

Who Sits On The Throne Of Your Heart?

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[0 : 00] Now, returning back to the chapter that we read, chapter 3 in the Gospel of John, and we can look at verse 26 in that chapter, verses 25, 26 and 27.

Our 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, Luke, he is baptising, and all are going to him.

John answered, a question cannot receive even one thing unless it is given in from heaven. And in looking at these verses, we can first look at the danger of human loyalties, and secondly, with the question who sits on the throne of our hearts, and thirdly, a challenge we must face, a challenge we must face.

Finally coming to danger of human loyalties. And this is of course a passage that we very often tend to skim over when we read this chapter.

It is very much overshadowed by the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, which we have at the beginning of this chapter or taking up most of this chapter.

[1 : 54] And so we tend to skim over this passage. Therefore, we pay little or scant attention to it.

We pay little or scant attention to it. And historically, historically, it provides us with information that we do not find elsewhere in the New Testament.

It reveals to us that John the Baptist had a faithful circle of disciples who struggled with the decision of shifting their commitment from John to Jesus.

It also reveals to us that John, both John and Jesus, were ministering in Judea at the same time.

The other three gospels, they have Jesus' ministry beginning after his baptism and his temptation.

[3 : 08] And they provide us with no information of Jesus' earlier period, which this passage does.

Now, did you ever wonder, why Herod who beheaded John the Baptist when he heard about Jesus, why he said that it was John the Baptist having been raised from the dead?

Well, the thing is that this was something that was very familiar to the crowds who followed John.

We find in Mark chapter 6 and verse 14 these words, seeing Jesus, some cried, John the Baptist has been raised from the dead.

And we should not wonder at the struggle that his disciples found in committing themselves to Jesus' craft, because of the high opinion that John was held in by most of the crowd who came to him to be that tired by him.

[4 : 28] They held him in high regard and therefore Herod even believed it was so that this was indeed John the Baptist raised from the dead when he heard about Jesus and he desired to see Jesus, he desired to see Jesus and to be in his presence.

And this is why the John's disciples had such a struggle in committing themselves to Christ and turning their backs upon John, because of the high opinion, the high regard he was held in by many.

No, when we read in this passage that John and Jesus were ministering at the same time in Judea, it could very well be when we realise how precious the Old Testament heroes were to the children of Israel at this time.

Maybe some of them were thinking along these lines when they said that John was raised from the dead, that this was nothing but John's spirit being passed on to Jesus, just the same as Elijah passed on his own spirit to Elisha.

I'm not saying that that is what was behind it, but there is a possibility. Some of these people had seen John and Jesus' ministry at the same time in Judea, they would have been thinking along the lines that Jesus was the Elisha that was following the New Testament Elijah.

[6 : 19] It is a possibility. But what this passage reveals to us is that John and Jesus were acquainted with one another, they worked together, their disciples knew one another, their disciples knew each other.

And when John was put to death, his disciples were faced with this great conflict. Would they know, commit themselves to Jesus or not?

Would they know, commit themselves to Jesus or not? And this gives us an insight into the fact that these disciples, both John's and Jesus' disciples were not perfect, they were sinister just like yourself and myself.

Can we find this manifested from time to time in Jesus' own disciples? So if you remember when they discovered this man in Galilee, casting out demons in Jesus' name, they went with great eagerness to tell Jesus about it.

Master, we have found this man casting out demons in your name and we try to stop him because he is not one of us.

[7 : 44] How did Jesus react to that? Well, he did not act upon it. He did not go to Galilee to tell this person to stop doing what he was doing.

But he rebukes, he chemopts, he rebukes his disciples in saying to them, whoever is for us is not against us, or words to that effect.

Words to that effect. And we find the same thing repeating itself in the early century churches, particularly in the church in Corinth.

Here we find Christians disputing about their loyalties to Paul, Apollos, Peter and even Christ themselves. And we find that in 1 Corinthians 1 and verses 10 to 17.

And you see, we have formed this impression that it was easy for these first century Christians to work with one another without human loyalties getting in the way.

[8 : 54] And you find some people today wanting to get back to the way the first century churches behaved.

Well, they had the same difficulties as we face today. Worth dispute about human loyalties creating division within them, creating division in their midst.

And you see John, the author of this Gospel, sees here a universal lesson, a lesson that is relevant to her own day and age.

John's followers were blinded by their affection for and their devotion to their leader to the extent that it made them draw back from following Jesus.

They would not at all have been opposing Jesus Christ because that would mean that they would be in a disagreement with their master John the Baptist.

[10 : 09] Neither would they be questioning Jesus' uniqueness as a person who was set apart by God to fulfill God's will within the world.

Which brings us to the second thing that we have here, a question for us all. Who sits on the throne of our hearts?

The big danger here is that we are all prone to set someone or something above Jesus Christ.

We are all prone to set something or someone above Jesus Christ. Maybe or something becomes so important to me and to you that Jesus Christ has to take the back seat.

He has to take the back seat. It is a subtle ploy used by the evil one to distract the followers of Jesus and those who are not yet following Him.

[11 : 27] So I will put the question to you this morning. What is holding you back from committing you all to Jesus Christ?

From committing you all to Jesus Christ? Is there something or someone, something or someone that you give the throne of your heart to over and above the Son of God?

Luca John's firm reminder to his disciples in verse 28, you yourselves he said, bear witness, bear me witness, that I said I am not the Christ.

And that gives rise to another few questions. Where there are some who are claiming that John was the Christ?

Well, yes, if they were agreeing with the crowd, but this was none, but John the Baptist raised from the dead.

[12 : 47] You see the danger of giving the throne of our hearts to someone or something over and above Christ. Then there is the second question.

Where these disciples are willing that John would decrease in order that Christ would increase?
And the answer to that is yes again.

That is exactly what some of them were in willy to let it happen, John to decrease and Christ to increase.

And the question for me and you this morning is have we let that something or that someone take you over our lives to the extent that it's that something or someone that we want to increase and Christ to decrease.

Christ to decrease. You see John's followers were so blinded by their commitment to John himself, but are taken over their lives to the extent, to taking over their lives to the extent that they were wanting to give John a place that John would have never accepted for himself.

[14 : 34] And that is exactly what happens when you and I do place to something other than Christ within our own hearts.

And we give that place on the throne of our hearts to something or someone else. This I am afraid is what happens when we do give the throne of our hearts to anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ.

And you might be here this morning and you might say to me, well, I found Jesus attractive.

And I will tell you, he's not attractive enough to you, to the extent that you are willing to follow.

His word might have an impact upon your life, but not enough to commit you all to Christ.

[15 : 45] Not enough to commit you all to Christ, to commit your lives to. You see the attraction of the other or the something very often blinds us to the extent that we see little or no value in Jesus.

Little or no value in Jesus. And a second lesson, we learn a second lesson from the testimony that John Bayer should relate to Jesus.

The second lesson is this, that the uniqueness of Jesus was not dependent upon the effectiveness of the persuasiveness of John's preaching.

You will find some people saying that, that people are going to be converted, it's down to the personality of the preacher, or his gift of oratory, or how he conducts himself in the pulpit, no.

The uniqueness of Jesus was not dependent upon the effectiveness or the persuasiveness of John's preaching.

[17 : 15] The uniqueness of Jesus stands in this, as John the Baptist himself confirms.

He is from above, he is from above, and he has been given the spirit, he has been given the Holy Spirit with a limit, as verse 34 reveals to us.

Jesus has come to us from above to do what to reveal God the Father to us, so that when the Passion looks, when the Passion's eyes is open to look upon this Jesus, he or she sees God.

And that is why John was desiring, that he would decrease and that Jesus would increase.

That he would be taken out of the way, so that people would see God in Jesus.

[18 : 34] From the manger to the cross, from the tomb to the Ascension, Jesus was revealing God the Father in His words and in His actions.

And two things flow from this revelation. That Jesus gives to us of God the first thing is that we ought not to be surprised, that the world does not understand this revelation that comes from above, and why does the world not understand it?

Because the world is encompassed by darkness. It is encompassed by darkness, it is blinded by its own sinfulness, and without God's word the world is a helpless, hopeless, meaningless, desolate place, as verse 36 reveals to us.

Listen to what John says in verse 36, whoever believes in the sun as eternal life, whoever does not obey the sun shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

So the world of humanity, as long as we remain in our sin, it remains a helpless, hopeless, desolate, meaningless place.

[20 : 16] A life, one could say from when you read verse 36 here, it is a lifeless place, because it does not know the giver of life, who is Jesus.

The world remains and will continue to remain dead in its trespasses and in sin, in its sins until it comes to no class, the giver of life, the giver of life.

And as we read on in this Gospel itself, we find more said about the incapacities of this world and its enmity against life, and its desire to disable everyone who bears testimony to this life that is Christ.

And we all know that that is the way the world behaves. It is incapacitated by sin.

It is a denmity with a light, and its desire is to disable all who bear testimony to this life that is Christ.

[21 : 42] But let us be encouraged by this. What is written in verse 5 in chapter 1 in this Gospel, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcut.

The darkness has not overcut, which brings us to the third thing that we have here, the challenge that we face.

And the thing is this, that when John says that this revelation comes to us from above, remember what Jesus himself said, nobody has ever seen God but the Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed him.

So it is a revelation from above, and when John says that it is a revelation from above, he is making a statement of authority. If it is through, that this revelation is from above, and that God is speaking to me and to you in these last days through His Son as we have it in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 2, what does that mean?

Well it means that the Gospel or Jesus Christ is different to every other form of religion. The world and every other religion has tried to domesticate Jesus down through the generations, and they are still trying to do it.

[23 : 37] And the world and other religions will tell us that Jesus is simply one wise man amongst a host of wise men as history reveals.

He is just like Gandhi or Mandela or Plato or Aristotle. He is no different to any other wise men as history reveals to us.

Neither is he different, they will tell us, to any other teacher whose teachings have had an impact upon the world's culture and upon the world's vision.

He is no different to any of these teachers. But all of that comes short of what we have here, comes very short of what we have here.

But the Gospels reveal to us is that in Jesus Christ something without comparison has been disclosed, something the world has never seen before, something the world has never seen before.

[25 : 06] And what that means is that the views that you and I hold in relation to salvation, God's word, suffering and resurrection, these views have to be altered.

Why? Well, when you and I look at salvation, the word salvation, what does it bring before us?

It brings before us Jesus. When you and I discuss anything about God's word, we give our own views on God's word and what God's word means.

What should we see in God's word? Jesus as the fulfillment of that word. When we talk about suffering within the world, should we not look at God's son suffering on the cross and seeing your own suffering as being nothing compared to his?

And when we look at resurrection, what do we see Jesus as the resurrection and the life?

[26 : 51] The views on all of these things need to be altered. You see the desire to follow charismatic leadership is still with us today as it was present with the first century disciples.

But what this passage reveals is that the problem is not with these leaders, but with their followers. With their followers.

You have a passion and desire in raising these leaders to levels that they would not accept for themselves.

That they would not accept for themselves. That's where the problem lies. Unfortunately, there are unfortunately some leaders who want nothing else than to be elevated to levels that God does not permit.

They have always been there with us, but there are others like John the Baptist who people want to raise to levels that they would not accept for themselves.

[28 : 18] And this is where the problem lies. We want to give something or someone the place that we ought to give to Jesus Christ.

And it is that the way it is with you this morning. There is something taking hold of the throne of your heart that is keeping you from committing your all to Jesus.

Well, we find Nicodemus at the beginning of this chapter be guided to water and to the spirit for renewal and for cleansing.

And of course, the water is a symbol of God's world. It's a symbol of God's world.

We find the disciples of John in dispute with another Jew over ceremonial worship. Both Nicodemus and John's disciples needed to realize that the only passion you can truly renew and cleanse is Jesus alone.

[29 : 50] Jesus alone. And the challenge is over today. Challenge is over as well.

And you and I lay hold of the truth of what God has provided for Son of God Christ. When we look at salvation, we've already mentioned, salvation is Jesus, knowing Jesus as a Pashman, Savior and Friend. When we look at the gospel, Jesus is the good news. When we look at the kingdom of God, Jesus is the door through which you and I gain entrance into that kingdom. So the question for us this morning is this, are we willing to step forth from the darkness and be different to the world?

[31 : 18] Are we willing to leave death behind and embrace life?

Can we believe in the truth of what Jesus says and in the truth of what he is as the Savior of sinners?

Well the first part of this chapter points us to an experience that we all need. And I mean the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus at the beginning of this chapter.

The first part of this chapter points me and you to an experience that we all need. A powerful, transforming encounter with the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ that produces a new birth.

And the second part of this chapter, the passage that we've been looking at, points us to a commitment of belief that none of us can attain to if we give the throne of our hearts to that other or that something that takes the place of Christ.

[32 : 55] So where do you stand this morning? Is there this other or this something that is keeping you from committing your all to Jesus?

May he bless to us. He has few thoughts on his word. Let us pray. O gracious and ever-blessed Lord, that you would win over our hearts for yourself and that you would fill it with a desire after yourself, a desire that would lead us to follow you and commit our all to you alone.

Lord, we are spoiled goods, sinners of the best of times and it is so difficult for us like it was for John's disciples to commit our ways to you and Lord, we need your help to do so and that we would be thankful that you are willing to give us that help if we so turn to you.

Help us Lord to do so and to have this desire after Christ alone and to truly put away from ourselves every other thing that stands in the way of that or give us for our sins and all that we have, that we would do so in Christ's name and for the sake of you and me.