

November 9, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study John 7:25-36.

1. List some religions that minimize or deny the atoning work Jesus Christ did.
2. Why is the work and person of Christ important?
3. Why did the people in Jesus' day think that no one would know where Messiah came from?
4. Do you know anyone who is depending on something other than the finished work of Christ on the cross as the means for their salvation?
5. When was the last time you had the privilege to explain to someone that Jesus is the only way to heaven?

DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW CHRIST?

John 7:25-36

One of the privileges of living in America is the certainty that the majority of citizens know Jesus. That certainty is compounded many times for people who live in the Southeast, also affectionately known as the Bible belt. And here at the "Buckle" on the Bible belt where we have multiple Christian colleges, Christian Universities, and Bible Institutes within a hundred mile radius, is it even possible that someone doesn't know Jesus?

It is not unusual in the conservative Christian melting-pot setting in which I live for someone to ask, "Do you know pastor So and So?" Much of the time I do know the person in question. However, if we go deeper in that conversation, I will probably end up trying to clarify the issue by saying, "Yes, I know who he is, but I really don't know him that well."

For example, someone asks, "Do you know Pastor "A"?" I do know him. I have heard him preach on a few occasions, maybe I serve on a board or committee with him, and maybe I have even attended his church. But do I know him? Okay, I don't know him like his people know him. And I surely don't know him like His wife knows him.

Or the question might be, do you know Pastor "B"?" Now that's a bit different because I consider Pastor "B" as a personal friend. We have spent much time together and discussed some very serious theological issues. Our families are friends. Yes, I know Pastor "B." But I don't know him like his wife knows him.

Now ask me if I know Patty Whitcomb. I know her better than anyone else knows her. I know her better than I know anyone else. We have what you might call an intimate relationship because we are one.

Having settled that matter of semantics, let's go back to the original proposition that it is a privilege to live in a society where almost everyone knows Jesus. Actually, almost no one in America knows Jesus. The vast majority of our fellow citizens know a lot about Jesus, but they do not have an intimate relationship with Him. In fact, they are His enemies. Even a large number of church-going folks in Greenville claim to know so many truths about Jesus, while at the same time remaining His enemies because they have never confessed their sin to Him and never embraced His work in their behalf for the forgiveness of sins.

Such people are like the folks in the crowd gathered around Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles. That they were very religious is obvious in the fact that they were attending the required feast. That they were interested in Jesus is obvious from their discussion. That they did not know Jesus is obvious from their conclusions. And that they would contribute to the execution of Jesus would be obvious within six months. They loved to talk about what they knew of Jesus.

But Jesus bluntly explained that they were clueless about Him because they had no relationship with Him.

To Truly Know Christ Is to Know God (vv.25-29).

Like the citizens of Palestine nearly 2,000 years ago, it is still true that some people are quite sure about their knowledge of “the Christ” (vv.25-27). In light of their supposed knowledge of Christ, there were people in Jerusalem who wondered why the authorities responded as they did (vv.25-26). They were quite sure that Jesus was their target for execution. Therefore, when Jesus showed up for the Feast of Tabernacles and went directly to the temple porches and began preaching, *Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?”* (v.25).

Who were these wondering people? We know that in the crowd there were visitors who had come to Jerusalem who were a bit incredulous that Jesus claimed people were seeking to kill Him (7:20). They had rebuked Jesus for making such a suggestion. However, there were also people in the crowd who lived in Jerusalem and they knew better (v.25). They knew the religious rulers’ hostility toward Jesus. Maybe they had been present a couple years before when Jesus cleaned out the rulers’ flea market and told them that the sign He would give was them executing Him. That is, Jesus told the authorities that when they destroyed “this temple (His body) He would raise it up in three days.” Of course it does appear that the authorities were baffled by that statement. Or maybe some of the folks had been present six months before when Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath and then claimed to be equal with God (5:16). This blunt assertion drove the rulers to find more reasons to have Jesus killed.

But if the authorities desired to kill Jesus (and they did), why did Jesus speak openly without being apprehended? That’s what the people wondered. They said among themselves, *And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ* (v.26)? He was not only speaking openly, in public, but boldly and directly as was usual when He taught in Jerusalem.

Be that as it may, none of the authorities made a move to apprehend Him. Jesus’ previous history indicates that at times the rulers did not make a move against Him because even they were spellbound as He leveled judgments against them. We remember from 7:15 that the rulers (the *Jews*) marveled at Jesus’ teaching in light of His lack of a degree from their school (7:15). Probably the more compelling reason was that the leaders feared that arresting Jesus at the wrong time might cause the people to resist them. Luke reported that such was the case during the next Passover. *The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor* (Luke 20:19-20).

Or, someone might argue, was it possible that the rulers had changed their minds and decided that Jesus was the Christ? That is what some of the people in the crowd wondered. But that is not very likely at all. Such musing prove that when we move away from the authoritative principles of the Bible, confusion sets in. The Bible principle is that leopards don’t change their spots and evil people do evil (Jer. 13:23). The Bible teaches that bad trees are incapable of producing good fruit (Mat. 7:17). The Bible teaches that a man’s words prove what is in his heart (Mat. 12:34). Had these rulers changed their attitude and language about Jesus? There is no evidence to support such a conclusion. Where was the public confession that they had changed? That they were not arresting Jesus gave no evidence that they believed Jesus.

So why did some people wonder if the rulers had decided that Jesus actually was the Messiah? It seems to be human nature to be willingly deceived by hoping that mankind is intrinsically good instead of intrinsically full of sin. True conversion is impossible to hide because it causes such a real and obvious transformation of character. Where there is no transformation of character, you have valid reason to doubt conversion.

Besides, not everyone was convinced that Jesus was the Christ. There were some people in that crowd in Jerusalem who were sure that the Christ would come from an unknown location. They said, *But*

we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from (v.27). This rule was well known: No one would know the origin of Messiah. Where did that rule come from? It was a combination of popular legend, misunderstanding of Scripture, and acceptance of spurious writings. For one thing, the official teachers of Israel misunderstood Isaiah 53:8 which says in some English versions “. . . who shall declare His generation.” They misapplied Malachi 3:1 which reads, “. . . Behold, I am going to send My messenger . . . And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple.” They errantly appealed to 4 Esdras which is interesting because it is not inspired Scripture. It says, “He said to me, ‘Just as no one can explore or know the depths of the sea, so no one on earth can see my Son or those who are with him, except in the time of his day’” (4 Esdras 13:52). Besides that everyone knew that Messiah the Christ could not show up until Elias (Elijah) had come and prepared His way. Even the disciples asked that question (Mat. 17:10).

So, this could not be the Christ because everyone knew where this man was from. They were all very sure that Jesus was from Nazareth. They knew His family. They knew His trade was carpentry. Everyone knew that Jesus was a Galilean. It was obvious from His accent.

But everyone did not know what they thought they knew. That is just the point that Jesus kept making to them. He kept telling them that He had come down from heaven (6:33). He kept telling them that He had come from the Heavenly Father to do His will (6:29). The problem was not lack of information. The problem was that the people refused to believe what Jesus said. How ironic that the people refused to believe in Jesus because they chose to accept legend and misinformation that no one would know where Messiah was from. They refused to believe Jesus because they knew where He was from. And yet, they really didn't know where He was from. His incarnation fulfilled their errant, foolish legend, and they didn't even realize it!

Jesus explained that He came from a place that is unknown to people (vv.28-29). He indicated that the people didn't know as much as they thought they knew. *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from” (v.28a).* It appears that Jesus' response to the people's assured conclusion is

an example of “divine sarcasm.” Maybe, He overheard the people discussing whether Jesus could be Messiah because they knew where He was from. It is more likely that He understood through divine perception as is the case at other times. That was not an unusual thing. For example, when the Pharisees accused Him in their minds of blasphemy: *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?” (Matthew 9:4).*

As far as their finite knowledge and experience could tell, Jesus was indeed from Nazareth. But that was not the whole story. This reminds us that conclusions drawn on partial information are wrong even if they are sincere. So people in every age who do not come to their conclusions about Christ based on the whole message of the Bible will be wrong. They will be dead wrong, spiritually dead wrong for eternity. Will these not be the people who stand before Jesus at the judgment and claim they did many mighty works in His name? But partial acquaintance with Christ robs Him of His full identity.

I saw a show on television once in which the owner of a company pretended to be an ordinary guy off the street who took a lowly job at his own place of business. The employees were not aware that this man was actually their owner. He put up with a lot of abuse, observed many breaches of the rules of operation he had made for his own company, and patiently put up with foolishness that was not good for the company for several days. You can imagine the shock of the employees when he disclosed to them that he was their boss who was responsible for their employment. In the case in our text, the Jews were pretty sure they understood the rules about Messiah's coming, and they were dead wrong in their conclusions.

Jesus reiterated that He had come from God the Father. That presents a problem then if people don't know God the Father. Jesus said, *“But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know” (v.28b).* That God the Son was really not from Nazareth was not the big issue. That He was God the Son on earth to do the work of God the Father is the important point. Because He was on earth doing the work and will of God who sent Him, He fully represented God. Therefore, any push back against Him was push back against God. Any rejection of Him is rejection of God.

This is the great tragedy of man-made religions. Invariably the religions that humans create minimize or wholly reject Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church replaces the acceptable work of Jesus Christ with the traditions of the church, the authority of the Pope, and the intercession of Mary. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and a host of other religions replace Jesus' work with human efforts. Muslims relegate Jesus to the position of a great prophet which, therefore, requires that sinners earn their way into heaven. All of these religions claim to love and revere God. But Jesus taught that if you reject Him, you reject God. Period! End of argument!

Jesus reveals God. He said, *I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me* (v.29). Make all the claims you will, but the truth is that if you don't know Jesus, you don't know God. God the Son knows God the Father perfectly. Because God the Father sent God the Son to earth, God the Son must make Him known. Therefore, all the work of God the Son coincides and affirms all that the Bible teaches about God. As a result, every person who follows a man-made religion that minimizes Jesus Christ is without excuse. They will have nothing to say when God the Son consigns them to eternal punishment. Jesus promised to people like that, *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS'"* (Matthew 7:23).

To Truly Know Christ Is to Know Where to Find Him (vv.30-36).

This text, like many texts in the Gospel accounts, proves again that Christ's presence causes confusion (vv.31-32, 35-36). In this case, it appeared that many people believed. John wrote, *Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"* (v.31).

Be sure to catch the connection between Jesus' works and the people's belief. That is why Jesus did miracles. He did mighty works for the express purpose of affirming His authenticity. He challenged people to believe that He was God in the flesh based on His signs. He established this principle by declaring, *But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me* (John 5:36). Therefore, the fact that Jesus did these confirming signs weighed against people who reject Jesus. *But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him* (John 12:37).

Jesus' signs and miracles did what He intended for them to do as they arrested the people's attention and many of them believed. However, there is always a question about the depth or sincerity of their belief. Up to this point (about 2 years of ministry), Jesus had done many miracles. Specifically, after Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children, the whole crowd was ready to make Him king on the spot (6:14). And yet, when they heard the truth of God's Word about who and what Jesus is, *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him* (John 6:66).

Surely some of the people in Jerusalem for the feast were fully convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah. But then, what did they expect Messiah would be? The important question is whether anyone was born again by the Spirit of God because of faith in Christ. Maybe some were. Many would change their minds and within six months shout, "Crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15). That kind of belief is not of much value.

The Pharisees didn't believe at all. John told us that *the Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him* (v. 32). There was no doubt about where the Pharisees stood on the issue of whether Jesus was the Christ. They were deeply concerned that the people were even debating (*muttering*) the possibility that Jesus was the Christ. So the Pharisees met with the Sadducees (chief priests had been Sadducees for a long time) to determine that it would be best to arrest Jesus.

Satan's plan is always to silence the truth through bullying. The evidence of that scheme is all through the story about Jesus. Therefore, we should not be surprised to discover that this is still Satan's plan. If Satan used his representatives to that end against our Master, will they not do the same to us? Jesus promised they would. He told the disciples, *"When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household"* (Matthew 10:23-25).

The evidence over the last 2,000 years proves this fact overwhelmingly. The intense persecution of Christ's followers worldwide indicates that Satan believes his time is short. The sad reality is the number of people who followed the example of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' unbelief. And the world still follows Christ-hating religious leaders by the millions.

Many people believed, the Pharisees did not believe, and a lot of people didn't know what to believe. *The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"*

Jesus informed the people that at a point in the near future He was going to return to the place from which He had come. That statement threw them into utter confusion. The picture reminds us that unsaved people cannot grasp spiritual truth. People who do not believe that Jesus came from heaven cannot possibly imagine that He would return there. So they make up other conclusions and wander around in confusing ideas. The most logical conclusion was that Jesus planned to go to the Greeks and teach them because the Jews wouldn't go there.

All of the muttering and decision-making on the part of the people was to no avail because they missed the most important point. Jesus was simply telling them that Christ the King controls circumstances (vv.30, 33-34). Notice, that in spite of the rulers' hatred for Him, no one arrested the wanted Teacher. *So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come (v.30)*. It wasn't like they didn't try. The religious authorities sent their representatives to arrest Jesus, but they didn't do it. They explained that they did not arrest Jesus because they were swept up in His astonishing teaching (7:46). The temple police (mostly Levites) did not realize that neither they nor the Sanhedrin were in charge. God the Son was in charge.

Being in charge of the situation, Jesus taught God's plan and people didn't get it. He told them that He was going to return to where He came from – the place people didn't know. *Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me" (v.33)*. God the Son came to die on the cross. That part of

God's plan would be fulfilled in six months. After that, God the Son would go "home." That sounds rather simple or cut-and-dried to people like us who have come to Jesus in faith.

The important thing that this cut-and-dried, very simply statement teaches is that no one finds Jesus on their own. Jesus warned, *"You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come" (v.34)*. The majority of the people who heard Jesus that day, never came to Him. The majority of all people who have ever lived or ever will live do not come to Jesus. No one in His human wisdom or strength is able to come to Jesus. We cannot find Him. We must be taken to Him, which is the gracious work of God as the Father draws us to Christ and the Holy Spirit gives us new birth.

That kind of teaching is not real popular because human pride is satisfied to stumble along in human conclusions and efforts. So the result is tragic as the current state of even conservative religion in America proves. In *The State of Theology*, a survey by Ligonier Ministries of 3,000 American adults and professing protestant evangelicals, we learn some rather surprising truths. For example, 45% believe there are many ways to get to heaven. Even 11% of Professing Evangelicals believe that. There are 41% who believe there will be people in heaven who never heard of Jesus (26% of Professing Evangelicals). Another 64% believe the sinner must take the initiative to come to Christ and then God responds with grace (68% PE). And 71% believe the individual must contribute personal effort in order to be saved (54% PE). Only 47% believe that heaven is an actual place, while only 60% believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

We might wonder what hope there is when only about 41% of the religious people believe that the Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true. The fact still remains: If you don't believe the words of Jesus, you will live in confusion without hope, just like His peers did. You cannot possibly know Christ without accepting by faith what the Bible says about Him. Faith still comes by hearing and hearing still comes through the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Will you believe what the Bible says today? Will you tell someone what the Bible says today?