

## Is this the Christ (part 1)

HN/SS 27 /02/05 am

Reading: John 7:25-52, I Timothy 4

Study Text: John 7:25-30

Psalms: 10040:1 -4, 40:8-11, 40:16-17

We were woken up by loud banging on our door. After a brief time we heard a desperate cry – memsahib, memsahib. It was the old widow from the nearby village coming for help again. She became known in our family as the memsahib lady. One day she asked for a glass of milk and so we took some out of the fridge and gave her a glass. But she tasted it, screwed up her face and demanded it be warmed before she drank it. Another day we shared our meal with her but she refused to eat the rice – this is not good rice she complained. What a fickle old lady she was. It was impossible to please her.

Jesus was teaching in the temple in Jerusalem. What a fickle audience he had before him. They marvelled at his teaching but would not accept him as the Christ. We know where he is from said one group and no one will know where the Christ is from. Another lot said we know where he is from but it is not the right place.

How could Jesus satisfy them all when they had such diverse opinions? He avoided getting into protracted theological arguments. He did not explain to them that he was actually born in Bethlehem not Nazareth. He did not say go and ask my mother to find out where I was born. Rather he took them to the truth that he was in fact sent from heaven, that God sent him into this world.

*Though we walk in the flesh we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not weapons of the world, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds and casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (II Corinthians 10).* Paul learnt well from his Lord, Jesus Christ. Paul sought to present the truth, not to argue as the world does. He sought to build up the church, not to tear it down.

### No arrest

What is the scene before us in this passage? The Jews, the rulers, were seeking to arrest Jesus and kill him for breaking the Sabbath. Jesus spoke to them and exposed them as law breakers, for the law also said do not murder. He called upon them to judge rightly not judge by what they saw. He spoke to them publicly but they made no response. They did not answer his accusation, nor did they move to arrest him.

The local Jews or Jerusalemites knew about the plot to kill Jesus and so were surprised that the rulers took no action. *He speaks boldly and they say nothing to him.* Jesus did not hold back. He spoke openly or boldly, without fear of the men who wanted to kill him. Why did the rulers not say or do something if they wanted to get rid of him? Could it be that they now accepted Jesus as the Christ. The locals did not really think this but the question had to be asked.

The locals had their own ideas about Jesus anyway and they were the next to be confronted by the teaching of Jesus. Soon **they** would be trying to take him and stop him teaching. *But no one laid a hand on him for his hour had not yet come.*

## Not the Christ

This group of Jews from Jerusalem concluded that Jesus was not the Christ because they knew where he was from. There is strong irony in this passage and indeed the rest of the chapter. Did they really know where Jesus was from? He was actually from Bethlehem, not Nazareth as they and everyone else thought. But even then they were ignorant of the true home of Jesus.

Where did they get the idea that no one would know where the Christ was from? It must have been a popular tradition, maybe promulgated by some Rabbis. The nearest idea to be found in Scripture is in Malachi 3:1 where we read *Behold I will send my messenger and he...will suddenly come to his temple.* Some even thought that he would arise out of the sea which meant that no one would have any idea of him before his sudden appearance.

It is not unknown of course for men to establish doctrine from some obscure passage of Scripture. We see it often enough today. That is why it is important to compare Scripture to Scripture in arriving at doctrine. If they had turned to Micah 5:2 they would have read *out of Bethlehem will come the one to be ruler of Israel.* There were Jews who knew this passage but they failed in their knowledge of recent history (7:42).

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing and this is true with regard to Scripture. How often do we see men parading their knowledge of the Bible when they really don't bother to read the Bible themselves? It is what they have heard others say. It is what they have read in their favourite magazine.

Some people find it inconvenient to remember certain truths. Did they really not know the prophecy in Micah 5:2 or was it simply convenient to ignore it. 'Men's memories are often sadly dependant on their wills' (Ryle). Some *wilfully forget* wrote Peter (II Peter 3:5). We see it so often in the courts today. 'I don't recall' they plead when it is something they would rather not know. Sadly such things are not uncommon in the teaching of Scripture. Let us hear the whole counsel of God.

**Jesus cried out as he taught in the temple.** He raised his voice so that all could hear, but also with a sense frustration and pain – Pain at the woeful ignorance of these people concerning his real origin. *You both know me and where I am from* Jesus said to them – at least they thought they did. Jesus began with an ironical agreement with what he Jerusalemites had just said.

But he went beyond the immediate question, as he often did, to teach fundamental truth. **Jesus was not concerned about the place of his incarnation but the fact of his incarnation.** The truth was that he was sent from heaven, by the God whom they thought they were worshipping.

They did not know the God who sent Jesus. They did not know the true God whom they had come into the temple to worship. Jesus said I did not come by myself but he sent me. He was sent down from heaven on a divine mission. He came to speak the words of God and do the will of God.

Jesus knew God. He was with God in the beginning. He was from God. They might have known where Jesus was from – or thought they did. But tragically that teaching of man, that tradition, kept them from believing in Jesus Christ, believing that he was God the Son, sent from heaven. Jesus is from God and is therefore the only way to God. No one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ.

They could celebrate the feast of Tabernacles and every other feast, but they were not worshipping the true God, for they did not know God. They understood that this was what Jesus was telling them, and they became angry. We have been coming to this feast for years. How dare he tell us we do not know God?

Therefore they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him. What they intended doing to him we are not told. Maybe a beating would stop him, or maybe they were going to hand him over to the authorities who sought kill him. But his hour, the hour of his death had not yet come.

That hour did come. The hour came for the Son of man to be glorified. Most assuredly said Jesus *unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone, but if it dies it produces much fruit* (12:24). Jesus did not die by the will of man, but by the will of God. It was his divine mission – to die for the sin of the world. Are you part of that fruit, the fruit of the death of Jesus Christ?

God sent his Son into the world; he gave his only begotten Son, to die in your place, as your substitute. He took the punishment that was due to you for your sin, he took your death penalty. That is why by believing in him you have eternal life. The perfect, sinless Son bore the sins of all who will come to him.

Jesus rose from the dead and returned to the Father in heaven. He returned to glory. One day soon he will come again, not to die again but to bring salvation and judgment in all the world.

Don't let traditions, false teaching or 'superior' knowledge ever cause you to stumble. Don't get caught up in worldly arguments that divert your attention away from the Cross. Don't come to the Lord's Table with such attitudes for they will prevent you from examining your own heart and acknowledging your sin. *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* And remember without repentance there is no forgiveness and without forgiveness there is no life. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.

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