

## The Death of Christ (4) What Do You Think of Jesus?

KSBC 03.08.09

Luke 22:54-71

**INTRO** Jesus is controversial. He is provocative. What you think about Jesus and how far you are willing to follow or defend him can cause quite a stir. What you think about Jesus this morning indicates clearly where you stand with God. Jesus forces people to take a position and that position either saves or condemns your soul.

Before Jesus was 2 months old, a godly man named Simeon held him and gave Mary, his mother this warning:

*This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.* Luke 2:34-35

For those who have any understanding of Jesus life, work and teaching, Simeon states the obvious. Jesus divides people by teaching dogmatically that the only way to 'rise' into God's kingdom is to 'fall' in humility and faith. He is a sign pointing to the truth about God and the way to God. He certainly is spoken against. But the phrase that Simeon makes about Jesus that draws our attention and curious delight is about how Jesus will cause the thoughts of people's hearts to be revealed.

There is a revelatory function to Jesus' work and teaching. People declare the very beliefs and thoughts of their hearts by their attitude toward Him. The old A.B. Simpson hymn asks 'What will you do with Jesus?' and then declares with certainty, 'neutral you cannot be!' Leon Morris in his commentary on Luke's gospel writes it this way; "When men see Christ suffer, their reaction shows on which side they stand."

We come to the study of the death of Christ again this morning with one eye open to watch for reactions. When the circles of public opinion and personal pride close tighter and tighter around you, your reactions are the best way to know the reality of what is in your heart regarding Jesus. Allow your response to Jesus to provoke you to deal with the reality of what you find in your heart today.

We pick up our study of Jesus death as he is being arrested and taken to the house of the high priest for the first of a two part trial before the religious leaders and officials. Luke tells the story of this night before Jesus death on a cross by telling three separate but connected stories of people reacting to Jesus and his message.

### **Luke 22:54-71**

Peter's denials reveal a heart of self confidence.	54-62
The guards insulting cruelty reveal a heart of stupidity.	63-65
The religious trial reveals hearts of self righteousness.	66-71

Part of Jesus destiny is to reveal what is going on in people's hearts. Simeon said it. Both you and I need to be reminded and warned about it. We need to be careful listeners and heart examiners because of it. As you again review and see Jesus suffer, on which side do you stand and why?

## **Jesus suffering reveals and provokes you to deal with these heart issues:**

### **1. Self confidence.                    22:54-62**

This account of Peter's denials is based on Jesus earlier interaction with Peter found in verses 31-34. Satan's sifting, Jesus praying, Jesus warning and Peter's pride are all played out in real life as the circles of pressure close in on Peter one questioner at a time.

**Question/issue:** What causes a person who claims to know Christ deny him under pressure from the evil one?

**What is revealed?** Self confidence.

Self confidence is, in this situation, is seen as a lack of dependence on Jesus due to a high level of confidence in your ability to live for Jesus in your own strength.

Characteristics of self-confidence include performance orientation, a lack of humility in listening to God well and the absence of dependent prayer. It is dangerous. It must be crushed or it will lead a person to hell.

The human heart does not have room for confidence in self and confidence in Christ.

Peter's failure and Christ's faithfulness (v.61) leads to the crushing of self confidence (v.63). Jesus faithfulness to follow the path of suffering and death changes Peter.

Cmp. John 21:15-19

Heb.4:14-16

2Cor.12:9-10

Acts 2:22-24

### **2. Stupidity.                            22:63-65**

The observant reader will note that the cruelty of the guards is set in a context where Jesus went 2 for 2 on prophesying what would take place in the future. Jesus said that Peter would deny him 3x before the rooster crows (v.34). Jesus predicted that he would be mocked, beaten and insulted (18:32-33). While his predictions are coming true, these guards blindfold him for a special game insulting his claim to be a prophet.

**Question/issue:** What motivates people to insult, mock and beat up a man who has not only done nothing wrong but has given evidence of being someone rather remarkable?

**What does this response reveal?** Stupidity.

Stupidity in this sense is not a reference to intelligence or how much a person knows. It is a term that well represents the condition of the human heart towards God and truth. There is a density, a dullness, a slowness . . . when it comes to understanding Christ and the gospel; people are dim-witted, thick and clueless.

Eph.4:17-19 – futile thinking, darkened understanding, separated due to ignorance, lost all sensitivity, given over to sensuality and desire for more . . .all due to hardened hearts. The guards were simply doing what was natural, what the crowd around them was doing and what felt good to them. The insults, beating and spitting were still beyond what most

civilized people would approve, but the darkness of rejection is the same regardless of how it is manifested.

Jesus suffering and death caused some soldiers to see clearly and acknowledge Jesus with at least some new level of respect. Jesus as the promised messiah and the unique Son of God is seen most clearly in his passion and death. Matthew 27:54

Cmp. Eph.2:5

1Peter 2:9

Acts 28:26-27

### **3. Self righteousness.**

**22:66-71**

Jesus is hesitant in his answers because he knows the hearts of the religious leaders. They will not believe him, they have made up their minds and they are convinced that they measure up to God's requirements by their external conformity to their rules(67-68).

**Question/issue:** What causes religious people to reject and call for the death of a man who has both said and demonstrated that he is from God?

**What is revealed?** Self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness is having a high view of your goodness, obedience and attention to religious details. Concepts of humbling yourself before the authority of God, submitting yourself to the judgment of God or deflecting attention and honor away from yourself toward God are quite foreign to you. These religious leaders rejected Christ and condemned him to death because he demanded they worship him and honor him as God. They had no room in their thinking for any approach to God outside their own system of rules, laws and self promotion.

In this brief description of the two phases of the religious trial, 3 names or titles for Jesus are heard and used by the religious leaders. Jesus is the Christ – the one sent to rule and reign as God's chosen one. Jesus is the Son of Man – the perfect union of deity and humanity. Jesus is the Son of God – the one and only sent from the Father.

Jesus claimed that he would be seated at the right hand of God from now on. This is clearly understood as a statement of authority, judgment and identity with God that demands worship and submission. In the midst of his being on trial at the hands of these self righteous leaders, he reminded them clearly that they will sit under his judgment. The darkness of self-righteousness motivated the hatred and rejection shown in their condemnation of Jesus.

Cmp. Acts 6:7

1Timothy 1:12-17

Psa110

Acts 2:32-33

## **Take Aways**

1. Ask God for help to identify what Jesus suffering and death reveal about your heart.
2. Purpose to live more obediently as one who has been rescued from darkness and placed into the light of Christ.
3. Turn from your sin and darkness, cry out to God for mercy and believe on Christ.

## **Study Questions**

1. What questions, observations or thoughts do you have from the study of Luke 22:54-71?
2. What do you think of Jesus? If you were to ask that question to your unchurched co-workers, neighbors or family members, what kind of answers would you get? Why?
3. Read the story of Simeon's prophesy regarding baby Jesus in Luke 2:25-35. What does the statement 'there is a revelatory function to Jesus work and teaching' mean? How does Jesus reveal the thoughts of hearts?
4. Read Luke's description of Peter's 3 denials in 22:31-34 and 54-62. What observations or questions do you have? What was happening inside Peter when the rooster crowed and he saw Jesus looking at him? What caused him to weep bitterly?
5. How does self confidence show itself in your life? What is the difference between good self confidence and bad self confidence? How has God crushed your confidence in yourself and built confidence in him in your life?
6. Read 22:63-65. Observe how many and what type of things these guards were doing to Jesus in the space of these short verses. Why is it so popular to neglect, insult or reject Jesus?
7. Read Matthew 27:54. What happened to these soldiers to change their thinking or open their darkened minds to truth? Connect other passages listed under point 2 to this discussion.
8. Read 22:66-71. Recall and review other accounts of when Jesus and the religious leaders connected in the gospel of Luke (for example 11:37ff).
9. What is self righteousness and why is it such a powerful force for darkness?
10. How can you help present the death of Christ to self confident, stupid and self righteous people, both in your sphere of influence as well as around the world, this week?