

Is this the Christ (part 2)

SS/HN 06/03/05 am/pm

Reading: Amos 8, John 7:25-52

Study Text: John 7:31-36

Psalms: 23, 138:1-5, 31:1-5, 31:21-24

The young girl's parents did not go to church but sent their daughter along to the Sunday school – hoping it would help her to become a good girl. They were shocked when she came home one day saying 'I believe in Jesus'. She wanted a Bible to read, she started praying and talking to people about Jesus. She wanted the family to pray. She asked her parents to take her to church. Tensions began to rise as this family was challenged by the claims of Jesus.

Tensions were rising to fever pitch in Jerusalem as Jesus continued teaching in the temple. He had rebuked the rulers for breaking the law they claimed to be upholding (7:19) – for they wanted to kill Jesus. The local Jews decided he was not the Christ for they knew where he was from. Jesus told them where he was from – he was from heaven, sent by the God they claimed to be worshipping. But they did not know God he told them, and they also became hostile and violent.

Many Believe

In the midst of this hostility were many who actually believed in Jesus. These were probably the pilgrims, visitors who had come to the feast from outside Judea. They came knowing little of the controversy that surrounded this man but soon felt the tension that was in the air in Jerusalem. They heard the reports that were circulating in the city.

They heard about the miracles that Jesus did. If they were from Galilee they may have seen him perform miracles. These miracles were signs meant to point people to Jesus as the Christ, indeed as the Son of God. As Jesus said *the very works which I do bear witness of me that the Father sent me* (5:36). These people were starting to read the signs. They said *when the Christ comes will he do more signs than this man-* they actually used the word signs (7:31).

Many believed. They did not see a man breaking the Sabbath, they did not see a man doing works by the power of the Devil, and they did not see a man trying to deceive them. They were moved to believe what Jesus said, to believe he was the Christ of God. How wonderful that many believed. It may well have been the majority, but the few rulers and *some from Jerusalem* had been dominating the scene. A silent majority?

We cannot be certain of the **depth of their belief**. When Jesus was in Jerusalem previously *many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself to them* (2:23-24). Belief based only on signs is not strongly encouraged, though it is better than nothing (10:38). It is a starting point.

I once had a person explain to me how she had been to healing service and her twisted arm was healed. That is wonderful I said to her- and what are you going to do now? If the Lord has healed

you, should you not acknowledge him and learn more about him. She started to attend our fellowship and grow in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These people believed Jesus was the Christ but had not confessed as Peter had – *you have the words of eternal life* (6:68). Certainly they did not understand that the Christ had to suffer and die in order to fulfil his divine mission. Peter did not yet understand this either.

In fact what Jesus goes on to teach here in the temple may well have been for the benefit of these believers. As we will see it was not his only purpose. But these people who believed needed to believe not only that he was sent from heaven by God but that he would also return to the Father. Faith based on miracles, on signs and wonders, and must become faith based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God.

If anyone wills to do the will of God they will know the truth (7:17). He who has ears to ear let him hear. Here was Jesus revealing more about himself and his mission, for those whose hearts were ready to listen and believe.

Leaders Left Wondering

The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring. They did not mind when the crowd was hostile but when they heard that *many of the people believed* they got worried. They quickly conferred with the chief priests who held the political power. They were almost all Sadducees, traditional opponents of the Pharisees. But they came together for the purpose of silencing Jesus.

Things were reaching a crisis in Jerusalem. The guards were sent to arrest Jesus. But Jesus was not perturbed – *his hour had not yet come*. He continued teaching. His words had meaning for believers but he also spoke to those who came to arrest him.

Jesus added a **whole new dimension** to his teaching which confounded his opponents. Jesus calmly said *I will be with you a little while longer, and then I go to him who sent me*. He had been telling them again and again that he was sent by his Father in heaven. Now he said he was going to him.

These Jews, who were still arguing about where Jesus was from, were now confronted by him telling them where he was going – some place where they would not find him. *You will seek me and not find me and where I am you cannot come*.

What did he mean? Where was he going that they could not find him? They heard him clearly for they repeated his words. These are very important words. They are words of life to those who hear and understand, but words of judgment to those who reject Jesus.

Then the Jews said among themselves (7:35). Did these Jews bother to ask Jesus what he meant? No. They just shared their ignorance.

Children are remarkable in the way they are always asking questions. Daddy what is that man doing, Daddy what star is that, or Mummy where do eggs come from or where does milk come

from. Such simple questions but that is how they learn, that is how they find out the truth. Sadly adults don't bother to ask questions. Some think they know everything; others are too ashamed to ask. They tell themselves it was not important anyway.

No one bothered to ask Jesus what he meant. The best idea they could come up with was that he intended to go to the 'Diaspora', the dispersion where the Jews lived scattered among the Gentiles. What else could he mean? Well Hello! There he is in front of you ask him!

Jesus had said that he was going *to him who sent me*. But these Jews had no real spiritual understanding. The only thing they could think of was he intended to go somewhere across the seas or over the mountains. The truth that he was going through the heavens (Hebrews 4:14), that he was returning to the glory of the Father in heaven (John 17:5) did not enter their earthbound minds.

How terribly tragic it is when people ignore their Creator, when their ideas and thoughts become futile and their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:21). See how men consult with one another and come up with their 'brilliant' theories about the origin of the universe and of life. It all began with a big bang they say. What a profound thought! And life began in a primeval cesspool. How exciting!

That is the beginning. What about the end? What about the destiny of man. Again we see men going off in all manner of futile searches. In India you will see them going off into the forests to live as hermits or up into the mountains to live in a cave – hoping to find God. A few decades ago Westerners streamed to India in search of God – now the Hindu teachers have brought their teaching here with yoga and other 'techniques'.

Jesus whom God sent into this world said I am going away, going to him who sent me. Do you know where he meant? Do you know where he was going? To those who believe in him as their Lord and Saviour he said *I go to prepare a place for you..that where I am you may be also* (John 14:6).

But for those who refuse to believe he said *you will seek me but not find me and where I go you cannot come*. The Jews were left wondering what he meant.

The rich man found out what he meant – after it was too late (Luke 16). Lazarus died and went to be with Jesus. The rich man, like these Jews, did not come to Jesus when he had opportunity. He was too busy enjoying life. When he ended up in Hell, then he desperately wanted to be where Jesus was but it was too late. The day of salvation had passed. Death overtook him before he stopped to consider the word of God, the call of Jesus Christ to believe in him and receive eternal life.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Now is the day of salvation. Jesus would soon be crucified and rise from the dead. He would ascend into heaven, to the glory of the Father. Soon they would not longer hear his words – the words of life. The door to eternal life would be closed.

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