

The Misunderstood Christ

Introduction. Jesus Christ whom we are honoring today in the observance of the Lord's supper is referred to by a number of titles. He is called the Son of God, Savior, Prince of Peace, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and many other titles which help us to understand His mission and work. Men have referred to Christ as the Wonderful Christ, the Powerful Christ and the Saving Christ. However, there is another expression which correctly describes Jesus Christ. I want to talk to you about the Misunderstood Christ.

It is often easier to be misunderstood than it is to be understood, and this is especially true with reference to one who occupies a position of public trust. The world has always misunderstood those who want to help them, frequently subjecting them to persecution and even to death. When Stephen defended himself in Acts 7, he told the Jews that God had sent the prophets to help Israel, and yet they had persecuted and stoned them.

Jesus Christ was the greatest help to mankind the world has ever known, and yet He was misunderstood, persecuted and finally crucified (Matthew 23:27). It will do us good to study for a little while about the Misunderstood Christ.

I. ***Some Misunderstand The Nature Of His Kingdom***

- A. The Jews misunderstood Christ's mission in coming to the earth. The prophets had foretold of His birth, life, mission, death and the blessings He would bring to the world. It had been clearly predicted by the prophets that He would come as the Savior of the world and would be made king of a spiritual kingdom, ruling through the law of love over the hearts of those who would voluntarily submit themselves to Him.
- B. The rulers of Israel regarded Jesus from the time of His birth to His death as one who had come to set up an earthly kingdom and make Himself a ruler in opposition to them. The friends of Jesus misunderstood His mission and tried to make Him a king by force (John 6:15). Jesus foiled their scheme by fleeing alone into the mountain.
- C. In spite of three year's worth of teaching on the subject, the apostles failed to understand the nature of His work and His kingdom (John 18:36; Luke 24:21). Even after His resurrection from the dead and His teaching concerning the kingdom of God during the subsequent forty days, they still misunderstood (Acts 1:6).

II. ***Some Misunderstand The Purpose Of His Miracles***

- A. The miracles which He worked were His divine credentials, proving His claim to be the Son of God and the fulfillment of all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. He worked miracles in order to lead

the people to believe in Him and to confirm the word of God (John 11:15; 20:30-31).

- B. The purpose of the apostles in performing miracles was the confirmation of the word (Mark 16:17-30), and since the word, according to Hebrews 2:1-4, has been confirmed, the purpose of miracles has been accomplished (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).
- C. So those who expect to see miracles performed today, or who expect to be able to work miracles in the name of Christ, either misunderstand the purpose of the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, or they are unsatisfied with the confirmation which has been given.

III. ***Some Misunderstand The Meaning Of His Silence***

- A. While the Jews were pretending to give Jesus a fair trial, they presented witnesses who brought contradictory charges, but Jesus offered no answer (Mark 14:60-61; 15:3-5; Luke 23:8-9). Some understood the silence of Jesus as an admission of guilt while others thought that His silence indicated fear in the presence of His enemies.
- B. There are some today who think that Christ's silence on a particular subject is a license to do as they please. Some think that because Jesus did not say, "Thou shalt not gamble," "Thou shalt not dance," "Thou shalt not dress enticingly," "Thou shalt not drink socially," that they have the liberty to do as they please in all these matters.
- C. We have people who think they can introduce into the worship and work of the church anything which Jesus has not expressly forbidden. They think that because He did not say, "Thou shalt not count beads," "Thou shalt not burn incense," "Thou shalt not have mechanical instruments of music in worship," that they can do as they please.
- D. Now we even have professed followers of Christ who are teaching that because He did not say, "Thou shalt not build a school," "Thou shalt not have a gym," "Thou shalt not have a family life and counseling center," that they have a license to do as they please. Misunderstanding the silence of Jesus can be disastrous. His silence means exactly what it states -- nothing (cf. Hebrews 7:14)!

IV. ***Some Misunderstand The Nature Of His Gospel***

- A. If the teachings of Jesus was followed in general we would have a better society, and yet the gospel is not a social betterment code. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). The gospel is not designed to bring about a better social order and to solve the problems of business and civil governments.

- B. The Lord revealed the gospel to save lost souls and to prepare them for heaven. We may feed the poor, build houses in which for them to live and put fine clothes on their bodies, but if we do not preach to them the gospel of Christ they will be lost forever.

V. ***Some Misunderstand The Mission Of His Church***

- A. Some think of the church as being a material building; some look upon the church as a hospital and medical association; some think of it as a political organization; some consider the church as a recreational facility; some feel that the church is the place to go when in need of food and clothes; and some consider the church of Christ as just another denomination among denominations.
- B. The church was brought into existence by the blood of Jesus Christ to make known to the world the wisdom and will of the Lord and to tell the lost how to be saved (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 3:10-11).
- C. The first mission of the church is to preach the gospel of Christ to a lost world (Luke 19:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). The second mission of the church is edification, whereby the saints are built up in Christ (Ephesians 4:16). The third mission of the church is benevolence for the needy saints (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). When the church devotes itself to other endeavors, it has lost its way in the world.

VI. ***Some Misunderstand The Purpose Of His Second Coming***

- A. The New Testament clearly sets forth why Jesus is coming again.
 - 1. He will raise the dead (John 5:28-29).
 - 2. He will change the living (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).
 - 3. He will judge all men (2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-32).
 - 4. He will reward the righteous and condemn the wicked (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).
 - 5. He will deliver the kingdom up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).
- B. In spite of this plain teaching some think that He is coming again to establish the kingdom, to sit on David's throne, to restore Palestine to the Jews, to convert the Jews and to reign a thousand years.

Conclusion. Why have men so grossly misunderstood these aspects concerning Christ? There are a number of reasons. First, some have misunderstood because when they study the New Testament, they have already made up their minds. They already know how they want to be saved, the kind of church they want to be a member of, the name of it, its organization, its work and worship and how they want to live. Second, some have misunderstood because they are blinded by custom or tradition. When Jesus ex-

posed the scribes and Pharisees' false doctrines, denounced their sins and blocked the progress of their wicked plans, they closed their hearts to His teaching and killed Him.

Third, some have misunderstood because to understand would mean their condemnation. We must not become discouraged because we cannot get people to see the folly of subscribing to doctrines which go beyond the word of God. If they would see the truth, they would have to admit to the sinfulness of dividing the body of Christ. Fourth, some have misunderstood because they have never given the Bible the careful study it deserves. They are like some members of the church today who are so busy that they cannot attend Bible classes, read their Bible and attend services where the gospel is preached.

We must come to Jesus with an open heart, casting aside our preconceived ideas and be ready to say, "Lord, speak and I will hear; command and I will obey; lead and I will follow," if we are to understand Christ and His teaching. In understanding Jesus Christ and humbling ourselves to do His bidding, we shall enjoy His blessings to the fullest here and have everlasting life in the world to come. This is the hope that characterizes the faithful and obedient Christian who understands Christ and His church.