

Christmas According to John
Why God Became Man: Humanity Needs a Savior, part 2
John 2:23-25
December 10, 2017

We are in a series for the month of December, "Christmas According to John," "Why God became Man." Last week we saw that God became man because humanity needs a Mediator. This week we look at 2:23-25 and consider "Why God Became Man: Humanity Needs a Savior."

There is a Faith that Jesus Does Not Accept

When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, many believed in his name because they saw the signs he was doing (23).¹ This is why John wrote his gospel. John wrote about the signs Jesus did so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we might have eternal life (20:30-31). This is what we have seen so far in the gospel. "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (1:12). At the wedding in Cana, the first of Jesus's signs, Jesus manifested his glory and the disciples believed (2:11)." At the temple, when he drove out the merchants and animals and overturned the money changers tables, the disciples believed (2:22). So, John is on task, writing so that people believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, see Jesus' glory, and receive eternal life. But this is disturbing. What it says is that Jesus can see a person's heart and know that there is some believing that is not really believing. There is some believing that does not lead to eternal life. So, Jesus is not encouraged by their response, "But Jesus did not entrust himself to them (24)." He did not go with them, he did not give himself to them. Why does he talk like this? Because Jesus is motivated by love and wants us to see that there is a faith that leads to eternal devastation. It is a matter of eternal life and joy or eternal torment (Jo 3:36).

We have seen that Jesus' disciples believed in him without any questioning from Jesus. Why did Jesus not entrust himself to them? "Jesus did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and he needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man (24-25)." These verses tell us two things about Jesus' knowledge that I want to look at in reference to believing and then come back to look more closely at what this tells us about Jesus. The first is that Jesus has perfect knowledge of all people. Jesus can see right through all people, through and all of us, and know the motives and intentions of the heart. He can tell if our faith is the kind of faith brings eternal life or not. There is a kind of faith that Jesus does not approve and does not accept. So, the reason Jesus does not entrust himself to the many here is that he knows all people perfectly and knows what is in them and does not accept their faith. But why does he not accept their faith? The text gives us two clues. The first is that they believe because they saw him doing signs. The second clue points in the same direction, Nicodemus is an example of this sign faith. Nicodemus recognizes that Jesus is a teacher because of the signs he was doing (see 2:23-3:2, especially 3:2). He was a religious leader yet did not recognize his own need of a Savior.

They "believed" because of the signs or miracles Jesus did, it was a sign faith. Miracles are no guarantee people will come to genuine saving faith in Jesus and experience eternal life. Signs and wonders support and authenticate the message of Jesus (20:30-31; He 2:1-4) but they do not guarantee faith. John describes Jesus becoming man as, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth (1:14)." Seeing Jesus' glory leads to receiving grace and truth or eternal life. When Jesus turned water into wine, John tells us that "Jesus revealed his glory and the disciples believed in him (2:11)." Seeing Jesus' glory and believing are connected and necessary to experience eternal life. When you are not satisfied with Jesus you will look to substitutes for satisfaction, even religious substitutes. Genuine faith sees past Jesus as a sign worker to seeing Jesus as a Savior. The signs point to the glory of the Savior. Genuine faith is more than just affirming the miraculous in Jesus but affirming the miraculous within the one believing, the new birth (1:12-13). So, Jesus did not entrust himself to the

¹ The imperfect verb tense points to repeated miracles.

many who believed because he did not approve or accept their faith. Genuine saving faith sees the glory of the Savior. More than we need signs, we need a Savior. If you believe in Jesus for any other reason than recognizing your need for a Savior then you believe in the wrong Jesus. Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet and did miracles but not as a Savior. Secular people believe that Jesus was a good moral teacher and someone who did miracles but not as a Savior. Genuine faith is seeing beyond the miracles to seeing God's glory in Jesus, recognizing him as the Savior of the world (4:42). And this kind of seeing and believing is the work of God in the human heart (6:29; 2 Co 4:4-6). Jesus became a man because humanity needs a Savior.

Jesus' Knowledge is Glorious

I want us to look at Jesus's knowledge again to see how glorious this knowledge is (24-25). Jesus' perfect knowledge of all people points to his omniscience as God (16:30). Jesus can see right through all of us and see the motives of our hearts. Another human being may not be able to see them, but Jesus sees them perfectly (1:45-48; Jo 21:15-17). You cannot keep any secrets from Jesus. Those things that you hide from your spouse, your boss, your friends, or your parent, are totally and completely known by Jesus. And Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows an infinite number of things about us, about our pasts, about our inner turmoil, about our feelings, and our darkest thoughts and desires. He knows all of those convoluted motives and desires. Similarly, Jesus knows what was in man (25). He did not need anyone to bear witness about humanity, he knows what was in humanity more deeply than any human being. That is, he has a perfect knowledge of the sinfulness of humanity (Ro 3:9-18). Humanity is hopelessly and helplessly under the power of sin. The only way out is the Savior. This is the beauty of the gospel: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope ~Tim Keller.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What are some of the reasons God became man?
2. How do you describe faith?
3. Why does Jesus not accept the faith of those believe here?
4. What is the difference between saving faith and the faith Jesus rejects?
5. How do we know we have genuine faith?
6. Does your faith ever feel weak and fickle that you wonder if it is true faith? Describe.
7. What are the purpose of signs or miracles?
8. Do miracles guarantee faith?
9. What is the greatest miracle?
10. What does God's omniscience mean?
11. Is God's omniscience comforting or not?
12. What is the beauty of the gospel?

