

The Witnesses To Christ

John 5:31-47

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In John 5:31, Jesus speaking says, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." Jesus has just made the claim that He is equal with God the Father. If you missed last Wednesday night, you should go back and listen to it online, get the CD, or check it out.

Jesus has actually healed the man who was lame by the pool of Bethesda, and it brought Him into conflict with the Jewish authorities. In doing that, He says they were upset because He healed on the sabbath day. He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." That really freaked them out. First, He had violated, according to their petty, man-made rules, the Sabbath day. He hadn't violated God's standards for the Sabbath, He violated their religious legalistic, self-righteous standards of the Sabbath. Then, He claimed that God was His Father. In the Greek, it's actually more clear. It's My own Father, My own unique Father, so they knew that it was actually a claim to be equal with God the Father. It's one of the most powerful and clear statements from Christ's own lips that He is divine or that He is God.

Jesus was equal with the Father in these six areas. We won't go into them, but just a little review. In essence, verses 17-18, He was one with the Father which means He was divine or God. In works, verses 19-20, He was equal to the Father. In power, verse 21, He is equal to the Father. In His judgment, all judgment has been put in His hands, and He is co-equal with God the Father, verse 22. In honor, I love that, verse 23, that you honor the Son just as you honor the Father. If you reject the Son, you have not the Father. If you're wrong about Jesus, then you're wrong about God the Father. Sixth, verses 24-30, He was equal with the Father in resurrection life and power. Now, those are six affirmations from the lips of Jesus Christ as to His equality with God the Father. I pointed out that if you ever have someone deny that Jesus Christ is God, these six points from this chapter are powerful evidence that Jesus Christ is indeed God.

Here's the point we go into tonight. Anyone can make the claim that they're equal with God the Father, but the question is: Are there any witnesses that can support your claim? I could make a claim. You could make a claim. Anybody can claim to be God, or they can claim to be equal with God the Father, but here's the question: Is their claim backed up by witnesses? The Bible says, "...that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." What we have tonight in this passage, it's classic, Jesus is going to actually call into the courtroom three witnesses, three witnesses that testify to His divine nature or His essence that He is God. Those three witnesses (you'll want to write them down) are John the Baptist, and we'll break it down in the text; the second witness is His works or His miracles, the signs pointing to His divine nature; and the third witness is the Scriptures. So, again, John the Baptist, the works that He did, and the Scriptures that were given by God the Father.

Verses 31-32, I believe, kind of set the stage for these witnesses that are called into this

courtroom to testify that Jesus really is divine. Notice with me verse 31, "If I bear witness," the word "witness" there is used a lot in John's gospel. It's used 47 times, and He says, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." You need to understand what Jesus meant by that statement. He's not saying, "If I say I'm one with the Father, it's not valid," He's saying, "It's not valid according to your standards." He's talking to the Jewish authorities and, of course, their law as our law would say in the Bible that you have to have two or three witnesses. Basically, He's saying, "According to your standards, My witness of Myself is not true. It's not valid for Me to just say I am one with the Father, and you reject that." The idea is that it's not true according to their estimation, to their evaluation. He says, verse 32, "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." Now, this is where the text gets a little tricky because the very next verse, verse 33, He calls a witness of John the Baptist.

Backing up into verse 32, I've become convinced that this other witness that bears witness of Him is actually a reference to God the Father. Now, He's going to go into more detail about God the Father when we get to verses 37-38, but I believe that Jesus is basically saying, before He calls these three witness groups in, "Listen, God the Father bears witness to Me." Now, He doesn't identify Him in verse 32, "There is another that beareth witness of me," He doesn't say it's God the Father. He didn't say it's John the Baptist. He didn't say it's His miracles. He doesn't say it's the Scriptures. He just says there's another witness. He doesn't identify Him. In the context of the whole passage, it seems to fit and make sense that it's a reference to God the Father.

Here's what I found to be interesting. When it comes to the witness of John the Baptist, he was a prophet sent by God the Father. When it comes to the witness of the miracles that Jesus performed, they were works given to Him to do from God the Father. When the Scriptures are opened up, that would be the Old Testament Scriptures, and point us to Jesus Christ, those Scriptures, the Word of God, were given to us by God the Father. It's the Word of God. When all three of these witnesses...behind the witnesses is the character of God the Father. You know, in a courtroom, when you call in a witness in a case, the witness' character is all important. If you just found him somewhere and they had a long history of crime, lying, and they were just a criminal element, their witness may not stand up in a courtroom because of their character. The defense attorney would pick apart the problems that they have. Behind all of these witnesses you have the character of God the Father. His holy, righteous character as He sent his prophet, John the Baptist, and other prophets, as He confirmed with miracles, and as He spoke about Jesus Christ in the Word. The value of these witnesses depends upon the character of God the Father who sent each one. I find that interesting.

The first witness that's called into the courtroom is John the Baptist—a lot about John the Baptist in the gospel of John. Notice verses 33-35, "Ye sent unto John," now John the apostle is writing the gospel, but it's a reference to John the Baptist, "and he bare witness unto the truth. 34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved." Jesus is saying, "I wouldn't necessarily point to man, but I'm pointing to John because he was sent by God, and he was a light, a shining light, and you rejoiced to see his light," so He wants them to

come to salvation. Notice verse 35, “He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.” The fact that, in verse 35, John’s ministry is put in past tense would indicate that at the time of this writing John is no longer preaching Christ. He’s no longer actively in ministry. He’s passed off of the scene, but there was a time when John was quite popular. Even the Jews were going down to hear him when he was preaching repentance and the Kingdom of God is at hand, and they were turning back to God as a result of John’s ministry.

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he was the first of the New Testament preachers. He kind of stood in the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. I love John the Baptist. He was a Nazarene. His dad was a priest. He could’ve been a priest, but he grew up out in the wilderness. He had long hair because he was a Nazarene. He had a big beard, probably. He wore camel skin. He was very rough. He ate grasshoppers and honey, and he came preaching repentance. He was a wild man. He was kind of the first of the Jesus movement is what it was when all the hippies got saved back in the sixties and seventies. They looked like John the Baptist. I used to look like John the Baptist. John comes preaching, but I love his position. Jesus said, “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Among those that are born of women, that includes everybody, okay, because there is no other way to be born—no one greater than John the Baptist, bar none. That’s pretty radical from the lips of Jesus. John was a prophet, but he was also a preacher. He bridged the gap between the Old and New Testaments.

Write down Hebrews 1:1. It says there, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by,” in, by, or through, “his Son...by whom also he made the worlds.” What I want you to note there in Hebrews 1:1, that God spoke through prophets. Now, the subject that we’re covering tonight is the subject of how do we know that we can know God? How can we really be sure that there is a God, that we can know God, that God is revealed? So, the Bible tells us that God sends prophets, and that prophets are God’s representatives, that they speak for God to men. They would pray and would speak to God for men to be saved. They speak on behalf of God, they speak the Word of God, they speak with the authority of God.

What did John say about Jesus? This is not exhaustive, but write them down. John 1:15, “John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.” John was older, born before Jesus, but alludes to the idea of Christ as eternal, that “he was before me.” That’s a reference to His eternality, that He is the eternal God. Write down John 1:29, where John the Baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away,” which is the concept of forgiveness, by the way. The word “forgive” literally means to carry away, so Jesus carries away, “the sin of the world.” Twice Jesus was referred to as the Lamb of God who carries away or takes away the sin of the world. Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

In John 1:34, where Jesus was baptized by John...can you imagine doing a baptism and Jesus

shows up to be baptized? John says, "I have need to be baptized of You," and Jesus said, "No, I want to be baptized. I want to fulfill all righteousness." As Jesus went under the water in the Jordan River and came out of the water, the Bible says the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove, so the dove becomes a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and it lighted upon Christ. Then there was an audible voice from heaven. Now, I don't know about you, but that would be amazing to actually hear God's voice. And, what did the voice that came from heaven say? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," or literally in whom My soul delights. Jesus was confirmed by John, "This is the Son of God. This is the Lamb of God," and then God the Father audibly spoke from heaven, John 1:34. Write down Matthew 3:11. John baptized with water, but John said Jesus would, "baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." So, "I immerse you in water, but there is Somebody that is going to immerse you in the Holy Spirit," and then He's going to come as well in judgment.

We see in John 5:35 of our text, that John came as "a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." So, the first witness is the witness of John the Baptist, even John who came as the forerunner to prepare the way of the Lord. John was a light, and we should be a light for the Lord as well.

Here's the second witness, verse 36, His works, "But I have greater witness," so He moves from John to a greater witness, "than that of John: for the works which the Father," there He is again, "hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." The first witness is John the Baptist. The second witness are the works. When He uses the word "works," He's talking about miracles. Jesus Christ performed miracles. He did miracles that no one could do but God alone. In John 20:30-31, where you have the theme of the gospel, John says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples... but these," the ones he picks out for his gospel, seven of them, "are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that believing ye might have life through his name." John's gospel is very strategic. He actually picks out seven miracles, and those seven miracles are called signs or tokens.

Circumcision was a sign of the Jews in the Old Testament and carried on to the time of Christ and even to this day. There were signs in the Old Testament that God used to say, "This is my people. These are my beloved." Then, Jesus came and performed miracles that were called signs. Now, the concept of signs used for the miracles is very significant. Signs have a message. Signs point to something. When we were in Alabama near my daughter and son-in-law's home, we took a little hike up into the forest, into the woods and all that stuff. We were trying to figure out what trails to take and were looking at the signs. The signs were a little crazy, and we had the map. We were trying to figure it out. We got to where we wanted to go. I wasn't much help because I'm not a hiker. I just said, "I'll follow you," but it's nice to have signs that mark the trail. It's nice to have signs that point the way. It's nice to have signs that indicate where you go and what you do. The signs point to something. I think that's the most significant aspect of these signs, that the miracles point to something. What do they point to? Different facets or aspects of His divine nature.

I don't want to get side-tracked or bogged down, but I'm going to kind of survey the seven miracles in John's gospel just quickly. The first, we've already seen, is in chapter 2, the sign of the water turned to wine. Now, Jesus did that merely to show His glory. The Bible actually says that they saw His glory, so the water was turned to wine. Then, there was the healing, in chapter 4, of the nobleman's son. That was a lesson on how we are to trust Him by faith. Jesus gave the man His word, and his son was healed. In chapter 5, we already saw this as well, there was the healing of the paralytic there at the pools of Bethesda. That teaches us that Jesus saves us by His grace. What do we see that sign pointing to? The grace of God, that out of the multitude that were laying of impotent folk by the pools, Jesus singled out this one man, thirty-eight years, and showed mercy upon him. Then we have in chapter 6, and I can't wait to get there next week, (next week we have communion as well) we have the feeding of the five thousand.

There are five thousand men, not counting women and children, it's time to eat dinner, and there's no In-N-Out nearby. I was looking for an In-N-Out in Alabama and Georgia, but I couldn't find one. There are lots of fried chicken and sweet tea, I'll stop right there. They have all these people, they're in a desert place, and the disciples actually tell Jesus, "Send the people away that they may get something to eat." I love it. Jesus says, "No. You feed them." Preachers are always trying to get rid of God's..."Send 'em away. They're a pest. They're a nuisance. They're bugging us. Send them away." Jesus says, "No. I want you to feed them. I want you to feed my sheep." So, they sat down and said, "How are we going to feed these people." Philip said, "Two hundred denarii is insufficient to feed this great multitude." He actually said, "If we had two hundred denarii, we couldn't feed this big crowd." Andrew says, "Well, I've got a little boy here. He has a lunch. He's got five loaves and two little fish." They then dismiss that and say, "Yeah, but what are they amongst so many?" They basically had a lack of faith, you know, "This two hundred denarii, not sufficient." How many times we look at our resources, our strength, and our ability in light of the problems or the trial we're facing and we dismiss them, "Oh, insufficient." We're not to look at our resources, we're to look at God's. Amen? We're to fix our eyes on Him.

Jesus said, "Make them all sit down." He took the loaves and the fish, prayed, and broke them. When He broke them, He handed them to the disciples, and the disciples began to pass it out and distribute it. It kept going, it kept going, it kept going. Everyone ate. All those people ate until they were full! The Greek word translated "full" there means they were gluttoned. They ate too much. Have you ever eaten too much? Yes, you have! You don't need to raise your hand, I know you've eaten too much. Every Thanksgiving you eat too much. Isn't it funny how we eat at Thanksgiving? We eat all this food, "Oh, no, no, no." And then about an hour later we're sniffing around for another piece of pie, more turkey, or whatever it might be? We'll say, "No, no. I don't have any..." "Would you like to..." "Oh, yeah, I think I have enough room for dessert."

They were actually gluttoned and had baskets leftover—12 baskets! The word for baskets means a huge basket. It doesn't mean just a little basket. It's a large basket. It's the same Greek word used for the basket that Saul got into when he was let down the wall from Damascus and escaped the hostility and hatred of the Jewish enemies. These were large baskets full of

leftovers which, by the way, too, ladies, if your husband ever complains about leftovers, tell him, "Jesus did it. It's biblical." They took up all these leftovers, and what do we learn? We saw His glory, that Jesus Christ feeds the hungry soul, that He takes care of the deep needs of our lives when we're thirsty or hungry. Then, you have the sermon, too, that Jesus is the Bread of Life.

In chapter 6, again, we have another sign where Jesus stills the storm. He walks on water. Can you imagine that? Walks on water! Now, there's a lot of New Age people who like to walk on fire, but not very many of them walk on water. Can you imagine being out on the Sea of Galilee and there's a storm? You look up and Jesus is walking to you on the water. That's amazing! Then, He gets in the boat and says, "Peace. Be still," and the wind and the waves stopped, and there was a calm. It blew their minds. They said, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" They saw His power over nature. They saw His glory and His majesty that He can calm the raging seas, and He can calm the stormy seas of our lives.

We then come to chapter 9, when Jesus heals the blind man from birth, the man who was born blind, one of my truly favorite miracles of Jesus. The disciples said, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him...while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work," and He heals this blind man. Jesus opens our eyes and brings light. Jesus is the healer and the One who restores our sight and opens blinded eyes. They saw His glory.

Seventhly, we come to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. That's the seventh sign, John 11. Some add the sign of Christ's own resurrection, but the seven miracles are: the water to wine, the nobleman's son, the paralytic, feeding the five thousand, stilling the storm and walking on water, healing the man blind, raising Lazarus from the dead. Don't you love that? When Jesus showed up, all hope is gone. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother hadn't've died," and they were despairing. Jesus said, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you'll see the glory of God? Roll away the stone." They roll away the stone and Jesus says, "Lazarus, come forth." What happened? Lazarus came forth. What a marvelous miracle that was! He had been dead for three days! Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jesus is the Son of God, so much so that when Nicodemus in John 3:2 came to Jesus by night said, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus performed these and many other miracles because He was God in the flesh. He had power over nature, power over demons, power over disease, power over sickness. He's the Creator of all heaven and earth.

There's a third and more important witness than either of these. They actually grow in intensity. John the prophet, the works that Jesus performed—there can be counterfeit works, but Jesus did miracles that no one has ever done. The third is the most important. It's the Scriptures. This probably ought to be a separate study in itself. Let me try to get through it. We'll maybe go back and go into it a little bit more next week, but I really encourage you to meditate on your own this coming week from verses 36-47. It's the Father who bears witness of the Son in His own Word, the Scriptures. Verse 37, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne

witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” Notice the reference to His Word in verse 38. He introduces the Father again, and you haven’t heard from Him, you haven’t received His Word.

Verse 39, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40 And ye will not come to me,” He’s talking to the Jews, “that ye might have life. 41 I receive not honour from men. 42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43 I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44 How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” Good question. “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.” He’s talking about the writings of Moses in what we call the Pentateuch, Genesis through Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible. You trust in Moses. “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” Here you have Jesus saying that Moses not only wrote Scripture, but that the Scripture had God the Father behind them. There are some amazing inferences here that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God. They’re the product, God-breathed, of the Father; and as Moses wrote, he was writing under the inspiration of the Scripture and was actually pointing us to Jesus Christ.

In verse 47, “But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” Here, from the lips of Jesus, we have these amazing statements about the witness of the Scriptures to Jesus Christ. It’s marvelous that in verse 37, He says, “And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.” One of my favorite subjects is the subject of revelation and the concept that God cannot be known apart from revelation. By searching, you can’t find God; God must reveal Himself to you. God has chosen to reveal Himself in many different ways, but the grandest, most glorious, and most wonderful way that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us is in the Book we call the Bible, the Scriptures. We learn about God’s other methods of revelation in the Bible. He’s revealed Himself in nature. He reveals Himself in our conscience. He reveals Himself through angels and prophets. He spoke to people in dreams, yet all of that is recorded for us in the Scriptures. The Scriptures have one author, God the Holy Spirit, many different human instruments, yet one theme over the many years the Bible was compiled—over some 40 different authors, one theme—and they all speak in unity about that one theme, the redemptive plan of Jesus Christ, God sending His Son to redeem us from sin.

God the Father did bear witness audibly at His baptism (I already mentioned that), on the Mount Transfiguration. Remember when Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on the Mount Transfiguration? God the Father spoke and said, “This is my Son...hear ye him.” Also, just before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus prayed and said, “Father, glorify Your name,” and an audible voice came from heaven and said, “I both glorified it, and I will yet glorify it.” Then, He says (verse 38), “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” You reject Jesus Christ. You have not God the Father, and you don’t have His Word.

Write down a couple verses. You can check them out. It is the great and classic passage on the inspiration of Scripture. It says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," that phrase, "inspiration of God" literally means it is breathed by God. Not only breathed by God, breathed out by God, so Scripture is given by the breath of God. Human authors, yes, but they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean that God violated their human will or that God changed their personality. They weren't just passive instruments, they wrote with their own style. They wrote about historical events, but God was breathing on them as they wrote. Nothing is more important for you as a Christian than to have right doctrine when it comes to the Bible. The Bible, about itself, says that it's given by inspiration of God, so we believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. The view that I think we should hold is what's called the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. Verbal means the words, and plenary means all of them. We're not saying just the concepts are inspired by God, we're saying that the very words the human authors wrote were the words of God. Why do I look at words when I teach the Bible? Because they're important. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

There is a massive movement today—it's not new, it's been around a long time—to deny inerrancy and infallibility. The Bible isn't all the Word of God, and the Bible has errors and mistakes; and we become the authority to pick, choose, and decide what in the Bible is given by God and what is by men, what we should take out, and what we should believe. I believe that all Scriptures...you say, "Well, that's Old Testament Scriptures." It was written to Timothy by Paul. We also know that the New Testament is classified by the apostles as Scripture, and Jesus said, "When I send the Holy Spirit, He will bring all things to your remembrance, everything I taught you," so they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God," or woman, "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." God superintended the human authors so that the very words that they wrote were the very words of God. I said it before, and I'll say it again: There's nothing more important than your doctrine of the Scriptures, that you have a high view of the Word of God.

The second verse to write down is 2 Peter 1:16-21. That's interesting because it was when they were on Mount Transfiguration, Peter says, that God the Father spoke audibly from heaven. He goes on in that passage to say that we have a more sure word of prophetic Scriptures. Then he says, "...but holy men of God spake as they were moved," or carried. He uses a different term for the inspiration of Scriptures, that they were borne or carried along. That word that's used there was used of the wind filling a sail of a ship and carrying it along. In the book of Acts, when Paul was on the ship, being taken prisoner to Rome, and the wind carried the ship along, it's the same Greek concept that it's carried along. These Scriptures aren't man's own concepts or ideas. The English Bible actually renders that: it's not of any private interpretation. Sometimes people think that's referring to the fact that you can't personally or individually interpret the Bible. That's not what it means. It means individual, private writers didn't write the Bible out of their own minds, their own concepts, their own thoughts, that they were actually carried. They were actually borne along by the Holy Spirit. It's another classic passage that mentions the inspiration of the Bible.

Notice in verse 39, Jesus says, "Search the scriptures." That word "search" can either be an imperative or indicative. In other words, it can either be Jesus telling them to search the Scriptures, or it can be Jesus telling them, "You do search the Scriptures." Which of the two is it? I believe that it's indicative, and that what Jesus is actually saying in verse 39 is, "You do search the Scriptures." If anyone searched the Scriptures, the Jews did. Right? They were Bible students. They dug into the Word of God. Jesus isn't telling them, "You guys need to read your Bibles." He isn't saying, "You need to study the Scriptures." He's saying, "You search the Scriptures. You dig into the Word of God. You do search the Scriptures," but He says, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life." He says, "The problem is they," that is, the Scriptures, "testify," there's our word, they witness, they speak, "of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." In other words, they read, studied, and analyzed the Bible but didn't find Jesus in the Bible; therefore, they were lost. They dug into God's Word, but they missed the central theme and the purpose of the Bible. That's so sad.

This happens today with a lot of people. They read, study, analyze the Bible and think that because they read the Bible, everything is fine; but if you read the Bible and the Bible doesn't bring you to Jesus Christ, you're not reading the Bible properly. It doesn't do you any good. The Jews analyzed the Scriptures. It was amazing. Their superstitious reverence for the Word of God led to all kinds of eccentric behavior. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet was given a numerical equivalent for it. Each word had its number equivalent. Each line formed a mathematical equation. The scribes even numbered the center letter of each line in the Scriptures, the center letter in each book, and the center letter in the Old Testament. Now, that's not too far fetched from the Bible code that was going on a few years ago where people were reading all kinds of codes, hidden meanings, numbers, and finding things in the Bible that no one had ever seen before. You know, generally speaking, when people find things in the Bible no one has ever seen for two thousand years, it's usually because it isn't there. Okay?

I have people sometimes complain about me and say, "You know, he didn't say anything all that great. He doesn't say anything new. He doesn't say anything I haven't heard before," and I think, Praise the Lord! I'm glad. If you come in and, "That's strange. I've never heard that before. That's weird. I never saw that before." It could be because it's not in the Bible, duh. If it's new, it's not true; if it's true, it's not new. I hope and pray to God I'm not teaching anything that the church hasn't taught for two thousand years. It's what Christians have believed and held to. It's sad that so many people get so wrapped up in the study of God's Word, even Christians who are saved sometimes miss the real purpose of Bible study. They want to analyze, theorize, and get into...people come up to me with all these doctrinal questions and all these things. You know, sometimes the more I begin to talk to them, I find out that they have crazy views of Scripture or they're living immoral lives. They're studying the Bible but not obeying the Bible. They're not putting it into practice. What good does it do to have the Bible in your head if it hasn't transformed your heart?

Years ago, I heard a statement that I've never forgotten: The purpose of Bible study is not an enlightened intellect, it's a transformed character. It's not a big brain, it's a transformed life. It's a big heart. If your Bible study isn't bringing you to humility, brokenness, repentance of sin, faith

in Jesus Christ, then your Bible study is amiss. It's the same today. The Jehovah's Witness' study the Bible, but they miss Jesus. The Mormons study the Bible, but they miss Jesus. There's a lot of the cults that know the Bible better than we do, but they miss Jesus Christ. There are kids that grow up in church. They've been taught to memorize the Bible. They memorize Scripture, and that's good, but unless they come to Christ, they're not saved. It doesn't matter how much Bible knowledge they have.

So, what's the problem here? Well, let me kind of wrap this up. Problem number one is that they have a wrong approach to the Scriptures (verse 39). They saw the Bible as the end in itself. They believed that the knowledge of the Bible was the end in itself, and that's a misguided approach. The Bible is to bring you into a knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, to bring you in a deeper relationship to God through Jesus Christ. They saw Bible study as an end in itself. That was not the purpose of Scripture. Notice verse 39. He says, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think," or just doing that, you're going to go to heaven, "ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." This is an amazing statement at the end of verse 39 where Jesus actually says, "they," the Scriptures, "testify of me." When He says that, He's talking about the whole Bible, but the Old Testament primarily. All through the Old Testament, Jesus is everywhere—every book, every chapter, almost every page you can find Jesus. Every verse has a path that leads ultimately to Jesus Christ, but they would not come to Him (verse 40), "that ye might have life."

The purpose of the Scriptures is to testify of Jesus Christ. Jesus makes that perfectly clear. They point us to Jesus. Here's my question: When you read your Bible, do you find Jesus? When you study your Bible, do you see Jesus? Is it bringing you to Jesus? You can go through all of the Old Testament, He's the seed that would bruise the head of the serpent, He's the lamb that was slain for the sins of mankind, He's seen in the tabernacle, in the tent, in the bread, in the light, in the oil, in the incense, all of it. The high priest and his garment, all of it speaks of Jesus Christ—Psalm 22, Psalm 23, Isaiah 53, all through there. Jesus told Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Jesus is all through the Old Testament.

Here's the second problem they have: Their motive was wrong. When they read the Bible, and this happens to people today, they have the wrong motive (verses 40-44). They didn't want to come to Him. They had the wrong approach (verse 39), and in verses 40-44, they had the wrong motive. Their motive was wrong. They were proud and stubborn (verse 40), "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Notice, you and will, "And ye will not come to me," they had freedom of will. They could choose to believe or not to believe, or to come or not to come. They didn't have the love of God in their hearts when they read the Bible (verses 41-42), "I receive not honour from men. 42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." When you read and study your Bible, you do it motivated out of a love for God and a desire to grow in your love for God. You don't just open your Bible, "Well, the preacher always tells us we need to read your Bibles, let's read the Bible," or "My wife will get mad at me if I don't read the Bible, so I read my Bible," or "My parents will get mad at me if I don't read my Bible," so you read your Bible. You do it out of duty rather than motivated for love for God. Why do you pick

up your Bible and read? To find Jesus, because you love Jesus, right?

A young fellow went away to war and his sweetheart was back home. The soldier was writing love letters to his future bride. You don't think she'd read them when she got them? She'd read them. She'd read them ten times! She'd be all excited, lock herself in her room, and read those letters. Can you imagine if he got home from war and they were never opened? They were just sitting over there. "Why didn't you..." "I was too busy. I didn't have time." God has given us a love letter in His Word. He's telling us how much He loves us and His heart for us, His promises for us, yet we don't have the time to be motivated by love to read His Word?

Here's another motive that was wrong (verses 43-44). They sought the honor that comes from men. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" When you read your Bible, you want to honor God. You want to glorify God. Their motive was wrong. They didn't find Jesus in the Scriptures.

Thirdly and lastly, they didn't have faith. They didn't mix their reading of Scriptures with belief and faith. Look at verse 45. It says, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." They boasted about their commitment to the Word of God Moses had written, but they didn't really come to believe in Jesus, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." In verse 39, "they which testify of me," now in verse 46, "he wrote of me. 47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" You don't believe what Moses said about Me, and in those first five books of the Bible written by Moses, he spoke so much about Jesus; but they wouldn't believe and turn to Jesus, so He says, "how shall ye believe my words?"

Remember when the two on the road to Emmaus after Christ's resurrection encountered Jesus, and He gave them a Bible study? He went through the law and the prophets and went through Moses. When He finally got to Emmaus, they constrained Him to come and stay with them. Then, Jesus prayed and broke the bread, their eyes were opened, and Jesus disappeared. What did they say? Did not our hearts burn within us as He opened the Scriptures to us as we walked along the way? There are three openings in that story of the road to Emmaus. There's first the opening of the Scriptures, the opening of their eyes, and the Bible says there in the story that He opened their understanding. What an awesome thing when God opens the Scriptures, opens our eyes, and then opens our understanding. Then we say, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" I tell you. The most glorious, wonderful experience with God you can ever have is in the Bible, is in the pages of Scripture. When God speaks to your heart through His Word, it's marvelous! It's wonderful! They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us." Would to God that we would have the same heart burn.

Let me give you three quick bullet points of application in closing on how to approach the Scriptures. As I said, again, this could go on for a long time. I've gone longer than I wanted to tonight, but I want to give you three quick bullet points. They're not anything new, but they're important. First, read the Bible humbly. God is in heaven, and you are on earth. We need to read the Bible on our knees. Yes, God used human instruments. Yes, it's set in historical

context, but we need to read it with great humility and utmost dependency upon God, the Holy Spirit. Before you read your Bible, pray and ask God to show you Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to show you the things of Christ.

Secondly, read it purposefully. You say, "What do you mean, purposefully?" You read it with the purpose of coming to know Jesus better and finding Jesus in every page. Look for promises. Look for sins that you are supposed to avoid. Look for promises that you should claim. Look for verses that tell you more about God's nature, character, and love. What do I learn about God? What do I learn about Jesus? What promises are there for me? What sin is there for me to avoid in my own life?

Thirdly, read it obediently. You read it humbly, purposefully, and obediently. What does the Bible tell us in the book of James? "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." God has given us His Word, Christ is revealed in this Book, and we must be doers of the Word; so we read it humbly, purposefully, and obediently, "God, change my life, and help me to put it into practice."