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## ACCEPTING THE EVIDENCE

There are people today who watched the TV pictures of the astronauts stepping on the moon and they refuse to believe that anyone has ever been to the moon. They think that it is all a hoax. They see the pictures of the earth taken from the moon and think that it is a trick. They refuse to accept the evidence that man has been to the moon. Others still believe that the earth is flat and refuse to accept the evidence to the contrary. We sort of chuckle and pass these folks off as being a bit eccentric because it really doesn't hurt anyone (including themselves) what they believe in these two areas. Just a little over a hundred years, many physicians refused to accept the facts of the germ theory of disease. They did not make use of antiseptics and they did not practice good hygiene in hospitals and as a consequence of this, many people died needlessly. This is a case where we fail to see the humor in the normal human tendency of people to not want to change what they believe even when there is adequate evidence to the contrary.

An even more serious situation exists when people refuse to accept the evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is God's Messiah and only provision for salvation and eternal life. Most of the people in the world today fit into that category. Jesus ran into this attitude among the Jews of His day. After He had healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day the Jews began persecuting Him for working on the Sabbath. Here was evidence that someone with great power was among the people and they chose to look the other direction and ignore the evidence. In answer to their criticism of His healing on the Sabbath, He said, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." They understood what He meant and that caused them to intensify their efforts to eliminate Him because, not only did He break their sabbath rules, but He also made Himself equal to God by saying that God is His Father.

In the fifth chapter of John's Gospel, we find Jesus' reply to what he knew was in their hearts. He challenged them to consider how they would know when the Messiah, the Son of God had come. Starting in the 19th verse, He gives them the criteria: The true Son will be just like the Father in His actions. What the Father knows, the Son will know. The authority and power of the Father will be evidenced in the Son. Even the responsibility for judgment will be given to the Son. He then proceeded to apply these criteria to Himself.

**JOHN 5:30-32** Before Jesus was saying, "The **Son** can do nothing of Himself." Now He says, "I can do nothing of Myself." Before He was saying, "The **Son** does the will of the Father." Now He is saying, "I do the will of the Father." He is in effect telling them, "I am the Son of God. I don't expect you to believe it just because I say it, but look at the evidence and the other witnesses."

The other witnesses and evidence that Jesus cited are John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, God the Father, the Scriptures and Moses.

**JOHN 5:33-35** (John the Baptist) The Jewish leaders had sent a delegation to John to determine just exactly who he was. They heard the testimony that John gave that he was preparing the way for the Messiah. If they had been there (and some of them likely were) they would have heard John declare: "Behold, the Lamb of God." Jesus brought this point up, not that He needed the endorsement of human beings, but that John was a believable human source of information that even they could recognize as speaking the truth. However, they refused to believe what John said about Jesus.

**JOHN 5:36** (The Works of Jesus) If you want to ignore what John the Baptist said, then

just look at what has been done in the miracles, the healings, the teachings, dead being raised to life, the blind being made to see, demons being cast out. These things are what God wants done. Even they could recognize that and yet they refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

**JOHN 5:37-38** (God the Father) Jesus is likely referring to the words that were spoken from heaven at the baptism of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son; with Him I am well pleased." He could also have been referring to the Scriptures by which God has spoken to us in the message that the Old Testament brings. However, the Jews had not been able to assimilate that message into themselves as a part of their very being. In other words, the word of God did not reside in them. They would read it; however, it did not make a lot of difference in their lives.

**JOHN 5:39-40** (The Scriptures) The Jewish leaders would study the Scriptures looking to unravel the mysteries that were there. If they had been looking with an open mind they would have recognized that these very writings supported Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. Was it that they could not understand? No, Jesus said that they **refused** to come to Him. It was a matter of the will, a conscious decision.

**JOHN 5:41-44** There are people in this world that thrive on praise from other people. Jesus was not like that. He said, I don't need and will not even listen to it.

Why? Because He was concerned about pleasing the Father. This was not His TOP priority, it was His ONLY priority. These Jewish leaders were so caught up in trying to impress each other and have some one "stroke" them that they forgot about what God wanted and worked only to get praise from somebody else. Jesus saw this misdirection of priority as the root cause of their being unwilling to believe the evidence that was plainly before them. This is not just a problem that existed 2000 years ago, it is real and present today.

**JOHN 5:45-47** (Moses) The Jews started out persecuting Jesus which gave Him the opportunity to tell them in clear terms about the evidence and testimony that was available to them if they were really looking for the truth. Moses was held in high esteem by the Jews and they claimed that they believed Moses. But Jesus challenged that claim in that if they really did believe Moses then they would believe what Jesus said since Moses writing foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah. His concluding remark was that if you do not believe Moses, who had been venerated for centuries, then how can you be expected to believe what Jesus says. The problem of people ignoring the evidence about Jesus has not gone away. However, there are people who need to be confronted with their stand. The consequences of being wrong is too costly to ignore His claims on our lives.