

Who Is Jesus?

Over the years many have rejected Jesus when they denied that He was and is God. In recent times some have rejected Jesus by asserting that Jesus never said He was God. Yet, we saw in our last study that the religious leaders of Jesus' day understood that He said He was God. They just did not agree! If it was not obvious in the last study that Jesus declared He was God, it will be very obvious in this study. His statements are strong.

It is reported that there was a wealthy man living in Philadelphia who was not interested in hearing anything about Jesus Christ until he was near his death. With concerns about his future, the man called his friend for help. When his friend arrived, his friend said, "I have nothing new to say. You are a sinner, and you need the savior, Jesus Christ. Do you feel guilt, and will you take the Savior?" The man responded, "No, there must be something better than hell for a man of my dignity." What a sad response!

Why did the religious leaders of Jesus' day reject Him? Why do some men and women not believe in Jesus Christ? The answer to that question will be found in this study. One of the thrills of listening to Jesus is that He does not use theological words and enter into different debates as to why people rejected Him. He just uses simple words and warns us to respond.

The Setting. In our previous studies we have been watching a growing conflict develop between Jesus and the religious leaders. The religious leaders rejected Jesus because He had been breaking their Sabbath rules and said that He was their God. When Jesus said that He was God, they decided to kill Him. They were like a boiling tea kettle and finally the whistle went off.

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 5:16-18 (NASB)

So the war was on and

it continues today with a modern set of new religious leaders. Several years ago my daughter gave me a book as a Christmas present called, "Honest To Jesus." It was written by Robert W. Funk who was the founder of the Jesus Seminar. The book captures his views about Jesus. In it he presents twenty-one unbiblical theses about Jesus. Here are some of his heretical statements:

1. The aim of the quest is to set Jesus free. Its purpose is to liberate Jesus from the scriptural and creedal and experiential prisons in which we have incarcerated him.

6. Jesus is not the proper object of faith. . . Jesus himself should not be, must not be, the object of faith.

That would be to repeat the idolatry of the first believers.

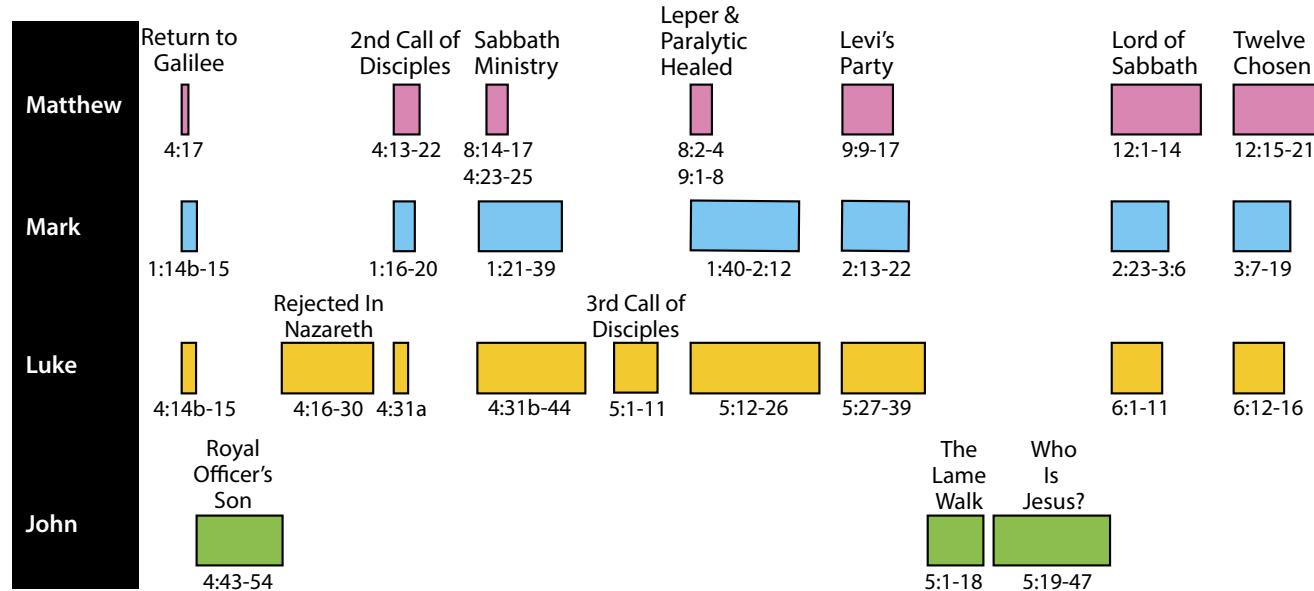
8. Give Jesus a demolition. We must begin by giving Jesus a demolition. He asked for it, he deserves it, we owe him



Jesus Healing - Mathieu Ignace van Brée, born 1773 - died 1839

Life and Heart of Jesus

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Mid A.D. 31)



no less. As a divine son of God, co-eternal with the Father, pending cosmic judge seated at God's right hand, he is insulted and isolated from his persona as the humble Galilean sage . . . A demoted Jesus then becomes available as the real founder of the Christian movement.¹

Mr. Funk does not believe that Jesus is God or the Eternal Judge in the future. Would Jesus be insulted? Apparently, Mr. Funk did not read the passage of our study or he has chosen to ignore it. Let's see what Jesus said about Himself.

Jesus Does What the Father Does. Our study is found in John 5:19-47 and it starts with these words,

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. John 5:19 (NASB)

The religious leaders had accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath laws by healing, feasting, and telling a paralyzed man to carry his pallet. So Jesus responded by informing them that He only does what He sees God the Father doing. Jesus uses a simple word when He says that He does what He "sees" the Father doing. It reminds us of a little baby trying to walk just like his/her parents. Babies are great imitators. That is how they learn to walk and speak. Later on in life, they imitate some aspects of our character that we did not know was obvious to others - some bad and some good. So Jesus imitated the Father. Whatever the Father did, He did too! That is, He never acted independently of the Father. Jesus was telling the religious leaders that when they criticize Him, they are criticizing God the Father, because Jesus was just copying the Father's actions.

The Trinity. What did Jesus mean when He spoke of the "Father"? For some this can be confusing. Jesus was not referring to another God. There are not two gods - Jesus and God the Father. Later in one of our future studies, we will read the following words,

1. Funk, Robert W., Honest To Jesus, Harper Collins, 1996. pp. 300-306

Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD . . .’” Mark 12:29 (NASB)

Jesus taught that there was only one God. We will see shortly that He claims to be God, and in other studies we will discover that Jesus and the Father are one God, along with the Holy Spirit. That is, God is a plural-one or a trinity. It is a concept that we do not understand; but should we be able to understand God? If we could understand Him completely, then He would not be God. There is a study at this website called “Who Is God?” which will help to explain this truth further for those who are interested.

Father Loves Jesus. After Jesus told the religious leaders that He mimics the Father, He told them that He and the Father are friends. Wow, what a shocking statement to the leaders!

For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.
John 5:20 (NASB)

The Greek word that Jesus used for “love” was *phileo*. This word has the idea of friendship love. Jesus does not have a cold, lifeless, business relationship with the Father. They are friends. The religious leaders must have been angry over this statement because they hated Jesus. Just think - they hated Jesus, but God the Father loved Him.

Then Jesus added a powerful statement by declaring that “you have not seen anything yet.” That is, Jesus promised them that they would see greater miracles, greater healings, and greater signs in the future. They had only seen the minor stuff so far. They had no clue what Jesus was able to do. More was coming, and some of it would be spectacular!

Jesus’ Spectacular Miracles. One of the spectacular miracles Jesus would perform would be the raising of the dead.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

John 5:21 (NASB)

Did the religious leaders doubt that He could do this? Most of us probably would have had we been there. Many today would doubt. Yet, Jesus raised the dead. In coming studies we will see Jesus raise the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), the daughter of Jarius (Matthew 9:18-26), and Lazarus (John 11:1-46) from the dead. If the Father raised the dead and since Jesus mimics the Father, then Jesus will raise the dead too!

The last six words of Jesus’ statement, “. . . gives life to whom He wishes,” are significant. Jesus was not a little boy who only does what daddy says. Jesus had the ability and the freedom to perform miracles, perform healings, perform signs and wonders, and raise the dead. This was and is the mark of God and not of a human being.

Jesus Will Judge All Men. The religious leaders must have been furious by now, but Jesus was not finished.

For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:22-23 (NASB)

The religious leaders believed that God was the final and ultimate judge at the end of life. So Jesus surprises them when He says that He will be their judge. The Greek word Jesus uses for “has given” in the statement “has given all judgment to the Son” is in the perfect tense. This means that Jesus was already the judge of the world. He was not waiting to become the judge at some time in the future. The judge was standing in front of these religious “bullies,” and the “bullies” were going to be judged by the one they were “bullying.”

But Jesus’ judgment would not be clouded with a heart for revenge. God does not seek to punish people because they “hurt Him” or because they disagree with Him. God’s judgments are and will be based on fact and truth - righteousness. Judgment had been given to Jesus in order to bring honor to Him. By honoring Jesus, everyone will honor the Father. Jesus was declaring that He had the rights, privileges, and authority

of God. This was a message the religious leaders understood.

Therefore, when we sing praises to Jesus, when we honor Him with our words, and when we pray to Him, we are also honoring the Father. This is the desire of God the Father. All honor is supposed to go to Jesus. "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

Jesus Gives Eternal Life. Since Jesus is the Judge of our souls and since He determines our eternity, what standard will He use to determine what happens to you or me? Have you ever wondered what Jesus would say about eternal life? Jesus answers our question next.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 5:24 (NASB)

The standard Jesus will use is that you must believe what He says and believe what the Father says. God is not interested in our educated opinions and objections. He is not interested in our independent thinking and suggestions that He lies. God is God and He does not lie (Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18). God does not need to lie when He is all powerful. Those who believe Jesus' words will have eternal life and escape judgment. Those who do not believe Him will spend eternity in suffering. Jesus' words are clear and obvious.

Now notice that at the end of Jesus' comment, He promises that those who believe Him will have "passed" out of death into life. The Greek word Jesus uses for "has passed" also has the sense of "depart" and is in the perfect tense. What Jesus is saying is that all who believe in Him already have eternal life. The perfect tense means that those who believe Jesus cannot and will not go back to death. Those who believe Jesus are no longer spiritually "dead" but are spiritually "alive." The decision is final. They have eternal life now and forever. They cannot go back. Jesus will tell us why when we come to the

next chapter of John in a future study.

Jesus Will Be Our Judge. Everyone will be judged by Jesus. There will be no escape. No one can escape an all knowing God. That is the message of Jesus' next words.

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. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 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. John 5:25-29 (NASB)

*T*hose who believe in Jesus are no longer spiritually "dead" but are spiritually "alive." The decision is final. They have eternal life now and forever. They cannot go back.

Jesus says that an "hour is coming." That is, judgment is coming some day when life in this universe ends. The day is

coming. Judgment is certain. There is no escape. When that day arrives, the old ashes, dead bones, and corpses will come to life and they will stand before Jesus.

Revelation 20 agrees with Jesus' words when it says that there will be two resurrections at the end of the world. The first one is a resurrection to eternal life. It starts with an earthly kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6). Everyone who comes to life at this time will be given eternal life. The second resurrection is for those who will spend eternal life in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). There are only two choices. There is not another option.

Jesus says those who do good deeds will be given eternal life. So, who does good deeds? The answer is given in the next two passages,

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him . . .

Titus 1:16 (NASB)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB)

Those who believe in Jesus will have a pattern of life which is marked by godly deeds, and those who do not believe will have a life marked by deeds that are not pleasing to God. We can claim to believe in God. It does not matter what we say about our relationship with God in this life, or what we tell others. God knows the truth. Can non-Christians perform good deeds that count for eternal life? The answer is no. Ephesians 2:10 says that only Christians can do deeds that God will consider to be spiritually good. When a man or woman becomes a Christian, God changes our spirit or soul and enables us to start performing spiritually good deeds for the first time in our lives. Only Christians can do spiritually good deeds. Since a Christian's sins are forgiven, God will not find anything wrong with them.

Jesus Has Life In Himself — Aseity. Buried near the beginning of Jesus' last statement we read these words.

For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself . . . John 5:26 (NASB)

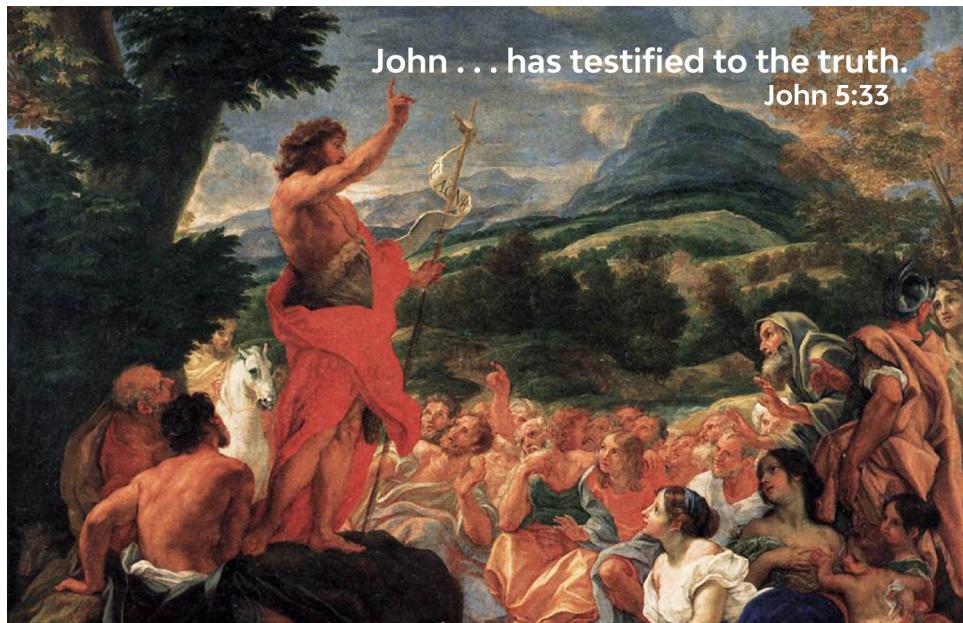
We want to stop and think about this statement for a minute. Jesus uses simple words in this passage, but the concept is complex. The message is that the Father has life in Himself. That is, God keeps Himself alive. God does not need air, food, minerals, or anything else to stay alive. He was not created. He has life in Himself. He is self-existing, self-maintaining, or self-continuing. All of us know that something comes from something else. Something is never created out of nothing. But God existed before anything. He was. He has always existed. He maintains Himself. How can something come from nothing?

Some people today do not understand how the universe

came into existence. So they have created theories in an attempt to explain how the universe came into existence, but their theories all assume that something existed millions of years in the past. They always assume something

existed. They have failed to explain how something came into existence from nothing. But Jesus has the answer. God was there in eternity past; since He is self-existing. Jesus is self-existing!

Proof of Jesus Is God. How would you have felt at this point if you were the angry religious leader - strong disbelief, raging anger, or would you have wanted proof? Jesus had told them that He imitates the Father. The Father loves Him. He is the Judge. He is the path to eternal life. He is self-existing. Those are incredible statements from any human being. Why should they believe Him? So Jesus proceeds to answer this unspoken question.



John . . . has testified to the truth.
John 5:33

If I alone testify about Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who testifies of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true.
John 5:31-32 (NASB)

Since the Jewish law required the testimony of two or three witnesses to prove that someone was telling the truth, Jesus reminds them that they should not accept His claims without the testimony of others. Then Jesus proceeded to give them four witnesses.

First Witness. Jesus' first witness is John the Baptist.

You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. John 5:33-35 (NASB)

Here we discover that the religious leaders had heard John the Baptist testify about Jesus. It is obvious that the religious leaders did not like what they heard and therefore refused to believe. Jesus was reminding them that John had spoken these words because He wanted them to be saved from an eternal death. Jesus did not come to punish us. He came to rescue them and us from spiritual death. But there is a simple requirement - we must believe Him.

In the Jewish culture there was a custom of calling a highly regarded, highly spiritual man a "light" or "lamp." It was a

great compliment. So, Jesus uses the same term - "lamp" - to refer to John the Baptist. John was a great spiritual voice, and apparently the Pharisees had agreed that this was true, at least for a while. John had told them about Jesus.

Second Witness. Jesus' second witness was His own miracles, signs, and wonders.

But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. John 5:36 (NASB)

John 10:25; 20:30-31; and Acts 2:22 remind us that His works were proofs of Jesus' deity. There is no doubt as to the meaning of Jesus' words. Jesus' works were the proof that He came from heaven. We read later in John these words,

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.
John 10:25 (NASB)

Jesus did more than just heal people and raise the dead. In future studies, Jesus will walk on water, multiply food, read the minds of people, and return to life.

Third Witness. The next witness was the Father Himself.

And the Father who sent Me, He has testified about Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time,



nor seen His form. 38 Also you do not have His word remaining in you, because you do not believe Him whom He sent. John 5:37-38 (NASB)

God the Father had already testified about Jesus during Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; and Luke 3:21-23.

... and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 3:17 (NASB)

We believe that the religious leaders had heard these words from heaven because they were standing there while Jesus was being baptized (Matthew 3:7-17).

Fourth Witness. Jesus' final witness was the scriptures themselves.

You search
the Scriptures
because you think
that in them you
have eternal life;
it is these that
testify about Me . . .
John 5:39 (NASB)

*B*ut I say these things so that you may be saved.

- Jesus Christ

for God, and as a result they wanted to kill Jesus. Their unloving hearts were also revealed in their treatment of others

The Old Testament spoke of Jesus, but the religious leaders were not willing to listen. In our study Jesus has already referred to one Old Testament passage which spoke about Himself (Luke 4:16-21), and Matthew has recorded many statements from the scriptures. In fact, the book of Matthew has more Old Testament quotes than any of the other gospels, and we will see more in future studies.

Religious Leaders Rejected Christ. But the religious leaders did not respond positively to Jesus' words. They were cold hearted people when it came to spiritual things. Were they warm and polite on the outside to friends and other leaders but not to Jesus? Jesus warns them.

... and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but

I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. John 5:40-42 (NASB)

Even though the scriptures supported Jesus' statements, the religious leaders rejected the message because they were unwilling to come to Jesus. The leaders had changed, twisted, or just ignored the meaning of the scriptures in order to justify their actions. This is the first insight into understanding why they rejected Jesus.

People do the same today. They do not like Jesus, so they distort what He said. Some do not like the Bible because it teaches that He is God. So they seek ways to discredit the Bible. The times are different, but the reactions are unchanged.

They also rejected Jesus because they did not love God. Yes, the Pharisees were legalistic; but legalism was not their real problem. Their real problem was their hearts. They did not love God. Legalism was the result of their unloving hearts

as they imposed their legalism upon them.

But that is not all. There was another reason they rejected Jesus.

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. 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?

John 5:43-44 (NASB)

The Pharisees wanted the approval of their peers - the other religious leaders. They were listening to one another and were unwilling to accept a different viewpoint. Jesus says that they were more concerned about the opinion of those around them than the truth. So Jesus says, "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?" That is, the honor

and respect of their friends, family, and their fellow religious leaders was more important than responding to Jesus.

This is still true today. Family, friends, and business relationships are a major reason people do not come to Jesus. If one is a Jew or a Muslim, there is great pressure from the family to remain a Jew or Muslim and reject Jesus' statements. Intimidation is common and some are even threatened. Many western cultures reject Jesus. It is now socially acceptable to slander and insult Christians. Prejudice and discrimination are pressuring people to reject Jesus. The same was true of the Pharisees.

Jesus' final warning deals with their attitude toward the very scriptures that they had memorized. These men who prided themselves as teachers of the Mosaic Law were actually rejecting the teachings of their great prophet Moses.

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. 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?"
John 5:45-47 (NASB)

The religious leaders had taught that Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 referred to the coming Messiah - the Prophet. Numbers 24:17-19 also refers to the coming Messiah. John 6:14; 7:40 and Acts 3:22-23 remind us that the people were looking for this prophet. The religious leaders either understood the passages written by Moses or just decided to reject them. So if they rejected Moses, their own prophet, how could they believe in Jesus? They did not reject all of the scriptures or just some portions but only the parts Moses wrote about Jesus.

Conclusion. This has been a long message by Jesus. With the religious leaders planning to kill Him, Jesus wanted to warn them because He wanted to save them. Jesus told

them who He was in words that they would understand. Jesus told them that He imitated the Father. The Father loved Him. He was the Judge at the end of the world. He was the path to eternal life, and He was self-existing. He was God. He warned them that John the Baptist, His miracles and signs, the Father, and the scriptures had testified that everything He said about Himself was true. Yet, they rejected Him.

Why did they reject Him? Why have others rejected Jesus? Why do some people ask question after question about Jesus and always have a reason why they cannot believe in Jesus? Why are some people like Mr. Funk or the man who said, "No, there must be something better than hell for a man of my dignity"?

Jesus gave us the answer. The answer is found in the heart. One must be willing to come. One must

accept the idea that God exists, and one must love Him to some degree. One must not be intimidated by those around him/her, and ultimately one must believe the Bible. Otherwise, one will never come to Jesus. It is all a heart issue. It begins there and ends there. Only the Holy Spirit can change the heart of a man or woman and cause it to respond (John 16:8-11).

If you are reading this and realize that you have never come to Jesus, then let me ask, do you believe what Jesus has said? The friend of the dying man said, "I have nothing new to say. You are a sinner, and you need a savior, Jesus Christ. Do you feel guilt, and will you take the Savior?" That statement was and still is true. Do you know that God hates your sins? Do you want to change? If so, Jesus is the Savior - the One who can rescue you. He can forgive your sins. Just stop and tell Him that you want His forgiveness.

We have some religious leaders, just like those of Jesus' day, who sound religious, are charismatic, but who are unwilling to come to Jesus. They do not really love God. It is obvious by their deeds. They are influenced by religious peer pressure, and reject key parts of the scriptures. As a result, some distort the news about Jesus and others present Him as only a wise man or sage. Some of them may come to Jesus later in life.

Praise God! The religious leaders of Jesus' day distorted the truth about Jesus and lied about His statements. We will see more of the same in our study and during our lifetime. Solomon was correct. There is nothing new under the sun.

Jesus was clear. He spoke the truth. He is our Savior. He is our Judge. He is our God . . .