

Fourfold Witness To the Deity of Christ

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 5:30-47
Preached on: Sunday, April 27, 2014

It is once again my great joy to minister the word of God to you this morning and I would encourage you to take your Bibles and turn to John's gospel where we continue our verse-by-verse study of this amazing gospel. Turn to John 5 and in a few minutes we will be looking at verses 30-47. This is a very timely text. Jesus warns us in his word to expect apostasy to increase just before he returns. Apostasy is a falling away from the truth of Scripture that we once knew and professed. Those who demonstrate this, demonstrate that they never truly knew Christ. Jesus said in Luke 17, "Just as it happened in the days of Noah." He went on to say the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building. In other words, life was going on as usual as if nothing would ever happen. Then he says, "But on the day that the Lord went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of man is revealed."

Scripture describes very clearly what days of apostasy will look like, especially in the church. There will be a smug sense of self-satisfaction and self-confidence. The church will be so wed to the world that it cannot be distinguished from it. He describes how there will be no concern for the evidence of history as in the days of Noah, especially with respect to divine judgment. He describes how churches will become more obsessed with the visual and with the sensual, that is, those things that appeal to the senses rather than the things of the Spirit revealed in his word. There will be an absence of zeal for the truth. There will be a total disregard for holy living. There will be an absence of the hungering and thirsting for righteous. Why? Because churches will become filled with unrenewed hearts that choke on the word of God. Because, my friends, for the unregenerate, error is far more appealing than truth.

The greatest guard against apostasy according to Scripture is the systematic, in-depth teaching of the word of God. We simply will not grow into spiritual maturity without it. So, to guard us and to grow us, I want to immerse us once again into the inspired, infallible word of God. This morning I've entitled my discourse to you "A Fourfold Witness To the Deity of Christ," as we will see that emerge from our text this morning. Let me read it to you beginning in John 5:30. Jesus says,

"30 'I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 31 If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true. 33 You have sent to John, and he

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has borne witness to the truth. 34 But the witness which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. 36 But the witness which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. 37 And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. 38 You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness of Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. 41 I do not receive glory from men; 42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 43 I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. 46 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me. 47 But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

The historical context is very important to understand this passage of Scripture. By the time John wrote this, he was a very old man. It was about 50 years after he had walked with Christ, after he had witnessed his earthly ministry and by the time John writes this, Christ is long since ascended into the glories of heaven and the Satanic philosophies of Gnosticism was in full bloom as I explained in my critique of the movie "Noah" a few weeks ago. Like a wicked man that would salt the newly planted fields of his neighbor, Satan has come along now and empowered countless false teachers to come behind the apostles and salt the fields with damning lies where the gospel had been newly sown. And their primary lie was this: the denial of the essential deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was highly effective when you think about it because the natural man is already predisposed to skepticism and unbelief. After all, what reasonable man would think that God would be born of a peasant virgin? In a manger? That he would work for years as a carpenter's son? And then he would emerge out of obscurity and select a handful of poor, uneducated fisherman to accompany him and then claim to be the Son of the Most High?

By now, almost all of the original apostles who had accompanied Christ are dead but Satan had amassed thousands of teachers to deny the deity of Christ and, therefore, literally eviscerate the truth of the gospel. By the way, we witness the same tactic some 2,000 years later: the gospel continues to be veiled to countless souls, especially the

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concept of the deity of Christ. Paul tells us that he does this, “he is the god of this world who has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the glory of the gospel of Christ who is the image of God.” But not only did the heretics flourish during this time at the end of the first century, but the Jewish people continued their long history of spiritual harlotry and rejection of the prophets that God would send them which included John the Baptist and, of course, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet despite their stubborn refusal, despite their rebellion, God continues in his mercy and grace to pursue them which is an amazing picture of his unending love for all of us. Is not Israel's very existence today a demonstration of God's preservation of his beloved enemy and a testimony of his covenantal faithfulness?

That God will never forsake Israel is a theme found throughout all of the Old Testament and we're seeing this played out in this scenario with Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Think about it: from the dramatic illustration of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer, to the striking analogies that we see in Jeremiah's prophecy for example. In Jeremiah 33 where he says, “Thus says the Lord, if you can break my covenant for the day and my covenant for the night so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then my covenant may also be broken with David, my servant, so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne.” He went on to say, “Thus says the Lord, if my covenant for day and night stand not and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David, my servant. Not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”

In similar fashion, the converted rabbi, the Apostle Paul, echoed these same concepts in Romans 11. He says, “I say then, God has not rejected his people has he? May it never be!” He went on to say, “God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.” And he said, “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the gentiles has come in and so all Israel will be saved.”

Now, we must bear in mind that until Jesus comes on the scene, Israel has not witnessed the glory of God for 400 years since it departed from the temple in the days of Ezekiel. And then suddenly, out of the Judean wilderness, comes John the Baptist heralding the Messiah. Now, while most rejected John's message and Jesus' message later on, some believed and we continue to see that to this day but one day God's promises that his beloved enemy will be saved are found, for example, in Zechariah 12:10, “One day Israel will look on me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

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Beloved, what a remarkable picture of God's sovereign grace on all of our lives and what a joy to know that God has promised that one day, according to Zechariah 13:1, "a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity." Then in verse 9, he went on to say "they will call on my name and I will answer them and I will say, They are my people and they will say, The Lord is my God." What an amazing promise.

Now, as we come again to John's gospel, we have seen thus far a small remnant of Jews and some Gentiles who have believed on the Son of God, have trusted him as Savior, and yet many of the Jews are already seeking to kill him because of his claim to deity. Now, I want you to imagine the scene as best you can in your mind: Jesus has just healed a man who has been an invalid for 38 years but the Jewish authorities are livid. You can see in first 18, here's why, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him." Why? Because he not only was breaking the Sabbath which, by the way, were the rules they made up regarding the Sabbath, but also was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. So friends, in your mind's eye right now, I want you to imagine a large crowd surrounding Jesus. Imagine if you were standing there next to him. You can see the crowd. You can see all of the Jewish religious leaders in all of their religious garb to let everybody know how spiritual they are. You can see violence in their eyes. You can see their veins bulging. They are red-faced. They are spitting. They want to kill Jesus. Their fingers are pointing at him, "How dare you say these things!"

In verses 19-29, Jesus begins his discourse with a seven-fold defense of his claim to be with the Father as we studied a few weeks ago, and now he provides a fourfold witness to his deity to this angry mob. We are going to look at that this morning, four things: the witness of John, the witness of his works, the witness of his Father and the witness of Scripture. By the way, if I can digress for a moment: as we watch the systematic unraveling of our country, the moral free-fall, the economic disaster, all of these things that are happening, I pray that by this reminder this morning of who our Savior and Lord really is, we can find great comfort and we can find great boldness in our gospel proclamation because in the end, Christ is the victor. Jesus is coming again. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords and in the end, we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us. Right? Romans 8:37. And as we examine these truths this morning, just bear in mind the purpose of John's gospel and it is to present Christ. These things have been written, he says in John 20:31, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in his name."

Now, we come to verse 30 where Jesus summarizes his claim to be equal with the Father and really reiterates what he said in verses 19 and 20. Notice verse 30, he says, "I can do nothing of my own initiative." Again, he never acts independently of the Father and this is specifically applied to his judgment and his authority. He goes on to say, "As I hear, I

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judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” So, he is reminding them what he said before: everything that I do, everything that I have ever done is completely in accord with the Father's will including the execution of justice upon those who resist and reject me.

He goes on to say in verse 31, “If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true.” Now, don't be confused here. He is not saying that his self-witness cannot be trusted. That's not the point. Rather, he's saying, that the burden of proof of his witness is not simply based upon his own personal witness, his own personal testimony. It is also based upon the witness of the Father. Jesus knows he is not speaking on his own accord. In chapter 12:49, he says, “For I did not speak on my own initiative but the Father himself who sent me has given me commandment what to say and what to speak and I know that his commandment is eternal life. Therefore, the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me.” Practically speaking: if you want to know God the Father, you've got to know the Son.

Again, speaking of the witness of the Father, Jesus says in verse 32, “There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true.” So, of course, Jesus' self-witness is true but the problem is they refuse to believe him and he's going to now provide four additional testimonies to his claim to be the Son of God.

1. The witness of John the Baptist. Notice verse 33, he says, “You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.” What is he referring to? Well, he's speaking of the delegation that these same angry men had sent to John the Baptist earlier. We read about it in John 1, beginning in verse 19, “This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.'” I'm not the Messiah. “They asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' And he said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?' He said, 'I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” as Isaiah the prophet said. They asked him, and said to him, 'Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?' John,” then in verse 26, “answered them saying, 'I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.’”

Indeed, they had heard that it was John the Baptist that thundered the glorious witness of who Christ was. He said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” But sadly, consistent with their history, they continued to reject their prophet. So, Jesus continues in John 5:34, “But the witness which I receive is not from man.” In other words, Jesus is not appealing to the witness of John to confirm what he knows to be true of himself, but it's for a more glorious purpose and he says, “but I say these things so that

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you may be saved.” In other words, John's testimony was an act of divine mercy upon Israel. That's the idea. Jesus didn't need his own testimony to learn who he was, Israel needed John's testimony that they might be saved as each of us do.

Verse 35, “He was the lamp,” referring to John, “that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.” It's interesting, we read in the New Testament record as well as in other historical accounts like Josephus, that John the Baptist's ministry animated the people of Israel with the hope of the Messiah and the kingdom and many were thrilled to learn that the promised dawning of the Messianic age had finally come. But like many people today, especially when Jesus came on the scene, they loved Jesus for his works but hated him for his word as we will see, by the way, more vividly in chapter 6.

So, there were thousands of thrill-seekers that followed Jesus to behold his miracles. They wanted free food, free healing, whatever they could get from him physically but they had no desire for what he offered them spiritually. And you're going to see this played out throughout the gospels. Why is this? Because what Jesus offered required repentance and faith. It required self-denial and worshiping Christ rather than self. So, they turned away from the light because men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. By the way, unregenerate man lives for himself in this life only. Everything he lives for is for himself. It's all about me, me, me. “God exists for me. I am the center of gravity around which my life must orbit, not God. He is here to fulfill all of my desires, not the other way around.” By the way, nothing has changed today. False teachers abound to this day. They preach a very man-centered gospel, not a God-centered, Christ-centered gospel. Instead of calling people to set their minds on things above rather than on the things of earth, they do just the opposite.

False teachers love to appeal to men who live for self rather than for God. I'll give you one example that is very prominent today: Joel Osteen is one of the most popular purveyors of a false Christ and a counterfeit gospel in our generation. I want you to listen to the titles of his #1 best-selling books: “Breakout: Five keys to go beyond your barriers and live an extraordinary life.” Another one: “I Declare: 31 promises to speak over your life.” Another: “Become a Better You: 7 keys to improving your life every day.” Another one: “Your Best Life Now: 7 steps to living at your full potential.” Compare this to the words of Jesus, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself,” which literally means “renounce yourself.” “And take up his cross daily and follow me for whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”

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So again, Jesus points them the witness of John the Baptist. Notice in verse 35, “He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.” Just for a while, they got all excited and then they fizzled out when they saw what Jesus wanted them to do. My friends, the difference between a genuine believer and a false believer is not how they begin but how they end. Jesus said in John 8:31, “If you abide in my word then you are truly disciples of mine and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

Now, I want you to look at this text very closely: it says John was the lamp that was burning and was shining. The term “lamp” in the original language is *lychnos*. It means a small portable lamp that they would carry around. But what you must understand is that Jesus was the source of light; he was the fuel in the lamp. Jesus said, for example in John 8:12, “I am the light.” And here the word *phos* is used, we get our word phosphorous from that and it means “the essence of light.” He is the antithesis of darkness. He is the source of illumination. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life.” Here's the point: he's saying John the Baptist was merely a reflector of the light of Christ like the moon reflects the light of the sun. Don't you love to walk out on a moonlit night where you can see how to walk around because of the light of the moon? But that light is not coming from the moon, it's coming from the sun. It is merely reflecting the light.

So, John was like that. He was a man whose life and whose lips lit the way for people in darkness to see the light of Christ. And I would ask you: can that be said of you? Can that be said of you? Or are you a moon that is so far removed from Christ that you cannot reflect his light? Are you a lamp without fuel? The answer to this, my friends, is not determined by what you do but by who you are in private. What I mean here is: who you are in private defines who you really are. This determines your proximity to the Son. If you have no habit of secret prayer and daily devotion to Scripture, if you do not long to be in the presence of Christ, then you have no fuel in your lamp. It's very simple.

George Whitfield was arguably one of the greatest preachers who ever lived since the days of the apostles. He was the catalyst of the Great Awakening in England and America, the American colonies in the 18th century. It is well documented that the secret to his power was his singular devotion to God in private worship. He was disciplined in his daily study of the word in prayer. He was focused on Christ. Nothing else really mattered. He was a man that was cloaked in humility. He was a man consumed with the glory of God and living a life of holiness. He wanted, he said, a “felt Christ.” He wanted a subjective experiential awareness of the living Christ, a longing to experience his presence and his power in his life. It is said that Whitfield was able to stand before men because he first knelt before God.

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Biographer, Robert Philip, identified Whitfield's prayer life as a main source of his spiritual success. He said this, "The grand secret of Whitfield's power was as we have seen and felt, his devotional spirit. Had he been less prayerful, he would have been less powerful." Stephen Lawson adds, "Whitfield was much for God because he was much with him." He went on to say that as a new convert, Whitfield remarked, "I would be so overpowered with a sense of God's infinite majesty that I would be compelled to throw myself on the ground and offer my soul as a blank in his hands, to write on it what he pleased."

Dear Christian, this is the kind of heart attitude. This is the kind of disciple that is necessary to fuel your lamp. And without it, you may think that you shine but you don't because you are fueled by the flesh, not by the Spirit. It's no wonder that countless eye-witnesses testified of being fearful during Whitfield's preaching because of the solemn realization that they had been in the presence of Christ. Oh, would that we all be lamps that burn and shine for Christ because we are fueled by Christ. Such was John the Baptist.

So, first Jesus provides the witness of John the Baptist to fortify his claim to deity but secondly, he directs them to the witness of his works. Notice verse 36, "But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." Now, by this time, of course, Jesus had turned water into wine; he'd given ears to the deaf; he'd given sight to the blind; he'd given limbs to the disabled; he'd given life to the dead; he had fed a vast multitude with a few loaves and fishes; he had cleansed lepers; he had delivered captives from demons; he had walked on water; he had stilled the wind, calmed the sea and thousands of other miraculous works that are not recorded. And I might add: that have never been duplicated by the phony imitators who claim to have such powers. It's fascinating: none of his enemies ever denied his miraculous signs. Instead, they just attributed them to Satan.

But his miracles were performed primarily to authenticate his regal claim as the Messiah of Israel that they might know that the kingdom indeed was at hand. And all of his miraculous works, most of which are not even recorded in Scripture according to chapter 20, verse 30, all of these claimed that he was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. This was the confirmation of all of his works. Moreover, they pointed to that climactic event when the Lord would purchase our redemption on the cross at Calvary. And all of these works, the Father sent him to accomplish. That's his point. They were done in perfect harmony with his will. In John 4:34, he told the disciples, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." And you might recall in his high priestly prayer to the Father, he states victoriously in John 17:4, "I glorified you on the earth having accomplished the work which you had given me to do." My friends, this includes your salvation and mine. What a glorious thought.

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Then he provides a third witness to his deity and that is the witness of his Father in verse 37, he says, “And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form.” When he speaks of this witness that the Father has borne of him, he's describing a witness that is infinitely more credible than any human witness, the witness of his heavenly Father. Which, by the way, people heard. There were three times when we see this: 1. at his baptism. Matthew 3:17 we read, “And behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Don't you know that was a terrifying event for everybody that heard that? Don't you know that word spread like wild-fire? “You are not going to believe what we heard.” But also, we know in John 12, remember when Jesus' soul was troubled as he contemplated his death and yet he said, “Father, glorify your name,” and then we read in John 12:28, “Then a voice came from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” Then also, the Father spoke at the Transfiguration. In Matthew 17:5, we read, “While he,” referring to Peter, “was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

But he says here, “You have neither heard his voice at any time nor seen his form.” They didn't hear any of these things. Now, some of them actually didn't physically hear it but the point is: you only hear what you want to hear. Isn't that how we all are? We only hear what we want to hear. And this is actually a stinging indictment to the Jews that are standing before him because of their refusal to hear the revelation of God through the Son that stood in their midst. It's an amazing thought. Now, they knew that God had spoken to Moses and Jesus is going to go on to say in verse 45 that Moses will be their accuser because if they had believed Moses, they would also believe in Jesus. The Jews also knew that God had manifested himself physically to Jacob, to Gideon, to Manoah and others but there, right in front of their eyes, stood the Incarnate Son of the living God yet they refused to see him for who he really is, the full revelation of God in human form. God's final revelation to man.

You will recall and John recorded it in chapter 1, verse 1, that Jesus is the very word of God so if you reject him, you reject God. He is the fulfillment of all of the antecedent revelation of God and no one comes to the Father but through him. So, Jesus says in verse 38, “You do not have His word abiding in you.” Mind you, he's speaking to the religious elite of Israel, “You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.” I ask you, my friends, do you have the word abiding in you? This speaks of the internal witness of God that every twice born saint will experience by the power of the indwelling Spirit. Paul spoke of this in Romans 8:16, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” Isn't that a precious thing? The Spirit confirms our inward conviction that we are children of God. In Romans 5:5, Paul says,

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“The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” So, every genuine believer has a subjective, internal awareness that is animated by the power of the Holy Spirit that he is alive in us and is continually working to bring us to glory. Jesus is saying, “You don't have that because you don't believe in me.” If you don't have that then you don't believe in him. You see, this is the Spirit's subjective testimony of our sonship experienced by believers who act like sons and honor their father. So, in verse 38 again, “You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.” They rejected his claim to deity, they rejected the gospel.

So, Jesus has given them the witness of John, the witness of his works, the witness of his Father and finally, the witness of Scripture. Notice in verse 39 and 40, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” Jesus here exposes their primary motivation for diligent study. Do you know what it was? They were absolutely convinced that this would earn them eternal life. Even today if you go to Israel, some of you have been there with me, you have seen this: the Orthodox Jews are fanatical in searching the Scripture. In fact, it is a badge of honor to study so hard that it begins to do damage to your eyes and so, therefore, you wear thick, Coke-bottle glasses. That's a badge of honor. It shows how godly you are. It demonstrates how you've worn out your eyes in fastidious study. One of the great rabbis, Hillel, affirms “the more study of the law, the more life and then if a man gains for himself words of the law, he has gained for himself life in the world to come.” That was the mindset. Jesus saw all of that but Jesus is saying, “You search in vain because you refuse to see the obvious. All of Scripture points to me and unless you see this, you will never have eternal life.”

Now, to be sure, if God's word is not a priority in a man's heart, he will never come to Christ, he will never receive Christ, he will never serve Christ, he will never have a genuine love for Christ, he will never live for the glory of Christ. In fact, he will perish in his sins. But a man must approach the word of God not just for the purpose of study or thinking that somehow studying it is going to give him eternal life, he must approach it with a humble honest heart, with a fear of God, seeking to hear God, not affirm his own preconceived ideas. In fact, God says through his prophet Isaiah in chapter 66:2, “But to this one I will look.” In other words, this is the person that gets my attention, “to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my word.”

Frankly, I have found that it is a waste of time and energy to tell a man about Christ if he rejects the word of God. When I share Christ with a man and he immediately says to me, “Ah, ah, ah, I don't believe any of that Bible stuff,” my quick reply is, “I'm sorry. I didn't realize that God has abandoned you so I'll not waste your time and I'll not waste my time telling you about his willingness to forgive you of your sins and give you eternal life

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through faith in Christ.” And they'll change the subject and I will pray that the Spirit of God will quicken his soul because unless he does, he will never believe and then when you give him the gospel, he will hear. Beloved, a man will never come to Christ in genuine saving faith unless he first senses the depth of his desperate need for Christ and undeserved mercy and grace. I mean, what man would ever go to a doctor if he had no concern for his health? And so, this is what Jesus is doing here with these stubborn, unbelieving Jews, his kinsmen.

Notice what he says then in verses 41 and 42, “I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.” Now the penetrating eye of divine omniscience peers into their hearts and sees what's going on and those who oppose him and what does he see? Oh, they're real religious on the outside but they have no love of God on the inside. And he does not want these men who dishonor him in their hearts to give him praise with their lips. Such hypocrisy is an abomination to God. Beloved, don't miss this: the love of God in a man's heart is the surest mark of genuine saving faith. If you don't love God, I don't care what your profession is, you've never been born again. The natural man doesn't have the faintest spark of affection for God in his heart, therefore, all of his outward acts, even religious acts, are worthless in God's sight. The word of God tells us that the unregenerate man is not only at enmity with God, he has no love for God. He is, therefore, incapable of obeying the supreme commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. As Jonathan Edwards solemnly put it, “The heart of the sinner is as devoid of love for God as a corpse is of vital heat.”

You must understand, dear friends, it is our love for God that motivates our obedience and to speak very practically, if you have some life-dominating sin in your life, the reason why it's there is because you love that sin more than you love God. Jesus said in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we,” don't you love that? “We,” the Triune Godhead, “will come to you him and make our abode with him.” My friend, I ask you: if Jesus looked you in the face and looked through your eyes and peered into your heart, would he say, “I know you and you have no love of God in you.” Oh, I hope not.

What a blistering accusation to these Jewish leaders. Despite the obvious revelation of Christ in the Old Testament. Without the love of God in your heart, you're never going to find Christ in Scripture no matter how hard you search. Jesus goes on to expose them more in verse 43, he says, “I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” You see, Jesus knew the history of the Jewish leaders who were absolute suckers for charlatans and Messianic pretenders that had come and gone for at least 200 years before Christ. This is well documented in the historical records. And Jesus warned that others would come as well. In fact, one

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Fourfold Witness To the Deity of Christ

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historian says, “Subsequent historical record accounts tell us that no less than 63 Messianic claimants attracted followers.”

“These men, they come in their own name and you receive them but you're going to reject me?” So, Jesus asked a penetrating question that exposes why would they so readily receive false teachers and bogus Messiahs, why would they do that? Verse 44, “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” What is he saying here? The word “glory” is “doxa” in Greek. We get doxology from that and it means “glory, praise, honor.” How can you believe when you are looking for praise and glory and honor from one another? That's the problem, it's your pride. You see, these Jewish leaders followed these deceivers because these deceivers flattered them, they glorified and honored them to gain favor. They told them what they wanted to hear. Now, you must remember, first century worship was an extravagant spectacle. It was the place for leaders to show off their religious garb. It was a time of ostentatious praying and giving and trumpets blowing, especially when one of the Pharisees would come up and give his offering and so forth. What's the purpose of that? To gain the applause from men. In fact, Jesus would later say in John 12:43, “They loved praise from men more than praise from God.”

My friends, both then and now, false teachers love to make claims that correspond with the desires of men. In those day, they offered the Jewish people and the Jewish leaders political power and victory over their oppressors, material prosperity. And Jesus comes along and exposes their self-righteousness, exposes their prides, calls them to repentance. He's not telling them what they want to hear. He's not telling them how to gain their life but how to lose their life for his sake that they might have eternal life. They want prosperity. They want pleasure. And he offers them a cross. To this very day, people clamor after ear-tickling prosperity charlatans but, my friend, when a man is seeking his own glory, he will never seek the glory that is from the one and only God as Jesus says here and he's speaking specifically to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 45, “Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.” Now, you must understand, Jesus just used what we would call “the nuclear option.” I mean, this is absolutely outrageous to the Jews. This is incomprehensible. Moses was their greatest hero. You see, Jesus didn't understand this whole seeker-sensitive thing. He just didn't understand that. He didn't say, “You know guys, we really need to have a conversation.” He didn't understand any of that. No wonder so few people followed him.

But he goes on to say here in verse 46, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” In other words, because of self-love, because of pride, they completely

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missed the whole purpose of the Mosaic law. What was the purpose of the law? To expose their sin and drive them to the Savior, to expose their utter inability to save themselves. In fact, Paul said in Galatians 3:23, "The law has become our tutor." To what? "To lead us to Christ so that we may be justified by faith." But they were convinced that their scrupulous adherence to the law would save them and they missed the whole point of the Levitical priesthood. They missed the point of the sacred symbolism of the sacrificial system that pointed to the Lamb of God that stood right before them. And since they could not grasp the obvious found in the writings of Moses, Jesus' point is: how can they possibly, how will you possibly believe my words? Sadly, despite all this proof, their rejection of Jesus would eventually climax by nailing their Messiah to the cross. Oh, dear friends, I pray that you are not likewise deceived. I truly pray that. I pray that you believe in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, that you have trusted him as your only hope of salvation.

I wish to leave you with a couple of thoughts as we close this morning in light of what we've examined. My friend, never underestimate the deceptive nature of your own heart. Never underestimate the deceptive nature of your heart. We read in the word of God that "there is a way that seems right to a man but it's end is the way of death." Ask yourself: do I really love God? Or if I'm really honest, do I love the world more than him and seek praise from men rather than from God like these that we've seen this morning. You know, if you do not have the love of God in you, you will never find Christ. It's real simple. Instead, what you will do, you will chase after the fleeting pleasures of this life, of this world and you will never find satisfaction for your soul and you will perish in your sins. Ask yourself: have I truly been born again? Not: am I religious or do I believe in Jesus intellectually? That's not the question. Have I truly been born again? Made a new creature in Christ? Some will typically ask: how can I know? How can I know for sure that my love for Christ is real? That I have not deceived myself? That truly he is my Savior and my Lord?

My friend, the word of God is very clear. He gives us a number of tests. Let me give you just a few as we close. If you are truly born again, you will hate your sin and you will live a life of repentance. You will manifest a transformed life. You will hate the things that God hates and love the things that he loves because you're a new creature in Christ. You will walk in newness of life because you have received spiritual life that animates all the faculties of your soul. And as a result of that, the Spirit of God will cause you to bring forth fruit from God as one who is alive from the dead. This is the stuff of genuine saving faith. You will separate yourself from the world because you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God. You will have a hungering and a thirsting for righteousness. You will crave the word of God because you know that you cannot know Christ apart from his word. You will long to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. And you will use the spiritual gifts that God has given you because you are

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devoted to his glory and everything else in life is secondary or tertiary. You will have a burden for the lost. And you will long to see your Savior face-to-face. And you will be looking for his return.

My friends, these are the things that validate genuine saving faith. Not some aisle that you walk. Not some profession that you've made. Not some baptism or some ritual. But it's the fruit of your life. If you say you're an apple tree, let's see the apples. There's what they are. Oh, we serve a wonderful Savior, don't we? And how I long to see him because he is the Son of God.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these amazing truths. I pray that by the power of your Spirit you will plant them deep within every heart and that you might cause them to grow and bear much fruit not only for our good but ultimately for your glory. And Lord, if there is someone that does not know you as Savior and has no desire to serve you as Lord, Lord, I pray that by the power of your Spirit, you will overwhelm them with conviction even this day that they might run to the cross and cry out for your mercy and be saved. I ask all of this in the precious name of Jesus who made it all possible and for his glorious sake. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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