



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 5:39, 41-47

“Revelation in Scripture”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now, tonight, we are beginning a series of studies in what I have called “Johannine Theology.” Since on Sunday morning, we are just at the beginning of the exposition of the Gospel of John, I thought, it might be a profit to us, to consider in these Tuesday nights, some of the outstanding doctrinal points and issues that are brought before us as we read the Johannine literature; that is, the gospel, the three epistles, the first, second, and third Epistle of John and also, the Book of the Revelation, although we will spend most of our time in the gospel and in the epistles. There are two or three ways in which we may study the word of God and one of them is to study it verse by verse. What Mr. Prier likes to say is, “a systematic approach to the word of God beginning at the beginning of the book and proceeding through to the end of the book.” Another way is to take some of the great themes of individual authors and consider them, drawing from several places in their writings to construct just exactly what they do say about any particular point, any particular theme, or, in speaking in biblical language, any particular doctrine that may be found in their writings. So, I think, it will be of profit to us, particularly, if we are listening to the exposition to consider some of the great themes of the Johannine literature.

So tonight, we want to take a look at revelation in Johannine thought and, particularly, “Revelation in the Scriptures” and I will try to bring you an outline each time so you can follow along and know exactly where I am going. This message will be one part of a two part series. We’re really going to deal with “Revelation in the Scriptures” tonight and then next Tuesday, the Lord willing, we’ll deal with the latter part, “Revelation in the Son.” But now, if you have a New Testament take your New Testaments and turn with me to the 5th chapter of the Gospel of John, and for our Scripture reading, I want to read John 5, verse 39, and then verse 41 through verse 47. John 5:39, and then 41 through 47.

Now, I’m reading tonight from the New International Version. I would have read from the New American Standard Bible or from the Greek text, but I have a New American Standard Bible which I leave in Chicago, since I use it in the classes there at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School rather than carrying it back and forth in my briefcase, I have one there. I have a Greek Testament up there and I looked around for my copy of the New American Standard Bible down here and I could not find it. I don’t know where it is. I have my library in three places, and also I have part of it in a couple of trunks, and so it’s hard to find things like this. I put it aside because I already had another copy in my study but I forgot that I left it in Chicago. So I’m reading from the New International Version tonight, which is not a bad version at all. You will enjoy it, I’m sure, as you read it, but it is a little bit different from the New American Standard Bible, and, I know, many of you have the New American Standard Bible. Furthermore, the print is a little small in this one, and I have to get out my glasses and look at it. Ah, there it is. John 5, verse 39. And we read.

“You diligently study the Scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life.” And then in verse 41, “I do not accept praise from men. But I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I’ve come in my Father’s

name, and you do not accept me, but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

H.D. McDonald is one of the outstanding theologians and biblical students of the present day. Mr. McDonald has written two volumes on the subject of Revelation. Revelation, incidentally, is the unfolding of divine thought to men. Well, he has written two volumes on the Book of Revelation, and he has in one of his volumes, has said that, “The problem of Revelation continues to be the central issue in the modern theological scene and it promises to remain so for a long period of time.” In fact, he goes on to say, “There can be no more momentous subject for theological thinking, and no more important one for theological debate than that which is enshrined in the question, can we be sure of a real self-disclosure of God?”

When you discuss with modern theologians, the question of divine revelation, the unfolding of thought about God, usually, their views of revelation may be divided into three parts. Some of them believe that revelation is located in man’s growing enlightenment, so that the more enlightenment that we have concerning religious experience, well, that is increase in revelation. Revelation, thereby, proceeds from man. And then secondly, revelation is sometimes located in the divine events of history. One of the most popular of current theologians, Wolfhart Pannenberg, espouses that particular view; that revelation is located in the divine events of history; not simply the biblical events, but all events. They are revelations of God. And then there are some who affirm that revelation is located in the living personality of Jesus Christ and we are to think of him as the supreme source of divine revelation. Now, that is a view that has been argued

by neo-Orthodoxy for a number of years. Neo-Orthodoxy has, within its company of believers, men such as Emil Brunner, Karl Barth, both well-known Swiss theologians, and then in the same company but one a little more liberal, Reinhold Niebuhr. So for them, revelation is located in the living personality of Jesus Christ.

Now, what relationship does the Bible have to these views of revelation because all of these men have some place in their thinking for the Bible? Well, for those who believe that revelation is located in man's growing enlightenment, the Bible gives us an account of man's experience, so the Bible is a book of religious experience. Now, of course, the Bible is a book of religious experience. There is no question about that, but when we affirm that, this is the source of revelation. We are then locating revelation in human experience and, thus, we do not have a divine system of truth. We do not have divine truth given to men, but we rather find in human experience thoughts concerning God. One can see, immediately, the dangers in that kind of thinking because, ultimately, human reason becomes the prominent and significant and authoritative thing and not the unfolding of truth from the God of heaven.

In the case of revelation being located in the divine events of history, well the Bible is a book of unfolding of God's revelatory events in history. For example, can you think of some events in the Bible that might reveal certain things about God? Well probably most of you would say, “Well, surely the cross of Jesus Christ must have been one of those events.” And we do learn a great deal about God if we proceed on the basis, that the cross of Jesus Christ is something that has transpired within the will of God. We do learn the grace of God. We learn the power of God. We learn the judgment of God and the justice of God. And if you were to ask for other events, you probably would think of the Exodus because in the Exodus and Israel's experience with the Lord God a great deal was unfolded about God in that great event. So the Bible then, for those who believe that revelation, is located in the great events of history, the Bible is a record of

some of the great events of history, particularly those that had to do with the history of Israel, and with the history of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now, finally, what does the Bible have to do with the revelation of God in Christ? Well, of course, the Bible has a great deal to say about the revelation of God in Christ. Neo-Orthodox men like to stress this because they like to tell us that revelation is not a static sum of revealed propositions. In other words, we're not to think of divine truth as a collection of biblical doctrines such as you might find written in a Systematic Theology. "Divine revelation," Professor Bruner said, "is not a book of doctrine. The revelation is God, himself, in his self-manifestation within history." So we're not to think of the Bible as a book that is composed of statements about God and that the revelation, but we're rather to think of the fact that in this book we have the means by which we come to know God himself, who has revealed himself to us in Christ. Now, it's very difficult, of course, to separate what the Bible says about Jesus Christ, from Jesus Christ.

I remember many years ago when Billy Graham was preaching in Harvard or Princeton, I've forgotten which, I believe it was Princeton, and he was addressing the university and was giving a series of messages for a week. And a number of the men from the theological school were there and after two or three of the days one of the men from the theological, this must have been Harvard because Princeton Seminary is really separate from the University. My memory is a little vague about it but probably was Harvard. And one of the men stood up and he said, "We're happy to have Dr. Billy Graham speaking to us again this week. He's talked to us a lot about what the Bible says. We just wish that he would tell us also some of the things that Christ says." And speaking from his neo-Orthodox viewpoint that was perfectly understandable; revelation is not contained in the Scriptures so much as it is contained in Jesus Christ. Well, Dr. Graham doesn't have any scientific theological training. He never went to theological seminary, although, he's a very intelligent man, of course.

But he stood up and made a very good reply. It reminded me of the replies that our Lord made to the Pharisees, even though he hadn't been to their schools. But he got up and said, “I appreciate the introduction that the professor from the divinity school has given me, and he's suggested that I ought to tell you some of the things that Jesus Christ has said and not simply some of the things that the Bible says.” But he said, “So far as I know, I don't know any of the things that Jesus Christ has said that are not found in the Bible.” And the students cheered. And they were the theological students because they'd had to listen to the professors give that rather irrational kind of approach, in which we are not to look so much at what the Bible says as what Christ says, but all the time, we're looking at the Bible.

There are, so far as we know, no other records of what Christ said that are reliable except these that are found in Holy Scripture. Now, of course, if you want to run off and study Thomas' Gospel and a few other of the works of that nature, you will have certain weird traditions to study, but so far as the knowledge of our Lord, the Bible gives us the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and gives us the things that he says. And as I've said so often to you, the Bible is a collection of statements about divine things. It's a book of propositions from beginning to end. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” That's a proposition. That's a propositional statement. That's a theological statement.

The 2nd verse is a theological statement too. And the 3rd, and the 4th, and the 5th, and in fact, we could go all the way through the whole of the Bible. I don't remember how many verses are found in the Bible because verses were added, were divisions, were made by men, but let's just assume they are twenty-five thousand, six hundred and thirty-eight verses in the Bible. Well when you got to the last one, the very last one of the Book of Revelation that also would be a theological proposition. All of the Bible's statements are statements of theology. They're all propositions. But now it is true, we should not stop with the proposition, but we should pay attention to what it says, and

seek to come to understand in a personal way the truth about which that proposition speaks. So to that extent the neo-Orthodox men are good and they do remind us of the fact that we are not simply studying theology when we study the Scriptures, but we are to study theology as a means to the knowledge of God. That's really what theology is. It is discourse about God. So we never really come to know theology properly until we know the God of theology. That's important. But so far as revelation about Christ is concerned and revelation from Christ it is the Bible that is the source of our knowledge concerning Jesus Christ.

Now, let's take a look at revelation in the Bible, and first of all, a brief review of what the Bible says generally about revelation. It is one of, and first of all, general revelation. It is one of the presuppositions of Christianity that while the knowledge of God is the aim and end of life, God himself is an infinite being and cannot be known by human searching. We know that the aim of all life is to know God. After all, what did Philip say? “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” If we could be sure that we know the Lord then we have the most important bit of information and the most important relationship that we could ever have in this life and the life to come. The Lord Jesus in his great high priestly prayer said, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hath sent.”

But now, God is an infinite being, and we are finite beings. How can finite beings grasp an infinite being? That's an impossibility in so far as our natural capacities are concerned. Job says, “Canst thou by searching find out God?” And he expects the answer, “No, you cannot find out God by searching.” “Finitum non capit infinitum” or “the finite is not able to grasp the infinite.” And we are talking about grasping an infinite being. Remember when Titov, the Russian astronaut, made his first flight out into space? When he came back he said, “I saw no evidence of God or angels.” And, of course, he said it in a cynical, sarcastic way. Well, of course he didn't. He was looking with his eyes. You do not see God with your eyes. He didn't have the capacity for

seeing God. As a matter of fact, God was with him in his instrument, in his space vehicle, and he couldn't see it because he's blind.

There is an old story about one of the men who was expatiating about the knowledge of God and, finally, he said he was one of the great astronomers. His name was Laplace and if you've studied astronomy, you know, you will run across Laplace. In fact, I think, he was one of the men that had something to do with the invention of the telescope, but I never took a course in astronomy, so don't count on that being absolutely accurate either. But he did say that he had taken his instrument, and he had looked for God, and he had found no evidence whatsoever of God. And President Sawyer, a Christian man said, “He might just as well have swept his kitchen with a broom, and tried to find God there, as find God with his instrument of astronomy because God is an infinite being and we who are finite cannot possibly know him.”

How can we know God? Well, the only way we can know God is by divine revelation. He must come to us and reveal to us himself. We could never find God. Christian experience or rather human experience, human religious experience, the great events of world history; they do not give us any message that is definite. We only are able to learn from history after we have had truth revealed to us from the Bible. Then we can read history in the light of divine revelation but we could not know God otherwise. He has to reveal himself, so we can only know God by divine self revelation. Now, this he has done, and so we listen to his audits; that is, the things that he gives us in the word of God about himself and so we listen with our spiritual ears to the audits.

You know, scientists, philosophers speak about percepts; the things that we perceive by our investigation of objects through the scientific method. And the things that we perceive, they're called percepts, things we perceive. Well, we can look at God but we do not perceive anything. We cannot even look at nature because even there our minds are touched by sin, and so we see things crookedly even in the divine revelation. But we can hear spiritually, and the things that we hear are audits; that is, they are things

that come to us from God to our spiritual ears and through the Holy Spirit he opens our spiritual ears so that we hear the word of God. Have you ever noticed how the prophets so often speak about, “hearing the word of God?” Well, that’s what they’re talking about. They are talking about hearing things that come from God by divine revelation.

So we discovered as we listen to the things about God that are important, and what we have discovered about revelation through his revelation of himself to us is that revelation is two-fold. Volume one of his revelation is his revelation of himself in nature about us. Because we read the Bible, we can understand that. We look about us and we see evidences of the power and majesty of God, and so we can learn of God from nature. The apostle in Romans 1:18 through 32, speaks of that. We also know things about God from our conscience. The apostle says that that is so from Romans chapter 2, verse 14 through verse 16. We can learn things about God from history, if we look at history from a Christian perspective, and we can learn things about God from divine providence.

When Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo by Wellington and the forces that were with him, someone said afterwards, as they understood what was happening, “Waterloo was God.” Well, it was God in the sense that there seemed to this individual to be a manifestation of the providential hand of God that changed the course of history for good. So in that sense he was saying, “Waterloo was God.” So the revelation of God in nature, we know from the Scriptures, is a genuine revelation. “We can learn his power, and we can learn his deity,” Paul says in Romans 1:18 through 32. That’s called general revelation, and it’s called general revelation because it is addressed to man as a man; not man as a sinner, but man as a man. So this revelation is addressed to him. Unfortunately, of course, man is a sinner, and, therefore, what he sees in the world about him, he sees crookedly. He does not see accurately.

Then secondly or ‘capital B’ in our outline, there is special revelation. General revelation was suitable for Adam, but it’s not suitable for Adam’s progeny, because Adam’s progeny are men in sin. And so man in sin needs special revelation and he also

needs someone to unfold that special revelation to him. So God has spoken to men in the revelation recorded in Holy Scripture. Remember what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says over in chapter 1, verse 1 and verse 2 of that epistle. The author of it writes these words, and I'll see if I can read this without my glasses. “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times, and in various ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” So he has spoken to us through his Son the revelation, and that revelation is found in Holy Scripture. This revelation is called “special revelation” because it's addressed to man as a sinner, and so man as a sinner has revelation specially addressed to him, in order that he may find salvation.

There is a book in the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms, in which is a chapter that contains some words concerning both of these revelations, so why don't you turn to Psalm 19, and let's just read through this psalm, and I'll try to point out to you the passages that have to do with general revelation, the revelation of God in nature, and conscience and history and providence and then special revelation, the revelation of God in the Scriptures; one addressed to man as man, the other addressed to man as a sinner. Now in Psalm 19 in verse 1, we read, “The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.” You see, this is revelation of God in nature. This is general revelation. “Day after day they pour forth speech. Night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.” You don't have to be able to speak Spanish to understand that God is powerful when you look at the natural creation. “Their voice goes out into all the earth; their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion; like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens, and makes its circuit to the other. Nothing is hidden from its heat.”

Now, that is natural revelation or natural revelation and general revelation. Now, notice verse 7. Here he speaks about the law of the Lord or the Scriptures. Here we

have special revelation and notice, we shall have mention in a moment of sin and also of the need of a relationship before the Lord. “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure, and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned. In keeping them, there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins. May they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” So here we have general revelation; special revelation: One, the revelation of God in nature, providence, history, conscience; the other, the revelation of God in the Scriptures.

What is human religion? In the final analysis, what is human religion? Well, let me first of all ask, in what ways has God revealed himself specially? Well we said, “He’s revealed himself specially in the word of God.” But what ways within the word of God has God used to reveal himself to us? Well, he had face to face confrontations with certain of the men of the Old Testament and the New, for that matter with Moses, with Adam, with others; so face to face confrontation, vision. We remember many of the visions of the Old Testament. Dreams. Many dreams are recorded in the Old Testament. Miracles. Prophecies. And of course, supremely in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This second volume of divine revelation has as its aim, the salvation of the elect people of God, and its great object is Jesus Christ. As John puts it in John 5:39, “They are they which testify of me.” So the Scriptures are those wonderful writings of divine revelation which testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is human religion then? What is the kind, what really essentially is the religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the religion of the

Mormons, the religion of the liberals, the religion of the Mohammedans, the religion of the Taoists, the religions of the world? What are they? Well, of course, they are products of human reason. That's one thing but, specially, they are the product of man's attempt to ignore the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Every one of the religions of the world that are not centered upon the truths of Holy Scripture are simply in one form or another, man's attempt to ignore the special revelation of God in the word of God; that revelation that has to do with the nature of man in his sin and the nature of Christ as the Savior from sin. All of them are the fig leaves of natural man by which he seeks to hide his nakedness before the Lord God. Now, of course, the closer they are to the Bible, and the more frequently they use biblical terminology, the more difficult it is to see exactly how they have erred from the truth, but that is the essence of human religion. It is man's attempt to ignore the special revelation of God in the word.

Let's move on now to discuss revelation in Johannine thought or revelation in the Scriptures, and the normative text is John 5, verse 39 really verse 39 and then 41 through 47. So take your New Testaments and turn back to this passage because there are a few points that I would like to stress from it before we close our session for tonight.

Since the time of the famous philosopher Plato, some men have believed that the puzzle of the soul of man is solvable in the belief that man may somehow reach the infinite, but it cannot be grasped how man, even in the next life, can reach the infinite. Plato once said that, “The final answer to this question could be given only by a God; by a revelation coming from the next world. There is, however, no longer philosophy, but religion. As in so many other realms, philosophical thinking here poses the question. It leads us to the borderline from which man silently looks into the eternal darkness.” That's all we have from human religion. That's all we have from human philosophy. Great questions are raised, and then as we seek to peer into the future, and understand what reality is really like, what do we see? Darkness. That's all. One cannot see. All of the claims of men who claim to have died and to have had a measure of life after death,

are all false. All they have seen is darkness. It's impossible for us to see apart from divine revelation.

Now, John the Apostle has by revelation seen the answer and he declares it to men. Now, if you just keep your hand right there in John 5, let me just read a passage that John writes in his first epistle; the first four verse of it. And listen to what he says. Now, notice what he's claiming. He says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched. This we proclaim concerning the word of life. The life appeared. We have seen it and testified to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.” So he talks about the eternal life, which was with the Father and which has appeared to them, and which they desire to manifest to others. So John has had divine revelation. That's the only way in which we can understand divine truth. All of the Johannine literature is intimately concerned with the question of revelation.

Revelation, I said in the beginning, is the unveiling of God's truth to men. It also is the truth that is unveiled. We can say, “Revelation is the process of the revealing of divine truth to man.” It also is what has been revealed. That's revelation. This is revelation. The word of God is divine revelation. It has come to us by divine revelation. So the word then that is significant is the word “revelation,” which means to uncover. John has used the word “to manifest” and what has been uncovered to him, he wants to manifest to others through the testimony of his writings.

Now, the normative text on divine revelation in Johannine literature is John 5:39 and then 41 through 47, and we ought to take just a quick look at this passage here. This passage is found in John chapter 5, which is the third discourse of the book, and it's a formal systematic statement of his complete unity with the Father, his divine commission,

and his Messiahship. Now in this section, he makes three claims. First of all he says, “The Scriptures are fulfilled in him.” Look at John 5 in verse 39. “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify of me.” So the Scriptures are fulfilled in him. Then secondly, he says the unbelieving Jews have perverted and misunderstood them and he speaks directly to them. Incidentally, he judges them. Notice, “I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I’ve come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me, but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?” And then he makes a third claim here. He says, “The Scriptures which you reject; they will judge you.” Notice verse 45. “But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me, but since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

So “The Scriptures are fulfilled in me. You have misunderstood them because you have perverted them. You have been unwilling to believe them. The Scriptures, which you have rejected, they will judge you.” Isn’t that a solemn thing to think about? The Scriptures which we reject are the things by which we shall be judged if we reject them. Now he says in verse 39, “And you diligently study the Scriptures, because you think that by them you possess eternal life.” The rabbis were exemplary in searching in their way, but their way was to think that the Scriptures themselves were the source of life. They thought of the Law of Moses as the source of life itself. So they hoped to find eternal life in the Scriptures themselves, rather than the one of whom the Scriptures were speaking. Now it’s, of course, necessary for us to pay attention to the Scriptures, but the Scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice also he says, “They are they that testify,” not testified but testify “of me.” The Old Testament Scriptures still testify to the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, he doesn’t tell them to cease their studying of the Scriptures. There are a lot of people who act that way. They say, “Well, it’s not so important that you study the Bible. What you need is a relationship with Jesus Christ.” And so you say, “Yea, I guess that’s right.” So you close your Bible and look for relationship with Christ but you will never have a relationship with Christ, except through the Bible. He doesn’t say, “Stop studying the Scriptures.” He just says, “Pay attention to what they are really saying.” In other words, develop that first-hand relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ about which these Scriptures speak. He doesn’t say, “Intensive study of the Old Testament takes a subordinate place to the lives of those who are his disciples.” But he means simply, that such study properly understood, will lead you to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Now, you know I have a pretty good friend by the name of Johannus Calwenus, and in my office in Trinity Seminary someone, by the way, came in they listened to the tape ministry, and they heard I was up there, and so they came down to see if they could go to the seminary. This young man’s about thirty-seven years of age. He’s grown up on the farm. He’s a very intelligent man; brought his wife and two children, just a wonderful family. He came in and sat. We talked for about an hour or two and looks like he’s going to be coming to the seminary, selling his business, and not simply for me, but I was one of the attractions. When he gets here, he may find things are different, but anyway, when he left he said he wrote me a letter and said he enjoyed talking with me, and he said, “By the way, I sure do love those pictures in your office.”

Well, Ken Consel, the editor of *Christianity Today*, it’s Today, it’s really his office, but we share the office, and there’s a picture of Johannus Calwenus right behind my chair. John Calvin. And right next to him is Martin Luther, and then there are a couple of worthies over on the other wall that I haven’t found out who they are yet. Nobody else seems to know either, but they sure look spiritual, at any rate, John Calvin.

Let me read you something that Calvin says here. He says, “Those who imagine what they like about Christ will, ultimately, have nothing but a shadowy ghost in his place. First then, we must hold that Christ cannot be properly known from anywhere but the Scriptures.” That’s what he says. “And if that is so, it follows that the Scriptures should be read with the aim of finding Christ in them. Whoever turns aside from this object, even though he wears himself out all his life in learning, will never reach the knowledge of the truth. For how can we be wise apart from the wisdom of God? Moreover, as we are commanded to seek Christ in the Scriptures, so he declares in this passage, that our work will not be fruitless, for the Father bears witness to his Son in such a way, that he will manifest him to us beyond all doubt.

Do you want to know Christ? Do you want to know him better? Do you want to have a closer relationship with him? Do you want to know what truly divine fellowship is? Then go to the Scriptures. It’s through the Scriptures that we come to know the Lord, and he promises that to us. He says, “They are they which testify of me.” This is the way to have the relationship with the Lord that is significant. It is through the word.” Calvin continues, “What hinders most men is that they look at them only carelessly, and as it were in passing, but it needed the utmost application, and so Christ commanded them to search diligently for this hidden treasure. Accordingly, the abhorrence for Christ which the Jews feel, who have the law constantly in their hands, must be imputed to their laziness, for the brightness of God’s glory shines clearly in Moses, but they want to have a veil to obscure the brightness.” So here are men with the Scriptures in their hands, and they are not spending time in those Scriptures, which are Scriptures that testify of God through Christ. And Calvin says, and this is a mild way of saying it, “The reason they don’t, is they’re lazy.”

But it’s worse than that. The Lord Jesus says, “You will not come to me, that you may not have life.” So he traces it to their will. As Irving Crystal said, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, nothing is so mysterious as the obvious.” And there

are many of us who lack the will to open the Bible, and sit down, and read it as the means by which we may have fellowship with God in Christ. O, my Christian friends, may I urge you through the power of the Holy Spirit to open the Bible, and to open it as the means by which you may have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luther said, “Theologians are made by *oratio, meditatio, tentatio*.” Now, that’s not revelation to you, I know, but what he meant was; theologians are made by prayer, by meditation, and by temptation or trial. Prayer, meditation on the word of God, and the experiences of life, these are the things that make us strong in the things of God and don’t forget the prayer. Abraham Kuyper said, “Theology loses its leaf and begins its winter sleep when ambition for learning silences prayer in the breasts of theologians.”

Well, our time is up, and we must stop. May I just urge you to do what our Lord suggests that the Jews did not do, which may be the obstacle in your own life to a deeper relationship with the Lord. Open the Scriptures, search them but search them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and you will find him and grow in grace. And be useful to him, and you’ll enjoy your Christian life.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this wonderful section which the Apostle John has given us. O, what an exhortation the Lord Jesus gave the Jews. Lord, may we search the Scriptures and search them with a view to fellowship with Thee, our wonderful triune God, who has redeemed us by the blood of the Son and brought us to the knowledge of it by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. We worship Thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.