

The Revelation of the Light of the World

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 8:48-59
Preached on: Sunday, September 21, 2014

It's a deep honor to be able to open up the word of God to you this morning so will you take your Bibles, that infallible record inspired by God and turn to John's Gospel, chapter 8. We continue our verse-by-verse study of this Gospel, beginning at verse 48 this morning through the rest of the chapter. So, if you will, follow along as I read John 8, beginning in verse 48 and I've entitled by discourse to you this morning "The Revelation of the Light of the World" for indeed it is the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ that is speaking to us here. In John 8, beginning in verse 48 we read,

48 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." 52 The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' 53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; 55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Once again, we have the privilege of looking upon the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and the chief purpose of this entire chapter is to present Christ as the light of the world, who he claimed to be and show us that light concerning man's sinfulness and God's remedy in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. As we examine these texts, we not only see the corruption of the ancient Jews filled with self-righteous indignation but we also see ourselves and it is with an eye toward ourselves that I wish to examine this text this morning. Frankly, an exercise that goes against the fortress of our pride.

My observation is that most people are convinced that they have spiritual discernment on virtually any theological spiritual issue. Like these first century religious professors, folks today have great sincerity and zeal for their brand of theology, their religious system and often like strutting peacocks, many religious people flaunt the plumage of their moral integrity and their passion for whatever noble goals they espouse but their religion simply cannot withstand the light of Christ. You see, when the penetrating light of the Gospel shines on false religionists, the corruption of their heart is exposed; the foolishness of

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their system is uncovered. Suddenly, the hornet's nest is disturbed and they come out stinging. This is why, frankly, most people are uncomfortable with the preaching of the word and many times even offended by it. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4:12 that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." He goes on to say that it is "able to judge the thoughts and the intentions of the heart." Then he goes on to say that "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare," literally exposed, "to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." That phrase "laid bare" or "exposed" is a fascinating term. It's used in ancient literature to describe the exposing of the neck for someone or something that is to be sacrificed or even the exposing of the neck for a beheading which we've become all too familiar with in our current era. The point here is that we are all judged not only by the word of God but by God himself on the basis of his word.

As you hear the word taught today, as you learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, confronting his self-willed kinsmen, folks, I want you to remember this: you are accountable to the living written word of God that you hear today. Too often we're like children. The father speaks, pay no attention, in one ear and out the other, going about our business. Often to our surprise, the father comes along and chastens us. Many times that's how we are when we hear the word of God taught. I hope that is not you and while the preaching and the teaching of the word of God must be done with tenderness and with compassion, it must also be done with authority and conviction because indeed this is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, all-sufficient word of God. It is his revelation to us. So I want to remind you of this. Men's souls are in the balance this morning. Your eternal destiny is at stake and God is speaking to you through his word and through his servant.

This is what we see here in Jesus' bold yet kind and dignified confrontation with the Jewish leaders. They are exposed. The word has laid them bare and yet they want nothing to do with him like countless millions of people today. My prayer is that we will all learn from this encounter. To be sure, these are truths that every believer needs to hear. All of the word of God is that way. There are really three reasons if you want to make it real simple: we need to hear the truths of the word of God because we need to be exhorted, we need to be equipped and we need to be encouraged. All three of those things. Some of you may have the vanity of your own religious pretensions and preferences exposed by the light of truth. In fact, I can tell you that that happens to me all week long when I'm immersed in the word, examining it, preparing to share with you what God would have me say and so it exhorts me. For some of you, you may discover that you were either ignorant of some doctrinal truth or you've been holding to an errant understanding of some doctrinal truth and so you need to be equipped. Most all of us, of course, will be deeply encouraged as we once again hear the words of eternal life, truths that thrill our soul and animate our heart to further praise and service. Now, which of these happens to

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you this morning, I will leave that to you and the Spirit of God but know that one if not all of those things should happen.

So I invite you to approach this text with me this morning by looking at three central issues that Jesus addresses, matters pertaining to first: Christ being honored and dishonored. Secondly, matters pertaining to spiritual life and death. Finally, matters pertaining to hope in the eternal one. So join with me now, let's go back a couple thousand years ago. Let's transport ourselves to the outer court of this magnificent temple there in Jerusalem where Jesus has dramatically declared himself to be the light of the world. This happened at the close of the Feast of Tabernacles. Once again, he has made yet another claim to deity like those he has made publicly before. For example, he has told the people that he has come down from heaven to do the Father's will; that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him will have eternal life. He has told them that no one can come to him unless the Father draws that person and unless it has been granted him from the Father. He has told them that if his word has no place in them and you hate him because he has told you the truth, he says, "You are of your father, the devil." So these claims of deity continue to come forth from the Lord Jesus Christ and, of course, this has ignited yet again another firestorm of furious antagonism towards Jesus from the Jewish leaders, the same type of response he would get if he were to come here today and speak to Congress or speak to the United Nations or speak to any or most college campuses and universities and, frankly, 99% of most religious gatherings including many ostensibly Christian churches.

The natural man who has never been born again hates the truth. If goes against his nature. He is absolutely by nature indifferent to Christ. He is rebellious. He is self-absorbed. He is self-willed. He prefers darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil, therefore, he does not want Christ to rule over him. But when the Spirit of God comes along and breathes life into the spiritual corpse and makes us a new creation, everything about us begins to change. Christ becomes our life and we love everything about him and we know that we owe everything to him. Well, my friends, this transformation has not yet happened to these Jewish antagonists. We believe that some of them later on did come to Christ but that has not happened here as yet so they are outraged at Jesus' declaration of deity as well as the fact that he is calling them children of Satan and not of God. That just did not go over very well as you can imagine.

So let's look closely at what happened and I'm confident that this will be helpful to you. In verse 47, Jesus said, "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." Now, we see this all through Scripture. Those whom God has set his love upon will have a nature that is radically changed by the Holy Spirit. They will become part of the family of God and one of the many proofs of genuine saving grace will be a humble, affectionate, reverent reception of the words of

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our heavenly Father. This is what distinguishes, frankly, the elect from the non-elect. The elect will eventually hear and receive the words of God. The non-elect will not. In fact, in John 10:27, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." And in John 18:37, he said, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." So only those who belong to God will hear the word of God and respond in faith and obedience. So Jesus is simply saying to his Jewish audience that, "The reason you do not hear me is because you do not belong to God." Very simple.

Verse 48, "The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?'" Now, you must understand for them to say that a person had a demon was tantamount to declaring a person to be insane. In both cases, a person acts in a crazy manner; they act and speak irrationally. Of course, they are absolutely blind to their own sin, therefore, they're convinced that Jesus' statements are so ludicrous, so absurd that he must be either possessed by a demon or insane. Now, this will always be the natural man's reaction to those who preach Christ. I was laughing about this. I'm constantly being called, I wrote down the first four that came to my mind here recently: I've been called delusional, a nut-case, a wacko, a Bible-thumping moron. By the way, those are the kind descriptions. I won't give you some of the others but this will always be the case because the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, Paul tells us, and he cannot understand them because he is spiritually appraised. He has absolutely no capacity to understand spiritual truth.

In what follows, we are going to see from Jesus' perspective here the difference between 1. Christ being honored and him being dishonored. So follow along how this works out. "The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?'" Folks, you've got to be there. You've got to see the veins bulging in their neck. You've got to see their teeth gritting and their faces are red with rage and their fingers are pointing like daggers at him. This is the mood. There were lots of people around. The place is absolutely electric. They are furious. They're frustrated. So they resort to character assassination, a vicious ad hominem attack on Jesus personally to invalidate his compelling argument. Isn't that what people always do? They can't win the argument so they attack you. After all, there are numerous people around, some people are sympathetic to Jesus but others are feeling just the sting of personal conviction. They are mad. They are embarrassed. So they accuse Jesus first of all, of being a Samaritan. Now, this was one of the most degrading epithets in the Jewish culture. You will remember from the Old Testament in 2 Kings 17, the Samaritans were the descendants of the Jews who had remained in the northern kingdom after its fall and they had intermarried with pagan idolaters transplanted there by the Assyrians. You will recall that they were not even allowed to help rebuild the temple when the Jews returned from Babylonian exile, Ezra 4. They were considered by the Jews to be half-breed heretics who were also notorious for dabbling in demonic, cultic magic. So the antipathy between

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the Jews and the Samaritans was very intense, even in Jesus' day. But Jesus also knew that the Jews were speaking out of just reckless outbursts of hatred, especially in light of Jesus' attack on their paternity, that they're not true sons of Abraham, that they are of their father, the devil. You also must know that the Samaritans, like Jesus, also questioned whether or not the Jews actually descended from Abraham. So you've got all these dynamics going on so naturally one of the things they were going to come up with is, "Well, you're just a Samaritan." That's the idea.

But notice what Jesus does. He completely ignores their charge. He knows that hatred and anger is speaking here and he refuses to even grace their idiotic accusation with an answer. Folks, this is a good lesson for every believer when experiencing just the wanton malice of someone who counters your presentation of the Gospel with some outrageous attack on your character. Don't think that you're going to somehow say, "Well, hang on a minute here," and then you give them all of these compelling points and by about number four, they're going to say, "Oh my, I didn't realize that. Thank you. That is so helpful." That's just not going to happen so don't get drawn into the battle. Stay on track as Jesus does here. Frankly, ad hominem attacks are best countered by silent indifference. Some statements are just so absurd they're unworthy of notice. You know, when I get called these terrible names, especially when they send me the emails, I will respond back very kindly and typically I will say, "So, what will you do with the facts about Jesus?" That's the real issue.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, we see him making these blistering, scathing pronouncements against his enemies but he does so forthrightly but yet in love. He speaks the truth in love. He never lashed out in revenge. In fact, Peter says in 1 Peter 2:23, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return." I might add that one day something different will come from his mouth. One day he will return in judgment to avenge his name, not as a gentle Lamb but as the Lion of Judah. In Revelation 19:15, we read, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations," speaking figuratively of his judgment. But I want you to notice that Jesus uses their second blasphemous accusation concerning him having a demon, to make a larger point. Verse 49, "Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.'" This is a curious statement. What is he saying here? Well, you see, even the Jews of that day knew that those influenced by demons seek to honor themselves, not the Father. This is always the dominate trait of a false teacher, they seek to honor themselves. And in their arrogant quest for fortune and fame, false teachers will flatter men, they will flatter women to seduce them. They are not going to offend them by exposing their sin and calling them to repentant faith in Christ. After all, they tickle their ears, right? They don't try to warn them of sin and righteousness and judgment and so forth.

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Jesus is saying here that, "Hey, I honor my Father and you dishonor him." So by dishonoring Jesus, the Son of God, they dishonor the very God they claimed as Father. Jesus is saying, "I'm not here to seek my own glory," like some demon-possessed false teacher or even the average hypocrite. "But," he says, "there is one who seeks and judges." This is interesting, the Father seeks to honor the Son and he also judges. Now, with respect to honoring the Son, think about it: this was a fact that had already been well-documented by Christ's baptism. Remember when John the Baptist baptized him, if you read about all of that, there were many people, no doubt, some of these same people were there and witnessed that. There were a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees that had gathered there and doubtless they witnessed the heavens being opened and they say, according to Matthew 3:16, "the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." And if they hadn't seen that, certainly the word of it would have spread like wild fire.

You will recall Jesus asking his disciples in Matthew 16, "Who do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am." And Peter made that great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven." Then you will recall that about a week later, God the Father arranged a special occasion to underscore Peter's great confession. The Father had Jesus, the Son, take Peter, James and John and brought to this mountain where the Lord Jesus peeled back some of his flesh and the effulgence of his glory blazed forth, his face shone as the sun and then at that moment, the Father's thunderous voice erupted from the bright cloud that overshadowed them saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him." Indeed, my friends, the Father seeks to exalt the Son and this had already been going on.

You will also remember in that account that Moses and Elijah appeared. This is very significant. Moses represented the law, Elijah represented the prophets. And they had a conversation, an amazing conversation. In fact, the Spirit of God lets us in on what they talked about. In Luke 9:31, it says that they "were speaking of His departure." Literally, the word could be translated "his exodus." "His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." This was the very core purpose for Jesus coming to earth. They talked about his exodus, the redemption that he would accomplish at Jerusalem and his ascension back into glory and it would be on the cross that the glory of Christ would shine forth most brilliantly when mercy and justice came together. No wonder the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him." Because of the Son's obedience to die on a cross in our stead, we read in Philippians 2:9, "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and

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under the earth and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Now of course, while Jesus was on earth, his glory was veiled so people would not be blinded by it. Unbelieving Jews and Gentiles could not see it nor can most people see it today. You see, only those on whom the light of Christ has shone, those who have spiritual sight, are able to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. What an amazing thought and for this reason, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, because we gaze upon the glory of the Son of God, we are being changed from one degree of glory to another as by the Spirit of God. Dear Christian, please understand: the glory of God in the Bible is manifested in and through the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in him that we witness the outshining of the inward being of him who is God, very God. Later in the first chapter of Revelation, John has this amazing vision of the same Jesus only in unveiled glory and there we read, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as a dead man." Oh child of God, this is the glory the Father seeks for his Son. This is what Jesus is speaking about and, frankly, this is the vision that we all need. We all need a soul-terrifying vision of the glory of God in the face of Christ, a vision filled with awe and with fear and with wonder because when a man sees Christ for who he really is, he will fall on his face and worship him. There will be no need to somehow cajole him into somehow honoring Christ. He cannot help but do it. Because of Jesus' unflinching obedience to the Father, the Father seeks to glorify the Son and when Jesus returns, he will do so with unimaginable power and glory. The whole universe will not be able to contain the glory of the Son.

So naturally Jesus says, "No, I do not have a demon but I honor my Father and you dishonor me but I do not seek my glory. There is one who seeks." The idea there is that there is one who seeks my glory, that's my Father and he is the one who judges. It's interesting, all that matters is the Father's will. This is why Jesus doesn't get discouraged by the opinions of men. Another good lesson for us. This, by the way, is why in 1 Corinthians 4, Paul ignored his critics. He didn't even trust his own conscience. He said, "But the one who examines me is the Lord. He will disclose the motives of men's hearts." Folks, what others think of us is immaterial. All that matters is what God thinks.

Now, I want to digress for a moment when we think about this judgment that Jesus alludes to here because some of you have had some questions. What about God's judgment on believers versus unbelievers? I'm going to give you just a very brief overview. We know according to Scripture that unbelievers will be resurrected at the end of the millennial kingdom. They will be raised to eternal death. Daniel 12:2 says they will awake "to disgrace and everlasting contempt." In John 5:29, Jesus described it as "the resurrection of judgment." At that point they will have a body that is suited for the eternal torments of hell. They will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment that is described in Revelation 20. In verse 14 there, we read, "Then death and Hades were

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thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." My friends, unbelievers will drink and ocean of divine wrath and yet they will not sip one single taste of injustice.

What about believers? Well, there are three separate stages of resurrection if you study it closely in Scripture. The first one will consist of all of those that have believed from Pentecost to the rapture of the church. This will be the end of the church age. You read about that in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15. The second stage will be those who are united to Christ and died during the tribulation along with all of the Old Testament saints. You read about that in Daniel 12:2, Revelation 20:4-6 and so forth. Then the third stage we believe speaks of those who die during the millennial reign of Christ. Many and I would agree with this, many believe and though Scripture is not real clear about it, that they will immediately receive a glorified body at that point. But we know that the Bible teaches that when the Lord comes for his church in the rapture, we will immediately according to Romans 14:10, stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and it is there where we will receive our rewards. Jesus said in Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

Now, 2 Corinthians 5:10 is a watershed passage on this particular topic. There we read, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." So this is the seat of authority in heaven. In Greek it's called the bema. It's the place where every saint will receive his rewards. You see it in the Olympics, those little stands that the Olympians stand on when they get their medals. Although each one of us will give an account of himself to God, again Romans 14:12. This is not going to be a place even though we will give an account, it's not going to be a place to fear, not a place to be afraid of because we are told that we are going to stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy. Alright? There wouldn't be must joy if all of a sudden we were going to have all of our sins exposed. We're blameless. This will be a place and a time where, according to 1 Corinthians 4:12, every man shall have praise from God. Indeed, some of our works will not be very valuable. They will have been done poorly with wrong motives and they will be burned up, 1 Corinthians 3:15. While others will have great eternal value and worthy of reward as verse 14 goes on to tell us. So there is not going to be some giant screen displaying our whole life before God and all the heavenly host as some have erroneously stated.

I'll never forget. I heard some preacher talk about that when I was a little kid and even though it was bad theology, it scared the bejeebies out of me and I was a pretty good boy for a while. You know, you can always fall into this, "Well, I can merit a little bit more

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grace here," right? That's just our nature and somehow that errant theology did play a role but, folks, that's not how it's going to be. Hebrews 8:12 says, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Okay, no big screen. No more. This will be the time when we will hear from the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Now, having said that, we must remember that we can forfeit reward or as Scripture says "suffer loss" in 1 Corinthians 3:15 because of our sin, our misplaced priorities, our selfish motives in serving Christ. We see this as well in 1 John 2:28, "Little children," he says, "abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." Now, while there will be no inferior and superior saints in heaven according to Matthew 20, some will enjoy more rewards in the millennial kingdom and heavenly service and even in heaven, we believe. Indeed, we will even judge the world and angels, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. This will happen as well in the millennial kingdom, Luke 19 and following.

Now, back to our text. The Father is the judge. Jesus is talking about that but he's going to answer them again in verse 49 saying, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges." Then he says this, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." This is referring to the second death of unending judgment, unending torment, eternal separation from God. Now secondly, he's going to speak on matters pertaining to spiritual life and death. Notice verse 52, "The Jews said to Him, 'Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.''" You see, the Jews are thinking literally here, not spiritually. I'm always fascinated to behold the horrifying condition of the natural man, his utter inability to see divine truth. One of the reasons I'm so amazed at it is because were it not for God's grace, I would still be there and you would too. They have no capacity to perceive spiritual truth. A. W. Pink said it well, "What is revealed to babes in Christ is completely hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own estimation and in the judgment of the world." No matter how simply and plainly the truths of Scripture may be expounded, the unregenerate are unable to understand them. Unable because their interests are elsewhere. Unable because they will not humble themselves and cry unto God for light. Unable because their hearts are estranged from him.

So in verse 53, the Jews say, "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?" You see, their reasoning is as follows. They're thinking, "Okay, Abraham and the prophets heard the word of God and they obeyed and guess what? They still died." So for Jesus to somehow suggest that his word was superior to the word of God that they heard and that they mediated, that Abraham heard and mediated and the prophets, was so utterly preposterous

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as to be blasphemous. Only a man with a demon could even think of such a thing, much less believe it and preach it.

So, "Whom do you make yourself out to be?" But Jesus wasn't trying to exalt himself. He was merely doing the will of his Father. He was purely giving them the truth because this is a matter of spiritual life and death and he says, verse 54, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'" In other words he's saying, "How absurd for you to claim that my Father is your God and yet you cannot see how the Father glorifies the Son. You just can't see it." They could not see his glory veiled in human flesh, a glory that would one day may be made public when he hung upon a cross, a glory that could only be recognized by those who placed their faith in Christ. Bob Kauflin captures this so perfectly in the hymn that we sang earlier, "The Glory of the Cross." May I remind you of just the first verse and chorus,

"What wisdom once devised the plan
Where all our sin and pride
Was placed upon the perfect Lamb
Who suffered, bled, and died?
The wisdom of a Sovereign God
Whose greatness will be shown
When those who crucified Your Son
Rejoice around Your throne

"And, oh, the glory of the cross
That You would send Your Son for us
I gladly count my life as loss
That I might come to know
The glory of, the glory of the cross."

Verse 55, "And you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word." My friends, here is the common theme throughout Scripture. Obedience is what validates a man's claim to having true knowledge of God. If you know the Father, you will joyfully submit to his word and to his will. I would ask: does this describe you? I hope it does. Or do you bristle when you hear his word? When you understand his will? Are you indifferent or perhaps hostile to what you hear? If so and you claim to know God, Jesus says you're a liar. You are self-deceived. You will never enter the kingdom because you deny him and therefore he will deny you.

Then finally after addressing matters pertaining to spiritual life and death, Jesus offers hope, #3, in the eternal one. I want you to notice carefully how this plays out. In verse 56,

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he says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Now think about this. Think about Abraham, the story of Abraham. He had this amazing unusual birth of his son, Isaac, to his wife who was so old and there Abraham saw the beginning of the fulfillment of God's covenantal promises to Abraham and he was glad. In fact, Hebrews 11:13 tells us that the Old Testament saints "died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance." They saw them through the eyes of prophecy. They saw them through the eyes of faith. But with respect to Jesus' hostile opponents, had Jesus said to them, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see the Messiah and the Messianic age to come," they wouldn't have had any problem with that. That would have been okay. But for Jesus to clearly assert that he personally was the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham, that was just over the top. That was more than they could handle. They simply could not see like most Jewish people today, that Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice pictured in Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Isaac, a sacrifice that God himself thwarted and you will recall instead he provided his own substitute. All of this was a beautiful picture of what God would do in fulfilling his unconditional covenant promises to Abraham and Abraham's spiritual children through his promised seed of which Christ eventually came. But they saw none of this and sadly, most Jewish people today remain hardened to the truth of their Messiah.

Still refusing to hear Jesus, verse 57, they said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" By the way, if you look closely here you will see a common tactic and that is distort your words. This is a common tactic of people that hate Christ. You see, Jesus did not say he had seen Abraham but that Abraham had seen him in a prophetic sense. So finally, notice what Jesus says so solemnly in verse 58, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Now, many will read this and say, "I am? That doesn't make any sense." Well, it does if you understand your Bible. He refers to himself in the present continuous tense because he is referring to himself with the name of God. He is referring to himself as the one who has always been and who will always exist. This is the title of God indicating self-existence. He is the eternal one. He is presenting himself to them again, "I am the eternal one. I am your God." You see, they knew what he was saying. This is why they reacted so. You will recall in Exodus 3, Moses asked God, "What shall I tell the people when they ask what is your name? What am I going to tell them?" And in Exodus 3:14, we read, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"" In other words, "I am the self-existent eternal one who is and who will always be."

So again, the Jews knew exactly what he was saying. This was yet another claim to deity. This Jesus of Nazareth was once again calling himself God. This is a sin so severe, so blasphemous that according to the Mosaic law, this guy's got to be stoned. Verse 59, "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of

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The Revelation of the Light of the World

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the temple." What a remarkable scene. In some supernatural way, he hides himself. He withdraws his presence. He separates himself. He symbolically leaves the temple grounds. Even though he did it literally, there is much symbolism here. It's so reminiscent of the presence of God, the Shekinah, that you will recall in Ezekiel's vision, left the Ark of the Covenant and went out of the Holy of Holies and eventually went out over the temple grounds and over the eastern wall and over the Mount of Olives and ascended back into heaven all because of their wickedness, all because of their idolatry. And here we see it happening yet again, the presence of the glory of God leaves the temple.

What a picture of eternal separation. What a heartbreaking end to this encounter that Jesus had with his Jewish kinsmen. Here the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the Incarnate Word, interacts with the religious elite of Israel and yet they are utterly bereft of spiritual discernment. The light of the world reveals the glorious truths of saving grace and exposes man's awful depravity, offering them the only remedy for sin and they cannot see it. They will not see it. Nor will most people today who call themselves religious, respond positively to a message concerning their depravity, that they are slaves to sin, that their father is the devil, that you share his desires. They hated him then and they hate him today. Augustine says, "Jesus flees from the stones but woe to those from whose heart of stone God flees." Oh dear friend, if this is you, I plead with you to humble yourself before the most high God, to place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, to confess your sin, repent of your sin and place your hope in him who alone can save you.

I want to end with a word of encouragement. If you have heard the word in your life and you have believed, if the searching light of God has exposed your sin and guilt and you have responded in repentant faith, my friends, he has not hidden himself from you but he dwells within you. Isn't that amazing? He hasn't left you. He inhabits you. This is just such a glorious thought. Jesus said, "You no longer walk in darkness but have the light of life. You are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hidden." Because of all of this in Colossians 1:12, Paul says that we should give "thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the Light." Literally because of his finished work on the cross, every believer has been authorized by God to be partakers of the inheritance. Literally, to have a portion of the lot. In other words, because of Christ, each one of us has our own individual portion of the total divine inheritance in the light which is a synonym for the kingdom of God. Folks, this is worth celebrating. This is worth celebrating for his delivered us, Paul says, "from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Dear Christian, this week I want you to celebrate the light, okay? Celebrate the light. Celebrate the kingdom of light. Make this the theme of your heart this week. Make this the theme of your song, of your conversation with your children, with your spouse, with

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your friends. Point up to the sun, use it as an analogy of Christ and then point to the moon and say, "You see, that moon reflects the glory of the sun as I want to reflect the glory of Christ." I mean, God gives us all of these things to animate our hearts to praise and that's what I would encourage you to do this week. Make this week a celebration of the light of Christ who has revealed himself to us and saved us by his grace. Amen.

Okay, let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Help us not to just understand them intellectually but, Lord, help us to take them in our hearts in such a way as to change us, to make us more like Christ. I pray all of this in his precious name with thanksgiving. Amen.

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