

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Deity on Display**

Scripture: John 2:18-22

Code: 43-10

As you know, we are looking at the gospel of John, and I want you to turn in that gospel to chapter 2, John chapter 2; we'll finish up that second chapter this morning. And I do confess to you that there's so much more that can be said and should be said about these sections that we're not able to get to, and I commend you to read diligently and meditate on these texts and let the Lord direct you as well in the things that we don't even have time to cover.

But I remind you, for those who are visiting with us, that John's gospel is a record of the life and ministry of Christ that focuses on one aspect, and that is His deity, that He is fully God. And John gives his purpose in chapter 20, verse 31, "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name."

So he has an apologetic purpose, to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and an evangelistic purpose so that you will believe that and in believing that have eternal life. So his goal is salvation, salvation. His means is evidence concerning Jesus Christ.

Now the New Testament is clear, as well as the Old Testament, but particularly the New Testament is clear on the deity of Jesus Christ. In fact, His deity--He is God--is declared throughout the entire New Testament. John begins His gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God." He is both God and with God, and there you have a statement regarding the Trinity. The three members of the Trinity are God and yet they are separate. He is with God, as distinct from God, and yet He is God. And this is the wondrous mystery of the Trinity. But the New Testament affirms the deity of Christ repeatedly. In Matthew 16 He is called the Son of the living God. In John 1, John 20, Hebrews chapter 1, He is called God Himself. In Titus and Peter He is called "Our God and Savior." He is in Revelation, "The first and the last, the beginning and the end, the One who was and is and is to come." He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord of lords, the King of kings throughout the New Testament, in the gospels, in the epistles, particularly in the book of Hebrews, chapter 1 verse 3--He is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. He is the One who forgives sin and only God can do that. He is the One who raises the dead and only God can do that for, in Him is life. He is the One alone who receives worship. There is worship for no other than the one who is God, and Christ Himself commanded that He be worshiped as well as God commanded, and as well as the Spirit enables us to worship Him. Summing it up in Colossians 2:9, the apostle Paul says. "In Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form."

So that is the Christian doctrine of Christ. He is God and man. He is the Word, the eternal God made flesh. He is 100 percent God and man. Throughout the gospel of John, John wants to demonstrate that, and he does it paragraph after paragraph after paragraph, incident after incident after incident, claim after claim, word after word, work after work, all the way to the culminating reality of His resurrection, which is the final validation of His claim to deity.

Now we're looking at chapter 2 and verses 12 to 25--chapter 2, verses 12 to 25. In this little passage here there are three incidents that happen. They're not serendipitous; they're not unplanned; they're divinely orchestrated incidents. They really are confrontations, three distinct confrontations. The first one is in verses 12 to 17 and that's with the Temple forces, the masses, tens of thousands, upon thousands gathered in the Temple at the Passover time and we have already looked at that, how that Jesus confronted what He saw, the desecration of His Father's house, turning it into a place of business. And He made a whip and He threw everyone, including all the animals, out of the Temple. This...this is a very, very powerful expression of the deity of Jesus Christ, His super-human powers. There would have been resistance from the crowd in the tens of thousands, multiples of tens of thousands of people there. There would have been resistance from the Temple police. The minimum number would be three hundred and there would probably be more for the Passover. There would have been, in the event there was any reaction by the crowd, and a conflict generated, immediate invasion by the forces of the Romans who were sitting next door watching all of this and ready to quell any disturbance. And yet, with all of those forces set against one man, not with a repeating rifle, but with a little cord, there was no resistance. And He evacuated that Temple in a matter of brief time. This demonstrates His divine power. No man could have pulled that off. That is the first indicator of the deity of Jesus in this little set of three.

The second one comes in verses 18 to 22 when He is then confronted by the Jewish leaders. First He faces the masses in the Temple. Then He faces the Jewish leaders and their queries about why He had the right, or thought He had the right to do that.

And finally a third confrontation with those who believed in Him.

So three different groups: the masses in the Temple, the leaders among the Jews, and then those who said they believed in Him. In each confrontation, collectively looking at it for a moment, in each of them there are elements of His deity on display. We see His divine knowledge. He knows the mind of God. He knows the future of His own life. He knows the future actions and behaviors of people who don't even know they're going to do what they're going to do and at this point aren't even thinking about it or motivated to do it. He knows the mind of men. He knows every thought in every person's mind. He knows the thoughts that those who think don't even understand. His divine knowledge then is on display. His divine holiness is on display. He is angry over religious corruption. He is zealous for the appropriate worship of God. He is passionate for reverence. He rejects superficial faith.

His divine sovereignty is on display. He is Lord over the Temple. He has authority over the Temple, authority over religion, authority over worship. He has authority over death. He has authority over human lives and destiny. All of that is here in this brief section.

Now we already looked at the first confrontation, we're not going to do that again. But it precipitates a question. Jesus goes in, just sends everybody out of this Temple at the most diligent, concerned period of Jewish worship history as they came to offer the Passover lambs. They were focused on doing what they had been prescribed to do and traditionally done every year at this time and they are bent on accomplishing this and it's against all of the force of that and the human power of the accumulated masses and all the rest that I mentioned, Jesus sends everybody out, including all the animals, and grinds everything to an immediate halt. Deity is on display at that point because He demonstrates the ability to do something that a man could not do.

But as we come to the second two, it's not so much His power that's on display, as His omniscience. So as we look at incident number two and incident number three, omniscience is the focus. And when I use the word *omniscience*, I mean that He knows everything, He knows everything. *Science* is for knowledge, *omni* means "everything." He has all-inclusive knowledge. That's what that word means. He knew what people can know and He knew what they can't know. He knew what people discover, and He knew it without discovering it. He knows everything there is to know. He knows the future, He knows the present. He knows what is happening. He knows what is invisible. He knows the visible and the invisible. He knows the past. He knows the present. He knows the future. This we see on display in Jesus here. This is testimony to His deity. God alone knows everything. God alone knows the past, the present and the future. God alone knows every thought, every word, every action, and the collective effect of all thoughts, all words, all actions. Only God knows, according to 2 Corinthians 4, the intent of the heart...1 Corinthians 4, rather...the intent of the heart. God will judge every man when the motives and intentions of the heart are made manifest, because God knows them. He knows history and He knows all that is behind history. He knows everything that has happened perfectly, everything that is happening perfectly, everything that will happen before it happens perfectly. And, in fact, He not only knows all of this but He controls it all, He controls it all. That's His sovereignty. God doesn't learn anything, nobody teaches God anything. He knows everything that can be known. He knows all the incalculable motives, all the effects. He has known them forever. He knows them perfectly. He knows them eternally. He has to gain no knowledge and He loses no knowledge. His presence and power control absolutely everything exactly the way they need to be controlled to bring about His purpose and His glory, because that's the goal of everything.

In his wonderful book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer writes this about God's knowledge. He says, "God knows all that can be known and this He knows instantly and with the fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past, or that may exist in the centuries or

ages yet unborn. God knows all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feelings, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth. Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but knows all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He's never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything, nor does He seek information or ask questions. God is self-existent and self-existent knowledge. He is self-contained and self-contained knowledge and knows what no creature can ever know. He knows Himself perfectly, and only the infinite can have infinite knowledge of Himself. This is God.

God knows details like the numbers of the hairs of your head, Jesus said. He knows details like every time a sparrow hops. All of that, you remember, our Lord spoke about in His sermon, Sermon on the Mount. You find those references there in Matthew and also Luke 12. He knows everything.

If you go back to the Old Testament, you find this is often indicated. I'll just give you a couple of suggestions from the Old Testament. But in the sixteenth chapter of Jeremiah and the seventeenth verse, God is in this context telling the Jewish people they're going to go into captivity, they're going to go into judgment. It's going to be a terrible, terrible judgment. There's going to be severe punishment. In fact, earlier in the chapter he says in verse 13, "I'm going to hurl you out of this land. I'm going to throw you out of this land and finally in the end, in the future, you'll be regathered." And verse 17, God when He regathers Israel will have full knowledge: "My eyes are on all your ways," speaking of His people, "All their ways, they are not hidden from My face, nor is there iniquity concealed from My eyes. I will first doubly repay their iniquity and their sin because they have polluted the land." After that, the Lord will then--it says in verse 19--regather the people. And verse 21, "Make them know Him and to know that My name is the Lord and I have no problem bringing judgment on you because I know every one of your iniquities, they are not concealed from My eyes. I know every detail there is to know about you and one day in the future you will also know Me."

Jeremiah 23 is another one. In fact, the Bible says that those of us who go to glory will know as we are known. So we'll have knowledge that is also supernatural. In Jeremiah 23, verse 23, God compares Himself a lot in Jeremiah and Isaiah to false gods--idols, non-existent gods--made out of wood and stone. So He says, "Am I a God who is near?" declares the Lord, "and not a God far off." In other words, He's talking about His omnipresence. He is both near and far. "Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord. God is saying, "I'm not like your gods stuck in some Temple somewhere. I'm everywhere in the universe and I see everything and I know everything and no one can escape My knowledge."

Psalms 139 is a marvelous insight into the omniscience of God. Psalm 139, verse 1, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, are intimately acquainted with all My

ways, even before there is a word on My tongue. Behold, O Lord, You know it all. You know the words I haven't even spoken. You've enclosed Me behind and before. Laid Your hand on me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It's too high, I cannot attain it."

What He is saying is it's not some kind of knowledge from afar, you know Me and you know Me in the sense that you actually have Your hand on me. You monitor me in that very intimate way. Verse 7, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold You're there. If I take the wings of the dawn, and dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, even the darkness isn't dark to You and the night is as bright as the day, darkness and light are alike to You.'" There's no escaping God. He is everywhere, omnipresent, and consequently He knows everything, fully aware of everything in His universe and in the vastness of His eternal presence.

In Isaiah 40 to 46, Isaiah again does something like Jeremiah and compares in a little more detailed way, God with the false idols and the foolishness of making an idol and then worshiping it. In Isaiah 40, for example, God introduces Himself as the one who measured the waters, verse 12, and marked off the heavens, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure. That's the science of isostasy, the weight of the earth is all perfect so that the mountains balance like in a pair of scales.

Then in verse 13, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as His counselor has informed Him?" Who told God anything? Who gave God any information about all of this? No one did. He knows everything about creation, everything about water, everything about the heavens, everything about the Earth, everything about the balance of the Earth, the rotation of the Earth--everything. Nobody taught God anything about science. Nobody taught Him anything at all. Who gave Him understanding? Verse 14. The rhetorical question expects a "no one" for an answer. Who taught Him about morality, justice? Who taught Him knowledge? Who informed Him in the way of understanding or wisdom? No one. No one. You certainly, verse 18, wouldn't liken God to something you crafted out of gold or silver, an idol. "Do you not know," verse 21, "have you not heard, has it not been declared to you from the beginning, have you not understood from the foundation of the world? It is He who sits on the circle of the earth." The earth is a sphere. This is long before they were still thinking it was flat, and so forth.

Verse 25, "To whom will you liken Me? What God am I like? Like none." Nobody gives Me information. Nobody gives Me knowledge. I'm not limited. I'm not isolated. I'm not located in one place. Chapter 41, verse 21, "The Lord says, 'Bring your argument forward. Bring forward your gods.'" Let's have a test. "Let them bring forth and declare to us what's going to take place. Tell the future."

If you're a true God, tell the future that we may consider them and know their outcome. "Announce to us," verse 22, "what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward that we may know

you are gods." If you can't tell the future, you're not God and only God can tell the future--the true God.

Isaiah 45:19, "I haven't spoken in secret in some dark land. I not only know the future, I declare things that are right." "I declare things that are right." Down in verse 21 He goes back to the future, "Declare and set forth your case." If your gods are true gods, let them consult together. "Who has announced this from of old, who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? There is no other God beside Me, a righteous God and a Savior. There is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other." Why? Because I know the future. I know all things. Chapter 46, verse 9, "I am God, there is no other, I am God, there is no one like Me declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times, things which have not been done saying My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure."

So God says I can tell the future. And anyone who claims to be God then has to be able to tell the future. Let's look at verse 18 to 22, that's exactly what Jesus does. It's exactly what He does.

This is the evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ, taken from His ability to tell the future. And not just His own future, but the future of those who don't even know their future. Verse 18, "The Jews then said to Him," after He had done what He had done to the Temple; they were infuriated, to put it mildly. "What sign do you show us as Your authority for doing these things." They're outraged. "Who do you think you are?" That's the question. The "Who do You think You are" question which they frequently will ask Jesus because He takes power and authority over things that they think belong to them. So in response to His assault on the corruption of the Temple, which, by the way, is a preview of an even greater assault that's going to come at His crucifixion when the veil of the Temple is ripped from top to bottom and the Holy of Holies is exposed and therefore the whole sacrificial system comes to an end and then 40 years later the Romans come, dismantle the Temple so there's not one stone left on another, destroy the entire city of Jerusalem and bring an end to that great city and that great temple--a final end and never yet to be rebuilt. This is where that starts. This is His first attack on the Temple. At the end of His ministry He does it again. Then the Temple is attacked while He's dying by God, as He rips the veil. And then it's attacked 40 years later by the Romans as they come and totally destroy it. So they say, "Who do You think You are? You've got to prove to us that You have authority."

Now they know He's claiming to be from God because He says, "You've turned My Father's house into a business." Or as He said in the latter time that He did this at the end of His ministry, "into a den of robbers." He's claiming to be the agent of God. This is My Father's house and you've desecrated the place. And, of course, it was John the Baptist who said already to the whole populace of Judea that He was the Lamb of God. The word is circulating about Him. So they want a sign. If you're acting for God, if you're protecting God, and God is Your Father and You're the Son of God, well give us a sign, some sign to indicate that You have a valid authority for doing this.

By the way, “the Jews,” when you see that in the gospel of John--“the Jews”--you’ll see that repeatedly over and over and over again; it is a term that John uses to speak of the enemies of Jesus, the enemies of Jesus. Not necessarily the whole populace of Israel, but the collected group of enemies who are always attacking Jesus. And so they--and it constitutes here, of course--the religious leaders who make up the Sanhedrin and the scribes and the important elites in religion. Jesus is not a priest. He’s not a Levite. He has no rights inside the Temple. That belonged to the priesthood; that belonged to the Sanhedrin. That was their purview. That belonged to those who were in the Levitical order, or in the priestly line. Jesus has no role in religion in Israel. He’s not an official anything. He had no right to do anything there, granted to Him by any powers in Israel. It is an outrage. He, Jesus, believes they have desecrated His Father’s Temple rightly. They believe that Jesus, a man with no authority, has desecrated their Temple.

By the way, there’s no repentance on their part. There’s no sorrow. There’s no bowing down and saying you’re right, we desecrated the place, this is absolutely true. We need to repent. We need to seek forgiveness. We need to be reconciled to God. They don’t have any interest in that because they don’t love God, they don’t love God at all. In fact, the truth is, they hate God; they hate the true God and the true way of salvation by faith and grace which had already been ordained throughout all of Old Testament history. They loved themselves. They love money, Jesus said. They hate souls. They make people into sons of hell.

They demand, then, one thing--that is that Jesus give them some sign so that they can validate His right to do this. That’s what they want.

“Well,” you say, “well, hadn’t He done a lot of miracles?” Well, He’s about to do more because down in verse 23 it says, during the feast, “They were observing His signs which He was doing.” He was doing signs. During the time of the Passover and the subsequent feast that came immediately after the Passover, so that’s a week and another week, and the day surrounding it, Jesus is doing sign miracles. You say, “Well what do they mean ‘Show us a sign? What sign do You show us?’”

They were never convinced by the miracles that Jesus did that didn’t fit into their category. When He healed people on earth, when He cast out demons of people on earth, they saw those as insufficient miracles to convince them. What were they looking for? Well, if you go back a little bit and remember your study of the gospels, you will remember that they wanted a sign not on earth but a sign from heaven. They wanted a sign from heaven. They wanted some astronomical sign. They wanted something to happen in the sky. They wanted a divine fireworks display or something...something that was so clearly heavenly. They were looking at Jesus; He was a man. He looked like a man in every sense. He didn’t have a halo, He didn’t have a sort of a heavenly expression on His face all the time. He just looked like a man. And the things that He was doing were earthly things and they were dealing with people’s illnesses and possessions, and they were even providing of food, and the

miracles that He was doing there weren't astronomical. They, they were able to sort of keep those down at a low level and leave them in an unconvincing category.

In fact, it's much like Matthew 12. You remember that in Matthew 12 Jesus made a claim that also outraged them. In Matthew 12 and verse 8, Jesus said that He was Lord of the Sabbath. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. He had been healing on the Sabbath and they said that's illegal. "What You're doing is not right, You can't do this on the Sabbath, You're violating Sabbath law." He said, "I'm Lord of the Sabbath." So this is the same thing, "I'm Lord over the Temple, I'll do what I want with it; I'm Lord over the Sabbath, I'll do what I want with the Sabbath." And He went right on healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. He was Lord of the Sabbath.

Well, they were outraged at this and so in that same twelfth chapter of Matthew, in verse 38, the scribes and Pharisees, again the religious leaders, said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You. You need to give us a sign. You can't just do these kinds of things without having some authority and we don't know where Your authority is coming from; You've got to show us a sign." So it's exactly the same thing; they're looking for a sign. And we'll go back to that passage if we have time a little later. Unbelief rejects signs that it chooses to reject, as the crucifixion proves after Jesus had done miracles for three years; they still put Him on the cross and rejected Him. And they sort of held out their trump card, "Well, He didn't do anything heavenly. It was all sort of earthly."

He says, "Okay, I'll give you a sign." Verse 19, "He answered and said, 'Destroy this Temple and in three days I'll raise it up.'" Destroy this Temple and in three days I'll raise it up. This is best understood as a statement of future fact, a statement of future fact. Some call it a sort of permissive reality in terms of the original language. It's not a command. He's not commanding them to destroy Him. He's making a statement about future fact. Since you destroy this, if you destroy this, and you will destroy this, and I will raise it up. He's not commanding them to destroy Him; He's simply making a statement of future fact.

There is the first indication from John in the record that He knows the future. They don't even know they're going to kill Him, yet this is the beginning of His ministry. All that stuff hasn't really taken shape in their minds and hearts, formed itself into motives, and then become a passion that finally ends in Him being executed at the hands of the Romans. They don't even know that all of that is working, but He knows: "Destroy this Temple and I will raise it up." He knows the future, they will destroy Him. He knows that He will rise from the dead on the third day. He knows all of that. That's the knowledge of the future that He has.

His resurrection then will be the sign from heaven that ultimately validates His claim to be the Son of God. And why would you consider it a sign from heaven? Because He will die and He will be dead, as verified by the Romans withholding the breaking of His legs because He was already dead, jamming a sphere into His side, all of which the leaders of Israel knew--blood and water coming out, He is



dead. He is buried in the grave. He is a dead man. The sign from heaven is that He comes back. And the sign from heaven further is that at His resurrection there are angels sitting in the tomb who had been sent from heaven by God. There's ample testimony to that angelic precedence. You want a sign? I'll give you a deferred sign, I'll give you a deferred sign. I will raise it up.

By the way, this is a good place to make a little note. When He says, "I will raise it up," He's saying, "I will...I will raise Myself from the dead." In other places in the New Testament, for example in Romans 1, it says that God through the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15 it says, "God raises the dead." So in Romans 1 the Spirit raises Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15, God raises Christ. And here, Christ raises Himself. Is that a problem?

Well, it's not a problem here anymore than it's a problem with creation. God creates; the Holy Spirit moves to make the creation take shape. And Christ creates everything that is created, and nothing is created that He didn't create. This is the Trinity's work. They are one in nature. They are one in operation. One in nature, one in operation.

So they want a sign. Jesus says, "I'll give you a sign deferred. A sign from heaven that will involve someone who dies and goes out of this world and comes back from heaven, attested by angelic angels."

Now go back to Matthew 12 for just a moment because when they said to Him in Matthew 12, "Where do You get the authority to claim to be Lord of the Sabbath?" They asked the same thing. "We don't know where You get this authority; show us a sign." He gives them the same answer. "He answered and said to them, verse 39 of Matthew 12, "'An evil and adulterous generation prays for a sign.'" Mark it, folks, an evil and adulterous generation prays for a sign. What is that saying?

Listen, you remember the words of our Lord in Luke 16 when He was telling the story about the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man said, "Send back Lazarus to my brothers." Send him back from the dead so he can tell my brothers not to come here. And Jesus said, "If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe though someone is raised from the dead."

The point is this, an evil and adulterous generation is not satisfied with Scripture; they want a sign. That's why all these so-called phony sign ministries provide no real truth, no real ministry, no real message that brings salvation. Salvation comes by hearing the Word. Faith comes through hearing the Word concerning Christ. If you will not accept that, signs won't do it. They didn't do it in that generation. Why did the Lord do those signs? To strengthen the faith of those who believed, and we'll see that in a moment.

So He says, "An evil adulterous generation prays for a sign. No sign will be given but the sign of Jonah the prophet as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a sea monster, so will the

Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” This is going to be the sign, the sign of the resurrection which is analogous to Jonah.

They wanted astronomical signs when He exercised authority as Lord over the Sabbath. They wanted astronomical signs when He exercised authority over the Temple here in John 2. By the way, I don't know if you thought about this, but when they said this to Him, “Show us a sign,” and He said, “Destroy this body, this Temple, and in three days I'll raise it up,” that...that literally went across Jerusalem. That became a part of popular conversation. That...if it were today it would have been tweeted universally. That statement alone would have showed up on every social media format immediately. It would have gone viral because it did go viral.

How do you know it went viral? Because three years later when Jesus goes to His trial, they're trying to find an indictment, they're trying to find a way to convict Him. Mark 14 records this, so they bring some phony witnesses in and these witnesses say this, they say, I'll read you exactly their words because it's important what they said and it's in Mark 14, starting in verse 56. False witnesses come and they stood up and they began to give false testimony, and this is what they said. This is three years later: “We heard Him say I will destroy this Temple made with hands and in three days I'll build another made without hands.” Did He say that? No. That is a garbled gossip misrepresentation of what Jesus said. But it's in the minds of people who can be used as false witnesses because they remember this in a garbled way.

And Matthew 26:60, by the way, says that that was the spin of the false witnesses; that was their version of it. In Matthew 27 and verse 40, this is even more interesting to me, Jesus is hanging between two robbers, two robbers, and they're hurling abuse at Him, Matthew 27:39, and what do they say? “You who are going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself.” What did I tell you? Those words that Jesus said had gone viral, they were everywhere. They were known by the riff-raff; the criminal element heard this. This got passed around. This man is crazy. This man is going to destroy the Temple and build it back in three days.

Well, of course, they didn't understand what He meant by what He said, but they also misrepresented what He said. He never said “I will destroy it.” What He said was, “You will.” Verse 20, this is mockery, just sheer mockery: “The Jews then said, ‘It took 46 years to build this Temple and will You raise it up in three days?’” This is a joke. It's also a demonstration of their spiritual blindness. I'm sure Jesus made a gesture like this, “Destroy this Temple and three days I'll raise it up.” Let's get off this Temple that you're concerned about and let's get on this one. And He predicts what they're going to do in the future accurately.

They couldn't understand that. I mean, this is typical of them. This is typical of them, and you will see that as we go through the gospel of John. You see it in chapter 3. Jesus tells Nicodemus he has to be born again. Nicodemus has no idea what He's talking about. How can a man be born again? How can

he enter a second time in his mother's womb? I mean, how does that happen? That's not possible. You can go over to chapter 6 and verse 51, and there are a lot more, I'm just giving you some samples. And Jesus says, "I'm the living bread, I came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he'll live forever and the bread which I give for the life of the world is My flesh. And the Jews began to argue with one another saying, How did He give us His flesh to eat?" He was speaking metaphorically. They never did understand it. This is the pattern.

Maybe just another one or two. Chapter 7, just so you have this in mind. Jesus says in verse 33 of 7, "A little while longer I'm with you and I'm going to go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and will not find Me and where I go or where I am you can't come." The Jews said to one another. "Where's He going? Where's He going to go where we can't find Him?" I mean, they were so ignorant. This was their constant pattern. He was talking about spiritual things and they were dead spiritually.

He says to them, "If anyone keeps My Word," John 8:51, "He will never see death." The Jews said, "Now we know You have a demon. Abraham died, everybody dies. And the prophets die. And You say, If anyone keeps My words, he'll never taste of death? Surely You're not greater than our father Abraham who died. The prophets died too. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

They were so blind to everything He was saying that it all went right on by without ever attaching to their understanding. So here's the first illustration of it, verse 20, 46 years according to Josephus, it had been exactly 46 years at this time that the Temple had been under construction.

Just a little bit of background--it's not the Solomonic Temple; it's not the Temple of Solomon, that was basically destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians, that great edifice that Solomon had built. And then when they came back after 70 years of captivity, Haggai and Zechariah the prophets told the people who had come back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, they completed it in 519. So it had been around a long time. It was pretty much in disarray. There was not much when Herod shows up 500 years later. And so Herod wants to make something out of it. So Herod decides to start a massive reconstruction, and it starts with the same location and builds this reconstruction, and he's been doing it for 46 years by this time. Very expensive; took ten years to do the main part of it and one record is that they used 18,000 workers on this. It's still going on for 46 years at this time and, by the way, 43 years after this when the Temple and Jerusalem is destroyed, it will still not be completed. That's what kind of a construction project it was.

So they're looking at Jesus and this is a joke. This thing is 46 years in the building and you're going to destroy it and put it back up in three days. Verse 21, "But He was speaking of the Temple of His body." "He was speaking of the Temple of His body." Isn't it interesting that He didn't explain that to them? Why? Because of Matthew 13, "He's hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them to babes." He wanted the disciples to understand that; He wanted you and I to understand that, because this is evidence of His deity as He predicts the details of the future. But He

never said anything to them about it.

But verse 22, “When He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this and they believed the Scripture.” What Scripture? All the Scripture from the Old Testament about the Messiah, including His death and resurrection and exaltation. They believed the Scripture and the Word which Jesus had spoken.

They had trouble believing along the way, didn't they? That's why Jesus said to them, all the time, “O you of little faith!” O you of little faith!” They were the little faith association. Always faltering in their faith until finally after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to them, they got it. And then, like on the road to Emmaus, He spoke to them all the things concerning Himself from the Law and the Prophets and the holy writings, the Old Testament, and their eyes were opened, their eyes were opened.

So Jesus gave a sign but it's a not a sign to an evil and adulterous generation. It wouldn't have mattered what He did; it didn't matter. He did rise from the dead, but they wouldn't believe. If they won't believe the Scripture, they won't believe even a cosmic heavenly sign, a resurrection attested to by angels from the very throne of God.

So our Lord's divine nature is revealed here in this passage in marvelous ways. He knows the future. He knows the future. In fact, the details of His death He lays out. Read Matthew 16, Matthew 17, Matthew 19, and through that section where our Lord is instructing His disciples, He gives them details: “I will be arrested by the chief priests and the leaders of Israel. I will be scourged, I will be spit on. I will be beaten. I will be crucified. I will be buried. I will rise again.” He gives every single detail. He knows the future. That's omniscience.

Listen, God knows all future events. Just take, for example, the realm of predictive prophecy. Because God knows the future, Isaiah was able to announce the coming of Cyrus to deliver the Jews from Babylon 150 years before the event. Because God knows the future, Daniel was able to predict the rise and fall the great powers of the world that would dominate Israel, the great four-nation powers. Because God knows the future, Zachariah could predict that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and be pierced. Because God knows the future, Micah could predict that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Because God knows the future, Isaiah could say that He would be born of a virgin. Prophecy is non-existent if God doesn't know the future. But He does know the future and that's why we believe that when we hear in the Bible that there is coming a rapture of the church, and a time of tribulation, and a millennial kingdom, and a new heaven and a new earth--the same God declaring that in the future is the one who declared the future from the past, which we now know came to pass. Omniscience has perfect knowledge of the future.

Now just a closing comment on verses 23-25 because it's really obvious. Omniscience also knows the secrets of men's hearts. He knows the big events that will happen visibly. He also knows the

invisible world of human thought. “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs, the miracles which He was doing.” He stays on, the Feast of Unleavened Bread follows the Passover, and He’s performing miracles. You remember John 21 says He performed so many of these things that all the books of the world couldn’t contain all that He did and all that He said. So He’s doing these kinds of miracles, which for the Jews were not adequate enough because they weren’t cosmic. But it does say, “Many of the people believed in His name.” That sounds really good. This is why he came. Is this not wonderful? Was this the moment? Was this the desired outcome, a true spiritual awakening of repentance and salvation? Was this it? Was this...was this kind of a Jonah thing where the whole of Jerusalem begins to repent as Nineveh did? Many modern evangelists would start here counting hands and heads fast and racking up the numbers.

But there’s a very interesting play on words here. “Many believed in His name, observing His signs, but Jesus on His part was not entrusting Himself to them.” That is very interesting. I want you to look more deeply. “Many believed,” that’s the Greek verb *pistuo*, the verb that means “to believe.” “Many believed in His name, in His name as Messiah, who He claimed to be. But” verse 24, “Jesus was not entrusting” [in the NAS, it’s the same word *pistuo*, “believing”]. They were believing in Jesus but Jesus was not believing in them. He had no faith in their faith. He had no trust in their trust. He didn’t believe in their believing.

Right here at the very outset of the gospel of John, we’re introduced to a very important issue throughout all redemptive history, the presence of false, superficial, artificial faith that doesn’t save, that doesn’t save. It’s a reality. It has to be recognized. As those of you who have been around here for any time know, that has been a major emphasis of our ministry in writing and preaching for decades and decades from the very beginning. The demons believe, the devils believe and tremble. “Many will say, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we do this and do that in Your name?’ ‘Depart from Me,’ He says, ‘I never knew you.’” False faith is a significant reality. Many will say, many will say, many will say; few will go through the narrow door. Most people who claim to believe in Jesus have a non-saving faith. That’s a frightening reality, frightening reality.

All belief in Him is not true belief. It is superficial, artificial. It lacks repentance. It lacks the singularity of faith alone by grace alone and it’s muddied up by works. Or it’s superficial, like the soils, right? There were three kinds of soils that seed landed on and they produced no fruit. There was a little emotional response, a little positive reaction, but no fruit. And then there was good soil, and the evidence of true faith is not in the proclamation of that faith, but in the demonstration of that faith in righteous behavior, John 8. “If you...if you obey My Word,” John 8:31-32, “if you obey My Word, then you’re My real disciple.”

True salvation shows up in a transformed life pursuing righteousness. “Faith without works is”...What?...“dead,” James 2. How did He know this? Why didn’t He believe in their believing? I can’t

know that. When somebody comes to me and says “I believe in Jesus Christ,” I don’t have any way to say, “Well, I’ve got to talk to you because I don’t think your faith is real.” Over time I might be able to look at that life and say I question that because I don’t see the passion for righteousness. But it immediately, instantaneously, verse 24 says, “He was not believing in their believing because He knew all men and because He didn’t need anyone to testify concerning man for He Himself knew what was in man.” Nobody needed to tell Him anything about anybody.

If somebody comes to me and says, “I don’t know if my husband’s saved,” well I might say, “Well, tell me about him. Give me some information, maybe I can help you decide whether he’s saved. What are his strong desires? What are his longings? What is his life like? Does he love worship? Does he love the people of God? Does he love the things that God loves? You could ask questions and getting enough information you might be able to say, “Well, based upon what you’ve told me, I think maybe he’s saved.” Or “Maybe he’s not saved,” or whatever. But that’s not the case with Jesus. He doesn’t need people to come and tell Him about people. He doesn’t need that because He knows what is in man. That can only be said of God, right? Now we’re back where we started to omniscience. This is what John is doing here, he’s connecting us to the deity of Christ through the evidence of His knowledge.

First John 3:20, “God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” “God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” What he means is that...there is...He knows what our own hearts don’t even know, what we don’t even know about ourselves, He knows perfectly. He reads your heart and my heart like a billboard, like a billboard.

So false faith is the end of 2. He sets the stage for 3, which is Nicodemus and true faith, true saving faith. But let me close by having you turn again to the end of John, John 21. He knows the future perfectly. And He knows the secrets of the heart perfectly. Let’s pick the story of Peter up, we all love this story, this is Peter when he’s confronted by Jesus because he’s disobedient, didn’t do what the Lord told him to do. He went back to fishing. The Lord told him just go to Galilee and wait for Me, and he went back to his boat and his nets and went back to his old profession. And, of course, the principle was if you love Me, you do what I say. If you love Me, you keep My commandments. So after breakfast, Jesus confronts Peter in verse 15 and he says, “Do you love Me? Do you love Me more than these?” Do you love Me more than these things that you’ve now gone back to? Do you love Me more?

And what does Peter say? “Yes, Lord, You know that I love you.” What is he basing the testimony on? The omniscience of Christ. You know I love you. It’s not evident. I get it. It’s not evident. I can’t say, “Well, look at my works. Look at My faithfulness. Look at My obedience.” He can’t say that. So I have to call on your omniscience. You know that I love you. He says to Him again. Okay, do you love Me? He said, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” He says to Him again, “Do you love Me?” Verse 17. And then He says, “You know all things, You know that I love You.” “Yes I do, yes I do.” Jesus

would have said, "So go tend My lambs, shepherd My sheep, attend My sheep, I do know you love Me."

Boy, that's comforting, isn't it? 'Cause Peter was disobedient. But a moment's disobedience doesn't cancel out the true love for the Lord. Just evidence of our fallenness. So here we have an illustration of where Jesus knew the secrets of the heart of Peter, and He knew he loved Him. Jesus also knew his future, verse 18. "When you were young, you used to gird yourself, walked where you wished." He knew his past. He's talking about his past, before he met Jesus, telling him that he was a free-wheeler. You put on your clothes and did whatever you wanted. But when you grow old, looking at your future, you're going to stretch out your hands. That's a euphemism for crucifixion. I know your future, you're going to get crucified, and Peter was crucified. I know your future. Someone else is going to gird you, take you where you don't want to go. You're going to die. He was signifying the kind of death by which he would glorify God.

So here in a little microcosm in the case of Peter you have this same omniscience directed at Peter. He knows Peter's heart. And He knows Peter's future. That's omniscience.

I hope your prayer is the frustrated confession of Peter--you know I love you, you know I love you, you know all things, you know I love you. And I hope your future is the one promised to Peter, a future in which though suffering may come, you will glorify God. Let's bow together in prayer.

It's always a thrill and blessing, God, to spend time with our Lord Jesus. It's such a privilege to be a part of these scenarios, these divinely authored occasions, incidents, confrontations, and times of instruction with our Lord. I can't imagine a richer experience than these. But it isn't just literature; it isn't just art to be admired, sort of spiritual beauty. It is to be convicting to our own hearts and to call us to examine our own hearts and ask whether you have faith in our faith, or whether ours is of that artificial and superficial kind and You know it, we're not fooling You.

On the other hand, for those of us who do love you, who do long to honor you, who have strong desires to please you, to glorify you, to worship you, we thank You that You've called us to tend Your lambs and shepherd Your sheep, because you know that in spite of our failures, we love you and you now that. And you know our future, and it's a future that's going to glorify You. We rest in that. We rest in the affirmation of that through the confidence and assurance that comes by means of the Holy Spirit. But I pray for those who You know don't believe savingly; they believe superficially. There's no repentance there. There's no hunger and thirst after righteousness. Lord, may that superficial faith be replaced with a genuine saving faith. And may they relish the joy of knowing they love You and knowing that You know they love You and that their future is one in which they will glorify You. We pray that for every soul here.

Lord, we ask that Your Spirit will tie this all together, press it deep into all our hearts. Fill us with joy in believing in thankful hearts for all that has been done for us in Christ. May we boldly proclaim His glorious truth until that day when we see Him face to face. We pray in His name. Amen.

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