

Almost There

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John 9:1-18; 24-38

In this account, the blind man has been given sight by Jesus, and at this point he perceives that Jesus is something special and powerful, but he does not yet know that He is Christ.

We live in a world where Jesus Christ is a name found in every corner of civilized society. Truly the earth is full of knowledge about Him and knowledge about His glory, but the earth is not yet full OF **His knowledge and glory** (Isaiah 11:9). In fact, the account of this blind man's experience in coming slowly to a revelation about who Christ was could be said to be much like the history of the discovery of the true person of Jesus Christ by the world.

In the world, lots of people have heard about Jesus Christ. Lots of people have a perception of what or who Jesus Christ is. But like this blind man, there are a lot of misconceptions about Him. People everywhere who tinker with religion come to realize that Jesus is some kind of special character. They come to realize that His influence has spanned the globe. But, like the blind man, many folks do not see clearly who He is.

It is interesting that the majority of folks who don't accurately or clearly see Christ as He is are "religious" people. And, true to form, we see that this has been the case since Jesus set foot upon the earth.

The uniqueness of this biblical account is that we find a bunch of Pharisees questioning a man about Jesus, hearing how he healed the man - a kind of healing (curing blindness) that has never been performed before - and they, possessing all the knowledge that the Old Testament canon could provide about God, His works, the prophecies concerning the Messiah, etc., still totally missed the mark of identifying Jesus as That One.

Apart from all this, however, when we look at the blind man on whom Jesus wrought the miracle, we see that after he had been made to see, he also did not have clarity about who Jesus really was. Our text, in **verse 17**, states that when questioned by the religious elite of the day, he simply stated that Jesus was a prophet. It never dawned on him that it was the Messiah!

What the attitudes and perspective of all the individuals in this event reveals to us is that the most religiously informed people in a society cannot scope out who Jesus is. It also reveals to us that obviously, the least religiously informed (the Pharisees told this man in v. 34 that he was altogether born in sins; which means in the hypocrisy of the Pharisees that this man was for the most part irreligious) among men cannot scope who Jesus is, even if God performs some miracle in their lives. The Pharisees, and the man who was healed of his blindness were almost there in their understanding. We thank God that Christ revealed himself in our text to that formerly blind man, and freed him of his misconceptions.

Bearing in mind the relative blindness of the characters in our bible text, I want us now to examine the human perceptions that abound concerning Jesus the Messiah. Perhaps in doing this, the Holy Spirit will bless all present with a good understanding of where they stand in regard to this most critical examination. So, our question for launching into this message today is: “how do you see Jesus?”

I. Is Jesus Christ Just the Character in the Bible, Religious Conversations and Sermons That You Hear?

- ❖ This is the most common acquaintance that humans have with Jesus Christ
 - This acquaintance with Christ allows people to remain neutral about their personal response to Him
 - This view of Christ is the most prevalent view of the unsaved religiously informed
 - ◆ The Pharisees were the ones in our text who were supposed to have received all the teaching and gained all the education about the hope of Israel...the Messiah. They obviously had their own preconceptions about what someone was supposed to be like who came from God with a message, yet they totally rejected Jesus based on their own presumption about what that was supposed to be.
 - ◆ The parallel today is that our citizens are highly schooled in the gospel history and the players in the gospel account, but to many of them, the Christ of this gospel is simply that bible figure, the person talked about in religious conversations, that person presented in gospel sermons

II. Is Jesus Christ Just the Character Revered In The Minds of People Professing Christianity?

- ❖ Christ viewed in this frame of reference can allow humans to be skeptical about the person, about His role on earth, about His actual existence
 - **Mark 6:1** And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. **2** And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, saying, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.
 - ◆ Note the following about such skepticism:
 - ◆ Those who are skeptical ignore the facts about His power (“From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?”)
 - ◆ Those who are skeptical seek to normalize Christ (“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?”)
 - ◆ Those who are skeptical are then offended at Christ because of the frame that they have put Him in (they discount His power; fabricate a reference point about Him that makes Him just another guy in their eyes, then they are offended at their own creation).

III. Is Jesus Christ Just the One That You Had Claimed to Believe In When You Joined a Church?

- ❖ We want to look at two types of views about Jesus Christ that fit this category:
 - The first we'll call the Jesus Christ of an insincere profession of faith; usually seen when people join a church.
 - ◆ Church membership is important...even critical to service in the life of a Christian.
 - ◆ But for many people, it is a step toward social acceptance, public reputation building, developing a persona of ethics and morals.
 - For these, making a profession of faith in Christ is not only the route for being accepted into church membership, but is the traditional and "good citizen" thing to do.
 - The second type of view of Jesus Christ takes on another aspect. To illustrate it we want to look at the Pharisees of Jesus' day:
 - ◆ The religion of the Pharisees had its Christ; and they believed in this fabricated Christ.
 - He was to be a flamboyant leader who overthrew the existing governments and set up His own government that the Pharisees and other religious figures were to be leaders in.
 - He was to have only a power side; He was not to be humble and submissive to dishonor and degradation;
 - He was not to step outside the context of their interpretation of O.T. scripture that they had fabricated.
- ❖ Because of these variations in people's perspectives and motives related to Jesus Christ, He warned about it in **Matthew 7**.
 - **Mat. 7:21** *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
 - **Mat. 7:22** *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*
 - Notice the restriction on who will enter the kingdom of heaven: "...he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."
 - What would that (doing the will of His Father) be? Based on the verse above:
 - ◆ Obviously it cannot be just doing good works in the name of Christ
 - ◆ Obviously it cannot be just preaching in the name of Christ
 - ◆ Obviously it cannot be just performing miracles in His name
 - God reveals what His will is in His commandments. So, doing the will of God must first of all be the act of doing what He has commanded. So, let's see what the first thing is that He commands people to do:
 - ◆ **Acts 17:29-30** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:
 - Jesus enlarged on that in **Mark 1:15** And saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*
 - ◆ Two things: repent; believe the gospel

- Repent: rethink the view one has of God; rethink, therefore the view one has of Christ
- Believe the gospel: part of the twisted view of unbelievers is to practically consider God to be a liar...God who cannot lie. They do this by not believing that God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him has eternal life...which is exactly what He says that He has done.
- Another part: disbelieving that one needs a Savior

IV. Last, as we look at all the different ways that people view Jesus, we ask: is He a personalized character in your life? What do we mean by that?

- ❖ You have had a personal experience with Christ
- ❖ You have come to the place that you have trusted Him as your personal Savior
- ❖ You have come to the place where you have voluntarily and willingly considered yourself one of His disciples.
- ❖ I have come to understand that being a disciple of Christ is far more than just becoming a born-again believer.
 - That's why Jesus details so many things in the bible that mean being His disciple.
 - There are earmarks of true discipleship.
 - If you are saved, the Holy Spirit points you to those earmarks.
 - ◆ All of them can be classified under one heading: obeying Him in the things He teaches. In other words, becoming His student and follower.
 - ◆ Look at **Matthew 11:29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
 - ◆ Look at **Luke 14:27** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.
 - ◆ **John 8:31** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;