

# Faith and Works LXIX

The Contemporary and Biblical Contexts

Col. 2:8

# Seeing Jesus

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## **Introduction**

Three years may not seem like a long for a career and ministry that two thousand years later is still transforming individuals and even whole societies, and providing the stability for democratic law and government.

But for the ministry of Jesus, it was probably long enough. Another year on earth, and we would not be putting our faith in Christ, we would be buying and selling the products and services that surely would have resulted as men sought, as they always seem to do, to codify and franchise the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

## **Hearing Him**

Even late into the ministry of Jesus on the mount of transfigurations, the disciples of Jesus were looking to take the ministry and message of Jesus and add it to the existing religious institutions of the day. They did not understand that as the Lamb of God, Jesus would fulfill what the Law and the Prophets had foretold.

### **Matthew 17:1-8**

*Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

*While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*

### **Matthew 9:16-17**

*No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

He had not come as another teacher of religious truth. He was the way, the truth and the life, the light of men in the darkness of their inherited fallen condition

as descendants of the first fallen Adam. He was not to abolish the law, but to fulfill all that was written in the law and the prophets.

**Matthew 5:17**

*"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill".*

## **Seeking Him**

The ministry of Jesus was not to produce generic religious faith or the working of miracles, it was to present Himself, that all would believe on Him for salvation and reconciliation with God.

### **John 8:24**

*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

This would seem to be why John delineates the turning of Jesus to the final phase of His earthly ministry, when he notes how the Greeks, who had now caught wind of the miraculous ministry of Jesus, and had come to interview the Messiah in search of His wisdom.

### **John 12:20-24**

*Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”*

*Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.*

*But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

### **1 Corinthians 1:21-23**

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness*

Jesus was not teaching a new law, He was there to fulfill the law and the prophets in Himself. And all of the teachings of Jesus can be summoned up in the understanding of how we are to behave, not as a religious work of payment, but as a response, and on behalf of becoming newly redeemed children who are born again into the kingdom of God through faith and union with God through Christ Himself.

And this is where the simplicity and purity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is often overlooked or misunderstood by those seeking yet another religious set of laws or principles. It is faith in Christ Himself that enables the believer to stand before God as a child of the kingdom, not the imitation or pursuit of the faith Jesus had, or his spiritual power. Those seeking such will miss the significance of the cross of Jesus as they instead seek spiritual power and favor with God on behalf of their dependency and trust in the clay vessel, not the treasure that God would place in that vessel.

### **2 Corinthians 4:7**

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

### **2 Corinthians 4:6-7**

*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*

### **2 Corinthians 12:10**

*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

The Greeks were not there to see Jesus, they were there to learn from Him, so as to possibly emulate Him, or gain the same knowledge they assumed He had to enable them to also do the same miraculous works.

## **Learning to See Jesus**

Learning to do miracles was not the point of the ministry of Christ. He was not here to teach fallen man how to redeem themselves and become supermen. He sought to take all of mankind on the cross and finish once for all the kingdom men built on the fallen foundation of sand inherited from the first Adam.

This so that all who would put their faith in Him, could start again, even as children, born again and starting to build who and what they were to become on the foundation of His risen life. That all would not be a continued building on the old foundation inherited from the fallen first Adam, but would instead be the working out of fruit growing from the seed of the Gospel received in good soil, the deeds done by the heart, soul and mind at rest in the finished work of Christ.

### **Matthew 23:25-26**

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

### **Proverbs 4:23**

*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*

### **Matthew 5:8**

*Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*

### **Romans 10:5-13**

*For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”*

Jesus said He was to be lifted up even as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the desert, and that if He was lifted up, He would draw all men to Himself, and into union through Him, with God. We need to receive the knowledge of Jesus in our hearts, knowing that we cannot on our own justify our flesh by the works of the law, coming to the knowledge of our sin, and being ready to repent from dead works, to put off the filthy garment of our own righteousness to be clothed by faith in Christ, and so to be able to stand before God in Christ as newly born members of His Household, not longer working to gain His favor, but enjoying the favor that a Father bestows on His children, and such we are if in response to the gift of God's grace we in turn show that same love and forgiveness to each other.

## **Burying the Dead**

Unfortunately in our contemporary Churches, we follow the intentions of the Greeks, in that we do not present Jesus, we present what we assume is the knowledge that we think Jesus had that enabled Him to be perfect and to work miracles. And so we congratulate ourselves when we seem to lead normal lives, at least by the cultural standards of society, and are considered good citizens, and by the application of a few moral platitudes, and some common sense guides on how to better get along with our fellow citizens, we assume that the old man inherited from the first fallen Adam has been nicely groomed, and that the old husband is now presentable and can take its place at the marriage supper of the lamb, which will surely be the consummation of a life rich and in need of nothing due to our mastery of spiritual principles for enriching our lives.

But the Bible says until the first husband dies, we cannot legally be married to another as the bride of Christ. It is that death that is never presented or always assumed to be something other than what the scriptures teach, that is, the final and complete end of all of our reliance and confidence in the flesh. The bases of who we are is to be by faith in the message of the Gospel and the revelation of the truth of the Gospel message by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

**Romans 7:1-6**

*Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

## **Seeing Jesus in His Body**

His body is a corporate body with equality granted to all the members as they recognize and affirm each other based not upon the value system of the world in which men measure themselves by themselves, in competition with each other for greatness and praise, but which instead sees each according to the riches in glory they share as an inheritance by their faith in Jesus.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians to remind them that they were corporately the temple of God, a dwelling for His Holy Spirit. A place that God sought to indwell. But that to come together in the name of Christ, and yet not regard each other clothed in Christ, but to degenerate into the carnality of self seeking amongst the members was the reason for the true lack of power that Paul expected a spiritually healthy body of believers to exhibit (1 Corinthians 11:30).

In the gatherings of the Corinthian Christians there was speaking in tongues, there was prophesying, everyone had something to say that they were sure was from God, to the point that there was often confusion in the midst of the meetings.

And yet, there were those that were not recovering from their illnesses whom Paul expected would be healthy in a mature gathering of believers. Paul indicated that if the body of Christ was truly coming together in the spirit of life in Jesus Christ, and building itself up in love into the full stature of what it means for each member to be resting complete in Christ, that there would have been more evidence of God's power amongst them, other than what outward behavior they were able to manifest out of their own enthusiasm and emotions.

Jesus said, that wherever two or more were gathered in His name, He would be there in their midst. It does not mean we are to get together and try to find people who agree with our own personal agenda in order to amplify our own power over our circumstances. What He was referring to was understanding what it really means to be members of the body of Christ where there is in the spiritual sense neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.

That kind of corporate identity and equality that is not based on politics, sociology or economics, but rather based on faith in the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is where the true power of the Gospel is manifest, and the Holy Spirit is able to corporately operate within the body as He wills.

He does not give men as gifts, He gives gifts to men for the purpose of building that temple that God is seeking to inhabit.

Therefore as individuals we cannot live the Christian life independently. It can only be expressed, and we can only grow in the faith as we learn to forgive and love each other in Christ. All the seminars, all the teachings focused on what we can do to have our own best life now are not the teachings of the Gospel. Far too many people know some scriptures taken from the Bible, but too few know the message of the Bible.

By this they will know you are my disciples, Jesus said, that you have love for one another. That was always the characteristic on which Paul would remark of those churches started by Paul's ministry, the true evidence of a corporate faith and the expression of love and equality amongst believers not in obedience to a system of laws but as a response to the surpassing great value of knowing Christ and abiding in His finished work. Peter spoke of how in obedience to the truth of the Gospel the believers had purified themselves for a sincere love of the brethren.

We cannot show up in even the largest of our so-called successful religious meeting places, and yet be ten thousand strangers who go our separate ways after watching as spectators talented musicians and dynamic teachers. The corporate life of the body of Christ is expressed in community and fellowship. And it is remarkable that the spread of the early Christian church was not done on the bases of mega-ministries, but on small groups of believers sharing in each other's lives and meeting in each other's homes.

**Acts 2:46-47**

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

## **Distractions**

When our attention is merely on the show, and seeking to be entertained and information that is only of benefit to ourselves, we will rarely turn our head to the stranger seated beside us to see if there may be a need in the body of Christ that we ourselves might be able to meet.

Indeed it was this degeneration into carnality that James is principally addressing in his letter, where he writes of how in the church services there is now more preference given to those of high esteem according to the worlds evaluation of what is prestigious and admirable, so much so that those lacking in material goods or fame according to the worlds standards of success, were being pushed to the back of the places of meeting and neglected.

And yet James points out that all of this proves that the testimony of the congregations faith was vain. For to truly be in Christ is to recognize that even though there may be those who do not have silver and gold, yet what they have is of great value. Peter writes that from God's perspective, our faith is more precious than gold. James points out something that many of the current teachers who promise worldly success through operation of their teachings on faith would never understand.

### **James 2:5**

*Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*

We need to stop interpreting Christian faith and practice through the mindset, cultural values and materialism of our carnal society, and get a fresh understanding of what it truly means to live by faith in Christ. To do that we need to seek to see Him lifted up above our individual concerns, not so we can imitate His power for our own ends or to continue indefinitely in this tent that New

Testament believers would have rather left in order to be in the presence of the Lord, but so that we might leave all that we might trust in or achieve or gain on our own building on our own foundations, and open our hands letting go of all we once held dear, that we may be free to receive the great gift that God is offering in Christ, and in so doing, find equality in His body, as all become partakers of the divine nature of Christ through the promise of the Gospel.

**Luke 17:20-21**

*Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."*

## **Lifting Jesus Up**

Seeking to utilize Christian faith or practices exclusively for the purposes of improving one's own self esteem will result in a partial understanding and influence of the Gospel at best, if not another "Gospel" altogether.

True influence of faith in Christ for self esteem is a problem. The Bible does not say that everyone is OK. Everyone can put their faith in the promise of the Gospel and be accepted in the beloved Jesus Christ. But that will mean a change not only in forgiving and loving ourselves, despite our flaws, it will mean the forgiving and loving of those around us. The principle of forgiveness and restoration in Christ cannot be effective, nor is it true New Testament Christian faith if it does not also change how we view those who are also members by faith in the body of Christ.

### **Matthew 6:14-15**

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

### **James 2:13**

*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

It would seem that if we want to see Jesus lifted up that all men might see Him and be drawn to Him, we will need to do more than profess a faith that does not correspond to the kind of Christian community evidenced in the book of Acts.

### **Acts 2:44-45**

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

**James 2:14-17**

*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

**John 13:35**

*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Jesus said if He be lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him. As long as professing Christian fellowships are preoccupied and drawing those seeking godliness as a means of great personal gain, we will not be able to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, perfecter and finisher of true Christian faith. He is needed no more so than today to be present in the midst of the body of Christ. Only when we truly, as a wise merchant, understand the value of the treasure hidden in the field, and can ascribe that value equally to the accounts of fellow members of the body of Christ will the true power of the Gospel be evident in the contemporary Christian church.

## Where to Look

### Matthew 25:31-46

*“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

*“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

*“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’*

*“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

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