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**B1036 – September 5, 2010 – The Life Of Christ: Modern Gentile Response**

Today we're going to look at the modern Gentiles response to the Life of the King. Matt 12:14 is one example of the ancient Jewish reaction to the King. As I said, you can read the Gospels and you can watch this pattern operate. In the early part of the Gospels the King is presented, He authenticates Himself by miracles, signs and wonders, He teaches with authority and his popularity grows. Then, at the mid-point something critical happens. There's a strong rejection to the King, there's resistance and fury and rage on the part of those who can't stand Him. Finally there's the falling off of His ministry that leads to the King's crucifixion.

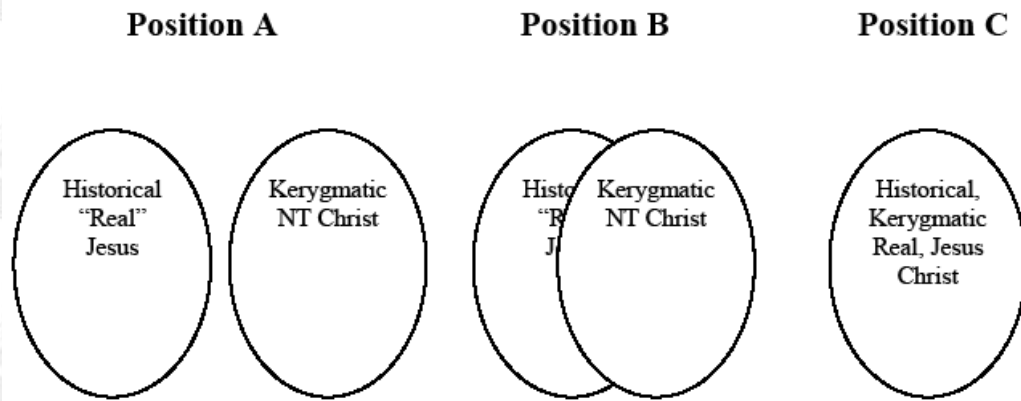
Matt 12 is the mid-point of His ministry when that stiff rejection occurs. The leadership of Jewish society rejects the person of Jesus Christ. From this point on it's just a matter of time before He's crucified. Note in verse 14, "But the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him," - so it wasn't just one or two people, it was a group effort of the leadership; they "counseled together against Him as to how they might destroy Him." That is the Jewish response to the King. Because we're so used to preaching the Gospel and saying Jesus was crucified and we're saved through His crucifixion, maybe sometimes we don't give adequate attention to what led to the crucifixion. Yes, the cross is wonderful, we'll see it next hour, but the cross grew out of hatred, and it's hatred for God, it's hatred for revelation, it's hatred directed against the highest and clearest revelation that has ever occurred in human history. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. And the purer and the clearer the revelation, the more violent the reaction will be against it. So Jesus Christ is clearer than Abraham, Moses, David or any other leader God sent because He was perfect. He had no sin and the righteousness of God was shown with

perfect clarity. Therefore the sinful response to that clarity showed up very violently.

We want to move to the modern unbelieving response that follows this same ancient response. Unbelief has a pattern to it in that no matter the century, no matter the people group, unbelief responds the same way to the challenge of the King. I want to examine the long quote by Professor Avrum Stroll because we want to understand in our thinking as Christians the hatred against God and the animosity against any revelation. This quote is thirty or forty years old, but it's still typical of what you would hear in any university classroom today, same story. It's typical of what you read in Time Magazine, every Christmas and every Easter, U.S. News and World Report; it's typical of the History Channel, wherever you go, this is the typical thing you hear today.

We want to go through this little assault on our faith. Part of this class is to become used to the assaults, the attacks against our position and understand them so we can stand against them. I want to see how sharp we are by way of observation. There are at least eight places in this professor's dissertation where he betrays his presuppositional position, where he shows the bias against the word of God. We want to get cued to listening for this, because this isn't just Professor Stroll, this isn't just the academic intellectuals; the men on the street are the same way. It's just that they aren't so articulate. We want to tune into this thing and understand where the attack is coming from. So let's go through this with a fine toothed comb.

"In contemporary philosophical theology one of the most widely debated questions concerns the relation between the historical Jesus, a man supposedly living in Palestine sometime between 9BC and AD 32, and the Jesus described in the Gospel writings..." Right there, I told you last week to watch for this. Position A and B make a split between the historical Jesus, the real thing, and the kerygmatic Christ, the preached Christ in the Gospels; we defined those two terms last week. And Professor Stroll is talking about them. He doesn't say kerygmatic Christ, but he uses the idea. Let's review. The historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ - what do we mean by these two terms. The first one is referring to the real Jesus that walked around Palestine, the historical Jesus. The second term is the kerygmatic, that's the Greek word "the preached" Christ, meaning the NT picture of Jesus.



Three views of the relationship between the “real” historical Jesus and the NT picture of Him (the so-called “kerygmatic Christ). Positions A and B show pagan worldviews whereas Position C shows the Biblical worldview. The same three positions could be extended to the entire canon of Scripture.

Both position A and B make a split between those and position C. Position C is the biblical position; the Historical Christ and the Kerygmatic Christ are the same, real Jesus Christ. The picture of Jesus that we get in the NT is the picture of the true Jesus. We don’t mean that’s how every NT Jew interpreted Jesus, they misinterpreted Jesus, and they thought he was just the son of a carpenter. But that wasn’t true; He was what the NT sketches Him to be, the Son of God. So when we talk about the historic Jesus we mean the kerygmatic Jesus, because the Holy Spirit who wrote the NT reported exactly who the God-man, Jesus Christ was.

Let’s think about something we’ve covered in the past. We said back in the first part of the Bible that the entire human race at one point had the Noachic Bible available, Genesis 1-9. The entire human race had those 9 chapters. Today you go back into ancient history and you read all kinds of myths like Pandora’s Box. This lady opens up the box and all the evil comes out. There’s truth in that Pandora’s Box mythology, isn’t there? What is it? It’s a distorted faint memory of what event of real history? Eve. Achilles and his heel, what’s that a faint remembrance of? What was the promise of the Messiah to Adam and Eve? A seed. He shall bruise His heel but Your seed shall bruise his head. And it’s preserved in the myth of Achilles. It’s twisted, turned, you could read the myth of Achilles and never having read the Bible you could never extract it. Never! But that myth preserves some history and distorts the rest.

So what we said was you could take the Noachic Bible, Genesis 1-9 and you could take any myth, Pandora's Box, Achilles, the *Enuma Elish* text, and if you lay those myths next to the Bible, you put them side by side, what have you got a testimony of? What interesting, profoundly interesting data do you have? You have what the fallen flesh does with truth. The mythologies are case studies of what sin does to the truth. The distortions show you what truths are offensive to the pagan heart and how the pagan intellect reinterprets the truth. Why this is seldom taught, even in Christian schools, I will never know. But Christians should be taught this. You've got a built-in experiment. Every experiment has a control. The Genesis 1-9 text is the control. The myths are what sinful mind generated down through history. Great poets, great stimulating writers, great oral teachers have generated this mythological material. They were smart, skilled people, but what they did in generating the material is show us how sin affects the fallen intellect. What does it do to revelation? It distorts it.

Why is there so much energy in the fleshly mind of man that works itself so hard to keep down and keep suppressing revelation? Paul says that in Romans 1. It is to avoid what? If I can suppress revelation what can I fool myself and self-deceive myself into thinking? I'm no longer accountable to the God of creation. You see there's a powerful subconscious agenda at work here, and the agenda is to get me safe as a sinner so I can go on sinning and feel safe from a righteous God to whom I'm accountable. That's the thing that's going on behind the scenes that generates this chasm between what the Scriptures report and what the mythologies say.

Let's come to the NT and the diagram. This diagram shows the same truth that I just got through saying, except now in place of the Noachic Bible we have the Kerygmatic Christ, and in place of the mythology we have the (quote) "Historical Jesus." People want to split them apart: the historical Jesus in position A, that's the mythology, in this brand there's a total separation; what you read in the NT has no overlaps with the true historical Jesus in their view. What they've done is they've invented a Jesus of history that has no relation to the Jesus of the NT. They're searching for a way of getting around the NT Son of God. If I can reduce him to a harmless Jewish carpenter boy from a two-bit town of Bethlehem what can I do? I can breathe a sigh of relief, whew! But if the historical Jesus really is the kerygmatic

Jesus of the NT, now I've got a problem. He's my judge, besides being a Savior.

So faced with this uncomfortable thought I'm going to invent a historical Jesus that's harmless. That's the agenda that's going on here. See this agenda at work so this doesn't become just an abstract study in what some intellectual says. Sin affects the intellectuals in exactly the same way as the non-intellectuals. It doesn't make any difference whether you're intellectual or not, we're all fallen. And part of our fallen nature is to avoid and want to hide from God. What did Adam and Eve do two seconds after they fell? They tried to hide, hide themselves in the bushes, cover up with fig leaves. We're still doing it, except now instead of using fig leaves we use philosophy, and we use art and we use music, but we're doing the same thing as Adam and Eve did with fig leaves.

Position B is like Professor Stroll where there's some overlap but the waters are so muddy we can never separate out the truth from the myth. So they're trying to spread apart the parts of the NT Christ that are so offensive, so demanding, so challenging from the "real" Jesus, the harmless carpenter boy, Jesus.

Watch how it unfolds from Professor Stroll: "One may, I think, not unfairly summarize the scholarly opinion on this question as follows: Stop there for a moment. What do you observe about that introductory sentence? Look at it carefully. What word sticks out that should tip you off of something here? Watch this, this is done time and time again, and it's done so often that we don't even think about it. It is done repeatedly on television; it's done repeatedly in news articles. This is scholarly opinion. What does it mean if you disagree with him? That you're unscholarly. That your opinion doesn't count. Immediately, in the first sentence, he's defined the scholarly opinion to be the non-Christian position. If a Christian took the opposite opinion by definition he's unscholarly. So you see from the start that he's defining words, he's framing the argument, setting it up with an insulated barrier. In the very way he's stated the sentence he has written conservative Christians off. How often have you heard that one in evolution debates, "well, the experts say"? You always want to pay attention to how the argument is set up. Because the trick for winning arguments is to be the one who sets up the argument, he who sets it up controls the playing field. So right from the start

he's said you can't be a scholar and believe the Christian position. That has filtered out you and me and any Bible-believing person. It doesn't matter if you have a Ph.D. If you believe the inerrancy of the Scriptures you're not a scholar. It's not the degrees you have, it's the content of your position that defines whether you're a scholar or not. Do you see? So watch this; this goes on and on and on. He's saying let me summarize the scholarly opinion, so obviously anything that isn't this isn't scholarly.

Let's go further: "the existence of Jesus is beyond question; but the information we have about him is a composite of fact and legend which cannot be reliably untangled..." At least he said it's opinion, a scholarly opinion, but what I want to draw your attention to is what is the main verb in that clause? The information we have about Him is *probably* a composite? Or, the information about Him *might* be a composite...? No. The information we have about him is... Now what does that communicate? Does that communicate doubt? Is there any question in Professor Stroll or the scholarly opinion that this is in doubt? No, it's absolutely certain. We know that "the information we have about him is a composite of fact and legend which cannot be reliably untangled." Do you see how unbelief builds on itself? First, we exclude any Bible believer from the discussion, next we make the unbelieving position certain knowledge. What does that mean if I disagree? It means I hold something to be true that's not knowledge, it's just myth, so a further caricature of the Christian position is painted.

Further: "These passages from Josephus (Antiquities, VIII. 3; XX.9) and the passage from Tacitus contain the only information we have about the existence of Christ from non-Christian sources in the first century." Hold it right there. When we went through the virgin birth claim, what did we say about the Jewish rejection? Jews today say the Church invented the virgin birth in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. But that that is categorically false is clear from what Jewish writings? The Mishnah and the Talmud. Remember the quotes we read from Jewish scholars who studied these Jewish writings. "Joseph Klausner, a Jewish scholar, writes of this Mishnaic section: 'That Jesus is here referred to seems to be beyond all doubt.' Klausner notes that throughout the Jewish Talmud, including its Mishnaic section, Jesus is known as 'Yeshu ben Pandera' (Jesus son of Pandera), a title which may refer to Mary's allegedly paramour or to the virgin-birth claim itself (virgin in

Greek is *parthenos*). Another Talmudic scholar, Herbert Danby, summarizes the entire Talmudic reference to the virgin birth claim.”

Now go back to Stroll’s argument and look at his statement. He quotes Josephus and Tacitus, and he says, it “contains the only information we have about the existence of Christ.” So is professor Stroll’s factually correct? No, he’s got a factual error that is a false statement; that is not true that Josephus and Tacitus are the only information that we have about Jesus from non-Christian forces. But put yourself in the shoes of a college kid. You’ve just graduated high school and you’re still wet behind the ears. You go into this college classroom and the eminent Dr. Stroll is your professor. Here’s a guy with his doctorate, who has years of experience under his belt, who has read the scholarly journals, and when he speaks it’s golden, he can say whatever he wants. He’s Mr. Slick and lecture after lecture he feeds it to you. 98% of the time the kids have never been thought to think critically, they’ve been force fed the dogma of secularism, never been trained what to look for, what to listen for, like what we’ve done on Wednesday nights with Geology. So they walk out, hmmm, I don’t know whether I really believe the Bible any more. Dr. So and So said and he has a PhD. Then here we go; shipwrecks of the faith all over the place. It’s particularly disastrous when a kid goes off to a Christian college and he hears the same liberal stuff at twice the cost of a secular college.

So we’ve seen three things so far; 1) a framing of the argument to exclude any Christian view, 2) a statement of certainty, we know this, and 3) an outright factual error. Let’s read further. “It is clear that neither writer could have been an eyewitness to the events he describes....” I’m not so sure Josephus couldn’t have, maybe he was too young. “The Gospels, of course, purport to contain descriptions of the life and activities of Christ, from the time of his nativity, through his baptism, crucifixion and resurrection. Until the attention of historical scholarship was directed to these documents early in the nineteenth century, it was commonly assumed that they contained eyewitness supports of the events described....” Here’s a fourth thing. What slick one has he just pulled right there? There’s a lot folded into that statement, let me unpack it. “Until the attention of historical scholarship,” that’s an interesting statement, underline it. Apparently there were no scholars before the 19<sup>th</sup> century! Athanasius wasn’t a scholar, he basically fought off all attempts to reduce Jesus to something less than the Creator,

wrote all the arguments that still have force today. John Calvin wasn't a scholar, he was only 21 when he wrote *The Institution of the Christian Religion* that form the heart of Protestant religion into our own day, but he's not a scholar. Excuse me! "...until the attention of historical scholarship was directed to these documents," let me explain what he's really meaning by that term "historical scholarship." Dr. Stroll is talking about higher criticism. This is a term we ought to know, "higher criticism." We also ought to know of something else called "lower criticism." Let's define those two terms.

Lower criticism is dealing with the manuscript evidence. We have variant readings in the manuscripts and so if you get into the original text you have an apparatus that points out, manuscript P51 reads this way, uncials x, y, z read this way, etc.... The biggest example of lower criticism is the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark, there are four different endings to Mark. That's a question for lower criticism to resolve. Which ending is the original? And there are presuppositions involved in deciding those questions. The argument between King James only'ism vs every other Bible is a lower criticism issue.

Higher criticism seeks to understand who was the author of the biblical material, when was it put together, how was it put together. In other words, here we're trying to explain the Bible in terms of humanism, as a humanistic creation of man. So the uniqueness of the Scripture, in spite of its own self-claim that it is the revelation of God, that it's an inspired text, is tossed aside, and the Scripture is arbitrarily at step one in the discussion classified as a piece of humanly generated literature. Now, given that fact how did it happen? That's where we get stuff like Moses couldn't have written the Pentateuch, J, E, D and P did. John couldn't have written the Gospel. We don't know who wrote it but we know that of the millions of people that lived then John the apostle certainly could not have written the Gospel of John. We aren't certain about history, but we are certain of x, you fill in the blank. That's the agenda that started floating around in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and that's what Dr. Stroll means by "historical scholarship." Now that historical scholarship has come we know these things, nobody thought before the historical critics came. What he means is when humanism and secularism took control of Biblical studies, then the opinion changed about the eyewitness business. Put yourself in the position of a naïve college student, first time out, he reads "until the attention of historical scholarship," and gee,



there wasn't any historical scholarship before the 19<sup>th</sup> century and you know, gee, when real scholars got together in the 19<sup>th</sup> century then they searched this out. So I guess we have to go along with scholars because everybody until them was sort of primitive, they believed myths and legends. Now we have come of age and we know there were no eyewitnesses. Totally oblivious to the fact that the agenda of unbelief is at work... the agenda is manifesting itself intellectually. The presupposition is that there is not a Creator that reveals Himself in human language to man, and if that's so, then the documents which are in human language can't be from God, right? The logic follows. But the logic only follows if you agree to the starting point, and the starting point is that there's not a God who speaks. Given that premise, then yeah, go ahead, rip the Bible to shreds, it's just a human document.

Be alert to the presuppositional baggage that's being imported. We have to train ourselves to remember what Paul said in Col 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception." The young student faced with this kind of stuff for the first time is not usually prepared to take it, so his faith gets destroyed. Every time a sentence is made like this and the Christian is there without a critical filter operating in his mind, his mind just sort of sucks it up. He gets enamored by this façade of intellectualism. This is the professor, they know what they're saying, and then boom, and all this explodes inside their hearts and tears up their faith, because they didn't have the Biblical tools to filter.

Let's continue with Professor Stroll, "It is extremely unlikely that the writers of the documents we now possess would have been eye witnesses to the activities of Jesus..." How does he qualify the certainty in that sentence? He puts a strong adverb in there, "extremely unlikely," not just unlikely, but it's "extremely unlikely." We would like to ask Dr. Stroll why do you say it's extremely unlikely? What's your data behind that analysis? Where'd you get that data from, "extremely unlikely?" That's number five, we're counting the number of problems in his paper. The only thing that he can use to justify "extremely unlikely" is his philosophic presuppositions, but to state his philosophic presuppositions over and over is just stating it over and over. It's not proving anything, it's just stating something, it's just a statement of his worldview, and we can do that, anybody can do that.

Let's look at the next sentence: "Even if there were reason to believe some of the material to express eye witness accounts of Jesus' life, the accretion of legend, the description of miracles performed by Jesus, which exist in these writings [sic] make it difficult, if not impossible, to extract from them any reliable historical testimony about the events described...." Let's look first at the sentence that begins "Even if there were reason to believe," does anyone smell a rat in that one? "Even if there were reason to believe," just think about that one. After you prove to me that God's word is true then I'll decide whether I believe it or not. Isn't that what you hear all the time? You've got to prove the Bible to me. Excuse me? But if I were to prove the Bible to you, what have I then done? I've undermined the self-authenticating word of God, I've said it's not implicitly true, but the proofs I use from outside the Bible are implicitly true, so true I can use them as a measure of truth. And if they're that powerful then I ought to worship the proofs, they're ultimate, not God's word, man's proofs. When Jesus said something He didn't quote someone else. People said, hey, He speaks with authority, remember we said His word was self-authenticating. That's the kind of thing going on in that statement.

What event in the OT did we link to the doctrine of revelation, inspiration? Mount Sinai. Here's where this framework will help you start circulating. Imagine yourself in your mind's eye at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses is up on the mountain, smoke and fire all over the place, and all of a sudden you hear these Hebrew words come rolling down this vast valley with over a million other people sitting there. And you hear the very words of God in the Hebrew language. "I am the God who brought you out of Egypt." Put yourself in the valley and think how ridiculous it looks to say hey God, can You give me some reasons to believe You're talking? How stupid and arrogant that looks, and nobody who heard God talking would have said that. Even the non-Christians would have fallen over when God spoke, because implicitly in our hearts, the way God created us, we know our Maker's voice. There's no discussion, there's no need for a reason.

So this statement, "even if there were reason to believe," is just another revealing of his presuppositional orientation to the word of God, that man is the final criteria and that man must judge whether God could do this or that. We put God under our microscope, when in matter of fact God is the one

who's existence is the presupposition of proving anything, because were He not existing we wouldn't have any ability to prove anything.

Let's continue. I'm sure that in the next part of that statement you spotted one of the most obvious portions of his statement, "the description of miracles performed by Jesus ... make it difficult, if not impossible, to extract from them any reliable historical testimony about the events described." What does that flagrantly show? His anti-supernaturalism. The guy doesn't accept miracles. Why can't we believe in miracles? The answer usually is this: You can't believe in miracles because they're disruptions of natural law and if we allow disruptions to natural law then we can't have certainty of knowledge because now you've got loose marbles in there and that destroys my knowledge. That's the argument you always get into. So what's our answer? Is knowledge somehow destroyed by miracles? Who stands behind the miracle that disrupts so-called natural law? God. Is He arbitrary? Is He capricious? Or is He an immutable God who is faithful to His word? He's immutable and faithful. He's not going to lie; Hebrews says God cannot lie. His character is stable and His characteristics are defined each in terms of the other. So when He does a miracle it's coming out of His character. So a miracle doesn't destroy the certainty of knowledge because the certainty of knowledge is His omniscience, not man's noodle. The certainty of knowledge was never located down here, it's located up there. So miracles are only a threat to knowledge if you've made man the source of the certainty. Yes, miracles do threaten that kind of knowledge. A miracle indeed is scary to one who has built this false edifice upon which to erect his knowledge. So Stroll is scared by this.

Finally, "It seems to me likely that during this [NT] period a prophet arose....; but an accretion of the legends grew up about this figure, was incorporated into the Gospels by various devotees of the movement, was rapidly spread throughout the Mediterranean world by the ministry of St. Paul," it's nice that he recognizes he was a saint, "and that because this is so, it is impossible to separate these legendary elements in the purported descriptions of Jesus from those which in fact were true of Him." What do you notice about that right from the start, item number eight in our critique? The first subject and verb, "It seems to me likely," well that's fine, but that's autobiographical. I may or may not be interested in what seems to be likely to you Dr. Stroll. All he's doing in that last sentence is simply reiterating what he

said seven times before, I am an unbeliever, I have located certainty in the human intellect, miracles are a threat to my worldview, and that's why I can't stand miracles, and that's why I cannot allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves. But they must be under the control and suppression of the human intellect through scholarship that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under higher criticism. So all we have heard in this lecture from start to finish is an articulation of the statement, I don't believe the Christian world view.

When we started this series I said watch for a tactic, and we have to learn to use it ourselves - what I call the tactic of strategic envelopment. By that I mean you take an event, like the coming of the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ in history, and you pack all those facts about Jesus Christ, the claim of His virgin birth, the claim of His life, His sermon material, reaction of people to Him, that whole package that we call the NT, and you envelop that package in your worldview. That's what Dr. Stroll has done. He's taken the NT and enveloped it in his worldview and explained it away.

But this is a two-edged sword. We can envelop it in the worldview of the Scriptures themselves. We allow the OT Scriptures to set us up for the NT Scriptures. And we take our position in the worldview that there's a Creator and He made man in His own image; that has all kinds of implications. We understand there was a historic Fall with all kinds of intellectual implications to that. And we understand that the God of creation spoke publicly in history from Mt Sinai, in the Hebrew language such that if you had an audio recorder you could have recorded His voice. Accepting all those things, does God have a problem revealing Himself in human language? Does God have a problem incarnating Himself in a true human being in hypostasis? Can He speak and I understand the words that come out of His mouth? I don't have a problem with that - if I start with OT categories. And if He wants to turn water into wine, can He do that? I don't have a problem with that. That doesn't mean all water is going to turn into wine. Most water remains water. Some water didn't because God had a plan for that water. So where do I put my trust? Do I put it in the molecular structure of H<sub>2</sub>O? No, I put it in the immutable character of God.

Let's go back to our diagram. It shows two forms of pagan thinking in contrast with Biblical thinking on Jesus. The most extreme critics hold to position 'A' in which the kerygmatic Christ has no connection whatsoever

with the historic Jesus.” “In their world view, man experiences religious emotions and responds in his imagination by generating religious images.” That’s their explanation for the origin of the NT Jesus. The apostles had religious experiences so they wrote about it. Shirley MacLaine had religious experiences and she wrote about it, any number of people had religious experiences and they wrote about it. So there’s no difference in the Gospel of John and what Shirley MacLaine wrote, because it’s all coming out of the human imagination.

What I’m trying to say is you can endlessly try to defend this little point of the Bible and that little point of the Bible, and you’ll be sitting there a thousand proofs later still defending if you don’t come to grips with the fact that the basic issue is a denial of the Creator, a denial that man is made in His image and a denial that God reveals Himself in human language. That’s the issue, not some obscure little detail somewhere. In paganism “No communication exists between a Creator and a creature because at bottom all is one impersonal cosmos, a grand Continuity of Being. NT writers, in this view merely wrote down their portrait of Christ out of their religious experience. Christ, in this view, is like a chameleon that takes on the qualities of the observer’s theology.” A chameleon blends into the environment, so there can be 501 different Jesus’, all of whom reflect the imagination of the individual. That’s why you have to have a creed that defines who Jesus is. If you don’t people say, “I believe in Jesus.” But then you have to ask, “Who’s this Jesus?” Tell me about this Jesus, is this Jesus the Jesus of the NT Scripture, or is this the Jesus of your religious experience? Always hone in, which Jesus?

Turn to John 12. We’re trying to get at the bottom of all the historical criticism against Jesus, and I’ve said several times that the problem is this agenda of trying to make the world safe for sinners. We do that by cutting off revelation from a holy righteous God. In John 12:37 we have the Apostle John’s description, given by the Holy Spirit, of what we’ve been talking about with Dr. Stroll, same thing. So watch, vv 37-41. “But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.” Look at that. Was Jesus’ revelation insufficient? Did He do a poor job? Something failed here. Here’s the God-man in hypostasis performing many signs and they didn’t believe in Him. If He lived today people would say, Jesus, you’ve got to change your approach here. The Bible says no-no, Jesus

doesn't have to change His approach; His approach did exactly what it was supposed to do. Watch the next verse. Verse 38, "that the word," purpose clause, why weren't they believing in Him, "that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled which he spoke, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" <sup>39</sup>"For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, <sup>40</sup>He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them. <sup>41</sup>These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him."

Remember Isaiah, the time of the Kingdoms in Decline. The prophet came and prosecuted the nation for their failure to believe the word of God. And part of the judgment that Isaiah announced was that the more of the word of God that you guys hear and reject, the harder your hearts become. Ironically preaching the gospel doesn't just soften hearts; preaching the gospel itself can harden hearts. The word of God is a double, not single-edged, sword. We quote the verse, the word of God does not return void and we like to think that means the gospel is going to go out and people are going to believe. Yes, they will, but the other side of that verse is that it will also be rejected. The word of God accomplishes both actions. When the word of God goes forth it always accomplishes one of these two things; it hardens hearts or it softens hearts.

So the revelation through the person of Jesus Christ did not fail, it did accomplish the purpose. The purpose clause in verse 38 is "that the word of Isaiah might be fulfilled." It was doing work, just not the work that people would like to have seen done. Modern critics have responded in similar fashion. Having rejected from the outset the possibility of a verbally revealing God no place is left for the Jesus depicted in the NT. The NT Jesus is quickly reduced to the imaginations of Jesus' followers based on their religious experience. Look at this quote coming up, this is a ripper. This is by Paul Tillich, who was probably one of America's most famous theologians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tillich was neo-orthodox. After WWII you had the rise of neo-orthodox theology, not orthodox, neo-orthodox meaning existential, meaning it's my experience that verifies what is true for me and it's your experience that verifies what is true for you. Watch this quote because he lets it all hang out here. If you've doubted what I said this morning, that this is going on, listen to Tillich, "There are no revealed doctrines, but there are revelatory

events and situations which can be described in doctrinal terms.... The ‘Word of God’ contains neither revealed commandments nor revealed doctrines.” Look at that sentence twice. “The ‘Word of God’ contains neither revealed commandments nor revealed doctrines.” Does that explain what’s happened in these churches you go into today and they don’t preach the gospel. Do you know why? Because the people in the pulpits have been trained under guys like Tillich. So they don’t even believe God is talking in the Bible. The Bible is a compilation of stories of men who had religious experiences, Shirley MacLaine stuff.

Conclusion, here’s what happens. We had a similar diagram back when we studied the virgin birth and when we studied geology. We said you come to the data with a worldview and the worldview tells you how to interpret the data. Here the data is this claim of revelation. The pagan world view looks at Jesus Christ, the highest, clearest, purest revelation of God and denies Him because their worldview doesn’t have a place for Him. They run off into a search for the historical Jesus. Or you come with a Biblical worldview, where you’ve submitted yourself to the Scripture, you accept the OT categories so you’re prepared for the NT revelation, then you look at Jesus Christ. He’s clear revelation, He’s pure and you accept Him as the NT Scriptures depict.

Next week we’re going to begin three doctrines, the doctrine of kenosis, the doctrine of impeccability, and the doctrine of infallibility. Those are the doctrines associated with the Life of the King, just like the doctrine of the hypostatic union was associated with the Birth of the King, now we’re going to look at the doctrinal fallout, kenosis. It comes from Phil 2:5 and we’re going to talk about that and I think we’ll see some pretty amazing things that should be encouraging to us in the Christian life.

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