

5. Two Johns testify to Jesus

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Date: 07 October 2012

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] And I'm going to read from verse 22 to verse 36. And because it's not always quite clear who is speaking at which point in this chapter, let me just say again what I said last week about how the chapter is structured.

In the first part of the chapter we have the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, between verses 1 and 15, and then we have some comments from John the Evangelist, the Gospel author, verses 16 to 21.

We then have a second conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples over the next few verses. And then we have finally another comment from John the Evangelist, the writer, in verses 31 to 36.

So if you just look down at verses 27 to 30, that's John the Baptist speaking, and then his speech ends at the end of verse 30. And then we have final words from John the Evangelist as he comments on the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus and so on.

But we have John the Baptist speaking and then finally John the Evangelist. So let me read from verse 22. John the Baptist, verse 22, Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.

[1 : 58] John answered, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

He must increase, but I must decrease. 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. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, but God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. Amen. This is the word of the Lord and may the Lord bless it to us this evening.

Let me ask you to turn once again to John's Gospel, chapter 3, verses 22 to 36, page 888.

[3 : 53] My title for this evening is Two Johns, Two Johns Testify to Jesus. That is John the Baptist and John the Evangelist. I may say quite often this evening John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, just to distinguish the two, because part of this passage are his words and part of his words, if you see what I mean, as I tried to explain a little bit earlier. So forgive me if I labour that a little bit, but I just want it to be clear who is speaking where.

Testimony. Testifying. That's one of the most important ideas in John's Gospel. In fact, John the Evangelist thinks of the whole of his book as a testimony to Jesus or a testimony about Jesus. In fact, the second to last verse of the whole Gospel, chapter 21, verse 24, in that verse, John writes of himself as the disciple who is bearing witness or bearing testimony about these things, who has written these things. And, says John, we know that his testimony is true. That's a very interesting way to end a Gospel. John signs off not by saying the end, but by writing, this is a true testimony. Now, you'll soon see that this element of testimony is prominent in the passage that we're reading this evening. Look with me at verse 26.

John's disciples come to him and say, Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, that's Jesus, to whom you bore witness or testimony, look, he is baptising and all are going to him.

Then, in verse 28, John is speaking, you yourselves bear me witness or bear me testimony that I said, I'm not the Christ, but I've been sent before him. Then, look at verse 32, where John the Evangelist is speaking. He, that's Jesus, bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. So, in those two verses, 32 and 33, it is Jesus who is bearing witness or testimony. In verse 26, it was John the Baptist who was bearing witness to Jesus. And then, in verse 28, it's John the Baptist disciples who are bearing witness to John the Baptist. So, everybody is testifying. This book is as full of testimony as a sardine tin is full of sardines. The whole of the book, you might say, is a testimony to Jesus Christ from the pen of John the Evangelist. Now, why should John frame his book like this? Why should he use this angle of testimony? Those words, bearing witness or bearing testimony, appear on almost every page of the Gospel. Now, if you were writing the biography of some famous person, someone like Winston Churchill, you wouldn't begin your book by saying, I testify to the world that Winston Churchill was born in such and such a year. Or, I testify that his father was so-and-so and his mother was so-and-so.

[7 : 07] You wouldn't need to use that word. So, why does John use this testify language on almost every page? The answer is that what he is saying could well prove to be dangerous to him.

Because testifying is what you do under examination in a court of law. If I were taken to court and I was standing in the witness box, I imagine a barrister would come and look at me with a penetrating stare and he would say, are you willing to testify under oath that you're telling us the truth, Mr. Lobb?

And I would say, with knocking knees, yes, I'm willing. So, if you're testifying to something, you're expecting your testimony to be probed, to be examined for faults and weaknesses. In human law courts, testimony is sometimes given in situations of great pressure and hostility. Now, the Greek word that John uses for giving testimony literally means being a martyr or speaking as a martyr. And I think you can see the connection between testimony and martyrdom. In some parts of the world today, if a Christian person boldly and persistently testifies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior, that person can attract great hostility and can even end up being put to death. In fact, over the last 20 centuries, many millions of people, literally millions of people, have lost their lives because they have been unwilling to deny their testimony that Jesus is the only Savior.

A passage like this one from John chapter 3 looks at first sight like a gentle passage, as gentle as a valley in Perthshire in the month of June. But it's not like that. What John is saying will inevitably bring down hostility upon his head. Now, he's saying to his Jewish readers, and this will give us some feeling of the possible hostility, he's saying to Jewish readers, Judaism has come to an end. Just look back at the first part of chapter 2, where Jesus turns the water into wine. That water there represented the old Jewish rituals of purification and cleansing.

[9 : 29] But Jesus has rendered all that obsolete. The water of purification has given way to the wine of celebration because the heavenly bridegroom has now arrived to inaugurate his marriage.

Then later on in chapter 2, the old stone temple in Jerusalem is now also becoming obsolete because God's new temple, Jesus himself, is now the place where God and man meet and find reconciliation with each other.

And then in chapter 3, Nicodemus, a well-known teacher of the old Judaism, a Pharisee, an expert in the Old Testament, he discovers that he has no part in the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

And in our passage for tonight, towards the end of chapter 3, John the Baptist, who is the last Old Testament prophet, is glad to fade out of the scene, to decrease, because the one that the world has been waiting for has at last come.

And that's why John says in verse 30, he must increase, but I must decrease. And he's delighted to say that about Jesus because he knows who Jesus is. So Christianity is not a rival to Judaism.

[10 : 44] It is the fulfillment of Judaism. The coming of Jesus brings Judaism to its end and its completion. So John the Evangelist's message to the Jew is, come to Christ, put your trust in the Savior.

But of course, John has a message for the Gentile reader as well. And part of his message to the Gentile reader is, don't become a Jew. Now I say that because in the ancient world, many Gentiles were attracted to the synagogues, the Jewish synagogues, because they found monotheism more

satisfying than polytheism.

And also because the ethical standards of the Jews were so much better than the wayward moral standards of the pagan world. But John is saying to the Gentile reader, don't go to the synagogue, come to Christ.

Is John's gospel anti-Semitic then? Not at all. John was a Jew. He loved the Jews. And he's teaching the Jews the truth about their own faith.

And he's saying to them, the wonderful Old Testament points to Christ and is fulfilled by Christ. And my testimony to you is that Jesus is the Christ. The problem is that you won't receive the testimony. [11:59] That's why Jesus says to Nicodemus in verse 11 of chapter 3, you, you Jews, do not receive our testimony. And that's why John the Evangelist says in verse 32, no one receives Jesus' testimony.

So this theme of testifying and testimony shows the kind of hostile reception that John the Evangelist knew that brave Christians would often meet.

It was a pretty dangerous business being a Christian in the first century AD. You risked your neck. John the Evangelist himself ended up as an exile on the Isle of Patmos, possibly having to endure hard labor.

His brother James was executed by Herod. His fellow apostles, Peter and Paul, were executed by Roman justice. That's why the testifier can so soon become a martyr.

And it is still true today. If we bear persistent testimony to Christ, we may be in trouble. Now our passage, verses 22 to 36, is packed with testimony about Jesus.

[13:06] These paragraphs may look innocuous, but they contain a message about Jesus Christ, which, if we stick to it, may lead to our being regarded as the scum of the earth.

So this section of chapter 3 shows two Johns testifying to Jesus. We have John the Baptist and his testimony in verses 27 to 30, and then the Evangelist in 31 to 36.

The whole passage is about the greatness of Jesus, the greatness of his person, and the greatness of his achievement or work. So let's look at the passage under two headings.

First, the real problem is sin. The real problem is sin. You'll see that verses 22 to 24 take us to the Judean countryside.

And we're told that Jesus and his disciples were baptizing. Though if you look across to chapter 4, verse 2, you'll see that John the Evangelist is a bit more precise, and he tells us that Jesus himself was not baptizing, it was only his disciples who were doing that.

[14:14] And in verse 23, we read that John the Baptist was also baptizing at a place called Enon, near Salem, because water was plentiful there. Rather different from Scotland.

In the west of Scotland, water is plentiful everywhere. But in dry Israel, John the Baptist had to seek out a place that was well supplied with streams. So there was a lot of baptizing going on.

John the Evangelist, just turn back to chapter 1, verse 25, if you would. 1.25. John the Evangelist back there has already pointed out that John the Baptist was baptizing people.

In chapter 1, verse 25, you'll see some Jewish priests come to John the Baptist and they ask him, why are you baptizing if you're not the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? And John answers them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I'm not worthy to untie.

And in Luke's gospel, John adds, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So John the Baptist's view of himself in relation to Jesus is that Jesus is infinitely greater than John the Baptist.

[15:33] I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. And also, John is making the point that Jesus' baptism is quite unlike his and again, it's infinitely greater than John's.

All I can do, says John, is to make people wet. But Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, which means he will cause people to be born again.

He won't just wet them, he'll fill them with the breath of God and bring them to life. So there's a lot of interest in baptism in this early part of John's gospel. The Baptist is baptizing in chapter 1, then in chapter 2, verse 6, at the wedding at Cana, we had those huge stone water jars standing outside the wedding banquet hall, jars that were used in Jewish rites of purification, and that would have included baptisms and other washing rituals.

We've then had Nicodemus, who was deeply involved in the Jewish purification culture, coming to Jesus and being told that he needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be born again.

And now here in chapter 3, verses 22 and 23, we have John the Baptist baptizing people and also Jesus' disciples joining in with baptizing other people. So what is it all about?

[16:52] It's about human sin. These varied rites of washing and purification were a constant reminder to people that God was holy and they were not.

These rituals reminded people that if they were to enjoy fellowship with God, they had to be washed clean of their sin. And that's true for all people in all periods of history.

if there is to be true fellowship between unholy sinners and a holy God, there must be cleansing.

There must be a thorough purifying. Now, we learn from the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, that John the Baptist not only baptized, but he also preached.

He was John the preacher as well as John the baptizer. And the message that he preached was a message of repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins. So people came out to him in the desert places.

They heard his preaching about repentance. They began to repent and he baptized many repentant sinners. But all he could do in the end was to make them wet.

[17:58] He knew that they needed something more from somebody greater. And that's why he kept telling people in those early days that somebody else was coming, someone so much greater than he was, that he was unworthy to stoop down and untie his sandals.

So when we think of John the Baptist as the herald of Jesus and the forerunner of Jesus, the way to think of him is not only as preceding Jesus chronologically, but also as administering a shadow baptism, which is the forerunner of the real baptism to come.

And that is the baptism with the Holy Spirit administered by Jesus. So John comes before Jesus to announce him and to prepare the way for his coming, but he also prepares for Jesus by practicing a form of baptism which was ultimately ineffective.

So that we should see that at last that the real baptism, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the new birth, that that is the only baptism that can really cleanse us and fill us with new life from God.

That's what Nicodemus had to submit to and it's what we have to submit to as well. So we have two baptizers or Baptists. We have John the Baptist who brings water and no more and we have Jesus the Baptist who alone has the power to enable us to be born again because he baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

[19:30] So the reason why John the Evangelist has quite a lot to say about baptisms and purification is that he doesn't want us to lose sight of our basic problem which is our sin.

It's our sin which defiles us and makes us unacceptable to God. If we forget our sinfulness, if we pretend that our sin is of no consequence, we shan't see our need of the new birth.

But if we're deeply mindful of our sin and guilt before God, we shall value deeply what Jesus alone can give us which is the new birth into membership of the kingdom of God and that new birth comes through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

So there's the first thing. Our real problem is our sin and we are powerless to do anything about it ourselves. Our sin keeps us from God.

It brings down his condemnation and wrath upon us. We can't just get rid of it and throw it off like an old coat. It is woven into our whole personality.

[20:35] It's who we really are. We're rebels against our maker and it requires a power more strong and a cleansing more deep than John the Baptist could give us in the waters of Enon near Salem if we're to be put right with God.

So there's the first thing. If the real problem is sin then, secondly, the real and only answer is Jesus. Let's see how the evangelist develops his story. Verse 25. A discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

Now I don't know if that word discussion is really code for a blazing row. It may have been but the problem was sufficiently knotty for John's disciples to come to John and speak to him about it.

But what they say in verse 26 doesn't seem to be anything to do with their discussion about purification. It's about something else. They say to John in verse 26, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan, that man to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all people are going to him.

[21:53] Now do you detect the green-eyed monster? Jealousy. A little bit like Manchester City fans and Manchester United fans wondering who's going to get the bigger gate next Saturday.

It's as though John's disciples are saying to John the Baptist, John, we're losing support. Everyone's going to Jesus now. What are we going to do? Let's step up the PR. Should we jazz up our website?

We've got to attract more people. But look at John's reply to his friends. He's not only not bothered, he's positively delighted.

He says in verse 27, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. In other words, the tasks and roles that have been assigned to me and to Jesus have been assigned by God himself.

Therefore, the arrangements are perfect. And anyway, verse 28, have you forgotten what I've told you in the past, that I'm not the Christ, I'm only his forerunner? He's the one that we've been waiting for.

[22 : 57] So don't fret yourselves, you silly boys, that Jesus' popularity seems to be rising while mine is waning. That's the way it was always meant to be all along.

In fact, says John, the way to understand things is to think of Jesus as the bridegroom and me as the best man. The best man waits around at the church door looking at his watch and coughing rather nervously.

And when at last he hears the bridegroom's voice, he rejoices because he knows that the wedding can at last get underway. That's, of course, that's the opposite way around to our culture, isn't it?

Where we have to wait for the bride who is sometimes late. Not always, but sometimes. But in first century Jewish weddings, it was the groom who was eagerly awaited. The bride was already there. So John the Baptist is saying, I'm the best man and Jesus is the bridegroom.

He's the one on whom all eyes are fixed. Because without him there's no joy and there's no wedding. But now that he's arrived, I, the best man, can step back and sit down.

[24 : 02] All I could do was to make the preparations. He is the one who brings the joy and fulfills all the arrangements. He's the one who makes everything happen. So, verse 30, of course I must step back now and I'm delighted to do so.

He is the one the world has been waiting for. Let the people go to him now. All I can do is baptize with water and what people need is to be born again through the baptism with the Holy Spirit which only Jesus can bring.

So John is saying to his disciples, don't be jealous on my account. Understand my role and understand Jesus' role. They're quite different from each other. It's time for me to stand down now because the Savior has arrived.

Let the whole world go to him because they won't find the new birth by coming to me. So do you see, looking at this from a slightly different point of view, how again this paragraph is making the point that Judaism has finished its course.

John the Baptist is the last of the Old Testament prophets. He's a special one but he's the last. He's the one whose role was explicitly foretold in the books of Malachi and Isaiah but his work is now finished.

[25 : 18] Christianity does not rival Judaism. It fulfills Judaism and supersedes it. The last prophet of the old order has now done his work and all eyes are now on Jesus who alone can answer the problem of our sin, who alone can bring us new birth, new life and real forgiveness.

Well that's where John the Baptist's testimony ends at verse 30 and then at verse 31 John the Evangelist begins a paragraph of his own testimony to Jesus.

It's a wonderful paragraph. I wish I had rather longer to try and unpack it but then we at least point out the most important things that John is showing us in his testimony to Jesus here. First of all, I think I've got four little points.

First, in verse 31 John shows us Jesus' cosmic supremacy. So verse 31, he who comes from above, that's Jesus, is above all.

He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way but he who comes from heaven is above all. In that verse John is distinguishing between Jesus and all other human beings.

[26 : 36] You and I and John the Baptist are of the earth. We belong to the earth and our words are earthly. Do you remember how God made Adam literally from the earth, from the dust, from the soil?

And when in Genesis chapter 3 God judged Adam and Eve for their rebellion, he said to Adam, for you are dust and to dust you shall return. My surname, you perhaps think it's a rather odd surname,

Lobb.

It's an old Cornish surname. Cornwall, by the way, friends who come from abroad, is right down in the deep south of England. It's the very deep southernmost part of England. And apparently in old Cornish, my name Lobb means a clod of earth.

A clod of earth. You can imagine some old Cornishman saying to my forefathers, oh Lobb, you're an old clodhopper, you are. Clodhopper. It's a good name. I enjoy having that name because it reminds me of the dust that I one day shall be.

And we're all in the same boat in that respect, aren't we? But Jesus, although he took on human flesh, he comes from above, from heaven. And that's why John tells us here that Jesus is above all. [27 : 52] He is the prince of heaven. Yes, I know his human flesh was killed, but it didn't return to the dust. He was raised up gloriously. And that is why he is fitted to raise up us gloriously at the end.

We couldn't be raised up and saved by a dusty, earthly man like ourselves. But the one who comes from above is above all. And he is uniquely fitted to be our savior.

So there's the first thing, his cosmic supremacy. Then secondly, in verse 32, John shows us that Jesus is the one who speaks the authentic truth from heaven.

So here's verse 32 again. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. So what is it that Jesus has seen and heard?

Well, surely he has seen what no mortal eye can see. And he has heard what no human ear could ever hear. Jesus has seen the glory of God the Father and he has shared the glory of God the Father since before the creation of the world.

[29 : 05] The glory is his native element. As the old West Indian Christmas carol puts it, he come from de glory. It's true, isn't it? He knows the glory of heaven better than you and I know the back of our own hands.

And what has he heard? He has heard the gospel from God the Father who planned it and prepared it from before time began. You and I can only tell the gospel hesitatingly and falteringly because we don't fully understand it.

But Jesus testifies to what he has seen with his all-seeing eye and to what he has perfectly heard and perfectly understood. The truth of the gospel as Jesus speaks it is authentic truth that has come unadulterated from heaven.

Now, as you look at the final phrase of verse 32, you're bound to think it looks rather odd. No one receives the testimony of Jesus. No one, we say.

Well, surely those who become Christians receive the testimony of Jesus. And yes, indeed they do. I think to understand this, it's helpful to look back to verse 11 in chapter 3 where Jesus says to Nicodemus, truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we bear witness to what we have seen.

[30 : 26] But you, that's plural, you Jews, he means, do not receive our testimony. So if you put one finger on verse 11 and another one on verse 32, you'll see that 32 is almost a word-for-word repetition of verse 11.

So what John says in verse 32 is echoing Jesus' words in verse 11. The point is that no one can receive the testimony of Jesus or believe the gospel without the change of heart that the new birth brings.

But as we're born again, our hearts and minds are opened to receive the truth that Jesus brings from heaven. And that's why John goes straight on to say in verse 33, whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

So there are some who receive Jesus' testimony, testimony, and that is those whose hearts are opened up to the gospel, those who are born again. But until that happens, no one can receive his testimony.

Now thirdly, from verse 34, John testifies there that the words Jesus utters are the very words of God the Father because God the Father has given God the Holy Spirit to Jesus without limit.

[31 : 47] So verse 34 is a remarkable Trinitarian verse. For he whom God has sent, that's Jesus, utters the words of God, for he, that's the Father, gives the Spirit to Jesus without measure.

So John is teaching us there how to understand the words of Jesus, all the words of Jesus recorded for us in the New Testament. Jesus speaks them, but in truth, they are the Father's words, and they are spoken in the unlimited, unmeasurable power of the Holy Spirit.

And that helps us to understand why the words of Jesus carry such weight. Just think of the words of the greatest of our human authors, Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky.

People like that. They write masterfully and entrancingly, and yet their words are like smoke in a calendar compared with the words of Jesus. They're insubstantial.

Do you remember how elsewhere Jesus says, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away, and they never will. And verse 34 shows us why they carry such weight.

[33 : 01] His words carry not only his own authority, but all the authority of the Father and the Holy Spirit. then fourth, John testifies in verse 35 to the universal authority that the Father has given to Jesus.

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand, says John. Now that's a very similar verse to what Jesus says of himself at the end of Matthew's gospel.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. John says here, the Father has given all things into the hand of the Son.

Isn't that a remarkable thing to say? All things, which would include, I guess, the course of human history, the rise and fall of empires and nations, the joys and sorrows of the church, the authority to separate the saved from the lost at the day of judgment, and so much else.

All things. What a relief to know that we're in the hands of a merciful and wise ruler who has the authority to do all things. And did you notice that other little phrase in verse 35 at the beginning of the verse?

[34 : 19] The Father doesn't only honor his Son and place confidence in his Son, he loves the Son. Jesus, later in the gospel, in chapter 17, says to his Father, you, Father, have loved me from before the foundation of the world.

God. So before the heavens and the earth were made, before there was darkness upon the face of the deep, the Father was loving his Son. It's a love and joy and a sharing that predates the very creation.

And isn't it remarkable that the Father, who so loves his Son, in verse 35, should so love the world, in verse 16, that he was willing to give up his beloved Son to death for the sake of the world.

So this is the testimony of the two Johns. John the Baptist gladly lays down his preparatory ministry, so that his great successor should begin to exercise his.

The baptism with water gives way to the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And then John the evangelist, as it were, stands in the witness box, and he places his testimony to Jesus before the world.

[35 : 34] He speaks of the cosmic supremacy of Jesus in verse 31, as the one who is above all. He tells us that Jesus speaks the authentic truth from heaven in verse 32.

He tells us in verse 34 that the words of Jesus carry all the weight of the Father and the Spirit behind them. And in verse 35, that the Father has put universal authority into the hands of the Son he loves.

That's the testimony. And the world who listens to the testimony, the world has to weigh the testimony and come to its decision. Will the world receive this testimony?

The end of verse 32 suggests that many won't, but the beginning of verse 33 suggests that some will. Now, humanly speaking, from our point of view, why should it be hard for some people to accept this account of this testimony about Jesus?

Surely the issue for us is the issue of self-determination. It's not difficult to see what John is claiming for Jesus. Supremacy, authority, matchless words that come from heaven.

[36 : 50] The implication, plainly, is that we must submit to him, we must bow before our king and acknowledge that if he has the authority to rule the universe, he certainly has the authority to rule your life and mine.

But it's at that point that a person says, I can't bear it, away with this testimony. And it's at this point that the man or woman who listens to the testimony begins to throw tomatoes and eggs at the testifier.

And the tomatoes and eggs may be followed by rocks and hand grenades. And the testifier can become a martyr. John the evangelist was exiled for his testimony.

John the Baptist was beheaded for his testimony. Peter and Paul and James were all executed for theirs. That's why this is such a live issue.

It's not a neutral thing. The question is, who is going to rule my life? Is it going to be the son of God who carries all authority? Or is it going to be me?

[37 : 56] me? Which of those two is likely to be the better master? Well, we must allow John to have the last word. And verse 36 puts the issue before us in the clearest terms.

Whoever believes in the son, says John, has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the son shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on him.

John is telling us there that there are two groups of people in the world. Only two groups. First, there are those who cast caution to the winds and put their trust in the son of God.

They say in the end, away with the pathetic idea that I'm the best person to rule my own life. I'm clearly not. I'm going to trust everything I am to Jesus Christ.

If he is the one that John tells me he is, I'm a great fool if I don't submit to him. He is God incarnate and God loves him and God loves me. And I'm beginning to realize that I'm not made for this world and for this life only.

[39 : 02] Jesus has sacrificed himself on the cross to bear the penalty for my sin in my place. Of course I must trust him. And such a person says John in verse 36 has eternal life.

Not only will have but has it. it begins now. The new birth brings a man or woman into the new creation now in this life as well as for the world to come.

Now what about the second group? Well there's something rather unexpected about the second half of verse 36. I think you'd expect John to have written whoever believes in the son has eternal life.

Whoever does not believe in the son shall not see life. But he uses a different word there. He says whoever does not obey the son shall not see life.

The issue is not just an issue of intellectual understanding. It's an issue of obedience. To believe the gospel is to obey the gospel. To believe in Jesus is to obey the Lord Jesus.

[40 : 12] And this means that the one who walks away from Jesus is deliberately turning his back on his only hope. He is saying in effect Jesus Christ you came to the earth for me.

You died for me. You love me. You're my rightful king. But I deny you your rights. I'm not going to submit to you or obey you. I'm determined to be my own master.

But in the last words of the chapter John shows us the peril, the danger of speaking like that. To turn away from Jesus is to welcome the wrath of God.

All of us by nature are under the anger of God. In fact verse 18 tells us that whoever does not believe in Christ is condemned already. The world is in a desperate plight.

The dark clouds of the anger of God justly hang over the world. But God loves and pities the world so much that he has sent a savior to rescue for eternity anyone who is prepared to put their trust in him and to bow to his kingly rule.

[41 : 22] If you have never yet come to Christ come to him. Because the truth is that whoever believes in the son has eternal life. But whoever does not obey the son shall not see life.

But the wrath of God remains on him. let us pray for a moment.

Dear God, our Father, we thank you for your love and compassion and pity that you were not prepared to leave us all to be consigned to wrath and condemnation because you want to share eternity with us.

You love us indeed. And you have sent us a savior, the only savior. And because of your love for us, you were willing to allow him to suffer, to cause him to suffer, the penalty, the just penalty for our sins sins in his own body on the cross.

So our dear Father, please give us the grace not only to understand what you have done for us, but to believe in it and to be glad and willing to obey your son, whom you sent for our salvation.

[42 : 53] Have mercy upon each one of us, we pray, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.