

How do we see?

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Let us turn to **John 7: 25-30**

John 7: 25-30

- 25 So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"
- 26 "Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?"
- 27 "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."
- 28 Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know."
- 29 "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."
- 30 So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Today, I want to spend some time to consider with you how we should look at life and situations and people: How do we relate with people, how do we go through situations, how do we consider issues, what do we consider as important and what is not.

So in this context, the people were assessing the Lord Jesus. They were relating with Him. What did they perceive of Him? What was in their heart? What were they looking for?

The Jews said, "...we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." So the Jews said they knew where the Lord Jesus was from. Were they right? Well, the Lord Jesus confirmed it. The Lord Jesus, He said, "You both know Me and know where I am from".

So it seems that they were right. The Lord Jesus said, "You both know Me and know where I am from". But what did they know of the Lord Jesus? What was their perception of Him? How did they regard Him?

Verse 30 tells us: So they were seeking to seize Him.

They were seeking to seize Him to kill Him. Did they know Him? Did they know who the Lord Jesus was and if they really knew Him, would they want to seize Him and kill Him?

Matthew 13: 54-58 gives us some idea of the way that people tended to view the Lord Jesus and the way they would relate with Him.

Matthew 13: 54-58

54 He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers?"

55 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?"

56 "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?"

57 And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household."

58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

So notice, they seemed to know who the Lord Jesus was: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" True, He was the carpenter's son. His mother called Mary? It was true. "...His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas"? Correct. "...His sisters, are they not all with us?" Also correct. But they were all wrong.

What was it that was right and what was wrong? After knowing all this and saying all this, they took offense at Him. So because of that, the Lord Jesus did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

So the way they perceived the Lord Jesus was related to their unbelief. What caused the unbelief? Why did they perceive things this way?

In **John 7**, we see the same thing. They seemed to know who the Lord Jesus was, but they wanted to kill Him. There are various reasons why they may want to kill Him.

One basic reason at the heart of it has to do with the difference in moral direction of life. The Lord Jesus moved in the direction of perfect holiness. The Jews were seeking for something else. That is why there was unbelief. That is why they could not see who the Lord Jesus really was: full of grace and truth, God dwelling in their midst; God with us, Immanuel.

How did they see things?

The underlying principle by which they saw things is also very applicable to Christians, including those who love God because underlying this, within our hearts, although we may love God, we are still very much affected by the outward forms of things and we are still attracted to many of these things.

They were preoccupied with Him being the carpenter's son. They were concerned about the physical, the outward. They neglected the inward and the spiritual and eternal. They were concentrating on the physical and temporal, and this can also be true of Christians today.

What are the things that we concentrate on, whether it be in our home situation, in our work situation, relationship in society?

Very often, we assess people and situations based on the outward forms of things. When the thing happens in a way that we like in the physical plane, we say it is good. When things are problematic and difficult, we say it is not good.

If that were the case, how can the cross be good? The cross is the place of the most intense suffering. How can that be good? But it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened in this universe, and the most painful, most difficult path. And God went through it for us.

If we learn to concentrate on the spiritual and eternal, and our hearts are aligned with that, we truly want that direction, we will see things differently.

Why is it there were people who could recognize the Lord Jesus in His holiness? Well, we may say God revealed to them. True. But why did God reveal to them? In many instances, it was because they loved God, they loved what was good. Whether it be Simeon or Anna, there was the devotion to God, and in that context God revealed to them, helped them to recognize who the Lord Jesus is, even when He was a baby. Even when He was a little child, they could recognize because the Holy Spirit helped them to recognize. So it will be that God will help us to recognize what is of true value if we concentrate on the right thing.

The Lord Jesus said, "You both know Me and know where I am from". Did they know Him? Did they know where He was from? No. He was God Himself. Did they know that? They did not know that. He came from heaven. Did they know that? They did not know that. They thought He was just a carpenter dwelling amongst them.

They said, "...whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." Why did they say that? It was their concept. To them, if the Lord Jesus Christ were God, then He must not come in a way that we know who He is, where He is, what He did. That is too common. It must be something miraculous. We do not know where He is from. Similar to Naaman: When he was told to go to the river and wash, he said, "How can it be? Just go to the river and wash and I will be healed of my leprosy? Should he not come and wave his hand and perform a miracle?" That was his concept - God should work like that. But God chose to work by asking him to go to the river and wash - the river Jordan. Aren't the rivers of Damascus better? No, that is faith - in obedience to God's commandments.

So too, in our lives, we can easily live our lives based on our natural thinking, based on what we see around us, based on man's wisdom and our own abilities, and we seek to know God and to worship Him and to follow Him. We will not succeed.

If we want to know God, then we must understand the meaning within Him. Just as when we face situations of life, the most important thing is not to look at the surrounding circumstances, the events that are taking place in themselves. We need to look beyond these to understand the meaning of the situation. And how do we understand the meaning?

It is when we learn to look to God: We concentrate on the moral, the spiritual direction, and understand what is the meaning of that situation, what is God seeking to do, how can we work together with Him.

In order to do that, we have to develop our heart, so that it is in line with God's heart.

Why is it there is so much of conflicts and quarrels, wars throughout the world?

We know for example, racial discrimination is a major issue. Some races consider themselves superior to others. Why is that so? It is because we are looking at the outward, we are looking at the culture, we are looking at the background, we are looking at the appearance; and so, we may consider ourselves more able. Or we consider our heritage in terms of what we have achieved in the past. Maybe we are the conquerors, these are the subdued. So we classify people according to these kinds of situations.

Does God classify people in this way? Obviously not! God does not classify us in that way in terms of what He values, in terms of what is of true meaning in life.

But does God classify people?

The answer is: Yes, He does. Is it wrong? No.

The Lord Jesus tells us very clearly: On the Judgment Day, He is going to separate the sheep from the goats. He is going to classify them. And how does He classify them? It is based on the meaning: The way you respond in your life, what goes on in your heart, how you live your life, how you relate with people, how you consider things, what are your values, what are your goals, what you seek for, how you work at it.

That is what God is going to consider in the way He will judge. He will separate the sheep and the goats depending on how they respond to Him, how they respond to what is good and right, how they choose and select the path that they take.

So we need to pause and to consider: How do we value situations? How do we concentrate as we go through life? Do we concentrate on the outer man or the inner man? Do we look at the outward forms of things or the meaning of the heart?

Let us consider how the Lord Jesus responded in a situation of relationships.

Mark 3: 31-35

- 31 Then His mother and His brothers *arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called Him.
- 32 A crowd was sitting around Him, and they *said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You."
- 33 Answering them, He *said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?"
- 34 Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He *said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!
- 35 "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."

When we read this passage, we may wonder: Why did He respond in this way? Does not God teach us to honour our father and mother? Why did He respond like that to His mother? It seemed as if there was not much respect for His mother and His brothers.

But that is not the meaning.

The Lord Jesus is here communicating a very, very important principle. Certainly, He recognized the importance of honouring our parents, taking care of our families, of responsibilities in earthly relationships. We are told that He submitted to His parents when He was young. And we know that the Lord Jesus treated people with respect and love and compassion. Of course, He would be very appreciative of His mother because Mary was a good woman, and God specially chose her because she loved God.

So here, it certainly was not any aspect of disrespect. But the Lord Jesus wanted to communicate a very important principle that ultimately, the real issue is not the earthly relationships, although they have a place and we have a responsibility, and we must fulfil that. But ultimately, in the eternal realm, it is the moral meaning that matters: "...whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." And it does not matter whether you are Jew or Greek, slave or free; whether you are brown in colour, or yellow or white. It does not matter. That is not the issue.

The issue is: What is the quality of your heart? What is the relationship between you and God? Does God really know you? Do you really know Him? Are you moving in the right direction? Are you really doing the will of God? This ultimately is the question.

We may judge, we may form conclusions in many different ways and people have their own standards and ways to judge. The non-Christians have their ways; Christians also have their criteria, their ways of judging. But we must be careful, that ultimately our standard of assessment must be based on what God has declared.

There will be two classes of people ultimately: Those who move in the direction of what is good, and those who move in the direction of what is evil. There will be.

But it is also true that within these two classes, there is a wide range. Some are evil, but not so evil. And some are evil, they are very evil. Some are good, but not so good. But some are good and they are very good. There is a wide range.

The important thing is: What direction are we moving towards? What are our goals? What is our emphasis? What are our priorities? What is within our heart?

God does understand. If you really want to move in the right direction but you have your failures – you have your faltering, you struggle – He understands. He is prepared to help us. He is prepared to forgive us. So should we.

But did the Lord Jesus forgive the Pharisees who were hypocritical, who were living their lives in pretence, who were seeking for their own well-being at the expense of other people? No. The Lord Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”

The apostle Paul was so compassionate towards the weak and the suffering, but he was very angry with the false teachers, those who were leading people astray, those who were negative and evil, for the wrong direction of their lives and the negative influence of their being.

So we need to understand. If you want to identify with God, this is the heart of it.

Why did the Lord Jesus say, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”? To see God in a deep and meaningful sense has to do with the purity of our hearts. That is the only thing that ultimately will decide whether we will be close to God or not, whether He will appreciate us.

Why was Daniel called the man of preciousness, man of high esteem? It is because his heart was set on God, on what was good. He was prepared to give himself for that direction of life even though it was very costly.

And that is what the Lord Jesus has done as the perfect Man: He gave Himself fully for the most wonderful, the most meaningful path. If we love Him, we will follow Him and we will understand who He is.

So then, as we come before the Lord, as we seek to appreciate what He has done for us, let us learn to look beyond the physical and the outward and the temporal, and view issues and things and people as God does: the eternal, the spiritual, the ultimate.

All these things are passing away. The time on earth is very short. Let us not waste our time preoccupied with the things that are perishable, but concentrate on that which will endure for eternal life.

So, the Lord will help us if we ask Him to teach us.

But at the same time, we live in this physical world and there are responsibilities, there are aspects we need to attend to.

God does expect us to fulfil our responsibilities, but not to be absorbed in them, not to be distracted by them, not to be distressed by these things, but to know His peace, His joy, His life as we go through each situation.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to appreciate Him more deeply, so that we may truly be His disciples.