

God's wrath does not soften people's hearts like wax; it hardens them like clay, & keeps on hardening them as time goes by.

The more they suffer in hell, the more bitter and demon-like their hatred of God will grow, & the more sinful they will become, year-after-year, millennium-after-millennium, age-after-age.

They will never draw closer to God, only farther/farther away from Him in outer darkness.

Someone: "Stop talking about that. Your words make me uncomfortable & even frighten me a little."

If I knew words that would scare you right out hell & of your unbelief, & bring you into a soul-saving relationship w/ Jesus X, I wouldn't hesitate a moment to use them.

But that's the H.S.'s work, not mine.

All I can do is warn of the sobering truth, reminding you that the Lord is *"patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"* (II Pet 3:9).

Reminding you too of those beautiful words at the end of the Bible=>

"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17).

Jesus waits for you to come to Him, to believe on Him, and
surrender your heart to Him.

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Text: John 3:34-36

Why doesn't everybody believe in Christ and receive eternal life?

*1. Some would plead [20 ignorance].

Rom 10:17

*2. People don't believe in Jesus because of [26 indifference].

*3. Their pride says, “I don't think I really [10 need] a Savior.

*4. The most basic reason: They [10 love] their sin.

This text is divided into knowing about Jesus and believing in Jesus...

*** Knowing About Jesus**

5. The fourth aspect of Christ's supremacy which John wants us to know is that:
Christ [14 speaks] for God.

Syllogism

[John 3:34]

6. What would Jesus' ministry have been like if God hadn't given Him the Holy Spirit without measure? Like the ministry of every [12 other] prophet.

I Cor 13:9; Judg 15:14-15; Isa 11:2

7. Everything Jesus accomplished and continues to accomplish still is [20 empowered] by the Holy Spirit.

Isa 42:1; 61:1; Acts 10:38

8. Christ [10 acts] for God—this is the fifth and final aspect of Jesus' supremacy over all other men.

[Verse 35]

I Pet 3:22; Rev 1:18; Phil 2:10

9. The Father has entrusted all this authority to the Son because of His [10 love] for Him.

Jn 17:24; 10:17

*** Believing in Jesus**

[Verse 36]

10. This is John the Baptist's solemn declaration to all men, that it is absolutely essential that they [16 believe] on Jesus Christ.

Jn 17:3

11. Unbelievers are not persuaded that Christ is who John has said He is; they have not placed their faith in Him, and in refusing to so do, they have remained in [26 disobedience].

I Pet 4:17; Rom 11:30; 2:8; I Jn 2:3

Who exactly are these disobedient spiritual criminals?

12. People who have heard the gospel but have refused to obey its command to [16 believe] in Jesus Christ.

Why is their sin so bad that God's wrath abides on them?

13. Man's rejection of God's Law demonstrated wicked rebellion, but man's rejection of God's gracious gift of a Savior, was far [12 worse].

Jn 3:18; 17:5

What punishment does God impose for sin like that?

14. First, John says that the unforgiven sinner will not see [10 life].

Eph 2:1

15. Second, the wrath of God already [14 abides] on them.

Eph 2:3; Rev 20:15

16. Hell is not a remedial institution but an institution of justice; God's wrath does not soften people's hearts like wax; it [16 hardens] them like clay.

II Pet 3:9; Rev 22:17

17. Jesus waits for you to come to Him and to [16 believe] on Him.