

Who is the Lord Jesus to you?

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Let us turn to **John 7: 40-44**.

John 7: 40-44

- 40 *Some* of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."
41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"
42 "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"
43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.
44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

Again and again in **the gospels**, we read of different opinions that people had of the Lord Jesus. There often was disagreement; they had different views, different opinions as to who the Lord Jesus was.

Why is it there were so many different opinions and what is the significance?

And how about us: Who is the Lord Jesus to you?

It is good for us, as we seek to appreciate the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us, to ponder over this: Who is the Lord Jesus to you?

As we look at these people, we see that they had different opinions, but what was the significance of these opinions?

For many of them, the opinions did not really make much of a difference to their lives. Whether they thought He was the Prophet or the Christ or otherwise, it did not really make much of a difference to them in their own personal lives.

For some, it could make a great deal of difference.

But as we read the records of the Scriptures, for many of them, it was not significant. And yet, they could spend much time arguing over that, getting angry over disagreements and wanting to affirm what they thought was right.

Some of them said, "This certainly is the Prophet." But would they really listen to the Prophet? If they believed that the Lord Jesus was the Prophet that God had promised, a Prophet like Moses, then surely they would have listened very carefully to what the Lord Jesus said and they would obey Him; they would draw near to God as a result.

But the majority were not really listening to Him. They had their own ideas as to what they wanted from the Lord Jesus. And basically, the things that they wanted from the Lord Jesus were for personal gain, temporal things in this world, and not what the Prophet would bring: the message of God.

Others were saying, "This is the Christ." But did that mean that they would really come to Him as God's Messiah, Anointed One, and follow Him?

There were others who said, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" This group of people seemed to be knowledgeable. They could even refer to the Scriptures and their reference to the Scriptures was not wrong; it was correct. The Christ comes from the descendants of David and from Bethlehem

And yet they came to the wrong conclusion. They thought that the Lord Jesus did not come from Bethlehem; He seemed to have come from Nazareth.

So often, we may also come to the wrong conclusions even though we have some facts. There are certain things that we know, recognize that are accurate and yet, we can come to a wrong conclusion.

It is true that the Scriptures say that the Christ would come from Bethlehem, would be a descendant of David. And in reality, He was.

But the people did not think so. They had not checked carefully. They had not found out properly, to be accurate in understanding who the Lord Jesus really was. If they had pursued the matter properly, they would have known the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was of the descendants of David.

But even if that were so, would it make much of a difference to them?

So what I want to consider with you all today is to ponder over this: Who is the Lord Jesus to you? How do you consider Him?

Very often we come to the wrong conclusion about who the Lord Jesus is because we are looking for the wrong things. Our emphasis is not correct, our approach is not right, and we come to conclusions that we think are more suitable for us, more appealing to us.

We would like the Lord Jesus to be such and such, so we interpret Him in those terms. Same thing in our understanding of who God is: we imagine God to have certain characteristics which we would prefer and we want Him to be like that and so we worship a god of our own thinking, of our own preference.

How then can we come to a proper, accurate understanding, recognition, of who the Lord Jesus is and live our lives on that basis and benefit from all that He wants to give to us?

Let us look at **Matthew 1: 20-23**.

Matthew 1: 20-23

- 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

It is helpful for us to ponder over this passage that refers to the Lord Jesus: how He would be called and why He was called that way.

The first part tells us that Joseph should call the name of the Son to be born to Mary, he should call Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

The name Jesus is associated with being a Saviour from sins. He came to be the Saviour of the world, to save the people from their sins. But when we look at the record of the Scriptures, when we look at people around us who are seeking for God, we find that many people are not primarily seeking for the spiritual, the moral: to be morally right, to be forgiven of our sins, to be transformed, to become holy, to become what we ought to be.

That is not the focus of the majority of people.

Many people come to the Lord Jesus so that, as some people say, “I can go to heaven. It is a very nice place. I do not want to be punished. If I believe in the Lord Jesus, I can go to heaven.” Or, “If I believe in the Lord Jesus, I would have many friends who are very kind, who can care for me in my time of need. I have fellowship with people whom I can trust, who can do me much good when I need help.”

If our approach is like that, we will not know who the Lord Jesus really is. We will have our own ideas of who He is; we imagine Him to be such and we will follow someone that we ourselves have made in our own mind.

The Lord Jesus came to be the Saviour of the world. Are we concerned about this area of sin? Do we want to deal with sin in our lives? Do we want to become what we ought to be in the moral and spiritual realm? Is this primary in our hearts?

Or are we looking for many other things in this world: we want popularity, we want achievement, we want recognition, we want enjoyment, we want the things of this world – and we want a Christian name associated with it. If we approach it like that, we will not know the Lord Jesus as He really is.

The Lord Jesus will save His people from their sins and that is why we see in the records in **the gospels**, the people who benefited often were the harlots, the tax collectors, the people regarded as sinners. The Lord Jesus was called “a friend of... sinners”. These were the people who at a certain point in time recognized they needed help; they were going the wrong path; they needed forgiveness. They came to the Lord and they were saved; they were forgiven.

Why did the Lord Jesus tell the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector? It is precisely to help us understand: the Pharisee thought he had no need, he was all right; he was doing everything right; he was proud, he was arrogant, he was self-righteous and he looked at others with contempt. How could he really appreciate the Lord Jesus?

Such a person would not appreciate the Lord Jesus, and that is why the Pharisees wanted to destroy the Lord Jesus; He was a threat to them. They were hypocrites. They professed to love God but they were lovers of self. Self was primary in their consideration.

But the tax collector, he recognized he had sinned, he had lived a life that was not right and he said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" And he would go away justified because God is prepared to forgive us on the basis of the cross of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

So this tells us that if we want to benefit from who the Lord Jesus is in the right way, we must concentrate on the right things. He is the One who can deal with the problem of sin in our lives deeply and thoroughly and help us to become truly pleasing to God. We can become like Him in His character; we can become like God in His holiness and bring joy to His heart. But that is if we are prepared to concentrate on that.

If we concentrate on the moral and the spiritual, then we can go through life peaceful, happy: finding life meaningful whatever the circumstances, whatever the situation may be because we know that God will be with us, that God cares for us, He loves us, He will be with us if we truly want to live a life that is of quality.

And so we see in **verse 23** the quotation of what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

There are many aspects of this phrase "GOD WITH US".

The first and primary aspect is the Incarnation. God came to dwell in our midst: The Word became flesh. God with us: He dwelt amongst us. So we can say Immanuel has that aspect as a primary significance: God with us, dwelling in our midst.

But if we look further we will appreciate that "GOD WITH US" has much more significance than just the principle of the incarnation in the sense of God having come from heaven to dwell on earth.

Why did God do that? Why did the incarnation take place? What motivated this process, this event?

The explanation is very clear. We all know **John 3: 16**. It is because God so loved the world. That is what motivated God to take this step of the incarnation: GOD WITH US.

He so loved the world that He came into this world to suffer for our sake, to help us so that we can find true freedom and meaning in life.

If that is the case then would we not be so very grateful, so very excited, and find life so wonderful each day because God is actually with us? Not just in the sense He came into this world in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ about two thousand years ago... but also God has chosen to be with us all the time and even to dwell in our hearts to guide us, teach us, strengthen us, enable us to live as we should.

How can God be so truly with us? It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the Lord Jesus' coming into this world as He did, we would not know GOD WITH US in the fullest sense as is intended by God.

Yes, when our hearts are right we will know God; He will be with us.

Even people in the Old Testament, they could experience God in various ways and it can be very meaningful. But even then we know that that was on the basis of the cross. Without the cross they could not have approached God in that way when they had sinned. So it is still based on the cross.

Beyond that, when we live in a period after the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we benefit further because we have records of who the Lord Jesus was when He was on earth, what He did, how He lived and by looking at His life, we can appreciate God at a more personal level, in a deeper way than ever before. The Lord Jesus is "IMMANUEL"...GOD WITH US.

Sometimes we may think the Lord Jesus talks about spiritual things all the time and therefore, we can only concentrate on spiritual things and we do not bother about the things of this world. Sometimes a wrong concept of spirituality can lead to a situation where someone says, "My daughter is so heavenly minded that she is of no earthly use." Well, I heard this remark said jokingly, but it was an expression of something that a parent wanted of a child: to be more helpful, to be more involved in the daily situations of life.

Yes, we should be heavenly minded; our citizenship is in heaven. But that heavenly mindedness has practical implication in the way we live each day, how we conduct ourselves in our concern for the daily situations of life, of people, and situations of difficulties that people go through.

To what extent can we meaningfully help in a situation as we love and as we care, all the time with the consciousness that there is a direction: and that is spiritual? The underlying direction must always be spiritual, eternal, moral.

That is the emphasis because that is where ultimately the value is. But the moral and spiritual meaning, direction and content is very often transmitted in the midst of the physical, daily situations of life.

We see this all the time in the life of the Lord Jesus. Yes, He spoke words that are very spiritual and deep. But what did He do day by day? He was not speaking all the time. He cared for people who were suffering, He healed the sick, He cast out demons, He comforted those who were sorrowful; He helped the people as was appropriate.

But many people had the wrong emphasis: they wanted Him to be a king; they wanted Him to lead them at the material physical level, to benefit from that. He said, "No. Labour for the food that endures to eternal life."

So the emphasis has to be always the moral and spiritual, but that must be expressed in the daily situations of life.

So when we say GOD WITH US, we should appreciate it in all its fullness.

God is with us even in our daily situations of life that may seem so insignificant. He cares for us; He watches over us. And many people have testified how God has cared for them in very small kind of situations, which many people may not bother. But God understood that it meant something to them and God took care of them; He helped them. If we are prepared to respond properly to God, we will come to recognize that God is involved with us in every situation of our lives.

How wonderful that is!

But that requires first our heart is set to love Him, to walk in His ways.

And because we know that the primary emphasis has to be the moral, we have to take care. If there are things that are not right in our lives and God wants to speak to us then we need to make sure that we listen well.

If we do not respond well to God then even though God may still be gracious to us, we will miss much of what is the very best that He wants to give to us. Yes, even though we may not fully obey Him, God may still bless us in some ways but let us be careful.

The life of the richest meaning and fullness comes only when we truly give of ourselves to Him: our concentration, our priorities what we want in life concentrate on the moral, the spiritual, and expressed in each day of our lives.

Let us then as we come before the Lord to seek to appreciate who He is, ask Him to teach us. Who is the Lord Jesus to you? What are you looking for?

If you are looking for the moral and spiritual, you will recognize Him very rapidly. The Lord Jesus in His very life and presence radiates grace and truth, moral and spiritual perfection. It is not difficult to recognize who He is if our hearts are right, we long for the right things.

But if we look for the wrong things we will not recognize Him - He is just a carpenter; He is just a preacher - He can say many significant things but not much more than that.

So if we want to appreciate Him as He really is, let us ask Him to help us to concentrate on the really important things in life and not just for the moment, but each day, each moment, throughout our lives, to persevere in this direction. Then we will understand and we will benefit from what God wants to give to us.