

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Two thousand years ago, Jesus and his friends were having a conversation about all of the rumors churning in the social mill about who He was. This same question posed by Jesus, “who do people say that the Son of Man is?”, is once again being asked of men and women, both believers and unbelievers, all across the earth today.

*“Jesus...asked His disciples, saying, **“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”** So they said, **“Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”** He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Simon Peter answered and said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**” (Matthew 16:13-16 NKJV)*

- B. I believe we are living in the beginning of the time where circumstances designed by the LORD Himself will openly provoke a response to that question from every human being. All grey will be swept away and we will be forced to reckon with Jesus. Religious pluralism, radical Islam, Jews and Palestinians, presidential elections, and “Love Wins” all present a version of Jesus that leaves both believing and unbelieving masses perplexed about who He really is.
- C. In seeking to present a Biblical Christianity to a world completely confused about His identity, we must return to the ancient voices of the apostles and early church fathers who sought diligently to uphold the truths about Jesus. By far the most important one we must emphasize today is His divinity. *Jesus of Nazareth is the LORD – Yahweh made flesh.*

II. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS: THE CRUX OF CHRISTIANITY

- A. The right answer to that all-important question must have its foundation in what the nature of true Christianity is in itself. It is not a lifestyle, moral code, a system of religious rituals, or a collection of shared beliefs. Christianity is very simply *a dynamic relationship with a Person*: the Lord Jesus Christ. Though words, deeds, and interests will characterize this relationship, these things are not the defining features of Christianity. Who we believe that Person to be is *everything*.
- B. The divinity of Jesus is one of the pillars of orthodoxy regarding the person of Christ. Not only does this affirmation have dynamic implications for the knowledge of God, *the whole Christian faith hangs on this point*. In fact, the divinity of Christ is actually the cornerstone of His identity. He has not always been a human, but He has always been and will always be Divine. Humanity was an innovation to His identity whereas divinity is the unchanging constant.
- C. Though not directly the subject of this session, the New Testament *constantly* affirms the divinity of Jesus by employing the classical Jewish understanding of monotheism and including Him in the unique identity of the one true God, YHWH. Over and over again, Jesus is affirmed as the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all, the One possessing the Divine Name, and the One deserving of exclusive worship. (*Isaiah 45:12, 18; Colossians 1:16; 1 Chronicles 29:10-12; Philipians 2:9-11; Psalm 110; 1 Corinthians 8:6, Psalm 96:4-6*)
- D. The thing that distinguishes true, apostolic Christianity from other world religions and cults is the belief that the man from Nazareth is the Holy One of Israel, the living God, incarnate. When men confront Jesus they are rightly compelled to love Him, adore Him, and to *worship* Him.

III. THE COMING RECKONING

- A. Without question it is vital that belief in the divinity of Christ be at the absolute center of the Christian faith, but there is an added drama and context by the historical hour we live in that accentuates the necessity to focus on Jesus.
- B. In order to rightly see the importance of this, we must start at the end of all things. Throughout the passing ages God has restrained His hand and allowed men to persist largely in their ignorance, unbelief, and lawlessness. Yet the appointed hour is coming when He will arise to cause the nations to give an account for themselves and face who He is in truth. This central day, biblically called the “Day of the LORD”, is not simply about God bringing men into account for their moral transgressions and sins, but about confronting the earth with *His identity*.
- “The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day” (Isaiah 2:17 NKJV)***
- C. The Bible is abundantly clear that human history will culminate in the global judgment of Christ and the universal identification of Christ as the only Creator and sovereign Ruler over all, the only One worthy of humanity’s worship.
- “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11 NKJV, quoting Isaiah 45:23-24, equating Jesus to YHWH)***
- D. Apart from this foundational perspective, the events that the Bible describes leading up to the return of Jesus lack significant continuity and purpose. As a result, our vision and preparation becomes focused on events themselves rather than on the overarching purpose that the events serve, thus failing to appreciate the true nature of the eschatological crisis and its corresponding remedy.
- E. This is not only troubling for the unbeliever, but has radical implications for the Church. Scripture often speaks of the sobering truth of apostasy from the faith before the return of Christ and in fact sets it in place as one of the two major signs to indicate that the return of Jesus is near (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Many will not endure in faithfulness and loyalty to Jesus. The eschatological storm that is coming will remove all that is not founded upon the Rock and expose truth from falsehood.
- “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ... each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it.” (1 Corinthians 3:11, 13-15 NKJV)***
- ““Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”” (Matthew 7:24-27 NKJV)***

IV. THE COMING DECEPTION

- A. In contrast to what might be our initial impression, the New Testament speaks extensively about the subject of deception. In addition, this was a theme significantly emphasized in the teaching ministry of Christ, especially deception related to Himself and His return.

- B. Jesus and the Apostles warn of a time at the end of the age when false prophets will introduce heresy *into the Church*. Deceptive doctrines and ideas will be received by those who name the name of Jesus.
- C. Jesus is clear that the peril on the earth leading up to His return will be unprecedented both in its severity and its scope (2 Timothy 3:1; Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21). Yet of all the dynamics dangerous to the human heart, Scripture consistently highlights *deception* as paramount. It is our tendency to primarily associate circumstantial disruption with the crisis of the last hour, when in fact delusion is *far more* perilous.
- D. We must allow ourselves to feel the force of the fact that Jesus places confusion concerning His identity above all other perils in describing the severity of that hour to His disciples.

“And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:4-5, 23-24 NKJV)

- E. If guarding against deception is paramount we must emphatically expose, dismantle, and condemn the grand illusion of our age that it is possible for one to opt for doctrinal neutrality. One can only entertain true *or* false thoughts about Jesus.
- F. John and Paul were deeply concerned about the church being deceived into believing lies about the Person of Jesus.

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;” (2 John 9-10 NKJV)

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” (2 Corinthians 11:2-4 NKJV)

V. THE PRESENT CRISIS - STRAYING FROM THE CENTER

- A. Over the last 150 years the leadership of the Church has not sufficiently strengthened truths about the divinity of Christ in the hearts of the people through the ministry of teaching, and thus in the hearts of most people this belief is one they hold sincerely but one they cannot articulate or synthesize Biblically.
- B. Because the climax of the eschatological drama is the universal recognition of the divinity of Christ, the primary issue therefore of deception at the end of the age is the divinity of Christ.
- C. We currently see four general negative trends in the Church today, whose cumulative effect must be viewed as nothing sort of a full-blown crisis in light of the coming wave of delusion that the Scriptures speak of. The recognition of these four trends, however, must not produce criticism or elitism, but rather love and fervent supplication.

D. Four Trends

1. Drift to the Peripheral

- a. Though the vast majority of the earth throughout history has largely failed to honor and treasure Christ, there has never been a generation in which both nominal and sincere believers have so little regard for the centrality of Christ.
- b. He who should be central and ultimate to every Christian has become peripheral. The pulpits of our nation are almost full of everything but the proclamation of the glory of Jesus Christ. In a sincere effort to make preaching more “relevant” and appealing to the masses, shepherds have shifted their subject matter away from the knowledge of God and increasingly toward practical and financial principles.
- c. Man and his need is almost always the starting point of preaching rather than Christ and His surpassing glory. It has become normal to walk into a church and hear very little to nothing about Christ, except the benefits we receive from Him.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV)

- d. The god of personal fulfillment and happiness has replaced a preoccupation with Christ as the center of much of Western Christianity. Jesus is sadly relegated to the sidelines where we can conveniently use Him in whatever way to help our lives, further our goals, lift our spirits, advance our political agendas, soothe our troubled conscience, or improve our well-being.

Christ is ubiquitous in this subculture, but more as an adjective (Christian) than as a proper name. While we swim in a sea of “Christian” things, Christ is increasingly reduced to a mascot or symbol of a subculture and the industries that feed it. Just as you don’t really need Jesus Christ in order to have T-shirts and coffee mugs, it is unclear to me why he is necessary for most of the things I hear a lot pastors and Christians talking about in church these days...Liberals may have pioneered the idea that there is salvation in other names than Jesus Christ, but no group in modern history has wanted the general public to pray non-sectarian prayers – that is, with or without Jesus Christ – as much as the conservative evangelicals. When it comes to getting God back into our schools, we can even leave Jesus behind. Jesus has been dressed up as a corporate CEO, life coach, culture-warrior, political revolutionary, philosopher, copilot, cosufferer, moral example, and partner in fulfilling our personal and social dreams. But in all of these ways, are we reducing the central character in the drama of redemption to a prop for our own play?¹

- e. In a 2003 article the major periodical *U.S. News & World Report* described the evangelical movement in America as “spiritually accessible to all” and “theologically fuzzy and ambivalent.” Though the editors noted that the Church is “market-savvy” in its growth, noticeably lacking from the article was any mention of the supremacy of Christ as a distinctive characteristic.²

¹ Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: 2008), p 22, 25

² David Bryant, *Christ is All* (New Providence, NJ: New Providence Publishers, 2005), p 7-8.

- f. It has become extremely common and entirely acceptable for professing Christians to know almost nothing about what the Bible says about Jesus' identity and work. The fact that what should be appalling and outrageous is instead normative is indicative of the harsh reality that in our day many expressions of Christianity are no longer primarily about Christ.
2. Confusion
- a. The consequence of this marginalization of Christ is that when He is spoken or written about within evangelicalism there are a startling number of opinions concerning how we should view His identity, how we should interpret His works, and what He came to accomplish.
 - b. It must be realized that for the authentic 'seeker' this inconsistency would be enough to reject the claims of Christianity regardless of what the building looked like, whether there was an adjoining coffee shop or not, or what kind of music the service boasted.
 - c. The most 'seeker-sensitive' thing we can do is to know Christ deeply and boldly proclaim His matchless worth in power.
3. Liberalism & Humanism
- a. The previous two trends – drifting to the peripheral and confusion – have resulted in many liberal and humanistic philosophies taking a foothold in the Church. For over a century liberalism has been undermining the Bible and the uniqueness of Christ. In the past this has resulted in a steady erosion of orthodoxy in mainline denominations.
 - b. Today, however, non-denominational evangelicalism is so hesitant in taking a stand on doctrine in favor of 'relevance' to culture that the lines of truth are becoming blurred. Evangelical seminaries are succumbing to pressure to back down from seemingly intolerant foundational doctrines and stances.
 - c. Even more troubling is the movement emerging out of evangelicalism that seeks to reach this generation by redefining church culture and making Jesus palatable. The apathy and even contempt for definitive doctrinal stances results in a very pliable belief system that has Jesus "meet people where they are". While the intentions of these movements are not always to alter beliefs at the outset, the effect is nearly inevitable unless forcefully resisted.
 - d. The Church is drawing its battle-lines and taking its stand on cultural and political issues and being annihilated in the real war of the person and work of Christ. We have marshaled all our forces to a farce and failed to realize that the enemy is at the heart of the camp plundering our goods and pillaging our towns.
4. External Assault
- a. Today the Christian faith is bombarded by external assaults more than ever before. Whether it is radical Islamic extremists, oppressive regimes, or the agnostic media, there is a persistent attack to undermine the uniqueness and preeminence of Christ.
 - b. In the past several years alone our nation has been exposed to the blasphemous assertions of the Da Vinci Code, the tomb of Jesus, and the gospel of Judas.

VI. OUR NEED IN THIS HOUR

- A. Our need in this crucial hour is to feel the weight of the fact that on the most important issue, the very centerpiece of Christianity, there is more uncertainty and confusion than ever within the body of Christ. And this is occurring on the verge of the greatest wave of delusion in history. As the ground is being broken on million dollar building projects, the seeds of apostasy are being laid in the foundation under the costumes of accommodation and tolerance.
- B. Gravely we must awaken to the prospect that a window of time now draws near when the Church in the West will be plundered by a worldwide apostasy so vast that it will act as a definitive sign of the second coming of Christ. In that hour the battleground for the eternal fate of souls will be *the identity of the man Christ Jesus*.
- C. Tens of millions of Christians are not going vehemently renounce Jesus and have their conscience seared because they lacked the right leadership principles, or did not have enough self-esteem, or hadn't attended the right conference, or because they hadn't been faithful in tithing. It will be because in their heart they did not have the "full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself." (Colossians 2:2-3)
- D. The coming trouble, persecution, and strong delusion will not so much turn the hearts of men away from Jesus or weaken their conviction to Him but rather *expose it for how weak it already is*. The crisis is not that the Church is strong and that hour will make us weak, it is that the Church during the last century has been built upon the sand and soon the rain will descend, the floods will rise, and the winds will blow and beat upon that house... "*and great was its fall.*" (Matthew 7:24-29)

VII. PERSONAL RESPONSE – A VISION FOR THE PREMINENCE OF CHRIST

- A. This vision for awakening in our churches is of utmost importance, but will have no real substance unless the Holy Spirit unlocks our own heart with a burning vision for the glory of Christ in our personal life.
- B. Throughout the New Testament, a beautiful symphony is composed but there is a melody that the Holy Spirit returns to again and again in His work of inspiration – *Christ and His matchless worth*. When reading the writings of the apostles, those who had known the sound of Jesus' voice and seen His form with their very own eyes, one gets the sense that they are meeting men who had been utterly overwhelmed by something and were still reeling in the wake of its magnitude.
- C. Yet the one who completely captured the hearts of the early Church had been riveting the eyes of the angels since the dawn of creation. The testimony of heaven was, is, and always will be that the matchless beauty of the Eternal Son warrants incessant worship (*Revelation 4:8*). This will be the testimony of all of humanity after the drama of the end of the age.

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:17-18 NKJV)
- D. The extent to which we are abandoned to the preeminence of Christ in all things is the extent to which we are in agreement with the passion and plan of the Godhead. The will of God for our lives is that Jesus would have the first place in everything. There may be other purposes and plans He has for us, but the end of all of them is that Jesus would be made much of through our lives. Individually, the piercing implication of this is that you would find your utmost joy and pleasure in lauding and extolling Christ and His unmatched worth.

- E. Contrary to almost everything that we have been told outside of the Church as well as within it, it is actually in *losing our life* by denying ourselves and becoming completely preoccupied with Another that our ultimate joy and satisfaction is found.

“Our fatal error is believing that wanting to be happy means wanting to be made much of. It feels so good to be affirmed. But the good feeling is finally rooted in the worth of self, not the worth of God. This path to happiness is an illusion. And there are clues. There are clues in every human heart even before conversion to Christ. One of those clues is that no one goes to the Grand Canyon or to the Alps to increase his self-esteem. That is not what happens in front of massive deeps and majestic heights. But we do go there, and we go for joy. How can that be, if being made much of is the center of our health and happiness?...In wonderful moments of illumination there is a witness in our hearts: soul-health and great happiness come not from beholding a great self but a great splendor.”³

- F. In one of the holiest moments recorded in Scripture, we are beckoned into the conversation between the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son the night before His blood was to be spilled for our sake. Near the end of the words recorded in John’s gospel, Jesus utters the ultimate end and supreme goal of our salvation that He was about to accomplish – *to behold His glory*.

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24 NKJV)

- G. When the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes of our heart (Ephesians 1:18) and His glory becomes our greatest treasure, we become the happiest of men.

“This is the all-encompassing gift of God’s love through the gospel – to see and savor the glory of Christ forever. In place of this, we have turned the love of God and the gospel of Christ into a divine endorsement of our delight in many lesser things, especially the delight in our being made much of. The acid test of biblical God-centeredness – and faithfulness to the gospel – is this: Do you feel more loved because, at the cost of his Son, he enables you to enjoy making much of him forever? Does your happiness hang on seeing the cross of Christ as a witness to your worth, or as a way to enjoy God’s worth forever? Is God’s glory in Christ the foundation of your gladness?”⁴

- H. Only through persistence in gazing upon His glory do the rays of Divine light pierce our hard hearts, sweeping us away in the same beauty that has kept the seraphim before Him day and night since the dawn of creation. And only through this persistence will the enslaving of our hearts to narcissism, self-compulsion, and self-centeredness be broken.

- I. The Apostle Paul stands as a radiant witness of the captivating power of the glory of Jesus. For Paul, Christ was so precious and of inestimable worth to Him. The loss of everything, including his reputation, name, possessions, and even eventually his life was nothing compared to gaining Christ. The surpassing glory of God in the face of Christ was the good news that he treasured within Him.

“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8 NKJV)

³ John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), p 11-12.

⁴ John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), p 11-12.

- J. It is in the unsearchable riches of Christ that we find the secret of Paul’s selfless love and overflowing joy in the most atrocious of circumstances. When the streams of gladness within us find their headwaters in the preeminence of Christ, they do not fail in the midst of persecution, rejection, suffering, criticism, or pain.
- K. Sadly the Church in modernity knows almost nothing of this consuming passion for the glory of Christ that kindles flames of yearning to depart and behold Him with unveiled eyes.

“The critical question for our generation – and for every generation – is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there? And the question for Christian leaders is: Do we preach and teach and lead in such a way that people are prepared to hear that question and answer with a resounding “No”? How do we understand the gospel and the love of God? Have we shifted with the world from God’s love as the gift of Himself to God’s love as the gift of a mirror in which we like what we see? Have we presented the gospel in such a way that the gift of the glory of God in the face of Christ is marginal rather than central and ultimate?...Can we really say that our people are being prepared for heaven where Christ Himself, not His gifts, will be the supreme pleasure? And if our people are unfit for that, will they even go there?”⁵

- L. John Owen, a man of towering devotion to Christ in the Puritan era, expressed similar sentiments:

“No man shall ever behold the glory of Christ by sight in heaven who does not, in some measure, behold it by faith in this world...Many will say with confidence that they desire to be with Christ and to behold His glory. But when asked, they can give no reason for this desire, except that it would be better than going to hell. If a man claims to love and desire that which he never even saw, he is deceiving himself...Should they be admitted, they would never enjoy it. All of us naturally regard ourselves as fit for eternal glory. But few of us have any idea of how unfit we really are, because we have had no experience of the glory of Christ which is in heaven...Music cannot please a deaf man, nor can beautiful colours impress a blind man. A fish would not thank you for taking it out of the sea and putting it on dry land under the blazing sun! Neither would an unregenerate sinner welcome the thought of living for ever in the blazing glory of Christ.”⁶

VIII. DEFINING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

- A. We will never live like Paul lived unless we *know* Jesus like Paul knew Him. Though many in modernity claim to know Him, we live in a culture where terms like “love”, “friendship”, “intimacy”, and “nearness” have myriads of definitions. Because Christianity is at its core a *dynamic relationship with a Person*, we must put the bounds of that relationship in its right perspective.
- B. We cannot lay hold of the depth of nearness to Him that we desire unless we actually know what we are in search of. There are three general facets to the reality of nearness and friendship with Him that we desire so deeply:

⁵ Ibid, p 15

⁶ John Owen, *The Glory of Christ*, Abridged and Adapted by R.J.K. Law (Edinburg, Banner of Truth Trust:1994), p 4-8.

1. The invitation to nearness: Nearness and friendship with Jesus begins with receiving revelation of His passionate desire to be in relationship with His people at a deep level (not just legally or functionally).
 2. The substance of nearness: At the heart of friendship and nearness is *relational knowledge*.
 3. The overflow of nearness: The growing degrees of love, communion, and emotional pleasure that we experience as a result of our knowledge of Him. This is the joy comes alive in our hearts as they overflow from relational knowledge.
- C. One of the most common misconceptions of knowing Jesus deeply is that it mostly consists of either the *first category (the invitation or call to it)* or the *third category (the emotions and sentiments within the heart)*. Nearness, intimacy, and friendship, however, is primarily composed of *relational knowledge (the second category)*. We know this intuitively from our human relationships, yet we often fail to apply this to our desire for friendship with Jesus. The people we say we are the most intimate with are those who we know and are known deeply. Thus when referring to the knowledge of God we are speaking of *relational knowledge*, not merely factual knowledge. Jesus is not an object we can acquire information about – He is a Person who is to be known.
- D. Love then compels us to seek after deeper knowledge, which then causes our heart to overflow with real affection and tender emotions. Put more simply – as we get to know someone, we love them, and then that love causes us to want to know more deeply. This is a glorious cycle that is designed to deepen our relationship with the Lord. Yet if at any time we cease in our pursuit of knowledge, the cycle is broken and our affection will wane until ultimately we are stagnant.

IX. GROWING IN FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

- A. If friendship must be based on relational knowledge of who Jesus is as God, what He has done, and what He will do, it may be said that the substance of our friendship and intimacy with Him is the prayerful, adoring study of the person and work of Christ within the context of a life of obedience.
- “If the believer would enter into a better, deeper, fuller knowledge of God he must prayerfully study the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures! Let this be made our chief business, our great delight, to reverently scrutinize and meditate upon the excellencies of our Divine Savior as they are displayed upon the pages of Holy writ. Then, and only then, shall we ‘increase in the knowledge of God’. The ‘light of the knowledge of the glory of God’ is seen only ‘in the face of Jesus Christ.’”⁷*
- B. “Study” is not a dry, academic endeavor but refers rather to the way one studies the beauty of a flower or a breathtaking landscape to drink it in as much as possible. Biblically, “study” is simply described as a life postured in listening/hearing or beholding/gazing, and is often described as the “one needful thing”.
- “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”” (Luke 10:38-42 NKJV)*

⁷ A.W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, p 23-4.

“One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.” (Psalms 27:4 NKJV)

- C. Therefore we must use Scripture as a launching point for savoring and meditating upon the life of Christ, the revelation of His glory and beauty, and His marvelous deeds. As we see from the book of Acts and the letters of the New Testament, Jesus was the preoccupation of the early church. Reflection on His beauty, zeal for His name, and ardent expectation of His return consumes page after page of the New Testament.
- D. The potency in studying His life and His words is not merely found in seeing that Jesus was a perfect human who pointed to the Father. While this is true and it is a biblical idea, this is not the *main* reason why Jesus is the culmination of the revelation of God and why it is critical to know Him. *Jesus is the fullness, height, or summit of the revelation of God because He is God.*
- E. As we look at the wedding of Cana, the cleansing of the temple, the feeding of the five thousand, every encounter with the Pharisees, the compassion of His heart in healing, and ultimately the cross, we must see that it is *God* there, the very LORD Himself, the Creator and Sustainer of all, walking among us and dying the death of a criminal.
- F. When the truth about Christ’s divinity begins to impact our souls, our hearts will erupt with love, devotion, and desire to be a supreme witness of His worth. The deepest recesses of our being will come alive when we begin to gaze upon His glory and search out His depths. For the first time we truly touch the bliss of entering into the purpose for which we created. Most people (and many Christians) spend their entire lives in futility, desperately spilling themselves out upon all the world and the Church has to offer in an attempt to answer the ache within them.

X. CONCLUSION

- A. The God-given antidote to the pandemic of Christlessness in our generation is an ardent, passionate focus on the glory of Christ in our conversation, activity, preaching, and ministry.
- B. May we be ones who persevere through the delusion and coming storm because our house was built on the rock – the rock of the glory of Christ. May we be ones who “count all things as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ”, and put His worth on display to a lost and dying world.