

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

CLASS EIGHT – JESUS FINDS YOUR LACK OF FAITH DISTURBING

1. Introduction

[movie clip – DV] Lights, please. Welcome to Class 8 of Who is Jesus Christ. Who can guess the title of my lesson today? Like DV, Jesus finds our lack of faith disturbing. As we saw a couple of weeks ago, some things made Jesus mad. Disrespect for God's temple; hypocrisy of religious leaders. Also, lack of faith in his disciples. I looked in a Concordance and found 10 times in the gospels where Jesus rebuked his disciples for lack of faith. Let's look at some examples. Turn to Matt 17.

2. Jesus Concern over Lack of Faith

Jesus comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Talked with Moses and Elijah. The Voice of God spoke. Pretty heady stuff. Back down on earth what does he find? :14-17. The 9 could not cast out a demon. How does Jesus feel about it? He is not happy. Upset. Frustrated. Exasperated. Probably rolled his eyes. Threw up his hands. Calls them perverse. Imagine being one of the 9. What a stinging rebuke! Jesus found their lack of faith disturbing. :18-21 How much faith did they need to have? Faith as small as a mustard seed. A small amount of genuine faith is enough for God to do amazing things. Doesn't have to be large; simply has to be real. We often read this passage to inspire great faith – All things are possible! But we often miss the rebuke. They had so little faith it did not even measure up to a mustard seed. So little Jesus couldn't detect it; called them unbelieving and perverse. He found their lack of faith disturbing.

Turn to Luke 18. Jesus was also concerned about our faith. You and me. The faith of future disciples. He wondered if we would give up. :1-8. Jesus tells a parable to encourage his disciples to pray and never give up. God will give us justice when we cry out to Him. But we are impatient people. Sometimes we have to wait longer than we want. We are tempted to give up and quit. [Praying for a teen minister.] He is telling us we can count on God to hear our prayers and answer them. But then Jesus asks the question. When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? As we talked about from Dan 7, Jesus knew one day he will come again in power on the clouds of heaven. He wondered if the faith of the future church would last that long. Would we – the future disciples – continue to have faith. Continue to pass it on. Or would we quit. Give up. Let it die out. Fail to pass it on to the next generation of believers. That's his question for us today: Will you still have faith when I come again? Are you tempted to quit? Are you tempted to give up? **DON'T!** Hang in there. God will answer your prayers. Be faithful until Jesus comes again. Jesus doesn't want you to give up and quit. He finds that possibility disturbing.

Turn to John 20. Jesus has been raised from the dead. He appeared to Mary M and to 10 of the apostles. But someone wasn't there. You know the story. [Have Thomas read?] :24-28. Thomas was from Missouri – the Show Me State. He had to see it and touch it to believe it. So often we want to see it before we believe it. Only after

the prayer is answered can I have faith. Only after I see results do I believe. Sometimes like Gideon, God will help us with our faith. But here Jesus simply rebukes Thomas. Stop doubting and believe. I think he says that to us too. When we grumble and complain about problems in our lives and don't see the solution. When we grumble and complain about our jobs, our spouses, our kids, the leaders or the church and we don't see God working. Jesus says "Stop doubting and believe." I really did rise from the dead. You can have faith. Amen!

Then he says something very encouraging. :29 Jesus talks about us. Blessed are those who do not see and believe. That's us. We believe without seeing the resurrected Christ. We are blessed because of that. Do you feel blessed this morning? Jesus says you are. You believe he arose. Amen! You are blessed for that. .

:30-31 John then tells us why he wrote the gospel. So that we could believe even though we have not seen. Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing have life in his name. That's why he wrote the book. In 95 AD, when John wrote his gospel, he may have been that last living memory of Jesus. The last person who actually knew him, heard him, saw his miracles. Saw the Resurrection. And he, by the Holy Spirit, recorded it for us so we can believe. Stop doubting and believe!

3. Who does Jesus want us to believe in?

Turn to John 14. ?^ That may sound like a funny question, but Jesus answered it differently than anyone else in the Bible or from any other (legitimate) religious figure in history. :1-6. Jesus said to believe in God, yes, but also to believe in him. He called people to have trust in him, put their faith in him. To follow him. To obey him. To be devoted to him. To love him more than anyone else. This made Jesus different than any other religious leader of his day or of any day. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me. Everyone else pointed to God or to the Way or to the Truth or to the Secret of Life as being above or somewhere else; Jesus pointed to himself. This is what caused controversy; caused some people not to follow him, to turn away. We read that 2,000 years later, and yes we believe it, but I don't think we grasp the impact this must have had when Jesus said it. Imagine being there. A real live human being said that to them.

:7-11. Philip makes a bold but entirely reasonable request. Show us the Father! Don't we all want that! Let us see God. A shaft of bright light from heaven. The ceiling opens, the clouds part, a host of angels descend praising God and He descends right here into the room, performs incredible miracles and give us direction for our lives. That would build your faith. But look at Jesus' reaction to Philip. He seems peaved. Annoyed. Disturbed again. Don't you get it? Have I been with you so long and you still don't understand? Seeing me is seeing the Father. My words are the Father's words. The Father is in me. Wow! Guess what? God did send the shaft of light. Angels did come and proclaim his coming. He did come down from heaven. He did give us guidance. He did do miracles. And Jesus was Him. He is God come to earth. God in the flesh. God's Word, God's Message, revealed to us in human form walking around. Jesus points to the miracles. He fed 5,000 people. Made the blind see. Walked on water. Raised the dead. Haven't I proved to you that I am God? I imagine the disciples sitting

there with the jaws hanging down. Speechless. Incredulous. Stunned. What did he just say?

Back in John 10, he said something similar to the Pharisees “I and the Father are one.” Not merely united, but one and the same. This is a hard teaching. The Pharisees and the Sadducees couldn’t accept it. The scribes and teachers of the law. The chief priest and the Sanhedrin. Ordinary people such as the folks in Nazareth in Luke 4 couldn’t accept it. Even people who accepted him at first and thought he was the Messiah; they turned away in John 6. It is simply hard to accept that Jesus was God.

I think it is hard for us too. Even as disciples, we want to put our faith in something else. A leader, a church, relationships; or a pat set of doctrines, a system, a creed. I think this is why many fell away when the ICOC dissolved. Their faith was not in Jesus, but in something else. Even the Bible itself cannot be the focus of our faith more than Jesus. In John 5:39 Jesus warned the Pharisees about that. They thought they could find life by pouring over the Scriptures, but they failed to recognize the Messiah – the very one the Scriptures pointed to. I love the Bible; it is an essential guide and source of authority. But the Bible didn’t die for me on a cross. Turn to Exo 3.

4. Who is Jesus Christ?

When God speaks to Moses from the Burning Bush, they have quite a conversation. God calls him to return to Egypt and free his people, but Moses is reluctant. He keeps trying to find reasons not to go. Look at verses: 13-15. Moses asked God his name and God tells him “I AM.” In the next verse he uses the word translated LORD – the name of God. Yahweh. Jehovah. The Hebrew words “I AM” and the “LORD” are related. Both mean the One Who Is. The One who exists outside of time. The Eternal One. I AM is first person – God referring to himself; The LORD is third person – when we refer to God. They are both the name of God. Turn to John 8.

In John 8, starting in verse 30-31, Jesus has been challenging Jews who believe in him. He is trying to get them to take the next step of faith. Jesus tells the Jews everyone is a slave to sin, but they get offended and they respond saying they are children of Abraham and slaves of no one. Look what Jesus says about Abraham. :58-59. Jesus said “Before Abraham was, I am.” Jesus wasn’t merely claiming to be very old. He is using the name of God and applying it to himself. The Jews understood this instantly and wanted to stone him. He is claiming to be the same person who spoke to Moses from the Burning Bush. Jehovah. Yahweh. The One Who Always Is. The One outside of time. The Great I AM.

This is the ultimate answer to the question Who is Jesus Christ? Yes, he was the Messiah prophesied by the OT. Yes, he brought a kingdom that defeats Satan’s dominion in our lives. Yes, he was the Son of God. Yes, he was human with feelings and emotions like us. Yes, he was the Friend of Sinners. But above all He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Father revealed to us in human form. The Great I AM come to earth. Amen!