

**JAMES RAFFERTY**

**2024**

**Q4**

**L13**

**Theology From “Above” or From “Below”**

**Dec. 25**

Lesson 13: Epilogue: Knowing Jesus *and* His Word (Wednesday)

December 21-27

**Wednesday** *December 25*

**Theology From “Above” or From “Below”**

Read John 4:46–54. What problem brought the official to Jesus, and what was the real underlying issue here?

**46** So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

**47** When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

**48** Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

**49** The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

**50** Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

**51** And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

**52** Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

**53** So the father knew that *it was at the same hour, in the which* Jesus said unto him, *Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.*

**54** This *is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judæa into Galilee.*

This man came to Jesus, the Light of the world, but he had made up his mind to believe only if Jesus healed his child. We could say this man's theology was a "theology from below." Theology from below sets rules and standards for God and His Word. Human ideas, as flawed and as limited and as subjective as they are, become the final authority on how people interpret the Word of God. What a dangerous trap to fall into!

Theology "from above," in contrast, responds by faith, with belief in God and His Word first (*John 4:48; John 6:14, 15; 2 Tim. 3:16*). When the Bible is accepted by faith, it becomes its own interpreter. The worldview of Scripture, rather than the philosophy of the age, is the guide to understanding and interpreting Scripture. Human views must be subjected and subservient to the Word of God, and not the other way around.

THERE IS SUCH A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE HERE THAT WE CAN EASILY MISS IT. THE VAST MAJORITY OF PROFESSED CHRISTIANS ERR ON THIS ONE POINT.

We must believe the words of Scripture if we are to believe the words of Jesus (*John 5:46, 47*).

**46** For *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me.*

**47** But *if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?*

“ ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed’ ” (*John 8:31, NKJV*).

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, *If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed;*

**32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

They answered Him, We be Abraham's seed, (BORN BELIEVERS) and were never in bondage to any man (ADDICTIONS LIKE OTHERS): how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

**34** Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

**35** And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

**36** If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

John 1:1, 12–

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**2** The same was in the beginning with God.

**3** All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

**4** In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.

**9** That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

**10** He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

**11** He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

**12** But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

In every command and every promise of the word of God is power, by which the commandment can be realized and the promise fulfilled. He who by faith receives the Word of God receives the very life and character of God.

If we doubt God's Word, His Word cannot abide in us (*John 5:38*).

*AND IF GODS WORD DOES NOT ABIDE IN US WE HAVE NO POWER. THEREFORE GODS WORD CANNOT DO IN US WHAT GODS WORD SAYS THAT IT CAN DO IN US. SO YOU SEE HOW IMPORTANT IT OS TO BELIEVE [LIVE BY] EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.*

*TO REJECT GODS WORD IS TO REJECT GOD, AS JESUS SAID:*

“ ‘He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak’ ” (*John 12:48, 49, NKJV*).

To hear God's Word is more than a passive intake of information. It means also to do God's will. And this is the active response to hearing the Word. “ ‘If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority’ ” (*John 7:17, NKJV*).

And this hearing, and doing, of God's Word is an expression of love for Him. “ ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’ ” (*John 14:23, NKJV*).

**What is the relationship between our love for Jesus and obedience? Why is any kind of “obedience” not based on love in danger of being legalism?**