

How You Know Jesus

Luke 9:7-9, 18-20.

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If you are in Christ, it is because at some point you came to know the truth about Jesus, and by grace alone, through faith alone, you were united to Him. I want to remind you today that all this occurred because God made you the object of His gracious revelation regarding His Son. But Herod, and the crowds over which he ruled, did not possess the truth about Jesus. Our text today tells us when news of our Lord's ministry reached Herod the tetrarch, the apostate king was perplexed. For some said John had risen from the dead; others said Elijah had appeared, and yet others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod himself said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So Herod sought to see Jesus. Herod was a seeker, but not because he desired to know the truth.

These two verses appear at first to be rather random within the narrative flow, until we look further ahead to verses 18-20. There we read that Jesus was alone praying, and His disciples came to Him, and Jesus asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" Now, it is important to note the similarity between what Herod was hearing, and how the disciples responded: "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again."

Apparently, there was a popular speculation developing among the crowds as to who Jesus might be. Israel had a long history of killing prophets, the most recent, of course, being John the Baptist. So there may have been a sense of wonder tempered by dread if one of the prophets had risen again. What could this mean? Regardless, speculation is all the natural mind can do. Many today continue to speculate about Jesus. Public television and other networks broadcast special series investigating the claims of Jesus. Then there are theologians who speculate about who Jesus based on their own imaginations since they reject the revelation contained in Scripture. Most people, religious and non-religious, have an opinion of Jesus.

Revelation, not Speculation

But the truth about Jesus comes only by revelation, not intellectual investigation and speculation. Popular views of Jesus represent only what the natural mind can produce apart from Spirit imparted revelation. Ask any unbeliever, and you will get a host of opinions about Jesus.

Speculation about Jesus does *not* save, only the truth saves. And if you know the truth about Jesus, that is to say, if you know Jesus based upon the revelation found in Scripture, it is not because you are so intelligent or because you are naturally more religious than most people, but because the Spirit of God made Jesus real to you.

Notice how Herod's position of power did not provide any special inside track as to the true nature of Jesus of Nazareth. God is not impressed with status and power. For instance, in Luke, chapter three, we read,

3 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness (Luke 3:1-2).

The word of God passed over all the men and places of secular and religious power, and came to John in the wilderness; not to Caesar, not to Pontius Pilate, nor to Herod, Philip, Lysanias, or even to the high priests. God passed over the rulers of this age, in favor of a man living in the wilderness, and not the center of power, Jerusalem. God's word came to a man filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, and not to those devoid of the Spirit, though they possessed great temporal power and influence.

Likewise, the word of God came to Peter, a fisherman, and not to the experts in the Law. When Jesus asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter declared, "The Christ of God." Now, this was not due to some sudden flash of personal insight or genius, but because the Father revealed it to the disciple (Matthew 16:17). Modern scientists and scholars can speculate all they wish about Jesus, but the fact remains, "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3). And no one can possess saving faith apart from the gracious gift of God, through the preaching of the gospel, all of which remains foolishness to the worldly wise (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18).

In recent decades, many American Christians have sought out alliances with political parties and leaders, as if somehow God needs the help of secular leaders. Apparently, some well-intended Christian leaders believe they can influence the moral standing of America by involving themselves in electing candidates that will support moral causes and write moralistic legislation.

But there is nothing within Scripture that would support such thinking. Throughout the history of the church, no church-state leader or ruler has been able to coerce people into

behaving like Christians. It is heresy to think they can. The Bible is clear that the state of fallen mankind is such that adding moral-based laws and gaining political influence will change nothing. What is needed is a change of mind and heart, the type of change that only a saving encounter with the risen Christ can bring about. Therefore Christians ought to rethink this notion that alliances with the politically powerful will change society. It will not. What is more likely to happen is that they will simply diminish their usefulness to God; indeed, God may just pass over them and use someone else.

Rejoice in Revelation

So, if you are in Christ, my exhortation to you today is to rejoice in the fact God has revealed to you the truth about His Son, and that truth saves you from His just wrath, and makes you instead, His precious child. Rejoice not in the philosophical speculation of human wisdom or political power, but instead, rejoice that you know the Spirit-revealed truth about Jesus. No one can figure out Jesus, only the Spirit can reveal Him in a saving manner. Remember also, that twice in the New Testament we are told, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (I Peter 5:5-6; James 4:6-7). Let me close with this quote from I Corinthians:

²⁶ For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—³¹ that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.”

AMEN.

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