

## John (Part 10)

Identity with God Requires Unconditional Submission to His Will

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You remember the setting that Jesus had come in to Jerusalem. The setting, from the chronology we are able to pick up from chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, was apparently a fall festival time, and it seems likely that it might have been Trumpets or Tabernacles or Atonement—least likely Atonement, and most likely Trumpets. I believe that Dr. Hoeh has mentioned, at least in my presence, that he felt it was a Feast of Trumpets.

He came across this man whom the scriptures reveal had an infirmity for 38 years, which is an awfully long time for a person to have the kind of infirmity that he had. Unlike many of the healings that are given, this one was completely inaugurated by Christ. It seems as though the man was just sitting there. He made no request of Christ—"Hey, can you help me?" There is no indication that he believed anything in particular about Christ. We might be able to speculate that he was somewhat aware of Him, but there does not seem to be any kind of a recognition factor. Rather, Christ sought him out and Christ asked him whether he wanted to be made whole.

As I mentioned to you the last time, that is kind of an interesting question because if you had an infirmity and somebody came to you and said, "Well, do you want to be made whole?" you would say, "Well, *certainly* I want to be made whole." But there are implications of that which need to be considered, one of which was that people who are under this kind of an infirmity do develop a mindset that is conditioned by people always taking care of them.

If he were healed, he would then have to face the responsibilities of having a whole body. You might consider that to be a small price to pay, but on the other hand it is a very *great* price to pay. There is also a very great spiritual lesson for you and me there: if God heals us—whether it is a physical healing or whether it is a spiritual healing in the sense of clearing of guilt from our minds; the forgiveness of sins; whether it is the giving of understanding—with the blessing comes the responsibility of taking *advantage* of that blessing.

So the question seems to be kind of a dumb one on the surface, but it is not dumb at all. It needs to be considered very deeply by you and me, because if we are going to ask things of God we need to understand that with the blessing—with the gift that He is going to give—there is going to be the responsibility of properly using it.

Are you willing when you come to God—whether it be for healing or for some other gift; maybe you are asking for prospering; maybe you are asking for a deeper insight and understanding of *your* responsibilities—if you ask God to show you your sins, your flaws, your faults, are you willing to work with Him to overcome them? Or, once they are revealed, are you going to get burdened ("Oh, I did not know I was this bad!") and then get stuck in the mud and do nothing? That happens once in awhile.

Again, as I mentioned to you the last time, in my time in the ministry I have seen people healed, and then a few years down the road they leave the church. That opens up another area that we will not explore very deeply, but certainly needs to be thought of: are we going to carry through and glorify God with what is given to us? Are we going to forget? That is a human propensity—to forget.

If you will read through Deuteronomy 8, you will find that God warned the children of Israel. He said, "Beware when you are come into the land and you are blessed, and you have houses that you did not build, and fields that belonged to and were taken care of by someone else, and you are made rich, and you are full—beware, lest you forget the Eternal. Beware, lest you think that 'by the power of my own hand' I became this way. It is the **Lord** who gives you the power to do this, that, and the other thing." Again, it is something to be considered.

Those things are all implied in that question, "Do you want to be made whole?" Certainly we want to be made whole. But there is a responsibility.

Then I mentioned to you that Christ actually commanded the man to do something that was impossible. He had not used his limbs for 38 years. Certainly the muscles were atrophied. Who knows what other problems were there. Yet the man *must have*, in his mind, responded. It shows a great deal about the man, and it shows a great deal about how to overcome. I think undoubtedly the man had a very great determination to succeed, but his determination to succeed was not enough by itself because his body was infirm. Yet with that determination he set his will, and the combination of his determination, and the setting of his will, and the power of God, led to him rising up and walking.

There is an ingredient in overcoming that we do not possess of and by ourselves. That is, the power of God, or the power of Christ—however we might want to put it. Nonetheless, the power of God does not relieve us of the responsibility of carrying through with whatever it is that we possess to do the job. That man gave whatever little he had, and God gave the remainder to enable him to follow through.

This healing, then, led to a confrontation with the Jews regarding the keeping of the Sabbath, because they caught the man carrying his pallet and they had regulations that had grown up around the religion of the Jews regarding what was lawful and what was not lawful. I mentioned to you that they had some 39 different categories regarding what was a burden and what was not a burden. I mentioned a few of them to you. They considered the carrying of a sewing needle in a man's or a woman's garment as a burden because it was an instrument of work, and there was no need to be carrying it on the Sabbath. They deliberated over whether a person could wear a wooden leg on the Sabbath.

I mentioned these things to you not to demean the Jews in any way. I would that we had the zeal that those people did—at least this particular group of Jews. I do not know whether all Jews were like that. We might kind of laugh at some of the extent to which they went to worship, but at least they went to that extent. As misguided as it was, there was at least a great deal of zeal in what they did. We need to emulate the zeal, but do it in a right way.

Then we got here to verse 17. There is, I think, something very significant there that will help us to at least understand a broad principle regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. Also I mentioned another thing to you: I think there is a broad principle regarding why it is that the people in God's church always seem to have so much to do. There are more things to fill the time than there seems to be time.

I think this is very important because if you do not understand it, there is a possibility that it will get you depressed. It is very easy to get discouraged if you have a great deal to do—you feel burdened—because you are always running out of time. If we do not have the right outlook, I think that we could look upon Christianity as a very great burden. But once we begin to understand what God is, and what God does, and that we are to become like He is, then we begin to understand that we are just in training.

**John 5:17** But Jesus answered them [this was His defense for why He told the man to pick up his pallet and walk, and why He healed on the Sabbath], "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

That does not make quite the right kind of sense unless one understands that this was in defense of His keeping of the Sabbath—and the way that He kept it. So He defended Himself by saying, "My Father never ceases working. He never stops." As the psalmist says, "He does not need to sleep—He does not slumber, He does not sleep." If we could think of God as sitting at the controls of some gigantic machine, regardless of the

time—day or night—God is always operating the machinery. Another way of putting it is that His management, His administering of His government, never ceases. It always goes on regardless of the day that it is.

Jesus said, "*I* am always at work." He was just like the Father, and the fact that it was the Sabbath made no difference to Him. He just kept right on working.

This is where we need to stop and consider something. First of all, the thing about God always working and our potential to be like God: there are principles throughout the entirety of the Bible regarding work. Solomon makes statements in the book of Ecclesiastes that it is here that we find much of the enjoyment and fulfillment in life. I certainly think that God intends that it be that way. It is not that what we might call entertainment is not enjoyable. It is not that it is not necessary from time to time, because it is. We are physical. We need a change of pace. But we are going to be God. We have to become like God. It is a process of growth until we are like Him.

When we are spirit, we will be composed of what He is composed of now, and then we will be capable of working without ever tiring. But the attitude—the mindset—has to be there already before we are changed into spirit. God never ceases working, and we are in training to become like Him. That approach to life has to become ours before we go into the grave—that is, the approach, the attitude, of work.

Just reasoning back from that, to me it gives sort of a shape—an understanding—of why we are so busy, of why there always seems to be more to do than there is time to do it in. We have to learn to look at work, and to follow through with work, the way that God does, modified by the fact that we are still physical. We do need a rest, and we do need a break from time to time—a change of pace because of our physicality.

One more factor has to be added to this, and that is what God is in the sense of His motivation. His outstanding characteristic is one of love. That means that He is always in the act of doing, providing for, doing something unselfish for His creation. Because of that approach, He is able to—if I can put it this way—continue right on working through the Sabbath because all of His acts on the Sabbath would be acts of love—acts of kindness, acts of generosity, acts of providing for, acts of caring for, acts of guiding, acts of mercy for His creation.

That is the basis of Jesus' defense. Because He is just like the Father, all of His activities on the Sabbath would be acts of love. Unfortunately, it is not that way for us. We are still very carnal, so when the Sabbath comes we have to make extra special effort to pay attention to what we do because we are not motivated by a totally unselfish,

loving way of life. So we have to be very careful to monitor everything that we do.

That is Jesus' defense. The Jews caught on immediately. Because of what He said—"My Father never ceases working, and I am always working"—the conclusion had to be that He was equating Himself with the Father.

**John 5:18** Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

His answer—"I am always at work"—equated Him with the Father.

**John 5:19-30** Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

We have contained here in this twelve verse section some of the clearest statements Christ made early in His ministry regarding His identity—His Messiahship. He identified Himself here in a number of ways. Any Jew who knew something of the Old Testament would have to regard Him as equating Himself with the Messiah.

Some of these things are not always really clear, but nonetheless they are identifying marks. Number one was that He identified Himself as the Son of Man. The earliest designation of "Son of Man" that I know of is in the book of Ezekiel, where Ezekiel continually called himself the "son of man."

The "son of man" is also mentioned in the book of Daniel—Daniel writing just a little bit later than Ezekiel did. It was from this scripture (Daniel 7:13) that the Jews developed the idea—the concept, the notion—of linking "Son of Man" with God. Remember this is where Daniel had the vision of God at His throne, and the Son of Man is brought before Him in verse 13. From this scripture came the idea that the Son of Man is the Messiah. So when Jesus said that He was the Son of Man, they would think of what we know today as Daniel 7:13.

The healing that was done was also another implied sign, or identification, of the Messiah. The Jews picked this up from Isaiah 35, where it talks about the lame leaping as a hart. They understood that as being what we would call today "Millennial." They understood that would be a result of the Messiah being on earth, and the healing of nations (whether spiritual or physical). Here He just healed a paralytic, and He was claiming, through His defense, that He was equal with God, so therefore He was applying to Himself Isaiah 35.

Also, the fact that He had the power to resurrect (John 5:28-29)—all you have to do is go back to Deuteronomy 32:39, and you will find there the statement that He has the power to kill and the power to make alive. They knew that was a statement only God could make. So when He had the power to resurrect, He was equating Himself with the Messiah.

The fact that He said that all judgment had been given into His hand—the Jews would look back to Deuteronomy 1, and they would again find that God is judge of all. Here He was claiming that power—that authority, that responsibility—to be man's judge.

So in many statements, He is giving signs of His Messiahship. This is interesting because even though they recognized the signs—even though He did the works to back up what He did—they still questioned. They kept asking for more and more. We will see this as we go through, because they did not accept the proof even when it was given to them.

Why? We will answer that, at least partially, a little bit later as well. Why would they not accept it? You can see that they were at least somewhat familiar with the Bible. Why would they not accept what He said? Why would they not accept His claims?

Do you know that when Nicodemus came to Christ, it says it in John 3:2, "we *know* that you are a Teacher come from God because no one could *do* what You do, except God be with him." They knew—but they still would not accept it.

Let us go back to verse 19, and set the stage a little bit. Remember I said at the beginning of this Bible Study that this was an act that God precipitated. It was not made on the request of the man. All he wanted was—when Christ first talked to him—for Christ to help him into the water. But Christ went a great deal further and healed him. He did not have to do that, but again remember the overview of this book: God is showing us, through the life of Christ, what God is like—what He can be expected to do, how He can be expected to react. He will go above and beyond even what we expect Him to do. He is kind, and generous, and merciful. But all of these things have to be seen in the light of the work that He is doing, and the responsibility that we have in carrying out His will.

Jesus must have known that what He was going to do was going to precipitate trouble. You understand from John 4 that He was very careful not to allow things to go too far. So whenever a crowd began to build up that was somewhat antagonistic to Him—remember that whole long stretch there in John 3, and how John 3 ended with Jesus baptizing more people than John the Baptist, and then Jesus very abruptly left the area of Judea and went up into Galilee because of a rising interest in Him. And because of Nicodemus and the revelation of what the Sanhedrin was already beginning to think of Him, He went off up into Galilee in order to cool things off in Judea. Now He is back in Judea, which gives you an indication that Jesus knew that He was going to be walking back in to trouble.

Yet He precipitated this, bringing this question of the Sabbath to a head. It gave Him an opportunity to do two things: (1) to give them some teaching regarding the Sabbath, and how it ought to be kept. Then, even more importantly, was (2) a further, more complete revelation of His identity. You know that they were going to immediately begin to get ideas of blasphemy, because they did not accept at face value either what He did or what He said. It is certainly an indication to me of an extraordinary amount of courage.

Even today, from what I read, Orthodox Jews will stone people who drive automobiles through their section of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. They put up barriers on the street, and put horses across there, to keep people out. If they showed the same rabid fanaticism to their way of life in Jesus' day, then He was stepping into the jaws of trouble. But He did it. We will see by the end of the chapter that He departs just in time again. He would heat the pot up, and just when it was getting ready to boil, He would

skedaddle out of there. He would go so far, and then He would back away and go up into Galilee until *they* were ready to throw stones at Him. Then He would go back down into Judea.

It had to be done. But it is not something a man does without thinking it through very deeply, and without being able to judge a crowd's reaction as to how much is enough. It took a great deal of faith and courage to do what He did, because He knew that there would be immediate charges of blasphemy, and then judgment and death.

Let us look at it a little more carefully. He identifies Himself with God by making this statement—this is a little bit of a paraphrase—"If you want to know what God is like, watch Me and listen to Me." That is what He is saying in verse 19:

**John 5:19** Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

Do you see how He is equating Himself with God? You cannot get much plainer than that! He is saying, "If you see Me, you see the Father—you see God." Those are pretty strong words.

He goes on to say that His identity with God is based upon His complete submission to God's will—complete obedience. It is through this that we see God in Him—that is, through His obedience.

His obedience is interesting, because what He shows there is not a submission to power, but rather a oneness of mind. There is a big difference, because a person can be *forced* to do something, so he will *submit* to authority, or he will *submit* to power. What Jesus says is not in that order at all. Certainly God is most powerful, and certainly He *could* force us by the sheer authority and power of whom He is and what He is to make us submit. But what Christ is saying here is that His submission to God is based upon His thinking exactly like God does—like two minds with one thought.

So His identity with God is complete and total. His mind, His heart, His will—everything is in agreement with God. You cannot get much more equal to God than that. The only thing that separated them was that Jesus was flesh, and God was Spirit. In every other way—that is why He said later to Philip, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." That is how identical they were.

There is another thing to think about here. I mentioned before about Christ's courage, which of course was buttressed by His faith—His faith that His life was in God's hands, and that though He had, in a sense, His own will (if I can put it that way), yet He was so confident that God would inspire Him, that God would guide and direct Him, that God would help Him to understand how far was far enough, that He was able to proceed completely trusting God to respond, to guide, to direct at just the right time. Boy, I am not that confident. I have got a long way to go before I reach that. I am so unsure of myself, but He seemed to have that closeness. It sort of reminds me—I just happened to think of this scripture:

**I Peter 2:21-23** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

That is the part that I meant—He "committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." He was absolutely confident that His life was in God's hands, and that God would not allow Him to be taken until His time had come.

**John 5:21** For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

See how clear that identification with God is? He is the life-giver. He is telling them right off that He is Creator. We could take "life" here in two senses. We could take it in the physical sense, in that He just gives physical life by means of being Creator. But there is a second—a spiritual—sense, and that is that He is the giver of *abundant* life. We will see more of this when we get into chapter 6. This is a little precursor of what is going to come in chapter 6.

How does Christ give an abundant life? Let us put it this way: if a person is drawn by the calling of God to have faith in Christ, then it is like a whole new world opening up to the person—something that never existed, in the sense of being part and parcel of their mind, of their thinking, of the way that they conducted life, of understanding the purpose of life, of understanding what we are to do with our time between now and our death. That opens up a whole new vista.

Boy, I will tell you how *my* life has changed since 1959. I never would have dreamed in

1959 that I would be sitting in North Hollywood, California, conducting a Bible Study. But it opened up new vistas in every area of life—my relationship with my wife; my relationship with my children; my relationship with my neighbor; my relationship with my employer. All those things began to change—and above all, my relationship with God.

Wow, how my life changed. I never kept the Sabbath before then. I never kept the holy days before then. I never tithed before then. There were a lot of things I did not do before then. That is what Christ has opened up—He has given me life. Now I can do things that lead to *life*. My life has taken on a quality that was *never* possible before. That is one of the aspects that He is talking about. He not only can resurrect people and give them physical life, as He did with Lazarus; He also has the power to give those who believe an abundant life. It is like a whole new world opens up.

He also identifies Himself as the bringer of judgment. I went through this at least to some small degree. How is this judgment accomplished? In two ways: first, a person's reaction to Christ is what actually brings the judgment on a person. Remember how I illustrated this with the person to whom you wanted to introduce a better quality of music than they had been accustomed to, so you put on Beethoven's Fifth, and within 15 minutes they are asleep. They have actually judged themselves. The music is at such a quality that their rejection of it actually judges *them*. I also used the illustration about the art in the Louvre, and about the reaction of the man to the art, and what the guide said back to him.

So that is one way: how do we react to Christ? He becomes the benchmark. He is the standard. We are to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Everything in our life becomes measured against *Him*. Later, of course, He will actually administer judgment. He will execute it. That is the second phase of it. Right now, judgment is on the house of God, and we are being measured against the standard of Jesus Christ.

**John 5:24** "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life."

Belief implies obedience. Obedience is the proof of faith. We are not measuring the degree; we are only giving a principle: a person's obedience proves that there is some faith there. Remember James 2, where it says that faith without works is dead. The works are proof that there is faith there. So submission to the will of God is the proof that the person believes.

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Paul uses this in Hebrews 3. Remember the background here ("Today, if you will hear His voice, and harden not your hearts as in the rebellion. . ."). Here he is beginning to reach a conclusion regarding the children of Israel in the wilderness, and leading that conclusion to these people to whom he was writing, so that they would see the point.

**Hebrews 3:18-19** And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Unbelief is equated with disobedience. If there is faith, the person will obey. Put that back into John 5:24:

**John 5:24** "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and [obeys].  
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Just holding the intellectual understanding will not produce life.

**John 5:25** Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

The word "dead" is used here in two senses again, just like the word "life" a little bit earlier. There are those who are literally dead. We understand that those are going to be resurrected in the second resurrection. Then there are those who are *spiritually* dead, in the sense that they are alive, physically walking about—they are existing—but they are just heading toward death. There is no spiritual life within them.

Those who are spiritually dead could be awakened to spiritual life, by and through Christ. If you look back in I John 5:19, those who are "dead" (as Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead.")—those who are spiritually dead—they are now in the power of the evil one. They could be awakened, as you and I were, by and through Christ.

**John 5:30** I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

This statement anticipates a response. He claimed to be the judge of man. He is anticipating that they are going to ask Him by what authority He judges. He answers it, actually, before they even ask it. His answer here in verse 30 is that His judgment was God's judgment. Why was His judgment God's judgment? Because He did not seek His own will. He just said a mouthful there.

It is very, very difficult for one human to judge another. It is because of this statement that Jesus made—the flipside of it. Unfortunately, we do not always seek God's will in judgment, but our judgment is colored by so many things other than God's will. Our judgment can be colored by our pride. He had no human pride, so His judgment would be righteous in such a case. Our judgment can be colored by our prejudices. We might not like the color of a person's skin. We might not like the accent with which a person speaks. There are a lot of things that might prejudice us. We may not like a person's personality. We may not like one sex—and on and on it goes.

Our judgment can be colored by envy. Suppose that you were poor, and you were called upon to judge somebody who was wealthy (or vice versa). There could be envy in there. There could be contempt. There are people who are hardworking individuals, they have made their way in the world, they have a measure of prosperity, and they think, "I did it—why can't somebody else do it?" So if they happen to be sitting in judgment of somebody who is poor, their contempt would come out: "Well, why didn't you just work a little bit harder?" There would be some contempt there.

Jealousy can color a person's judgment as well. We can be intolerant. That colors judgment. What if we happen to be self-righteous? We could be awfully condemnatory if we are self-righteous. What if we are ignorant—ignorant of circumstances, ignorant of motives? That can color our judgment.

*Christ is judge because in every circumstance He only seeks God's will!* That is a tremendous statement—it is awfully fair. You just cannot get fairer than that. He is the only one because He seeks God's will all the time. He is the only one who is free from the inevitable mixture of prejudices from which we make our judgment. He is perfectly and totally loyal to God in every circumstance.

**John 5:31-36** "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than

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John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me."

Another anticipation. "Okay," the Jews would say, "You have claimed all these things. What are your evidences that these things are true? What are your witnesses?" They did not ask, but He anticipated what they would have on their mind. So the first thing He shoots back at them is He admitted that the unsupported witness of Himself is not valid. We know that He would not tell a lie, but they would not accept that.

The Bible says back in Deuteronomy 17 that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall judgment be made. So if a person gave unsupported testimony on behalf of himself, that was not acceptable before a court. So Jesus quickly dismisses out of their mind that He would give any testimony of Himself. He was going to supply them with other witnesses which would be good ones. There are other ones:

**John 5:32** There is another who bears witness of Me . . .

Who is "another"? It would almost have to be the Father. The reason I say that is because in verse 33 He mentions John. John was His second witness. He does not dwell a great deal on the Father, but He just makes that statement that there is another. "I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true." He is going to get back to God a little bit later.

In verse 33 He mentions John, and that John bore witness to the truth. They could not deny the fact of John the Baptist's preaching. They could not deny what He preached about. Jesus said that he was a burning and a shining lamp—that is, that John was a lamp, or a light. They were willing—they were pleased for a time—to take pleasure in what he said. But as we know, they abandoned him too, and got a little bit awkward about some of the things that he was saying.

There was one thing I wanted to mention about the lamp here in John—"he was a burning and shining lamp." There are some interesting things. One was that a lamp does not light itself. Rather, it has to receive its power to give light from outside of itself. The application to you and me is that we are to be lights to the world as well. We have to recognize that if we are going to be a light for God, it is going to be on the basis of our relationship with God. The better that relationship, the more power there is going to be to light up the area around us—to be a good witness, to glorify Him.

The second thing is this: as a lamp gives light, it is consumed itself in the process. I want you to think about that. Maybe if we can think of ourselves in terms of being a light of some kind—are we willing to burn ourselves out for God? Are we willing to go all out for Him—to be completely sacrificed, totally, to Him and to His way? Or are we going to hold back something for ourselves—to hold something in reserve? I do not know. It is just something to think about.

**John 5:36** But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

The Jews were already aware of what He did. Remember John 3:2—Nicodemus said that the things that He did had been done by somebody who was from God. They were already recognizing that. So He has two witnesses already: there is the witness of John the Baptist, and John said that He was going to increase while John was going to decrease. There was One coming whose shoe latchet John was not worthy to tie.

**John 5:37-43** And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

Here comes the third witness: the witness of the Scripture. I asked the question earlier, "How could it be that they missed Christ in the scriptures?" They seemed to be so familiar with the Old Testament. They seemed to be so familiar with what could be expected of the Messiah. Yet He came to His own, and His own received Him not, and His own were partly responsible for crucifying Him.

I want you to think of this, not in terms of the Jews, but in modern terminology as well. "Christianity" has about 1 billion adherents around the world, and yet there is only one true church, and that is a very, very tiny group. Yet here are 1 billion people that claim adherence to Christ and to His Word. But you and I know that they are not obeying Christ. Again, I do not mean to impugn their sincerity at all. Yet they are not obeying

Him.

I am going to give you some reasons. Number one would be this: they had the Scriptures, but they read them with a prejudiced mind.

Last week in North Hollywood we had a very fine sermon by Mr. Peter Nathan. It was on seeking God. I really felt bad after it was over that he had to stop, because the things that he said in the beginning about the area that he is regional director over were certainly necessary, but it only left him with about 50 minutes to speak. There was a great deal, I am sure, that he wanted to say about seeking God, that he never got to say because of a lack of time.

Are you really seeking God, or are you seeking God like the Jews did? What they did boiled down to this: they did not search the Scriptures to find God, but rather to find arguments to support their own theology. There is a big difference. They were not looking to be corrected. They were not looking to be put on the right path. They were not looking for areas in which to repent. They were not looking to change their heart, or to change their mind.

You could see that in the way they reacted to God in the flesh. What did they do? They argued with Him! Anytime He told them the truth, they came back with a reason why they could not—and the reason they could not was that it did not fit their already, previously-held conviction. That is the way they approached the Bible. They were looking for support for their own arguments. They were not looking like David, who said, "Correct me, Lord. Try my reins and heart. Show me where I am wrong." They were not like David at all.

Secondly, and maybe even more importantly, is that they did not look at the Bible in the right way. I am talking about the whole thing. I hope that we do not have this same flaw in us. The Bible is not just a revelation of the *words* of God. It is a revelation of God *acting*. God is alive. God is working. God is bringing something to pass. God is creating. God is producing. God is a working God, and the Bible reveals how He works in His creation.

The Jews worshipped the words of the Bible—they did not worship God. They just worshipped the words. How many people do you know out there, as sincere as they are, who may read the Bible every day, but they do not look upon it as a revelation of God acting in His creation? To them, God is just a figurehead, sitting on a throne up there. But He does not really work in their lives.

I hope that you see God as alive. I hope that you see Him as working in your life. I hope that you see Him as always being interested and concerned in you, that He loves you from the very depths of His being, and that He is always going to be working in your behalf. Sometimes that is going to be painful. It is going to be painful because He loves you. It is going to be painful because He wants to develop things in you. I hope that you see Him working in a positive way—that He is not against you, but He is for you. He is trying to create in you something that is wonderful and awesome, beyond belief almost.

What good is knowledge if it is not used, and especially if it is not used in the right way? All the Jews wanted to do with God's Word was to argue. They were religious people.

I hope that you look upon the Bible as the revelation of God acting in His creation. It is very important that you do.

**John 5:43** I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

In a sense He is saying to these people (at least it is implied), "I am not talking to you like this because I want to win an argument. I am talking to you this way because I am concerned about you. I want to get your life turned around. I love you." He says to them, "Look, if some imposter comes in his own name, him you would follow."

I think the logical question to ask after that is, "Why will people follow an imposter, but they will not really follow the Christ?" It is really interesting when you get to the tail end of chapter 6, and you go through chapter 8, you find that the people who believed in Him were leaving in droves, and you find in chapter 8 that the people who believed in Him were going to throw rocks at Him and stone Him to death.

Christ was not an imposter. Why will people follow an imposter, but they will not follow the Christ? I think that there is a logical reason why. It has to do with what imposters say. Basically imposters promise people a "pie in the sky." They promise people what people want to hear. They promise them victories, empires, glories, material wealth, prosperity, well-being, power, honor, prestige.

What did Christ promise these people? When it came down to the nitty-gritty, in broad terminology He said, "Well, I promise you abundant life, but you are going to have to bear your cross." Not many people want to hear that. Most of the people are going to go the broad way. Those who are going to find life are going to have to walk the difficult way. Jesus called a spade a spade. He never told people that it was going to be easy.

John (Part 10) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

He always leveled with people. He told them that "he that denies *himself* will find life." That is why people will follow an imposter.

Did you ever listen to any of those TV evangelists? I do not know whether they are hypocrites, or whether they are sincere, but about 95% of what they are offering people is a blessing a minute. Reverend Ike gets on there, and he promises that he is going to make everybody rich. Orel Roberts gets on there, and always lurking in the background are sensational healings, and on it goes. Just check it out.

That is why they would not follow Him. Christ, all through here, demands submission of man's will to God. By and large, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, it does not want to hear that. So, like the Jews, we will come up with arguments, and we will look at the Bible looking for arguments to support our own theology.

You have got to be very careful that you are not still doing that. You need to be asking God in prayer that God will give us the humble open-mindedness that we need to really seek Him through His Word, and that we look at His Word as a revelation of God acting in His creation—not just merely a revelation of words. That is too passive. God is an active, creating God who is working. Jesus said, "My Father never ceases working." Again, you see, the common ordinary picture is of God in long robes, sitting on a marble chair up there—not actively involved and managing His creation.

**John 5:44-47** How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

This is another aspect of why the scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees rejected Christ: they desired the praise of men. "How can you believe who receive honor from one another?" Look at how they did it, just from the pages of the Bible—just from the things that Jesus said. All you have to do is begin in Matthew 5, 6, and 7; Matthew 23—you begin to put together pieces of the way the scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees acted.

They dressed so men would recognize them. They wanted to set their office off, so they wore long robes. Remember Him mentioning the long robes? It identified them as "men of the cloth." Do you know ministers, priests, who do that? Certainly you do. It draws

attention to them. This is a major reason why Herbert Armstrong came to the conclusion that the ministers of God ought to blend right in, and look—in a sense—just like everybody else: common, ordinary businessmen, so we were not set apart by appearance.

Another thing Jesus mentioned is they did their religious duties so that men could see. They prayed in public places. This is not the prayer that would take place in some sort of a public service. This was something that they were doing apart from a public service. Or, they fasted in such a way that men could see what they were doing. He mentioned that they would come into meetings and purposely walk down to the front of the synagogue, looking for the front seats.

He also mentioned that they loved deferential greetings that they could receive in the marketplaces. You see, they loved the praise and honor that came from men. Why do this? What kind of an effect would that have on a man's relationship with God? The effect would be this: what these men were doing was measuring themselves against other men. As long as a person is free to measure himself against other men, he is invariably going to be content with himself. If he is content with himself, there is no change. Remember that sermon I gave you on what produces change? At the basis of it all, there is discontentment with the way things are.

The whole point—the instruction for you and me—is this: the point is not, "Am I as good as my neighbor?" The point is, "Am I as good as Christ?" That is why He said earlier, "All judgment has been given into My hands"—because He did not seek His own will in anything. He always sought the will of God in every aspect of life. Therefore His judgment could be absolutely pure and true. He becomes the touchstone—He is the benchmark in everything. It becomes our responsibility always to judge ourselves against the standard, and the standard is Christ.

If we do, honestly—as much as we are capable within ourselves to do that—judge ourselves against Christ, it is invariably going to lead to some discontentment with the way we are, and that discontentment will produce change. That change will produce honor from God.

The second effect is this: as long as we feel free to seek the honor of men by judging ourselves, comparing ourselves with other men, it is going to *kill* our relationship with God. In Isaiah 66 He said, "To this man will I look, to him who is of a humble and contrite heart." As long as we are comparing ourselves with other men, we are going to be so filled with pride, there will be no humility to come before God—except with the pride that we have, and God is not going to respond to that.

Remember, I told you last week that humility is created out of a sense of need. If we really recognize a need, we will crawl on our hands and knees to get it. If we recognize that need enough, we will humble ourselves to do *anything* to get that thing. That is why Job, at the end of the book, was thoroughly humbled, and he said, "I am nothing but an old windbag. Therefore I *abhor* myself." Now he was humble, and he would have done *anything* to get the praise and approbation of God. Of course, God recognized it, and God forgave his sin, and God restored his health, and God restored his prosperity. Job was thoroughly humbled.

It is the comparison with God that produces humility. When we recognize how far short we fall of the ideal, then we will humble ourselves and do *anything* to please Him. We will commit our life, we will commit our savings, we will commit anything. Abraham was willing to commit the most precious thing that he had—the life of his son—to please that God. That is how humbled he was.

That is the sum of those last five verses. "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another?" Then He goes back to Moses, and back to the Word of God:

**John 5:46-47** For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

He knew what He was dealing with there. These religious men, who palmed themselves off as the spiritual leaders of the nation, actually had their minds set against God's Word because they were filled with pride. Because they were filled with pride, they looked at the Bible to support their own arguments rather than humbly *submitting* to the orders of that great God. They turned and argued against Him in the flesh—the very God who inspired Moses! They argued against Him because they did not recognize Him because they were filled with pride.

Do you see what this is leading to? To understand the Bible, you have got to submit to it. I do not care how smart a person is, he will never really understand—he will never really know God—unless he submits to what God says, and be really seeking God.

**John 6:1-14** After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a

great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

Chapter 6 opens with Jesus back in Galilee. In chapter 5 He was in Judea. We also see that it was just before the Passover, so it indicates the spring following the episode in chapter 5.

Also, Passover probably accounts for much of the crowd. The people coming toward Jerusalem through Galilee from other parts of the Mediterranean world to keep the holy days there also tends to confirm the dating of this. Also, it even mentions in verse 10 that "there was much grass." The weather over in that area is very similar to this area, and if it had been later, the grass would have browned and there probably would not have been a great deal of grass. So the winter rains had left a good covering of grass.

There are three personalities that I just want to look at briefly. One is Philip, another is Andrew, and the other is the boy who brought the barley and the fish. Why did Christ single Philip out? Well, we find in another place that Philip was from this area. It was in, we might say, Philip's home town. Now, did he just happen to be standing there, or did He single him out of the group of disciples who were following Him to ask him this question? I do not think Christ did anything by accident. I think that He singled Philip out.

Back in John 14, Philip comes back in the story when he asks Christ to show him the Father. Jesus came back with the remark, "Have I been with you so long, and you have not known the Father? He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

There is not a great deal of revelation about Philip, but from the little that is there, I think it tends to illustrate that Philip was probably a pretty steady, sober-minded individual, and a dependable personality. He probably had quite a number of admirable virtues, but he also seemed to lack some of the drive and maybe intense leadership qualities that some of the others had, like Peter, James, and John.

From his reply that he gives in John 6:5-7, it does not seem as though he was very adventuresome or audacious, and Jesus was testing him. His reply was probably pretty much what Jesus thought his reply would be—not really creative, just sort of threw up his hands, which is probably what most of us would do. I know I would probably do that. I would probably shrug my shoulders and say, "You are the boss here," or something. "What *can* we do?"

Now there is Andrew. At least Andrew seemed to be doing something. He saw the crowd as well, and he at least turned up with somebody who had something (the boy with the barley loaves and the fish). His reply also indicates that he was not too confident—it was not very much for that size of a crowd. He was not really confident of the usefulness of what he had turned up, or that there would be any success as a result of what he turned up. But at least he was doing *something*.

There is a little bit of an interesting insight into Andrew: virtually every time he appears, he is bringing something, or bringing somebody, to Christ. It is kind of interesting. He was the one who went and got Peter, and brought Peter back to Christ. Here he is bringing something to Christ again. It shows a personality there that had some foresight—a little bit of vision—and though not super-confident, at least he was learning. At least he was trying.

Now the boy: there is something interesting there for you and me. I think there is a good lesson for you and me there. He is unnamed. We have no idea who he was. Whatever happened to him, again, we do not know. We also do not know how willing he was to offer what he had. But it does not seem as though he resisted any. There is no indication he said to Andrew, "Hey! Gimme that back—that is all I have!" Apparently he cooperated with Andrew, and gave the little bit that he did have.

Therein lies the lesson: that boy is much like you and me. We do not have much to offer Christ either. I will bet you everybody in this room, if they have not uttered it aloud to somebody, they have uttered it to themselves: "What in the world can I offer to God? What can I give to God? I do not have any talents. I do not have any abilities. I cannot speak. I do not have any money. I am just a widow. I am 86 years old. I cannot speak fluently. My eyes are dim. My knees are creaky. I have a wretched marriage. I do not

have much!"

But look what Christ did with a little bit. All it took was five barley loaves and two fishes, and He fed 5,000 people, plus. It says 5,000 men. If we take that literally, it may mean that there were, possibly, 10,000 people there. If we did not count the women, and there was an equal number of women . . . . we know that the boy was there, so there were some children, too. There might have been 10,000 people there that He fed—5,000 men plus.

Do you get the point that the little bit that we have to offer, with Christ's power, is a great deal? There can be so much produced from us—from the little bit that we have to offer to Christ—it is almost unbelievable. Brethren, we do not have much to offer, but God's power is unlimited. What He is going to do through us is awesome.

What is being done through us collectively, already—this little, tiny work of 85,000 baptized people is doing something that has *never* been accomplished before. Do you know of any other group of people who gives away 8 million magazines a month, plus all that other literature? And on and on it goes. We are having a tremendous impact on this world. And this work is made up of little old widows, elderly men, weak people with problems.

When we look at it like Mr. Armstrong looked at it, he had to understand, and He had to keep reminding him, that this was not his work. God did the work *through* him, just like Christ did the work *through* what the boy gave. That is the way we have to look at it. We can go to God humbly, with the little bit we have, and He is able to use and expand upon the little bit we have to offer.

Our prayers going up to God must not be like so much baby-talk. God listens, and God responds, and things happen.