

JOH 5:37-47 "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, 38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. 39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life. 41 "I do not accept praise from men, 42 but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. 43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. 44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? 45 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

This is an amazing indictment against the very people for whom Christ came. It is for these very Jews that the Son of God became man, born of a woman, lived a sinless life, was falsely accused and then crucified for the sins of His people, and who then rose bodily from the dead so as to bring all men back into a peaceful relationship with their God.

Israel enjoyed a very unique relationship with God and Jesus points out the relationship He had with Israel when he says to the Samaritan woman at the well, "You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." (JOH 4:22)

When explaining His mission to His disciples Jesus said, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (LUK 24:46-47)

The apostle Paul would later echo this same truth when writing to the Christians at Rome.

ROM 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Of course this unique relationship which Christ had with Israel was a double edged sword. For just as salvation was first offered to them, so too condemnation was extended to those who were first offered this gift and rejected it.

ROM 2:9-11 "There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism."

Israel was given a great privilege of having come under the covenant and protection and promises of God. And our Lord Jesus has come into the world and is now approaching Israel as their promised Messiah. And yet, as we see in our text, the majority of Jews, specifically the leaders of Israel, would reject the Lord and Savior who stands in front of them.

Now, we might ask, how is this possible that they would not know the Messiah, since Israel was given this unique glimpse into who the Savior would be as revealed in the very Scriptures they had in their possession? And keep in mind they knew how to use the Scriptures to identify the Savior.

MAT 2:1-6 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet [Micah] has written: 6 ""But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.""

So, it's not as though they didn't understand how the Scriptures were to be used to identify and point out who and where the Messiah would be found. And yet, Jesus can say in JOH 5:38 "nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent."

Now, if any one group of people should have the word of God dwelling in them you would think it would be the group who was given the prophets and the written word of God, along with the promise of the Messiah identified in those Scriptures. And yet,

Jesus makes it clear that they don't have the word dwelling in them.

But what does He mean by this? Does He mean they haven't read the Scriptures, or that they haven't studied the word of God? Not at all. As faithful Jews they have all been taught from childhood the Scriptures. They have been encouraged to read and memorize the word of God.

But to have God's word dwell in a person goes light years beyond simply reading and memorizing the Scriptures. David probably put it best in Psalm 119.

PSA 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

To have God's word dwelling in you is to have His word in your heart, which is to say, it is a living part of your life because of the life you have in Christ who dwells within each believer through His Spirit.

What Jesus is saying to these Jews is that despite the fact that they have the covenants, and the promises and the prophets and the identification of belonging to the one true God, they don't know God.

Why don't they know God? Because they have rejected the only one who can bring them to God, Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me."

And though they wanted to claim God as their Father, the Jews would not come to the Father through Christ. Their approach to God was going to come through the law as they understood it.

But how could the Jews be so blind? Well, I don't think it's fair to the Jews to single them out as the only one's in the world who were blind or who were capable of being spiritually blind. What Jesus was pointing out to the Jews was really the condition of all sinful men.

And this goes back to the sin nature all men are born with and what that nature produces. The only thing sin can produce is death, and the only thing man desires is what that nature wants, which is self. The natural man doesn't want God, be he Jew or Gentile. Now, there are those who might argue that point but I think God's word is pretty clear.

ROM 3:10-12 "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

This is not hyperbole. It is not an over-statement or over-exaggeration. From a spiritual standpoint all men are spiritually dead as Paul also points out to the Ephesians.

EPH 2:1-3 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

Well, if this is the case then how can man be responsible for not choosing God?

Because man is still responsible for having an understanding of who God is. Simply because man's sinful nature blinds him to seeking after God does not make man any less culpable, any more than Osama Bin Laden is any less guilty of being a murderer simply because he thinks he's a freedom fighter.

This is also the point Paul made to the Christians in Rome.

ROM 1:18-20 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

You see, it's not as though sinful man can't process in his mind the truth of who Christ is and the need to seek Him for their salvation. The problem is that man loves his sin more than he loves his God. And so, he makes his decisions based on that desire.

Man will even seek God in the Scriptures, but often only as it satisfies his particular bent on who he thinks God is and what God desires, so as to conform God into his man's image; again seeking self and the sinful nature, not seeking what is true about God. This is what Jesus says in our text.

JOH 5:39-40 "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

Put simply Jesus is saying that you claim to seek God through His word, but when God stands before you and says, "here I am", you tell God that He is mistaken, and then pursue after your own way of seeking God.

In this case the Jews were seeking God through the law as if the law were the end-all of entering into a relationship with the Lord. And yet the law was never a means of entering into a relationship with God, it was always designed to point out how no law could bring righteousness to men.

And so, they stood the law on its head and missed the point entirely of how one is made righteous before God. And by the way, this is not a Jewish problem, it is a human problem.

Every religion in the world, since sin has entered the world, is based entirely upon man's attempt to ascend to the throne of God. In fact, that's essentially what religion is in one sense. Man has an innate understanding that there is a God above him and so he devises a plan to get to Him and usurp His rule.

We saw this with Cain who attempted to please God with a sacrifice which was out of accord with God's will, as the Lord rejected Cain's attempt to worship God. We saw this with man's attempt to build a temple to the heavens as with the tower of Babel.

What the Scriptures, including the law, has always taught is that man cannot do anything to get to God which is why God came to men. Salvation has always been a top down proposition, not a bottom to top deal.

Thus God approached Adam and Eve after their rebellion and promised that He would be responsible for bringing man back into a right relationship with Himself as He sent the seed of the woman into this world to redeem men.

To suggest that man could do anything to achieve righteousness before God is to say that man has the capability of earning a right standing with a holy and righteous God when God has made it clear that the law's intent was to point out how sinful man really is.

ROM 3:19-24 "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

People who rely on the law, either the Mosaic law, or a law of their own choosing, for trying to get to God, fall under the category of being held accountable to God for their sin which the law cannot forgive. Why? Because any violation of that law is unrighteousness and will be punished by God.

JAM 2:10 "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."

This is why God's grace is essential and why God has always pointed to His grace from Adam and Eve on. Adam and Eve weren't saved after they sinned because of some law they performed, but by believing on the promise that God would send a Savior born of a woman. They believed God and it was reckoned to them as righteousness.

This is exactly what we're told about Abraham.

ROM 4:2-3 "If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about - but not before God. 3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

It's all God, it's all grace. It's a gift.

And what the Jews of Christ's day had done was to use the Scriptures in such a way where they could justify their approach to God. Now, this doesn't mean that men can't search the Scriptures and actually find God through Christ, but even in that endeavor it is still the grace of God opening the eyes of the spiritually blind as He illumines our hearts and minds to the truth.

If a person diligently seeks the Scriptures they should see that nothing of their own doing will bring them to God. Rather, what they should see is Jesus Christ who has come into this world for

them. And that's the point Jesus makes at the end of verse 39, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me..."

In fact, the risen Christ said the same thing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to *believe in all that the prophets have spoken!* ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then *beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*

But imagine the indignation felt by these Jews in our text today, when this man could say to them that everything that was written in the Old Testament, as it pertained to the Messiah, was written about Me.

This is the height of delusion and visions of grandeur as they perceived it. But Jesus doesn't back down. He makes such a bold statement because He knows who He is despite the inability of these people to see that.

And He follows that statement up by saying, "yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (vs. 40)

No one but God can make that statement and back it up. Only God can give life, because as we saw last week Jesus Christ is God who has life in Himself and therefore is in a position to offer this life to men.

JOH 5:41-44 "I do not accept praise from men, ⁴² but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?"

Here our Lord once again demonstrates the hardness of men's hearts. He begins by stating that He does not accept praise from men, which is to say that He is not looking for praise from men as though that were the motivating factor for Him. He knows that men seek praise from each other. It blindly gives them a sense of worth.

But God did not come into this world for that reason. If that were the case Jesus would have been born in a castle instead of a

manger. What Jesus is pointing out here to these people is that had He come as a King clothed in splendor they would have accepted Him because that is how they would have done it if they were put in charge.

These people would never have humbled themselves like Christ has done for mankind. And the reason is that these people do not love people, let alone God. How do we know that? Look at what Jesus says in verse 42....

JOH 5:42 "but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts."

The first thing we notice is that Jesus knows the hearts of men. Only God can know the heart. But here's what Jesus sees. He sees that they do not love God. They may say they love God as so many people today do. But saying you love God and actually loving God are two different things.

But what does this have to do with these Jews not loving people? Well, if they truly loved God they would in turn love people with the truth.

The first and greatest commandment Jesus tells us is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. And a second like unto it is to love your neighbor as yourself. If people are truly loving God they can't help but to love people with the love of God in His truth.

Jesus is saying to these Jews that He loves the Father so much that He would come into this world to love people as He gives His life for people. And yet they reject Him.

JOH 5:43 "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him."

This is the irony of the salvation that Jesus Christ offers. And essentially what He is saying here in our passage is that if He had come on to the scene and had not claimed equality with God as His Father, but rather claimed Himself to be Messiah in His own name, these people would have embraced Him.

And what He means by this is that men's sinful hearts would be more willing to accept anyone who claims himself to be Messiah than for them to accept the real deal. George Harrison of the

Beatles fame spent his life seeking after an Indian Guru he believed to be a messiah of sorts.

And of course all of this has come to the forefront again in light of his death here last week. For days after his death there wasn't a channel on T.V. that didn't do some sort of tribute to his life, and without exception every tribute centered on George's zeal for his religious life under this guru's teachings.

This guru had come in his own name, made claims of being the answer to reaching God as he understood God, and yet George Harrison certainly knew of the claims of Jesus Christ who came from the Father.

Now, I do not delight in the results of George Harrison's choice in a messiah, but at this moment he is a "believer" in the one true God. All people who have rejected Jesus Christ in this life have come face to face with the true Messiah in the next, and can no longer deny who their God is.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippians.

PHI 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him [Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Every tongue at some point, including the tongue of demons, will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Luke 4:40-41 ⁴⁰ While the sun was setting, all those who had any *who were* sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. ⁴¹ *Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!"* But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

Be it George Harrison, John Lennon who sang, imagine there's no heaven, or anyone else in history who rejected the one true Messiah, all of them after their death have confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. For them it is too late as they remain in their sin with God's judgment as they come to that realization in the presence of a holy God.

Jesus is trying to save these Jews from that fate as He confronts them with the truth that He is their Messiah. And yet, He knows

their hearts that they would rather seek a messiah who makes his own claims and comes in his own name without having the proof that he has the ability to save.

Jesus didn't come in His own name, though He could have. He came in the name of the God these Jews claim to know.

JOH 5:44 "How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?"

Sinful man is only interested in receiving praise from others. He would rather have his ears tickled than embrace the truth. He would rather go down to the pit thinking he's important in the eyes of others than humble himself before God and receive life.

As A.W. Pink puts it, "if we are determined to be honored and smiled upon by our fellow men we shall remain alienated from God."

And still Jesus reaches out to us as He was doing here with these Jews. He came to save, not condemn.

JOH 5:45-47 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Jesus is telling these Jews that they have put their trust in the law which Moses delivered to Israel. And in no uncertain terms it will not be the law which delivers them, but it will condemn them. "Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set."

Moses was an icon for Israel and yet Jesus says here that he is not the one to look to for hope, because not even Moses looked to the law for hope. In fact, long before the law was given to Moses he had already been declared righteous by God.

HEB 11:26 "[By faith Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."

He was still in Egypt when he trusted Christ, the Messiah, for his salvation.

And this is what Jesus is telling these Jews. He is saying that Moses always understood that it was the Messiah we are to look to

by faith, not the law. And the law which Moses gave even pointed to the Christ.

JOH 5:46-47 "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Jesus could say that these Jews searched the Scriptures diligently for salvation and yet what they found did not include the truth about the Messiah. They couldn't get past the law as a means for their salvation.

And what Jesus is telling these people is that if they don't believe Moses, whom they claim as a great prophet, how in the world will they believe Jesus whom they perceive to be a nutcase at best and a threat to the nation of Israel at worst?

What a hopeless situation for mankind. And yet, this is where God enters the picture and gives hope. Even Christ's disciples came to this hopeless conclusion for Israel, and Jesus puts our hopelessness into perspective.

MAT 19:24-26 "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The "all things are possible with God" is what we need to focus on. We can delve into all of the shortcomings of man, and his sinfulness, and his deadness of heart and his desire to seek everything but God, but unless we are willing to bring mankind the hope which only God can give in Christ then we've shortchanged people in this world.

If we love God above all; if we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through Christ, then we are to love our neighbors as ourselves by bringing people in this world the greatest news they've ever heard as we introduce them to Christ and His redemption. As Paul says.

ROM 3:21-24 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified

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