

Religion for Power and Gain

John 2:12-25

The Holy Spirit of God is directing John to write to you for a very specific reason. The Spirit is energizing and supervising these words.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 ² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

We know that the Spirit used human authors to write what God wants said.

2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Scripture is then said to be “breathed out” of the person of God Himself.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...

What we also know is the purpose for the entire gospel of John.

John 20:31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Gospel faith believes that **Jesus is the Christ** and that has a very specific meaning. Jesus is the one God promised would crush Satan, the descendent of Abraham through whom all the nations would be blessed. The eternal king on David’s throne. The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He is **the Son of God**. Not a son of God. This term does not allow the common response of “but we are all sons of God...right?” No we are not all sons of God! We were made by God, but we do not come into this world with the nature and character of God. We come in as fallen, broken, lost sinners. Things I make are not my sons. Only things I give my nature to, my DNA in today’s vocabulary. Our sons share in our nature. If all men are sons of God then how could Jesus say something like this?

John 8:42-44 ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Cleaning up the outside with religion will not cleanse the heart because men are hopelessly separated from God by nature. The most perfectly religious men of Christ's day became His enemies within a few days of starting His public ministry. Why? Because Christ and religion do not mix. They are like oil and water. Religion always reveals man's belief that he can be good enough for God. Put another way...that he can meet God's standard of righteousness. Christ taught the exact opposite of this. Listen to just a few of the things and ask yourselves how this would resonated with men and women who believe their own religion and morality was enough.

Luke 18:18-19 ¹⁸ A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

Matthew 5:20 ²⁰ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. **Illustrate**

Matthew 7:21-23 ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.
²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

John 3:3 ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Let's read about Jesus' first encounter with the religious men of His day. These are not drunks, atheists, murders or fornicators. They are pastor's, Bible teachers and church leaders. They have the true Bible...The real Scripture that came from God and they know it in the original Hebrew. They are descendents of Abraham and Moses and they have gone to church every week of their lives. They are in charge of the church, the worship and the teaching of the Scripture. And yet...Jesus picks a huge fight with them before he has finished the first week of His earthly ministry.

John 2:12-25 ¹² After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and *His* brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. ¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME." ¹⁸ The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word

which Jesus had spoken. ²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

In these verses we see.....

- His Full Humanity [12-13]
- His Full Deity [14-17]
- His Full Authority [18-22]
- His Full Knowledge [23-25]

His Full Humanity [12-13]

John 2:12-13 ¹² After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and *His* brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

After this He went down to Capernaum: After the wedding feast and the low key miracle of turning water into wine, Jesus went down to Capernaum. Cana was in the hills and Capernaum was right on the sea so they did literally go down to get there. This became the headquarters of Jesus' earthly ministry. The good people of Nazareth, after all thought he was an illegitimate child and had tried to kill him when He preached in the synagogue there. On the other hand Capernaum was the home town of Peter and Jesus received a warm welcome there. It became Jesus' home town:

Matthew 9:1 Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over *the sea* and came to His own city.

He and His mother and *His* brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days: Mary had other children. If "Mother" is literally Mary, it for brothers to be allegorical. Jesus' brothers would have been the other children that Mary gave birth to.

Matthew 1:24-25 ²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, ²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Luke 2:6-7 ⁶ While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

God the Son became a human man. He had a human mother who was married to a human father and she had other human children who were Jesus' brothers and sisters. As a family they were at a wedding. After the wedding they went to a nearby town for a few days. Jesus being human went about the things of humanity.

Men must believe in the true Christ of the Bible not one they feel comfortable with. Chapter One says the Eternal Creator God became Flesh...He entered humanity. God the Son eternally altered His nature to be one of His own creatures. John is writing so that you might come to trust this Christ, the human being called Jesus. No one else could break the power of sin and death that binds everyman's soul. You will never free yourself from yourself. You are what you are and no amount of self effort will ever change your nature or your destiny. In fact,

Ephesians 2:1-3 ...you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

John's Gospel is a complete repudiation of all human efforts to make ourselves acceptable to God. Christ alone makes us acceptable to God by becoming a human being, bearing every suffering and pain without sin and then absorbing the punishment for sin that should go to you. Christ Jesus became a human being for you. He traded His life for you. He took your sin and gave you His righteous standing with God. You and I get no credit and therefore no glory for our salvation. The spiritual death that Satan desires for you went to Christ in your place. God tells you so that you might trust only Him and not yourselves at all.

Hebrews 2:14-15 ¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Christ's humanity gives this added benefit to you. He has not kept Himself back from the pain of your life. He was hated without a cause, maligned, lied about, ostracized, unjustly condemned and executed. Whatever you are going through right now...know this! Jesus, left heaven to suffer humanity's fate so that He could take your place in death.

Hebrews 4:15-16 ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem: With this simple statement John sets the stage for the confrontation of the universe between God's righteous son and man's self-righteous arrogance.

His Full Deity [14-17]

John 2:14-17 ¹⁴ And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated *at their tables*. ¹⁵ And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured

out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶ and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."

He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables: The animals were the sacrifices required as the pilgrims came to worship. Because of the great distances people traveled by foot to arrive there it was difficult to bring your own animals for those offerings. This would have been a big help to the worshipers to have animals provided for them when they arrived except for the fact that it had turned into a business with greatly inflated prices. Like paying 20.00 for a hotdog and fries at a ball park. It is nice to have the possibility of buying, but you are now a captive consumer. Men take advantage of such things.

Every male over 20 had to pay a temple tax each year as well. The religious rulers of the day had decided that only a certain kind of coin could be used to pay. You had to pay up to 12% more than the coin was worth to get the coin to pay the tax which you then paid right back to the people who just sold you the coin. It is a great business!

He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen: This is a whip of rope. Jesus made it Himself on the spot with materials that were available. With it he actively and aggressively threw or drove all of those making money on worship out of the temple.

He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables: Not only did he drive the oxen and sheep out by swinging a whip used to scourge criminals, but he also poured the coins out of their containers and then flipped the tables over.

To those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.": Everyone is standing aghast. Such things are just not done. It is shocking. It is unexpected. It is incredibly bold and it is unprecedented. So after it is done and when everyone is staring at Jesus, He gives His opening salvo against man-made, self-righteous religion. The Prophets spoke of a similar day when Christ will actually do what He only commands here.

Malachi 3:1-3 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. ² "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

Those who say that Christ never claimed to be God must answer this question: "Why did His listeners always think He was?"

John 10:30-33 ³⁰ "I and the Father are one." ³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. ³² Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for

which of them are you stoning Me?" ³³ The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be God*."

Luke 5:18-23 ¹⁸ And *some men were* carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. ¹⁹ But not finding any *way* to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle *of the crowd*, in front of Jesus. ²⁰ Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹ The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

John 8:56-59 ⁵⁶ "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad." ⁵⁷ So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." ⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

His Full Authority [18-22]

John 2:18-22 ¹⁸ The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²² So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?": Jesus has done his only miracle so far in an obscure village in the fare northern reaches of the country. Only a few servants, His mom and His disciples knew about it. He declines to give them anything to consider at this point other than His words.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.": These guys loved the temple but not the God of the temple. They loved the religion and the worship and the ritual but not the God were designed to exalt. What no one knew at that moment was that their love of religion and self-righteousness and hatred of God, was about to be exposed by a three year running confrontation with a itinerate country preacher they could not refute and had difficulty killing.

The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But He was speaking of the temple of His body: Christ's resurrection was His greatest miracle, but it would not be seen for three years when He spoke these words. Nevertheless, Jesus offered it on more than one occasion as the definitive sign He would give to prove His Authority to teach, preach and even to oppose Godless, religion and ritual.

So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken: These guys

had trouble remembering that Jesus just did a miracle or understanding what happened on the mount of transfiguration. How in the world did they remember something that He said the first week of His ministry? Well, God sent the Holy Spirit into the world after Christ's resurrection and ascension to help people like you and me to see Christ, believe Christ, trust Christ and remember Christ as we struggle through life.

John 16:12-15 ¹² "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

The absolute proof of Jesus' Authority to rule creation comes from His Resurrection.

John 10:17-18 ¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. **I have authority** to lay it down, and **I have authority** to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Matthew 28:18 ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

John 5:25-29 ²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷ and **He gave Him authority** to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. ²⁸ "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

His Full Knowledge [23-25]

John 2:23-25 ²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

When He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing: This is a conditional faith. It is not Spirit generated. There were a lot of people like this that followed Jesus, but when there were difficult things to be believed or obeyed they fell away. It is funny that the more things change the more they stay the same. There are grand television ministries built on the premise that if people will see the signs they will believe...and you know they do stay with those ministries, even when the miracles are exposed as tricks and the healings as false and the tithes as avarice. Why do people still give to such things? They are observing the signs.

But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew

what was in man.: Jesus Christ then and now, does not seek, or require the affirmation of men. He knows all men and what makes them tick. There is an interesting play on words in Greek here. “Many were trusting Him, but He was not trusting them...because He knew their hearts.”

CONCLUSION So how do you know if you are really trusting Christ or being like these curiosity seekers at that first Passover? How much authority over your life do you give to Christ? Do you reserve the right to say no to His commands or to just ignore them? Do you feel free not to forgive an offense or to judge someone to be more worthy of punishment than you? Do you Love Christ Himself or just the His benefits?

Jesus left the eternal glory of heaven to become a flesh and blood man. He did that so He could take your place in death and pay the righteous penalty for your sin. And, He knew He was doing it for you by name when He did it.

Jesus could only do this because He was God the Son who became that perfect sinless human man. Humans are broken, fallen and sinful....yes that means you and me.

The God-Man Jesus has authority over all things. He is the creator and sustainer of the universe suddenly contained in a frail human body. Who would ever suspect His true identity? What sign will He give to show that He has ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH? He will rise again and then come again.

Jesus knows everything about you this morning. He knows all thoughts and discerns your motives. He reads you like an open book. Why are you a Christian my friend? Have you ever given you life to Christ? I don't mean prayed some prayer or done some religious thing. I mean signed over full ownership of your earthly life, ambitions, hopes and desires to the Lord of Creation.

Do you have any sense of His Glorious Love driven authority over this creation? If He is even remotely what He claims to be....and if He has known you in your sin and died for you willingly.....if He has purchased [redeemed] you from utter hopelessness then why do you hold yourselves back from Him.... The Psalmist expresses it well....

Psalm 49:5-15 Why should I fear in days of adversity, When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me, Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches? No man can by any means redeem *his* brother Or give to God a ransom for him For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever That he should live on eternally, That he should not undergo decay. For he sees *that even* wise men die; The stupid and the senseless alike perish And leave their wealth to others. Their inner thought is *that* their houses are forever *And* their dwelling places to all generations; They have called their lands after their own names. But man in *his* pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of those who are foolish, And of those after them who approve their words. Selah. As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning, And their form shall be for Sheol to consume So that they have no habitation. But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me. Selah.