

Jesus above All

SS/HC 13 /06/04am

Reading: John 3, John 8, Hebrews 1

Study: John 3:31-36

Psalms: 8, 113, 115:1-9, 115:10-18

'Jesus Christ greater than Mohammed' was the title of a talk given recently here in Sydney. The question was asked 'who has the greater credentials'. Many points were listed including the miracles, the prophecies, rising from the dead, the teaching and other things – all of which are true. But in the text before us we find a different focus- a more fundamental difference.

The disciples of John the Baptist were asking who is greater, Jesus or their Rabbi John. John explained to them his God-given task was that of being the herald or forerunner to Jesus. He always said 'I am not the Christ/Messiah'. Jesus is the one who must increase.

He goes on in the passage before us to explain the fundamental difference between Jesus and himself – or any other man *who is of the earth*. He does not refer to the miracles that Jesus did or to what Jesus said, valid as such arguments are. But John spoke about **who Jesus is**. He spoke of where he came from and the relationship he had with God his Father.

Jesus would later use the same argument when the Jews questioned his credentials (John 8). You make great claims they said to Jesus, but who do you think you are? Jesus said *I know where I am from (8:14). I am from above. You are of this world but I am not of this world (8:23)*.

From Above

God made man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). This is the essence of every man. Made from the dust of the ground. He is of the earth and *speaks of the earth*. This world is the realm of his existence. This was true for John, for Mohammed and for you and for me. *We are all of the earth*.

Man is of course made in the image of God. God has revealed himself to man. He spoke through the prophets in the past. He spoke directly from heaven at the baptism of Jesus. John never forgot that revelation – those words of God. But it remains that man's life, our existence and our experience is limited to this earth.

Jesus however is *from above*. He *comes from heaven*. In this way he is unique. He took on flesh and blood to enter this world but he is not of this earth. He was put to death but it was not possible that he should be held by it. God raised him from the dead. His flesh did not see corruption or decay (Acts 2:31).

Jesus is from another realm and he is above all. He in fact is behind the very creation of this earth and behind all that happens in this world. Through him God made the worlds or the universe, and He *upholds all things by the word of his power* (Hebrews 1). *He is before all things and in him all things consist* (Colossians 1). He rules over all. Jesus is the very reason for the existence of this world.

I sometimes cringe when I read things like 'Jesus is greater than Mohammed' because Jesus is really beyond comparison with any man of this earth. His is from above; he is not in the same category. He is the very creator of man, the ruler of the universe. It seems presumptuous to even make such a comparison. But we do have this comparison between John and Jesus in our text and the vast superiority of Jesus explained – just as we have him being compared to angels and to Moses in letter to the Hebrews.

Jesus was sent by God into this world and he was given the Spirit without measure – *for God does not give the Spirit by measure*. Most understand v.34 in this way. John saw the Holy Spirit descend upon him at baptism in bodily form as a dove. Jesus in fact is part of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Coming from the very throne room of heaven he speaks the words of God all the time.

The prophets often spoke the words of God. God gave his Spirit and his words to them to speak to the people. But not everything they spoke was the word of God. Jesus on the other hand only ever spoke the word of God for he was God. *I say to you the Son can do nothing of himself, but only what he sees his Father do* (5:19). Jesus was not expressing any limitation as such in what he could do. What he was saying was that he did whatever his Father did because *I and the Father are one*. Jesus was God.

He Testifies

Jesus, who was sent by God into this world, *speaks the words of God*. He does not speak of the earth or of earthly things. He speaks of heavenly realities. He spoke of what he had seen and heard in the realm of heaven from which he came.

What did he come to tell us about? He spoke about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is at hand he announced when he started his ministry. And he told many parables explaining for us what the Kingdom of God is like. Here in this very chapter He tried to tell Nicodemus about the Kingdom of God and about how to enter that Kingdom.

How did Jesus know so much about the Kingdom of God? Because he came from there! He was telling of what he had seen and heard. And he was returning to that Kingdom to prepare a place for those who believe in Him. *I speak of what I have seen with my father* he told the Jews who would not believe him (8:38).

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. The relationship between Father and Son is described as one of love. Jesus is the only begotten son. He is deeply and intensely loved by the Father. The Father has given him the highest place, the place at his right hand, the place from which he rules.

The relationship of the Father to the Son had important implications for the Jews. They claimed God as their father but rejected Jesus. Jesus tried to explain to them that this was not possible. If they truly loved God, the God of Abraham and the God of Moses, then they would love him also. *If God were your father you would love me for I proceeded forth and came from God* (8:42).

Our text says that he who believes in Jesus and his testimony has actually *certified that God is*

true. They assert or seal that God is true. Because God himself spoke from heaven – *you are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased*. The corollary is that those who do not accept Jesus make God out to be a liar – a very serious charge (I John 5:10).

That being the case what is the conclusion. If they did not accept Jesus and his word they could not say God was their Father – for Jesus is God. If God was not their father then who was? It must be the devil said Jesus. You are of your father the devil said Jesus. He did not say this to violent and corrupt worldly men. He said it to very religious Jews. He said it to those who knew the Scriptures and sought to walk according to the Law of Moses.

Do you think that a harsh judgment to make? Surely not, in the light of the implications of not believing Jesus. You are in fact calling God a liar for he declared that Jesus was his son. He declared that he loved Jesus and sent him into this world.

Is it different nowadays? Does Jesus still say to people 'you are of your father the devil'. How is anything different today? Those who reject Jesus reject the greatest gift ever seen in the world of men. They offend God by their rejection and are actually calling God a liar for God says very clearly in his word that *He gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*.

I remember discussing this with a new believer once and it came a bit of a shock to this person. What about my friend who does not believe? Should I regard her as a child of the devil? Surely that is what we must understand from the Scripture. When you believe in Jesus Christ and pass from death to life, you pass from darkness to light; you also pass from the rule of Satan to the rule of God in your own heart.

The concluding verse of this section makes the same clear distinction. *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life*. The 'not believe' is a different word from believe in the original. It comes from the verb to persuade – so it means refuses to be persuaded or to disobey or to reject. No place in the middle. Either you accept Jesus as the Son of God who came from heaven into this world – he came to give you life, his life for yours. Or you reject Him and this gift of life.

Rejection, refusal to be persuaded by the truth means you remain under the wrath of God, condemned already. May neither ignorance of the gospel, nor a love for evil deeds keep you from accepting Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon