

Misidentifying Jesus

John 6:14 ESV When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” **15** Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

- I. We’re continuing our verse by verse study of the gospel of John.
 - A. If you were with us last week, we talked about the feeding of the multitude; where Jesus fed somewhere between 5,000 - 20,000 people by multiplying 5 small barley loaves and two fish donated by a young boy in the crowd. Today we'll discuss the crowd's "gut reaction" to that miracle.
 1. **John 6:14 ESV** When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Many times, in their amazement, a person will respond to a clear demonstration of Jesus’ glory by misinterpreting (or, as in this case, not fully interpreting) what has happened, making assumptions about Jesus that are either false or incomplete.
 2. When the people say, “the Prophet who is to come into the world”, it is a reference to a prediction that Moses had made (some 1500 years before Christ) that God would send another prophet, like Moses, into the world.
 - a) **Deuteronomy 18:15 ESV** “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—*it is to him you shall listen*—
 - b) Peter and Stephen both point to Christ as the fulfillment of this prediction in the book of Acts. Interestingly however, throughout the NT, the people who are most likely to wonder aloud if he is “the Prophet”, are the ones who seem to know the least about him.
 - (1) In Matthew 16, the disciples reported to Jesus that many of the people in the crowds were saying that Jesus was “the Prophet”, but only Peter was commended for knowing, by divine revelation, the true identity of Jesus; “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matt 16:16)
 - (2) In John 4, the Samaritan woman told Jesus she “perceived” that he was a prophet, but she had to be told by Christ **directly** that he was the messiah at the end of their exchange.
 - c) The message here is that no one can truly know who Jesus is until he tells you who he is!
 - d) If I can be honest with you, I am gravely concerned that many fine, church-going people have only a limited, self-constructed concept of who Christ really is today. Yet, in total self-deception, they truly believe that they know him well!
 - e) All throughout scripture from Jacob at Bethel, to Isaiah in the temple, to Simon in the fishing boat, to Paul on the road to Damascus, people who thought they knew who God was and felt very familiar with him, had their minds blown when he introduced himself.

- (1) If I can be honest with you again, that fact convicts me to the core! Does it you? Is your mind blown by God? His bigness, his beauty, his power, his glory? How long has it been since you've been amazed by him?
 - (2) Or have we become so familiar with him that he is just *something* we've figured out; some formula we've deciphered, some song and dance that we've heard many, many times before.
 - (3) **Romans 11:33 KJV** O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways *past finding out!*
3. It wasn't that those who identified Christ as "the Prophet" were wrong. The problem was in their limited, sin-restrained, flesh-driven perception they didn't go *far enough*. They "under interpreted" him.
- a) Those who identified him as "the Prophet" did so in strictly human terms. Was he a remarkable man in their estimation? Yes. But they regarded him as no more remarkable than Elijah or Moses.
 - (1) The Pharisees who came from Jerusalem to interrogate John the Baptist (in John chapter 1) about his ministry and influence suspected that he also might be "the Prophet".
 - (2) Because they were looking for someone like themselves or one of the great heroes of their history (David, Elijah, etc.) they made no distinction between John the Baptist and the Christ.
 - b) But Christ was not just one among many. He was so much more than just "the Prophet". When the Jews called him that, they were attempting to make him fit him into their story, and their definition. Like the proverbial "square peg" going into the "round hole", they were trying to pound him into their interpretation of how God will fulfill his promises, instead of letting Christ show them how they fit into his story; allowing themselves to be defined by him.
 - (1) Many today still try to define and identify Christ. Many today still resist asking God to show us who Jesus really is, and submitting to him to tell us who we really are.
 - (a) Muslims regard Christ as prophet but certainly not God.
 - (b) Mormons teach that Christ was once merely human as we are, and that we will one day be gods, as Christ is now. And of course, none of this has any basis whatsoever in scripture.
 - (2) But this isn't only an issue for those who adhere to religious beliefs that are unscriptural and clearly false. I'm also speaking of those who claim to be Christians, and may attend church every week, but yet look at Jesus as not much more than a ticket to heaven when we die, or a ever-present vending machine to dole out favors as we faithfully demand them.
 - (a) Make no mistake, if you place your trust in him, Christ will certainly take you to Heaven when you die, and he loves to hear and answer your prayers, but if that (or several others things) is the grand total of your estimate of the worth of Christ, you haven't

even begun to recognize his power, beauty, majesty, worth and glory. You don't really know him.

- (b) You must begin today to plead with God to reveal himself, and to reveal Christ as he truly is, not as we have perceived him to be.
 4. Christ was undoubtedly the supreme and quintessential prophet of Israel. But understanding that means little if you fail to understand that he was also the highest of High Priests, and the King above every other sovereign. That he was Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. Those who enjoyed the free lunch had correctly identified him in that one aspect, but could not, by corrupt and limited human insight, ever fully understand him. Neither can you or I.
- B. Watch what happens next...**John 6:15 ESV** Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. Because they failed to fully identify him, but they also “misapplied” him. Because they didn’t know who he was, they didn’t know what to do with him.
1. This means that upon discerning that he may be “the Prophet”, they quickly realize that they can’t let him slip through their fingers! John 6:2 tells us that the crowd was following him in the first place because they had seen his healing power. Now they have experienced how he can feed thousands by miraculously multiplying food!
 2. Why, if this was a even a sample of the power at his disposal, just think of what he could do to their Roman oppressors! The Jews could be unstoppable! Imagine Caesar himself trembling before their mighty King!.
 3. What absurdity! They thought they would make him what he already was: a king! But Jesus’ answer to their grand scheme was to simply withdraw from their bluster, retreating to the mountain to enjoy the company of his Father in solitude.
- C. He was not persuaded by their demands that he rule over them. Jesus never surrendered to the surges of pride at the praise and affirmation of others as you and I so often have. He was not insecure, enslaved to the opinions of others.
1. **John 2:24 ESV** But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them (*the crowds - MS*), because he knew all people **25** and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.
 2. Instead, Jesus lived to please the Father. In fact John 8 tells us that he “always” did what was pleasing to the Father. He did this by perfectly trusting the Father, which resulted in perfect obedience to the Father. Hebrews 11:6 (which we usually look to as an instruction for ourselves) illustrates this perfectly well.
 - a) **Hebrews 11:6 ESV** And without *faith* it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
 - b) Faith, simply defined, means trusting that what God says is true, with no regard for our outward circumstances; that he is always good and in control. There was never a moment when the Son of God was not trusting the Father like this. Doing what pleased God was his life.

- D. Because of this commitment to pleasing God, by submitting to his will no matter what, Jesus was prepared when this mob tried to compel him to lead Israel. In fact, this wasn't the first time he had been prematurely offered the throne!
1. **Matthew 4:8 ESV** Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. **9** And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"
 - a) The devil tried to convince Jesus that he could still get what he'd come for with the added benefit avoiding the pain, humiliation and separation from God that would result from the cross.
 - b) But Jesus knew that if the cost of the throne is bowing the knee to an illegitimate authority, than you are never truly King.
2. Because of this, Jesus' hastily assembled "Political Action Committee", were no better than the devil himself! Satan tried to get Jesus to bow the knee and worship him. The crowd wanted Jesus to bow the knee to serve their interests. But Jesus chose instead to retreat to the Father and please him.
- E. The world simply cannot understand the reality or nature of Christ's kingship. At his trial, both the Jewish and Roman authorities insisted that he give a clear answer as to who he was.
1. **John 18:33 ESV** So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "**Are you the King of the Jews?**" **34** Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" **35** Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" **36** Jesus answered, "**My kingdom is not of this world.** If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. **But my kingdom is not from the world.**" **37** Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." **38** Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"
 2. Did you see that? Jesus was telling Pilate that he was incapable of understanding who Christ was because he was not "of the truth" ("**Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.**"). Pilate confirms what Jesus has said by asking the question, "What is truth?"
- F. Jesus' kingship will not be molded to our desires and it cannot even be perceived by those who have no concern or clue about the will of the Father.
- G. Nevertheless, people who misidentify Christ as something less than he truly is will always try to enthrone him over their pet causes.
1. Perhaps they will try to take him by force by co-opting his name, reputation or church in order to champion their right or left leaning political cause. Or like the man in Luke 12, they may want Jesus to be take their side in a family dispute, blessing them with the supposed moral high ground. Maybe they

- want him to grant his affirmation of their theological or denominational superiority over all those they have branded heretics.
2. But I can assure you, that whenever you try to forcefully chain Christ to your agenda, whatever it is, he will quickly slip from your grasp and go where you cannot follow (up to the mountain to enjoy the Father!).
- II. Never forget that Jesus doesn't need your agenda because he already has one of his own. He cannot be persuaded under any circumstances to abandon it.
- A. Everyone of us at some point wants Jesus to "play ball", and conform to our preferences, and comply with our demands.
 1. But the fundamental nature of our discipleship is to surrender to the will and the demands of Jesus, and never the other way around.
 2. And Jesus is not vague in his use of imagery to describe what following him entails! **Luke 14:27 ESV** *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*
 - B. Jesus uses the image of crucifixion, the bloodiest, most humiliating and painful form of execution that mankind has ever put forth to describe for you and I in unmistakable metaphor what the life of a Christ-follower must look like.
 1. Agendas and pet-projects are of absolutely no benefit to someone who is nailed to a cross.
 - a) Your hands are nailed down so that you can no longer do what you choose to do.
 - b) Your feet are nailed down so that you can no longer go where you choose to go.
 2. A man or woman on a cross is no longer in control of his or her life. The plan has been sacrificed to the will of another.
 - C. But when Christ invites us to share in the shame and death of his cross, he is inviting us to do no less than he was willing to do in order to please the Father.
 1. **Matthew 26:39b** *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, **not as I will, but as you will.**"*
 2. You cannot call yourself a Christian until you have prayed the same prayer to Christ, surrendering your agenda, your desires, and your will to him no matter what. "Not as I will, but as you will!"
- III. None of this sounds very hopeful does it? Follow Jesus so you can die! Follow Jesus and watch all the plans that you've ever had for your life shrivel! We've been talking about rightly identifying who Jesus is, and about not forcing him to be the puppet King over our little kingdoms. If we rightly submit to his will, identifying him as Lord it will cost us everything, with no exceptions.
- A. But before you hear this word and go away sad like the rich young man whom Christ told to sell everything he had and give it to the poor; you must realize that Christ is not merely asking you to surrender your agenda, he's asking you to exchange it.
 - B. **1 Timothy 6:17 ESV** *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, **who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.** 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure*

for themselves as **a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of **that which is truly life**.

1. In 1 John 2:17, the apostle says that everything in this world (all the stuff we fight for and hope in) is fading away. But by contrast he says that the one who does the will of God abides - literally "lives" - forever.
 2. We are promised in Romans 6:8 we are told that **if** we have died with Christ that we will surely live with him - both now in the spirit and one day in a physical reality.
- C. Jesus said that the pathway to finding your life is to lose it - with all of it's earthly agendas, passions and desires. It is in him that we both lose our old life and find our real one.
- D. So remember, Jesus is much more than "the Prophet", he is God. And you would do well to decide today to make him your Lord. He doesn't need you to try and force him to be the puppet king of your agenda. He is already King of Kings and Lord of Lords.