

Jesus: Lord, Liar or Lunatic?

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 7:17-24
Preached on: Sunday, June 29, 2014

It is our great privilege this morning to return once again to the gospel of John 7. If you will join me, John 7, we will be looking at verses 17-24 this morning. I've entitled my discourse to you "Jesus: Lord, Liar or Lunatic?" Follow along as I read our text beginning in verse 14 of John 7,

"14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. 15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?' 16 So Jesus answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If any man is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. 19 Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?' 20 The multitude answered, 'You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?' 21 Jesus answered them, 'I did one deed, and you all marvel. 22 On this account Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? 24 'Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.'"

May I remind you that we are here together this morning to worship the one and living and true God, an infinite, all-knowing spirit, perfect in all of his attributes. One, in essence, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each equally deserving worship and obedience. And specifically this morning, we are focusing our attention primarily on God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the second member of the Triune Godhead, the self-existent, eternally existent, uncreated Creator of all things who continues to sustain all things by the word of his power. By faith, we believe in God's written revelation to man, the Bible, which tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, that he was God Incarnate and that the purpose of his incarnation was to reveal God, to redeem man and to rule over God's kingdom.

According to Scripture, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of his blood and sacrificial death on the cross and on the basis of the efficacy of his death, the believing sinner is forgiven, is declared righteous and is given eternal life. Moreover, he is adopted into the family of God. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave which guarantees the future resurrection of all those who believe in him and we believe that Jesus Christ will

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return to receive the church which is his body unto himself at the rapture and returning with his church in glory, will establish his millennial kingdom upon this earth. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind.

According to Scripture, we know that the coming universal King, the Lord Jesus Christ, will reign upon the throne of David and he will be the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in him as Lord and Savior.

Now, essentially all of these claims that I just rehearsed with you are the claims that Jesus made when he was here on earth, claims that we see throughout the gospels. In fact, the purpose of John's gospel is recorded in John 20:31 where he says, "These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing, you may have life in his name." But the people of his day rejected these claims, in fact, they were profoundly offended by them, so much so, that they crucified him. And I would submit to you that 2,000 years later, nothing has really changed.

I spent some time doing something I seldom do this week and that is I got on YouTube and I looked up, "Who is Jesus?" I wanted to get just kind of a flavor. I already pretty much knew but I thought I'd get a bit of a flavor. One that popped up says, "Who is Jesus? New York City street survey," and I listened to what people said. Let me remind you of what the world says about Jesus. One guy says he's a white guy with a beard. Another guy says he's a white guy from the 60s. Another person says, "I guess he's a reason to believe and continue on in your life and your journey." Another person said, "Ah, he's just a story made up by someone." One guy said, "Jesus, he's a friend of mine from Puerto Rico." Another person said, "I don't really know." One young lady said, "He is the Son of God, my Lord and Savior."

Then it went on. Someone said, "Well, I don't really know but there's definitely something special about Jesus just like there's something special about everybody." Another person said, "Well, he definitely taught good morals and beliefs, possibly he had some special gift." When asked the question, one guy just rolled his eyes, shook his head and walked away in disgust. Another girl said, "Well, he was really cool because he smoked pot. That's why I love him even more." Another person said, "He's some kind of a Ghandi type guy." And yet another said, "I think he's some superpower but I don't really know." And then another person said, "Ah, he's just a make-believe story that's blown out of proportion."

I left that video and went to some others and basically what you hear, for the most part, people will say that he was a great teacher who loved everyone, he preached love and tolerance but what you will find is that people were adamant that he was not the Son of God, that he is not the only way to salvation, that he is not coming again in power and great glory and he is not the one through whom God will judge all mankind. What's

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fascinating, in every case their spiritual authority was their own opinion, not the word of God which, once again, betrays man's hopeless inability to free himself from his own ignorance and pride. Man's hostility toward Jesus, the Son of God, continues to be one of the greatest evidences that man is indeed dead in his trespasses and sins. The Holy Spirit described it this way in Romans 3, beginning in verse 10, "There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving. The poison of asps is under their lips whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery and in their paths and the path of peace, they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

My friends, during Jesus' earthly ministry, he performed countless miracles. He never once sinned against God or sinned against man. He never once mistreated anyone or used them for personal gain. He never once failed to love others perfectly even to the point of giving his life for many who wanted nothing to do with him and even hated him. But because he claimed to be God and because he called men to repent of their sins and have faith in him, he was despised, he was rejected and eventually murdered. So I would ask you this morning: what do you say about Jesus? Who was he based upon his claims recorded in Scripture? Is he Lord? Is he a liar? Or is he a lunatic?

C. S. Lewis put it this way, "A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

In John 7, verse 7, Jesus told his half-brothers who at that time did not believe in him, "The world cannot hate you," meaning you're a part of them, and he said, "but it hates me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." And as we continue to examine how the world treated Jesus and his disciples, both then and now, we see a four stage progression that I gave to you the last time we met together. The first stage is people maligned Christ and those who belonged to him. Then it moves from maligning to marginalizing them and then to mistreating them and finally, to murdering them. We see hostility in the United States mounting against those who truly love Christ and who truly see his word as the only moral spiritual authority. I believe, as I have said before, that in the United States we're somewhere between marginalized and being mistreated, moving rapidly towards

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persecution, towards murder. In our text this morning, we're going to see this kind of hostility played out in a very dramatic way.

Let me remind you of the context. By now, the Lord Jesus is enjoying mixed reviews by his Jewish kinsmen in Galilee and in the south in Judea and, for the most part however, the massive crowds, 20,000+, have abandoned him. They want nothing to do with him because he not only refused to be their political and social savior who would continue to feed them and free them from Rome, but he had the audacity to expose their sin and their false religious system. He knows by now that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were seeking to kill him, according to verse 1 of chapter 7. But to be obedient to the law, he is now going to go to Jerusalem to participate in the eight day festival known as the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles and rather than joining his brothers and risk being spotted and perhaps taken by force by those who would want to make him king or taken by the religious authorities who would imprison him before his divinely appointed time, he sends his brothers on their way by themselves. Soon after, Jesus goes up by himself very privately. You see, normally they would go together in caravans; there would be lots of worship and singing as they went and he wanted to avoid that.

Notice verse 10 of chapter 7, "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, 'Where is He?' There was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were saying, 'He is a good man'; others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.' Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews," referring to the Jewish leaders. No doubt, they were afraid to voice an opinion that might be contrary to their Jewish leaders because the result might be excommunication, being removed from the synagogue, being banished from the Jewish community.

So what happens next is both fascinating as well as instructive and I wish to divide verses 14-24 into three categories that I pray will help you grasp some of these remarkable and very practical truths. 1. We're going to see the source of sound doctrine. Secondly, the secret to spiritual discernment. Thirdly, the spirit of self-exaltation. So notice verse 14, "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach." Think about this, this is amazing: there are literally thousands of people there in Jerusalem but fearing God not man, Jesus walks right into the lion's lair, so to speak, into the temple that he had previously cleansed by force in order to honor his Father. I would have given anything to be able to see the looks on the faces of those religious leaders that were bent on killing him. But because there were so many people that were fascinated with Jesus and some even favorably disposed towards him, the Jewish authorities didn't want to arrest him on the spot, plus they didn't want to, once again, arouse Pilate, the

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Roman governor, who had previously entered the temple and slaughtered a number of Galilean Jews who were giving sacrifices there which Luke alludes to in Luke 13.

Now, the Holy Spirit does not tell us what Jesus taught about, but it's obvious from the text that his listeners were absolutely amazed and, of course, this should be no surprise to us, after all, he is the Incarnate Word of God. However, as I thought about it, since it was the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, no doubt he explained why it was required, what was really going on theologically with all of this. No doubt he took them to Leviticus 23 and explained Deuteronomy 16 where this is described. He probably explained the meaning of their bondage in Egypt, the great exodus that pictures God's mercy in salvation and the faithfulness of God in their wilderness wanderings where they dwelt in makeshift shelters which they would have done during this feast period. No doubt he spoke to them about God's faithful sustaining power and provision for them, for their ancestors during that wilderness wandering and how it will one day be celebrated in the future along with the feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread in the millennial kingdom in association with the temple that he would build. Perhaps he took them to Ezekiel 45 that explains these things. No doubt he spoke to them about its true meaning and how it applied to them specifically. Because of his omniscience as the Incarnate Word of God, it would be demeaning to say of him that he had a good grasp of Scripture because he was and is the Living Word of God.

So naturally, the people are dumbfounded when they heard him teach. Notice verse 15, "The Jews, therefore, were marveling saying, 'How has this man become learned having never been educated?'" We know according to Mark 1:22, on another occasion when he taught in the synagogue in Capernaum they said, "They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." To put it in our vernacular, they would have said, "Goodness gracious, listen to this Jesus. I mean, this guy is a redneck from Nazareth. He's got no formal education. He didn't go to any of the rabbinical institutions. This arrogant upstart is not citing other rabbis to substantiate what he says like all of the rest of the teachers, he is speaking on the basis of his own authority." And indeed, this is true. If you look at other places in the gospels, you will hear him say, "You have heard that it is said, but I say to you," or "I tell you the truth."

Now, what better way to undermine what Jesus was saying than by questioning his authority to teach because he does not have the proper credentials and that's what was going on. They were basically saying, "Don't pay any attention to this guy. He hasn't gone to the right seminary." That's the idea. How sad; what a betrayal of the hardness of their heart. Think about it: they could not deny his brilliant grasp of Scripture nor could they refute what he said that undoubtedly pierced their conscience and exposed their sin, so rather than contemplating his words and humbling themselves, they attack his qualifications. It's interesting, later they did the same thing with Peter and John. We read

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about it in Acts 4:13, there Luke tells us, “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.” Boy, that's the institution I want to go to, don't you? There has never been a greater training opportunity in all of the world than what they had sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Understand what Jesus is doing here in the temple. He is forcing them to ask some very important questions: who is this guy really and what is the source of his teaching? Jesus knows that these are some of their questions and he's going to follow along right with their line of thinking. Notice verse 16, “Jesus therefore answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.'” Friends, here we gain insight into 1. the source of sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is another way of saying divine truth. What we see here is that Jesus received his knowledge directly from God the Father who sent him and by implication what he is saying is this, “Unlike you teachers who derive your knowledge from other men, the source of my doctrine is from God the Father and so if you disagree with me, you're disagreeing with him.” It's interesting, later in chapter 12:49, Jesus says, “I did not speak on my own initiative but the Father himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that his commandment is eternal life, therefore, the things I speak I speak just as the Father has told me.”

Now, I want to ask you this morning: what is the source of what you believe? Is it your own opinion? Is it the opinions of men or of God? Routinely, I hear people make ridiculous assertions about some spiritual truth or something in the Bible, some theological issue and you find that it's just their own opinion. Haven't we all been in those Bible studies or those Sunday School classes where people love to pontificate on a particular verse and tell us all what that verse means to them rather than what that verse means to God which many times are radically different?

Recently, I was interacting with a very hostile internet listener who had heard my series on how God justifies the ungodly and this man profoundly disagreed with me and I asked him why. He said, “Paul's views were merely his own opinion as he was trying to make sense of Judaism and Christianity.” I wrote back to him, “Then how do you explain Paul's words in Galatians 1:11-12 which says, 'I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ'?” His answer was this, “Well, naturally, he would say that.”

You know, this type of thinking is pandemic today even in the church. Arrogant teachers make things up and worldly people eat it up. In 1 Timothy 1, Paul warned Timothy to “instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,” that's in verse 3. Then in verse 5 and

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following he says, “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. But,” he says, “for some men, straying from these things have turned aside to fruitless discussion wanting to be teachers of the law even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they are making confident assertions.” By the way, the majority of what you see these days sold in Christian bookstores is what we read here, “strange doctrines, the opinions of men rather than the opinion of God.”

In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul warns Timothy about, “doctrines of demons.” Plural, “doctrines of demons preached by lying hypocrites whose consciences are seared because of their sinfulness and their deceptions. But,” he says, “you must be constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine,” singular, “which you have been following.” In verse 16, he says, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching,” or your doctrine, singular. You see, friends, there is only one doctrine, one teaching that comes from one source and that is from God himself but there are many doctrines, plural, that come from men. That's why you read in the New Testament about the doctrines of men in Colossians 2:22. You'll read about strange doctrines, plural, Hebrews 13:9 and doctrines of demons as I just mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1 and the multiple doctrines of men and demons will always contradict one another and certainly contradict the single true doctrine of God revealed in Scripture that will always exist in perfect harmony with all that God has decreed for his glory. This is why Paul told Timothy and all creatures in 2 Timothy 4:2, “preach the word,” and in verse 3, he says, “for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”

I want to digress for just a moment because sometimes I hear people ask, “Well, how can a man know that Scripture is from God and, therefore, the sole authority of faith and practice?” The answer is real simple: he will know it by grace through faith. It's the only way. You see, as you look at Scripture we see that human depravity has rendered man's cognitive capacity incapable of judging truth. 1 Corinthians 2:14, “The things of the Spirit are foolishness to him.”

So God must do something to humble a man's heart and give him understanding and then when he does, the truths of divine revelation will be self-authenticating to a man whose heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God. He will hear it and he will believe. “Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.” We must remember that the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is an indispensable antecedent to embracing the truth and when the Father, by his great mercy, draws a sinner unto Christ, the Holy Spirit then gives him spiritual life. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 36:9, “With thee is the fountain of life. In thy light, we see light.” Practically speaking, if you line up a thousand

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false religions in front of a man's door and they all knock and the man opens the door and he hears a thousand spiels, how will he possibly know that the gospel is the only one that is true? The answer is: by grace through faith. When a man's heart is being softened by the Spirit of God he will reject all of the lies and he will embrace the truth of the gospel. By the way, folks, it's for this reason that we never deviate from the doctrine of God that is revealed in Scripture, especially to somehow make it more appealing to man. I mean, what arrogance to somehow assume that we can take on the role of the Holy Spirit who will always use his word to either judicially harden a heart or graciously soften a heart. We know, according to the word of God, that all Scripture is inspired by God and so we are never to stand in judgment of it nor should we ever create our own word. We preach his word and his word alone.

So, Jesus begins by speaking about the source of sound doctrine and then, secondly, he reveals an amazing truth about 2. the secret to spiritual discernment. Verse 17, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." Here we learn that the secret to spiritual discernment is having a humble heart committed to doing God's will. You know, such was not the case with the audience standing before Jesus.: their hearts were proud; they were self-seeking; they were not willing to do his will; they wanted to do their own will, do their own thing and the Holy Spirit will not confirm truth to that kind of an arrogant, selfish heart. By the way, this is why Jesus refused to respond to the requests of the people to perform more and more miracles to somehow validate his claims. You know, the same is true today. You think about it: no matter how compelling the truths of the gospel and the testimony of those who have been born-again, the hard-hearted man filled with pride is never going to hear that and believe because they don't seek the Lord. They are seeking to justify their own lifestyles and their religious systems that prop up those lifestyles. It reminds me of God's promise to Israel in Deuteronomy 4:29 where he said this, "You will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."

You know, routinely I encounter people on the internet, sometimes they call me, sometimes I see them in other places and I'm sure you do too, people that want to attack the gospel and the truths of Scripture. They want to argue some issue and routinely what I will say to them is, "You know, before I answer your question, I have to ask you a question that is so, so crucial and that is: do you fear God? I can answer your question biblically but before I do, I need to know: do you fear God?" and it's always interesting to see the reaction. It's kind of an angry, "What do you mean, fear God? What does that mean?" and I'll explain, "The fear of God means to be absolutely awed by him, to worship him, to want to do his will, to understand that he is the God of glory and that he is the ultimate Judge," and as you explain that, they say, "You know, I don't believe any of that." The reason why I ask that is because according to Scripture we know that the

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fear of the Lord is the beginning of what? It's the beginning of knowledge. If you don't fear God, you're not going to be able to gain the knowledge. The text says "fools despise wisdom and instruction," so what I will kindly say to them, "Give the fact that you don't fear God, you're not going to be able to grasp the truths of his word so, quite frankly, for us to debate this is going to be an exercise in futility."

Perhaps this describes you: perhaps you're hearing me today and you're saying, "Well, you know, I've heard this gospel stuff and all these things about Jesus and so forth but, you know, I really don't believe all of that. I just disagree with so much of it." My response is, "Really? So what you're telling me is you believe that you are capable of standing in judgment of God." My friend, if this is you, Jesus says that your reaction to the truth of his word proves that "you are of your father the devil" and you want to do the desires of your father, John 8:44. He goes on to say, "he was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him." My friend, based on the word of God, your arrogance and ignorance proves that you are a slave to your own sin. May I humbly ask you to think about this, examine your heart right now, think of the misery and doubt that plagues your life because if you're here without Christ that's what's going on and you know it. Think about the confusion and frustration you experience every day, the fact that you know that your life is going nowhere fast. You know, for millions of people today, they measure their worth as a person based upon how many friends they have on Facebook. For many people, the highlight of their day is reading comments that other people have made on their Facebook posts and yet they have no desire to hear God's comments about their life. "Yeah, well, you know, I hear that but I just don't believe that the Bible is the answer, that it's God's revelation to man, that we're supposed to live for his glory and all that stuff." Then I would ask you: why are you here? What is your purpose in life? According to the prevailing wisdom of our day, the theory of evolution, you are nothing more than a sophisticated germ that somehow crawled out of some primordial ooze billions of years ago so you might as well just eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow you're going to die.

That's the mindset of most people whether they want to admit it or not. How else can you explain, for example, the euphoria of sports fans? I see soccer fans here lately. I mean, they watch men kick a ball around for hours and occasionally somebody scores and then people go absolutely insane. What's amazing is that the team that loses becomes violent, people become suicidal. You know, is that really your calling in life? Is that the best life is for you? Without Christ, it is. Think of the ways you live for yourself with no thought of God. Think of the ways that you experience guilt over your sin. Think of the ways that you desperately try to avoid thinking about God: you refuse to give him thanks; you refuse to give him glory; you will not worship him; you're all about yourself, yet you're miserable and think about the ways you fear death.

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All of this betrays the fool's paradise. In Proverbs 1, verse 20, wisdom is personified and speaks in the first person emphasizing the serious consequences that come to those who reject wisdom. Here's what God says, "Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: 'How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.'" Then he goes on to reveal the doom that awaits the arrogant fool that has no fear of God and he says this, "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me," here's why, "Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

My friend, I hope you are not like the hard-hearted hypocrites that stood before Jesus and listened to him in the temple and yet refused to believe in him and I must tell you that unless you humble your heart and you have a deep-rooted determination to know him and to do his will, a day is coming when this Jesus that you reject will judge you and you will perish in your sin and you will be eternally separated from God in the solitary confinement of hell. Dear friend, I cannot express how important it is for you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I offer you the words of King David when he spoke to his son, Solomon, in 1 Chronicles 28:9. He said this, "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind," and then he says this, "for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever."

So with this in mind, Jesus says in verse 17, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." So, my friends, if you decisively commit yourself to knowing the will of God, you will discover that what Jesus teaches is exactly that. You see, ultimately this is a matter of the heart, not a matter of the intellect. Jesus' Jewish kinsmen did not have a genuine heart desire to carry out the will of God in their life so they lacked spiritual discernment. They had no capacity to apprehend the truth that Jesus revealed to them. I just pray that is not your heart attitude.

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Jesus continues in verse 18, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” Here we have learned the source of sound doctrine and the secret of spiritual discernment and now, thirdly, we learn about the spirit of self-exaltation. This is really summarized in Jesus' statement, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory.” Now, you must understand this is an indictment against the very leaders that were listening to him because this is precisely what his opponents would do. They would speak from themselves and for themselves. Said differently: they would make up stuff to attract followers. By the way, this is the MO of every false teacher. As you look in Scripture, you will see that constantly the characteristics of a false teacher is that they speak from themselves and they seek their own glory. By the way, this was exactly what happened throughout ancient Israel. Charlatans of that day, like today, they didn't seek to rightly divide the word of God, they were into their own form of pragmatism. They had to say things that were necessary to somehow attract a crowd and gain their applause, in fact, Jesus has already indicted them on this issue in John 5:44. Remember there he says, “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?”

So Jesus' point to the people that were listening to him was simply this: how can you trust a person speaking to you based upon his own authority? Speaking to you because he's seeking a crowd and personal gain? By the way, this indictment was not without precedent in the Old Testament. We see in the Old Testament that God is constantly exposing false prophets. Ezekiel warned in Ezekiel 34:2, “Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.’” I like the way John MacArthur put it: false teachers “don't feed the flock, they fleece the flock.” This is what we see all the time.

By the way, I did a little study on some of the false teachers of our day, mainly the prosperity teachers. Creflo Dollar's net worth is 27 million. Joel Osteen: 40 million. Benny Hinn: 42 million. Joyce Meyer: 8 million. And on it goes. By the way, do you know what the net worth of Jesus was when he was on earth? He was homeless. He said, “foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” Rosy predictions were the stock in trade of ancient charlatans even in the day that Jesus spoke. Unconditional prosperity without repentance, that was the theme. They told people what they wanted to hear. In Jeremiah 23, beginning in verse 16 we read this, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD.’” My, how true that is today. He goes on to say, “They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have

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peace"; And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.'" But then God says, "who has stood in the council of the LORD, That he should see and hear His word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?" The answer is obviously, no one. In verse 25, Jeremiah goes on and says, "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!'" Then the Lord says, "How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?" Then he says this, "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth."

The theme of the New Testament when it comes to false teachers is summarized well in 2 Peter 2 where he tells us that they will secretly introduce destructive heresies. They are motivated by sensuality. They will malign the truth and in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Said simply false teachers seek three things: fame, fortune and sex. Unlike the Jewish leaders who sought glory from others, Jesus came, according to verse 18, "seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Then Jesus goes on to expose their sinful spirit of self-exaltation. This is really fascinating. Bear with me, I'll explain it briefly here as we begin to wrap this up this morning. In verse 19, Jesus says, "Did not Moses give you the Law?" The answer is obviously, yeah, "and yet none of you carries out the Law?" Whoa, there's a smack in the face. They all knew it was true. You see, the purpose of the law of Moses was to prove man's inability to keep it and drive him to God's mercy. No one has ever, nor will they ever be saved by keeping the law because no one is able to keep it perfectly. Then Jesus exposes this very thing, their inability to keep the law in the next phrase. He says, "Why do you seek to kill Me?" Think about what he's saying, "You profess to be such great law keepers yet you have murder in your heart which is a violation of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue." I find it fascinating, the greater the religious hypocrite, the greater their hatred of the truth. A. W. Pink put it this way 100 years ago, "Where there is no heart for the truth there is always an heart against it and where there is enmity against the truth itself, there is hatred of those who faithfully proclaim it."

So he says, "Why do you seek to kill me? The crowd answered," in verse 20, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" You must understand that most of these people didn't realize what their leaders were up to. Jesus knew it, they didn't. But isn't it interesting, rather than seeing the glory of Christ and confessing their murderous heart, they insult him and avoid answering his question. They say, "You have a demon!" By the way, that's

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just another way of saying in the ancient Hebrew, “You are insane,” because insanity was considered one of the primary characteristics of demon possession.

But then notice Jesus' humility here. He ignores their blasphemous accusation, verse 21, “Jesus answered them, 'I did one deed, and you all marvel.’” Later on in verses 22 and 23, we see that that deed that he's referring to is his healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda in John 5, and then he says something very curious, especially for those of us who do not come from this culture, but it's something so profound. In verse 22 he says, “For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.” You note there's a parenthesis there and there he is making it very clear circumcision was instituted as a sign of the covenant during the days of the patriarch, during the days of Abraham, and then later it was formalized as a part of the Mosaic law so Jesus is very precise.

Then in verse 23, he goes on with his argument. He says, “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?” This is such a fascinating argument and profoundly compelling. He's saying this: according to the law an infant male must be circumcised on the eighth day and if that happens to fall on the Sabbath, guess what? That's okay, that's not going to be a violation of the law so they would routinely break the Sabbath so that the law of Moses concerning circumcision would not be broken. They knew that; they understood that. So he's basically saying this: what kind of rank hypocrisy would argue that it's okay to routinely cleanse one small part of the body on the Sabbath and yet a violation to heal the whole body one time on the Sabbath.

So goes the insanity of self-righteous legalism. It's always on the prowl to find someone to condemn. Think about it: Jesus healing on the Sabbath, dear friends, was precisely what the Sabbath rest symbolized, God's merciful healing and rest in salvation which is the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes revealed first in the old covenant and fulfilled ultimately in the new. Indeed, we know that the law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ so that we can be justified by faith. You see, God's true rest did not come through the Sabbath rest but it comes through Christ and there he is standing right before them. The Sabbath was merely an earthly rest that foreshadowed the heavenly rest, a heavenly rest that is characterized by the fullness of heavenly bliss and the absence of any labor to earn it. That's why the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 4, verse 9, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” And here the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, stands in the temple and he presents himself to them and he gives them a foretaste of the glory of the eternal Sabbath rest in heaven when he healed that man.

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But they saw none of this because their hearts were hardened. So Jesus closes and says, “Do not judge according to appearance,” in other words based on your self-righteous legalism that is obsessed with externals but ignores the heart, “but judge with righteous judgment.”

My friend, today you must answer the question: who is Jesus? Is he Lord? Is he a liar? Or is he a lunatic? If you think he is a liar and a lunatic, I would humbly call you to repentance. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today and be saved. And if you reject that, my suggestion to you would be to grab all of the gusto you can in life, enjoy living in a fool's paradise because a day of judgment awaits you. And I want you to hear this: according to the word of God, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If Jesus is Lord, which I know he is for the vast majority of those listening to me this morning, may I encourage you to get serious about living for him. This is why you're here. The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins by telling us that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Dear Christian, if you are not enjoying God today, it's because you are not glorifying him today so get serious about glorifying him and you will find that he is a loving Master, one who wants to lavish blessing upon you. There is no greater joy, there is no greater ecstasy, there is no greater delight and satisfaction in all of life than experiencing the hear warming presence of God in the core of our being. Friends, life without Christ is no life at all. It is merely a prelude to hell. So won't you commit yourself to him today and enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ, beginning today and even more so throughout eternity.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these truths that you have revealed to us. I pray that by the power of your Spirit you would cause them to radically transform those who have never humbled themselves before you that they might be saved and experience the miracle of your saving grace today. And for those of us who know you, Lord, may we know you better, may we glorify you more that we might enjoy you more. We commit all of this to you because of Jesus and for his 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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