

The Purpose of The Scripture II

John 5:41- 47

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Introduction: The overwhelming percentage of what we know to be true we have learned through testimony of some sort. None of us were eyewitnesses to the 911 attacks, but we have been told, instructed and in some cases shown testimony. The same is true of most of what we know about the world and its history. For some reason however, men will willingly accept the testimony of others to establish the truth of history and geography, but are filled with doubt and rejection when the same accepted method of establishing truth is applied to Christ. All the universally accepted rules used by mankind to establish the truth of a matter are summarily rejected when the subject is God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus took on this subject with His hearers in the fifth chapter of John. He discussed the rules of testimony and witnesses that we still use today and He exposed the fact that men are unwilling to observe them when the subject matter is God and Christ Jesus.

BUT Jesus uncovered an even more deadly error in human thinking. It is, for want of a better term, “self absorption” or making everything about us. The Bible will give us something. If we do the right things and think the right thoughts and say the right words and practice the right religion and believe the right doctrine we are “Right With God!”

I recently saw a sign on a church that read, “The Bible is like a map to heaven.” If that sounds right to you then consider this... a map CANNOT get you anywhere.....it can only tell you what you have to do to get there. That is what maps do. They tell YOU what YOU must do to get YOURSELF somewhere. “Go here, turn here...etc.” If the Bible is a map to heaven then the instructions go something like this: “Believe this doctrine, pray this prayer, go to church, change your life....be good! These are the things YOU MUST do. And this is exactly the way the Jews used the Old Testament. It was their map...their instruction manual on how to procure eternal life and they were following it meticulously. Now here is the problem....

JESUS TOOK SERIOUS ISSUE WITH THIS WAY OF LOOKING AT SCRIPTURE!

John 5:39-40 ³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; ⁴⁰ and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

Jesus says that the Bible is not a map to heaven. It is testimony about Him. It identifies Him. This does not diminish in any way its perfection and infallibility. Here Jesus reveals the purpose of God for The Scripture. Was God giving a road map to heaven like most Christians believe? Absolutely not! He was testifying about Jesus Christ. He was unpacking history before it came to pass. And why was He doing that? He was making it possible for anyone who trusted His truthfulness [we call that faith] to identify His Son when He came into the world of humanity and history.

Along the way God recorded events that reveal who He is and who man is. God finds Abraham....Abraham does not find God. God gives Isaac to Abraham through Sarah not Ishmael through Hagar. God chooses Jacob rather than Isaac choosing Esau. God delivered the Children of Israel from Egypt rather than Moses and God gave them the Law to order their lives and their society....not Moses. God chose David as King rather than Samuel.

It was God who called the prophets. God who gave them knowledge of the future that only He could have. It was God who destroyed the Syrians while they slept and not Hezekiah. And finally....IT was God who conceived His own Son in the womb of Mary and not Joseph her betrothed groom.

Luke 1:31-37 ³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Is there a recurring theme in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation....a theme that was totally ignored in Christ's day and goes largely neglected in ours and throughout the history of the church. YES! The Scripture is about Christ!

**It is not about what men must be and do to be saved...
It is about who Christ is and what He does to Save us!**

John picks up Jesus teaching on this in 5:41. Let me read it to you:

John 5:41- 47 ⁴¹ "I do not receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and* only God? ⁴⁵ "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

While confronting the self-centered and man-centered nature of their religion, Jesus answers three vital questions:

- Why Men don't give Glory to God? [41-43]
- How do Men give Glory to each other? [44]
- How do men come to believe in God? [45-47]

Why Men don't give Glory to God? [41-43]

John 5:41-43 ⁴¹ "I do not receive glory from men; ⁴² but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. ⁴³ "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

I do not receive glory from men: This is a companion statement to the one Jesus made earlier:

John 5:34 ³⁴ "...the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

Jesus says that He does not need your approval to be God. "Receive" means "to accept" or even "require." Christ is glorious whether or not men worship Him. He is God in human form whether or not men testify to the truth of it.

I do not lose sleep over the History Channel or PBS documentaries on "The Real Jesus." God provided His own documentary on the identity of Jesus Christ in the form of 39 breathed out and perfect written testimonies about Him. In those documents, He singled out the place and time in History in which His own Son would enter humanity and He did it with such precision that the only explanation for not believing it is to reject the truthfulness of the witnesses and the validity of their testimony.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 ¹¹ It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

In the same way that Jesus does not need the testimony of men to confirm who He is or where He came from...He likewise does not need the approval, praise or glory of men to confirm that He is glorious.

I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves: What Jesus reveals here is straight information from God about religion, moralism and even knowledge of the Scripture. Men who do not trust or love God cannot praise Him. He does not receive praise that is not based on our love and trust for Him.

This does not mean that Jesus does not want praise or that He does not accept our praise. It means that it is all perfunctory and unacceptable unless it is driven by love for God and Christ. If it is not it is pandering and flattery.

How do you feel when you know someone is giving you a complement just because they want something out of you. Salesmen are trained in this. It is manipulation. God feels exactly the same and He knows the motives of men. Ask yourself right now...why am I here in church? Why am I singing these songs and listening to this message? To Christ...this is NOT trivial. It is vital!

Matthew 15:7-9 ⁷ "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸ 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY

FROM ME. ⁹ 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

If you do not have tender affection for God you do not have love for Him. I have heard men and women try to get around this most of my life. Their favorite verse is...

John 14:15 ¹⁵ "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

But Jesus knew men would try to reduce Him to religion and ritual. The pride of men is that they can DO SOMETHING that God must and will accept. They will be good enough or religious enough. God will pay them back for the good that they have done. So Jesus followed up this statement with the one seldom quoted...

John 15:12 ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Do you know how to treat someone you love? Now this is a serious question and not to be dismissed as rhetoric or sermonizing. Our culture is awash with those who do not know how to love because they have never been loved. Christ is the instructor on the subject. His love was sacrificial and unreciprocated. In other words, He acted first. He helped first. He forgave first. He gave first.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

It would be just plain neglectful for me not to bring this up here. Christ gave Himself up for the church...not just for you and me, BUT for you and me together as His bride...His family. He did know you personally and love you before the foundation of the world, but the way a father knows and loves all his children. You probably think that how you feel or act toward our little church does not affect your love for Christ one way or another...or at least has little impact. But you would be dead wrong about that. Listen to these other Scriptures that bear directly on this.

John 15:11-12 ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

Some believers have given up entirely on having joy. They don't pursue it because they think their lives are just too grim for joy. But God says otherwise. Jesus was not speaking of moralizing and ritualizing when He said "keep my commands." He was not breeding a sect of "holier than thou" folk. In the verse above Jesus is tying His Joy....The Joy of God produced by the Holy Spirit in you...directly to His command that you love one another sacrificially.

Joy and Love are inseparable. If you have no joy you are lacking love. Back to my question of a moment ago..." Do you know how to treat someone you love?" Would you go weeks or months without seeing them? Would you go a year or more and never eat with them? Would you never inquire about their health, their heart or their happiness? Of course not...but we will do that with the church. Would you give up some of your own time or money to help someone you really, really loved? Of course you would! But, it is so easy to treat the church as if it was just a fast food restaurant...MacChurch!

One more quick question....How exactly has Christ loved the Church?

Romans 8:32-39 ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?.... ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?.... ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John then tells us one way....that is in your power.... to increase your love for Christ.

1 John 4:11-12 ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another.** ¹² No one has seen God at any time; if we **love one another,** God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him: The problem men have is that they love themselves more than God. A great preacher will get glory from men that he should never receive while the Christ who is preached is given hardly any. Christians will stand in awe of 30,000 member churches that are connected not with the name of Christ, but with the name of their pastors.

George Whitfield was the greatest preacher of his day. Ben Franklin was a fan, but not a believer in Christ. Franklin would walk around the perimeter of the crowd so he could estimate its size for his newspaper. BUT....Whitfield was a man of single purpose and the fact that so little is known of him stems from His own often stated desire...."let the name of George Whitfield perish...but only Christ's be glorified." He died young, spent and poor. It has only been in the past 25 years or so that anyone has thought much about him.

Down through history of the church there have been the few who preached and lived for Christ's glory. This exaltation of Christ as central to all of life is not easily grasped and when understood is often rejected. Men prefer men to God and they always have. Men would always prefer a sermon on 10 ways to have your best life now to a message about the greatness of God's love in Christ when He bore your sins and gave you eternal life.

This is what Jesus means when He says you do not receive me because I come to you as God, but one who comes as a man....you receive.

How do Men give Glory to each other? [44]

John 5:44 ⁴⁴ "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God?"

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another: Here is the foundational reason why men reject Christ and the preaching of the Cross. Men are bent on getting glory from one another. "Glory" here means praise, kudos if you prefer. We want to be identified with success and something important. Men do good works because they make them look good. They want their names on things and they desire men to know what they have done. Christianity is totally given over to this in our day. The biggest building, the biggest crowd, the biggest band, the biggest program. These are the glories that men seek from one another.

Jesus said...."how can you possibly believe me when you seek glory from one another." It is a given that men cannot trust Christ because Christ gives no glory to men. He gives us no praise for our worthiness and greatness. He does not give condemnation either...not now....not in this world.

John 3:16-17 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world **to judge** the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

And you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only* God: This is another way of saying that we prefer what men think of us a lot more than what God thinks of us. We can compare well with other men. There is always a worse husband or wife than we are. There are worse employees, worse neighbors, worse people that we are.

But what if we had to get our praise from God? What if the only comparison that mattered was with God and Christ? When God gave The Law as His perfect standard of Righteousness he intended that we should compare ourselves to Him....seek approval from Him and not from comparing ourselves to one another.

Romans 3:19-27 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Our desire to be approved by men is the greatest obstacle to our love for Christ. It keeps men from true faith in the true Christ of Scripture, but it does not keep them from Bible Study, Religious observance, Ritual or Moralism....just from Christ.

John 12:42-46 ⁴² Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing *Him*, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved **the approval of men** rather than the approval of God. ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶ "I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.

How do men come to believe in God? [45-47]

John 5:45-47 ⁴⁵ "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. ⁴⁷ "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father: Jesus already said that His primary purpose in coming into the world was not to condemn. He could have done that from heaven. In fact...that is exactly what will happen at His second coming...but we are not there yet.

The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope: With this statement Jesus returns to the primary purpose of this discourse. It is to show us the true nature and purpose of the Scripture. The Scripture is the written Word of God while Christ is the living Word. It is Christ who saves. It is Jesus who has life in Himself to give to men. It is not the words or doctrines of the book that save...no matter how well you know them. The words and the doctrines reveal Jesus and it is Jesus who saves. The written word is perfect and it is supernatural and it comes from the mind of God.

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

Hebrews 4:12-13 ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

2 Peter 1:20-21 ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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.

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?": Here is a startling revelation from Christ. "If men refuse to believe the testimony of God as it is revealed in the Scripture they would never believe the Words of Christ. The opposite is true. People who say they believe the Old Testament but reject Christ simply do not really believe the Old Testament. Jesus made this same point when telling us about a rich man who died and went to hell.

Luke 16:23-31 ²³ and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may

not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷ And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house- ²⁸ for I have five brothers- so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹ But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰ And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

CONCLUSION: The Scripture is breathed out by God. We call that inspiration. It is therefore perfect and sufficient for its purpose. But its purpose is to identify Christ when He came into the world. So that the eyes of all humanity would finally see their God and know His love, compassion, mercy and grace for them. Even though the world is broken beyond repair and humanity is oppressed with hatred, fear, hostility, illness, emotional ruin and death...even in this condition, God sent His own Son into the world...not to condemn the world but to save it. This is our Jesus. The Scriptures are about Him from beginning to end. They were given to identify Him but not to give eternal life. For that we must come to Him.

As certainly as the Bible reveals Jesus as the Son of the Living God...The Son reveals the Bible to be the Word of the Living God. Who but God could have orchestrated the hundreds of details of history, geography and genealogy and told them to us precisely, centuries before they came to pass?

We need to love Christ and search and read the Scriptures for the purpose of knowing the one we love. Bible knowledge is the pursuit of the God who loved you supremely since eternity past.

Ask for a verdict: To this end you should purpose to pursue Christ. John Piper calls it "going hard after Christ." It is not knowledge for its own sake. It is like two lovers intent on knowing one another's innermost nature. Why...for love....for joy.

Purpose to love Christ's church and do something about it. Gather with it. Give your time and money to it. Pursue one another in love. This comes with a promise of increasing your love for Christ and your Joy in this life.

Is Christ's purpose for coming revealed to us? Yes. He came to show us God. He came to grant us mercy and grace and make us God's children for eternity. He came to take our punishment for sin and give us a righteous standing in God's sight.

John 1:14-18 ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.