

## Lesson 13

# What if We Miss Him?

## Introduction

At the beginning of this study, we began with John 1.9-11:

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

We asked, *why couldn't they see?* For us, with 2000 years of hindsight, it is easy to ask how the people of Judea could see Jesus and His incredible works ... banishing illness and demons, demonstrating power over nature, and raising people from the dead. How is it that they could see everything He was and not know who He is?

We have examined some of the variables that factored into their rejection:

- Jesus did not fit into the religious system they created, with its empty rituals, emphasis on oral law, intermixing with politics, and lust for power and prestige.
- Jesus spoke out against their traditions, which were often simple inventions to get around God's law.
- Jesus rejected their religion of works and the burden it created.
- Jesus failed to match their expectations of a human deliverer from the oppression they experienced by the Romans ... He failed to look like a King or ruler of their day. Kings simply did not allow themselves to die ... especially on a cross.
- The decision of many to harden or close their hearts to Jesus. Many simply did not want to believe in Him.

There really was no good reason to reject Jesus. It is not that they could not believe, it is that they would not believe. It is not that they needed additional evidence, it is that they did not act on the evidence they received.

Now as we wrap up this study, we turn the focus to us. *Could we miss Him?*

The answer is *yes if* we refuse to bend our hearts toward God. The same problems that confronted the Jews of the first century also stand before us. Stubborn arrogance and pride can derail our spiritual life. Selfishness can challenge Jesus' authority over our life. Earthly focus can blind us to spiritual realities. And finally, a lack of commitment and perseverance can get us off track to where we too could miss Jesus.

## Will We Confront our Selfish Pride?

Pride is Satan's universal temptation. Every person must deal with it. It often fosters the sinful illusions of sinlessness, sufficiency, and freedom. The natural human inclination is to exalt oneself, pointing to one's

achievements and or knowledge and feel nothing further is needed. In doing so, we can establish our own righteousness and feel little need for true righteousness that comes from God.

### ***The illusion of sinlessness***

Self-righteousness and pride create the illusion of sinlessness. We will certainly miss Jesus if we do not see our great need for Him.

But Ephraim thinks, “How rich I have become; I made it all myself. In all my earnings, no one can find any iniquity in me that I can be punished for!” Hosea 12.8.

It creates the belief that we are deserving of our blessings:

“Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, “This is what the Lord God says: Your heart is proud, and you have said, “I am a god; I sit in the seat of gods in the heart of the sea.” Yet you are a man and not a god, though you have regarded your heart as that of a god, Ezekiel 28.2.

There is nothing more deceiving and dangerous than the allusion self-righteousness creates. Solomon warned, *There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filth*, Proverbs 30.12. Pride moves us away from self-examination. Self-righteousness builds a false sense of security. This is why Jesus reserved the strongest of warnings for the religious, pious ones who felt they had arrived and were on a level above:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity. In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness, Matthew 23.27-28.

They were so self-absorbed that Jesus’ message bounced right off their heart. Let that serve as a warning for us. How open is our heart to instruction? Will receive the instruction of the Spirit? Are we *grieving* Him, Ephesians 4.30? Have we *stifled the Spirit*, 1 Thessalonians 5.19.

Don’t be like the person in Psalm 36:

Dread of God has no effect on him. For with his flattering opinion of himself, he does not discover and hate his iniquity, Psalm 36.1b-2.

### ***The illusion of superiority***

Another effect of self-righteousness and pride is the feeling of superiority it produces. Instead of keeping our focus on Christ, aiming for maturity, seeing the need for growth all around, we compare ourselves with others, measuring our qualities against theirs, emphasizing our good points, while concentrating on their shortcomings and weaknesses. There is no better example of this than the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18.9-13. The Pharisee exalted himself while simultaneously tearing down the tax collector:

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I’m not like other people—greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’

There is little doubt that the Pharisee did do many good things. Their attention to detail in observing the Law is commendable. However, the awful attitude of superiority cancels out any relationship with God. As Paul writes in Colossians 2.18: *Such people are inflated by empty notions of their unspiritual mind*, we will certainly miss Jesus if we move with an inflated ego that looks down on everyone else.

### **A refusal to submit**

Pride is the action of having oneself on the throne of our heart. That throne has no room for two ... only one person can occupy at a time. Who commands your life? Are you sure? Your salvation is more than belief. Inherent in it is your confession and affirmation that Jesus is Lord. This is why Peter's statement in Acts 2.36 is so powerful: *Therefore, let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah*. Jesus is not just our Savior, He is our King. As such, all authority on heaven and earth has been given to Him, Matthew 28.18, and that includes you. From the moment you were saved, you went on record giving allegiance to Him.

The person who chooses not to surrender his will to the Lord's will fall short:

“No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other, Matthew 6.24a.

Pride leads to many other evils and ends in destruction. *Everyone with a proud heart is detestable to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished*, Proverbs 16.5. May we all heed Solomon's words in Proverbs 11.2: *when arrogance comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom*.

### **Will We Elevate Our Focus?**

One of the main reasons the people of Jesus' time missed Him because of their refusal to think from a spiritual perspective. There was a time of political discord and world uncertainty. Most of the Jews were solely focused on regaining their independence from the hated Romans. Many of them misconstrued the prophecies and rabbinical teachings regarding the Messiah, morphing Him into a political and military conqueror who would come to dominate and destroy their oppressors. They were looking for a worldly-minded savior who would fit their idea of a King. Jesus fit nothing in their mold. He came from the most obscure, backwater of Israel. Although He was of the royal line, his parents were impoverished. Instead of being educated in the finest of their institutions, connected to the right people, being groomed for power and influence, and having the right “look,” Jesus learned a trade and socialized with the “people of the land.” Because they were looking in all the wrong places, they missed Him.

Today we need to elevate our focus if we do not wish to miss Jesus. How do we view Him? Is He seen only as a supplier of our wants and needs on earth? Do we value Him only on from the perspective that He will improve our present circumstances? What happens to our faith when we realize God does not always work on our timetable? Do we have the type of faith that will trust the way God chooses to answer our prayers and help us through our life situations, even if that is not the way we would have done it? Have you ever known Christians who have become disillusioned because the level of their aim was not elevated properly? Sadly, some walked away and have completely given up.

Do we see Jesus' way as superior to the so-called wisdom of this world? Will we elevate our focus thereby tuning out what the world pumps out?

Colossians 3.1-2 contains two commands. Can you see them here:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, NIV.

The first command is to set your heart on things above. The second command is to set your mind on things above. The first command is addressing our desires. Our morality is in view here. We cannot expect to receive Jesus if our moral life is not cleaned up. *Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God,* 2 Corinthians 7.1.

The second command addresses our values. In what do we delight? What are our values and loves aimed on? Mentally, are we choosing the spiritual things over the earthly?

## **Will We Persevere?**

A sure way to miss Christ is to fail in our perseverance. In sending out the disciples on the limited commission Jesus warned, *you will be hated by everyone because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved,* Matthew 10.22. If Jesus had to go all the way through the cross, enduring the pain, suffering the shame, how can we expect our need not to go all the way? *A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master,* Matthew 10.24. If He persevered, so must we.

In this study we covered Judas, whose treacherous sin led to the murder of his Master and Lord, Jesus. The weight of the guilt he endured became too much. The sorrow and regret he bore would have been immense. But Judas failed to persevere. He simply gave up under the weight of his sin and chose to end his life. Even this, the most heinous of sins, was not outside of Jesus' ability to provide forgiveness. When sin and human weakness knock us down, we need to have the perseverance to reach out for the helping hand of Jesus.

## ***Perseverance builds character***

Paul wrote:

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us, Romans 5.3-5.

We push through in our commitment to Christ because we know that our faith is not in vain. We can rest with the assurance that when we get to the end we will not come up short or have God fail to deliver on His promise. We know this because we have experienced His great love. The Spirit works daily to reassure our hearts so that we can know our effort and determination are all worth it.

## ***You can do this***

Peter also spoke about perseverance in 2 Peter 1. He urges the Christian to supplement their faith by adding the character traits found in verses 5-7. The exercising of these virtues renders us effective in the

kingdom. It is only after we fail in our pursuit of them where we become useless and unfruitful. This is the person who takes his salvation for granted, 1.9. So, we need to persevere. Why?

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 1.10-11.

Without perseverance, one cannot hope to see the Lord. Don't miss Him! Trust that your effort is never in vain.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain, 1 Corinthians 15.58.