

## **“HONORING CHRIST”**

Jesus Christ is certainly worthy of great honor. He is the creator of the universe, the only begotten Son of God, and the Bible declares Him to be the King over all Kings and Lord of all. We honor men of great stature, men who are given great authority and men who accomplish great things. But the one truly deserving of honor is the Lord Jesus.

**Romans 14:11 “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”**

Imagine that sight! One day, every knee will bow before Him! Now, let’s look at a passage in **John 5**. The Jewish leaders already had a very strong hatred for Jesus, and this encounter between them and Jesus is recorded, beginning in verse 18:

**John 5:18-23 “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”**

Now, Jesus here establishes three things. First, that all men should honor the Son as much as they honor the Father because Jesus claimed equality with God. Second, if a person refuses to honor Jesus as such, then he also refuses to honor the Father, because Jesus is the only approach to the Father. If a person rejects the Son, he also rejects the Father.

**John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”**

Thirdly, the way that a person honors God the Father is by honoring His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But, how do we honor Jesus? Let’s look at what the Bible teaches about how we honor Christ.

How do you honor a great person? Well, there a lot of ways that we ascribe honor to notable and honorable individuals. We might speak or write about them in history books. We might erect a granite memorial that will last for centuries and testify to that person’s significance and document their achievements. We might establish a holiday and dedicate that day to that person’s memory, noting their contribution to society. But how do we honor the Lord Jesus? Do we do it by building monuments or memorials? Do we honor Him by, perhaps, taking a day of the year and setting aside that day to

remember and think about Him? Do we honor Him by merely saying great things about Him? Remember what Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees:

**Matthew 15:8 “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”**

You see, we not only honor Jesus by what we say, but more importantly, what our hearts lead us to do.

**Luke 6:46 “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”**

So, how do we truly honor the Lord Jesus Christ? If I believe that Jesus is who he claims to be, shouldn't I want to honor Him? Isn't He worthy of all honor? Certainly, and I believe that the Word of God shows us several ways in which we honor Christ. The Bible not only tells us that we are to honor Christ, but it tells us how to honor Him. Thus, when we honor Him, we honor God the Father.

I. We bring great honor to the name of Jesus Christ when we make the good confession.

Paul spoke of that confession in **I Timothy 6:12-13**:

**“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;”**

What is this “*good confession*” that Paul says Timothy made, and that Jesus made before Pontius Pilate? You recall that when Jesus was tried and put to death, He spent all night being accused and questioned. Most of the night, Jesus was pretty well silent. Once in a while, He would answer a question that was framed in a certain way, but, presumably about daybreak, the high priest, exasperated, asked Jesus why He wouldn't answer.

**Matthew 26:62-64 “And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said...”**

Jesus was stating the truth of the ages in those few words. He was taking the whole of human history-- from the dawn of creation to the end of time on earth—and He was summing it up in this one great declaration: that He was the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Paul later calls that the “*good confession*.” Today, we give great honor to Jesus Christ when we, unreservedly and unashamedly, make that good confession to an unbelieving world: that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Think about what that means, to tell somebody that Jesus is the Christ. When we make that confession, we're not saying that Jesus was merely a good man, or a gifted teacher, or a powerful prophet. In making that confession, we're saying that Jesus is the only way to God and to eternal life. Now, there

are many people who will confess that Jesus was a wonderful man. They will confess that He lived and that He said some important things and taught some wonderful lessons. They will agree that He went around doing some good deeds. But that's not the same as confessing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When one made that confession during the first century, he was putting his own life at risk, because those words had, and still have today, incredible implications.

Consider this pivotal moment between Jesus and His disciples.

**Matthew 16: 13-16** "When Jesus came unto the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter never made a more profound statement. That was a confession that Peter would, one day, die for, and so would many others. Now, the scriptures teach that anybody who would truly believe in Jesus and follow Him and be saved, must make that same great confession. You see, we give high honor to Jesus when we are willing to make it, understanding what we are saying and consenting to the truth that it represents.

**Matthew 10:32-33** "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Have you ever noticed the verses that follow?

**Matthew 10:34** "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

In other words, confessing Jesus as the Christ, saying to an unbelieving and skeptical world that you believe Jesus is everything He claimed to be, is not going to make you the world's friend. It will have a polarizing effect. In fact, it will make you the world's enemy. I'm telling you today that if you say what you believe about Jesus to very many people, you're going to find out how unpopular that it really is. Some people will tolerate just enough about Jesus, but they don't tolerate the fact that He IS the Son of God, the only way to heaven, the giver and arbitrator of divine truth, the judge of the world. But, friend, we cannot ascribe any greater honor to Jesus with our lips and we can't utter a stronger condemnation of a sinful world than to say what Peter said, what Jesus Himself said, and what the Ethiopian nobleman said in **Acts 8:37**:

**"And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."**

Have you honored Christ by making the good confession? That confession must be made before you can be baptized into Christ and receive pardon from your sins. Let's read a little more about the salvation of that Ethiopian nobleman:

**Acts 8: 36-38 “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”**

He was willing to make the great confession and thus surrender his life in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, on the other side of that, we dishonor Jesus when we are not willing to make that confession before others. We dishonor Christ when we're too ashamed to confess that He is who the Bible says He is, when we're too ashamed to speak to others about Him or to speak about Him before others. Jesus said that if we deny *Him* before men, He will deny *us* before the Father (**Matthew 10:33**). Are you willing to honor Jesus by making the good confession before others, or are you ashamed or embarrassed by Him and what He represents and teaches? I want to remind you that all of us will one day be made to confess Christ's name in the final day. There will be no debate, no room for question or doubt. And even the most hardened unbeliever—think on it!—will tremble and bow before Him, and on bended knee with stammering lips, confess that He was the Christ.

## II. We honor Christ by water baptism.

I am always amazed at the resistance of people who claim to believe in Jesus, but deny the plain and simple teaching of Jesus about baptism. Think about it: there are millions and millions of people who claim to honor Christ, but they deny what He said about baptism. Now, they may not deny the act of baptism, necessarily. Why, they may even practice baptism. But they deny what Jesus said about the role of baptism, even though what Jesus said about it really could not be more simple and emphatic.

**Mark 16:15-16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”**

**John 3:5 “...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”**

Notice there that Jesus placed baptism *outside*—not inside—the door of the kingdom. Jesus showed its importance by being baptized Himself at the very outset of His ministry. He did so to fulfill all righteousness (**Matthew 3:14-15**). He later commanded *all men*, including you and me, to be baptized, and He made it a wonderful participation in His own death, burial and resurrection.

**Romans 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

He didn't say that we are baptized because we're already in Christ. He said we are baptized *into Jesus Christ*. How? By being baptized into His death. So, I imitate and thus participate in the three greatest events in history when I submit in baptism. Now, why do people reject that? Why do they argue with, diminish and dilute that? That sacred transaction is just that. It is not merely some church ordinance that you can take or leave. It is a sacred transaction and a tremendous act of faith in and honor toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. We honor Christ by wearing His name.

Not long ago, on this program, we studied about the origin and the sacredness of the name "Christian." That name first appeared in **Acts 11:26**:

**"...And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."**

Christian simply means "followers of Christ." It is a wonderful and worthy name, and it is a scriptural name. There are a lot of names today that, first of all, you don't read anything about in the Bible, and secondly, they don't bring honor to the Lord Jesus. They might bring honor to a man. They might bring honor to a particular doctrine or ideas of men. But they don't bring honor to the Lord Jesus. Think about the name that you and your church wear. When someone asks you, "What are you? What do you believe," what do you tell them? With all due respect, you don't read about Methodists or Presbyterians or Episcopalians, Baptists or Pentecostals, Lutherans or Catholics in the word of God. What you DO read is that the church was built by Christ:

**Matthew 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."**

Not built by Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, John Smith, Alexander Campbell or anybody else. It belongs to Christ. It was purchased by His own blood:

**Acts 20:28 "...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."**

It doesn't belong to the pope or some kind of council, president or superintendant. You also read that it was called by His name:

**Romans 16:16 "...The churches of Christ salute you."**

You see, we honor the Lord Jesus Christ when we wear His name. The church is not a denomination, and there is no room for denominating in the church that you read about in the New Testament. It is simply HIS church. Paul uses a beautiful metaphor in **Ephesians 5:23-27** when he tells us that the church is "His bride." Just as a bride honors her husband in the taking of his name as her own, the Christian and the church of which he is a part, cannot honor Christ in any greater way than to wear His precious and holy name.

#### IV. We honor Christ by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

I mentioned earlier that one of the ways we honor great men and historic deeds is by building monuments or memorials to them. Those monuments stand as a testimony to the accomplishments and the significance of that great person. Now, the Lord never told us to build a statue of Him or to erect some kind of monument to Him, or to even display a cross for others to see as a memorial to Him. In fact, Jesus built His own memorial before He was crucified. On the eve of His death, He gathered His small band of disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem, and with three simple things, He established a perpetual memorial that remains to this day. There was nothing grand or ornate by the world's standards about this memorial. It was a simple act involving three simple things that Jesus said would stand as a memorial to Him as long as time would last. And nearly 2,000 years after He did that, did you know that there are still disciples who will gather this very Lord's Day and do exactly what Jesus did that night, in the exact same way that Jesus did it? According to **Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and I Corinthians 11**, Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread. He gave thanks for it and He shared it with His disciples, saying that it was to them to be His body. They were to eat it in remembrance of Him. He then took a cup of fruit of the vine, He blessed it, He drank out of it and handed it to the disciples and they were to drink from it, reflecting together upon the new covenant and His precious blood that sealed that new covenant. They were to come together and thus remember His death until one day when He comes again. Now, friend, when a congregation of God's people comes together and shares the bread and the cup of the Lord, we are honoring the Lord Jesus. The Bible tells us that the early church did that upon the first day of the week:

**Acts 20:7 "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..."**

We are told that they did it stedfastly and often:

**Acts 2:42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."**

**I Corinthians 11:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."**

But, have you stopped to realize that multitudes of churches will gather this Lord's Day, and not even observe the Lord's Supper? My friend, the Lord's Day is a very special day. Every Lord's Day is a special day. It is the day upon which the church was taught, by example, to come together and honor Christ and His sacrifice in sharing His supper. And the early church did that every Sunday for at least two centuries after Jesus established it. Yet, through all of the changes of time, many will not honor Him today in the eating of that simple and divinely appointed supper. Will you be honoring Christ on this Lord's Day by faithfully and scripturally partaking of the Lord's Supper?

#### V. We honor Christ by following His teaching.

By following His pattern and obeying Him, by doing things in the way that He wanted them done, we honor Christ. We've just talked about the Lord's Supper. The apostle Paul called it "The Lord's Supper," and there's a great implication in that. It's not your supper or my supper, but it is HIS supper. Jesus said that we are to do what He did as we partake of it.

Think about it this way: what if you were to prepare a meal for me and graciously invite me to your home to share in that meal. Suppose I came to your home and sat down at your table and I began to be critical, and to rearrange the table that you had set. What if I were to say, "Is this all? Shouldn't you have had something more or something different?" Or what if I said, "I don't like the way you've set your table. I don't like the dishes that you've used. Surely you don't expect me to eat or drink from that?!" I suspect you would feel very insulted, not honored. I've been in many homes in my years of preaching the gospel. I have eaten countless meals at tables set by people, some who were rather wealthy and many, on the other hand, who were relatively poor. I've been invited into homes as an honored guest and I have eaten from fine, expensive china, and I've eaten from paper plates in homes where that was about all they had. You know, I would never think of telling someone that I didn't like the way they set their table, or that it wasn't good enough, or that I wanted a better meal. I would never dishonor my host in that way.

Jesus, by His grace and mercy, has invited us to sit at HIS table. There is nothing fancy or elaborate about it. In fact, judging by many people's response today, had they been invited to Jesus' supper in that upper room so long ago, they might've recoiled and reacted with disgust and disdain! But, oh, it is a precious, precious gift to be invited to the lowly supper of the lowly King, and I honor Him when I follow His example in that, and in every other act of worship and Christian service. I honor Him when I follow His instruction in submission, and simply do Bible things in Bible ways.

#### VI. We honor Christ by imitating His life.

That really is one of the greatest honors that we can pay to another person, to model ourselves after them. Jesus came and lived among us for that purpose:

**1 Peter 2:21 "...leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps..."**

His daily life, His compassionate deeds, His wonderful words, His pure and holy living, His faithfulness to God—all of those things are worth imitating.

**John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."**

Are you honoring Jesus by the daily life that you're living? Are you striving to live a clean and pure and holy life that honors Christ Jesus by your words and your deeds? If you haven't obeyed the Lord in making the good confession and being baptized for the remission of your sins, I hope you'll do that today, and honor the Lord Jesus with the life that He gave you.

