

The Gospel of John #9

by: Ronald L. Dart

One of the saddest things about the ministry of Jesus, is the number of people who believed Him, believed His message, believed what He said about who He was, believed on Him, but who could not openly confess any such thing.

John told us about them in John chapter 12 verse 42, "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers, many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, {43} For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

This is staggering, because it isn't being said about leaders in this secular society, but about religious leaders, in the very religion of Jesus Himself. And you know it's in this context that you can best understand what Jesus said on another occasion.

Confess Jesus Before Men

In Matthew chapter 10 verse 32, "Jesus said, "Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. {33} Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Think about this, here is a group of men, who all of their lifetime had believed in God. All of their lifetime they believed in the God of the Scriptures. All of their lifetime they had served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All their lives they had been committed to this faith and along comes the one whom God, that God whom they had always worshiped and always believed in, that God had sent to them His own Son. They actually believed Him, but they were afraid to confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue.

Now I will say this, being put out of the synagogue then, was a lot bigger deal than having to leave, let's say, your local Baptist Church. In my town, if you were thrown out of one Baptist Church, you could walk two blocks, literally from one place in town and go to another Baptist Church. And of course, there were synagogues all over Jerusalem at that time, but the loss of the synagogue, lost so much in terms of social connections and societal connections in one's place in society. It was just impossible for them to even consider the possibility of losing all of that, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And Jesus said, ""But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:33).

"Jesus went on to say, {34} "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth, I did not come to bring peace but a sword.""

Jesus said, "I have not come to make life easier for you. It is not going to be easy."

"Jesus said, {35} "I'm come to set a man at variance or against his father, a daughter against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, [36] And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.""

So don't worry about getting thrown out of the synagogue. This kind of division can go right down to the core of your family.

Verse 37, "He that loves father or mother more than Me," Jesus said, "is not worthy of Me, and he that loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me.""

So what about the guy who loved his synagogue more than Jesus?

Jesus said, verse 38, "He that does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me. {39} He that finds his life shall lose it. He that loses his life for My sake shall find it. {40} He that receives you receives Me and he that receives Me receives Him that sent me."

Wow, this is pretty strong, because what Jesus is saying is, that those people in the society at that time were able to receive Him, were receiving the Father, and those people who were not, were actually not receiving the very God in heaven, whom they thought they had worshiped all their lives.

Some Believed In Jesus But Could Not Confess Him

Returning back to John 12 verse 44, after Jesus said, "They love the praise of men more than the praise of God," He said, "He that believes on Me, believes not on Me. He believes on Him that sent Me, {45} And he that sees Me, sees Him that sent Me."

One thing Jesus does is that He absolutely equates the acceptance of, the reverence of, the reverence toward Himself, to the reverence toward, the acceptance of Almighty God Himself, and of course, so many of the people to whom He was speaking, even though they believed, and this is the condemnation, even though they believed, could not confess Him.

"I am come," Jesus said in verse 46, "as a light into the world, that whoever believes on Me should not live in darkness. {47} If a man hear My words and believe not, I'm not going to judge him. I haven't come to condemn the world but have come to save the world. {48} He that rejects Me and receives not My words has one that judges him."

Oh! What's that? Answer, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Wow, that means that whenever the day of judgment comes, what is going to sit in judgment of us, sit opposite of us, to condemn us, will be the words that Jesus has spoken. Why would it be so?

Well, Jesus says, {49} "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.""

So when you reject what Jesus is saying, you are rejecting the Father Himself.

Jesus says in verse 50, "And I know that His commandment is life everlasting. Whatever, I therefore speak, even as the Father said to Me, that's what I'm going to tell you.""

The Last Supper

Now we come to John the thirteenth chapter. "It is just before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of the world to the Father, having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them right to the end.""

This is a fascinating section beginning in John 13 because, here is where Jesus with full knowledge of what He was about to face, with full knowledge of the awful night in which He was going to suffer and endure betrayal, torture, suffering and finally death the next day. Knowing that all these things were coming, He loved His disciples right to the end.

And on the night of that Last Supper (Passover), it appears that they had a supper and then after the supper, Jesus did something more than that, He went on with the bread and wine of what we call Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Passover service or whatever you may want to call it.

Foot Washing

But before that, Jesus got up from the table. This is a really unusual thing to be doing after supper.

Let's continue in verse 4 of John 13, "Jesus got up from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded Himself with it. {5} He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel He had wrapped around Himself."

Washing their feet. Well, washing feet was a very important thing in that time, because as you know, people wore sandals and didn't have nice shoes and socks and couldn't get where they were going with clean feet. It was a time where they walked on dirt roads. They wore sandals and their feet were dirty and sometimes uncomfortable and so when you got to the house, normally you would go in and you would have a servant meet you and the servant would wash your feet for you and wipe them off with a towel, and you would go in not wearing your sandals, but barefoot into the house so that the place was clean.

Jesus now washes their feet and wipes them with a towel.

Jesus came to Simon Peter, {6} "And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" {7} Jesus said, "Look, you are not going to understand it now, but you will understand it later," {8} Peter said to Him, NO! You'll never wash my feet!" And Jesus answered, "If I don't wash you, then you have no part with Me."

I don't know what Peter thought exactly about that statement, but at least he accepted it.

Peter said, {9} "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head." {10} Jesus very patiently said, "He that is washed needs only to wash his feet, but is clean, you are clean, but not all of you."

Now what Jesus says is, "I understand, you people are all clean, you washed before you came here tonight and I washed your feet for a reason. You are all clean, but not all of you," for He knew who should betray him. Therefore, He said "You are not all clean."

"After Jesus had washed their feet," {12} "and taken His garments and sat down, He said to them, "Do you understand what I've done to you? {13} You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for that is what I am. {14} Now if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. {15} For I have given you an example that you should do what I have done to you.""

What does that mean?

Jesus explains, {15} "I have given you an example that you should do what I have done to you, {16} The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither is he who is sent greater than he that sent him. {17} If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.""

Well, down to this day there are many people in churches, hither and yon, who at this season of the year, when they take the Lord's Supper, wash one another's feet. Even the Pope, I understand, at Passover season or the time of the Easter season, will actually gather 12 priests around him and he will systematically wash each of their feet and exercising humility. That would mean more to me, actually, if I hadn't stood in St. Peter's and watch the Pope carried in on the backs of several men in the sedan chair, because it does seem to be somewhat anomalous to him washing his disciples feet. I would've been perhaps more impressed if he had like Jesus, ridden into St. Peter's on a donkey, but maybe that would've been a little too messy.

Judas Iscariot Betrayed Jesus

Continuing with Jesus in John 13 verse 18, He said. "I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, (quote), "He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me." (end of quotation.)

Now this is very disturbing. Many people have asked this question constantly about Judas. "What about this man? What's going to happen to this man?" And of course, we really

don't know! The most sobering thing of it all is, that Jesus knew from the start who it was who would betray Him and He went right along with him anyway. Jesus probably reflected on this following verse, "My own familiar friend in whom I have trusted" (Psalms 41:9). This is troublesome because you would think, why on earth would anyone trust a man that He knew was going to betray him? Well it's a little funny use of the word 'trust.' What it means essentially is, 'I have placed my trust in him, even though I knew he would betray Me.' 'Trust' in that case does not mean, that I think he's going to be faithful. It is talking about the placing of the 'trust', He had actually put the 'trust of the treasury' in the hands of Judas Iscariot, and He knew.

You know, there is something I often wonder about this, and there is almost as though there's a comparison, because you see these references in the Psalms to this person that David had to deal with and then Jesus comes along and deals with it and you begin to realize that somewhere back in the recesses of time, Almighty God had to deal with Satan the devil, who had once been a bright angel. Apparently, he was with God and on His side. Some translations often called him Lucifer. The word Lucifer only occurs once in the King James Bible in Isaiah 14 verse 12. The Hebrew word for Lucifer is 'Heylel' which means brightness or morning star. He was actually one who was very close to God who turned away from God and rebelled.

You find this theme of betrayal reflected down through the Scriptures and here it is with Jesus Himself, who has selected 12 disciples, knowing full well, not only that one of them would betray Him, but which one.

Let's continue in John 13 and verse 19, Jesus told His disciples, "Now I tell you before it comes, so when it comes to pass, you will believe that I am He. {20} I'll tell you the truth. He that receives whoever I send, receives me, and he that receives Me, receives Him that sent Me.""

So actually whenever you receive the one that Jesus has sent, you are receiving God. This is a strange statement that He is making here, but apparently that's the way He wants it to work.

Jesus continued talking to His disciples and said, ""I will tell you the truth, One of you will betray Me." {22} Then the disciples looked at one another, wondering of whom He spoke. {23} Now there was one leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.""

This is as it is written in the King James, and basically what it means is, in front of Jesus as they lay against the table, because they really reclined against the table to eat. They were not sitting in chairs up against a table like the famous painting of the 'Lord's Supper' has it. That was not the custom of the time.

But Peter wanted to know who Jesus was talking about, {24} "So he gestured over to that disciple who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, and motioned to him to ask Him who it is. The one who was lying against Jesus said, "Lord, who is it?" {26} Jesus answered, "He it is, to

whom I shall give a piece of bread, when I have dipped it." And when He had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

Satan Entered Judas Iscariot

John 13 verse 27, "As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him."

This really poses some serious theological questions and some problems because you have to ask yourself, just how responsible was Judas when Satan entered into him? Was it Satan that betrayed Jesus or was it Judas that betrayed Him? Actually, Jesus does not seem to leave room for Judas in anyway, because later He will say, "It would've been good for the man who betrays Me not to have even been born!" (Matthew 25:24).

It is hard to imagine that, but no matter how bad your life has been, you still had a good life, that it would have been better for you never to have been born, especially if you can be in God's kingdom later, it sounds like, in that situation, Judas might be there, but Jesus doesn't say that, He says "It would have been better for him never to have been born." Satan entered into Judas.

Mental Illness and Demon Possession

There is a question oftentimes that comes in people's minds about, mental illness, and demon possession, and one has to ask the question, when you deal with this, is this person demon possessed or is this person mentally ill? One authority on this subject who believes actually in demon possession said, "Generally speaking," his belief was, "that people who become demon possessed were mentally ill, and that's the reason why they became demon possessed." That's an interesting theory, but at the same time, in this case you have a person who has already corrupted himself. He is already a thief and a liar and a hypocrite. He is already living a lie, and therefore he has made himself available on this occasion for Satan to enter him.

John 13 verse 27, "Jesus said to Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Get it over with. {28} "Nobody at the table knew for what intent He spoke this to Judas. {29} They thought, well maybe because Judas had the bag that Jesus said, "Go buy the things we have need of against the feast" or "Go give something to the poor," which was a custom of the time.

Jesus Will Be Glorified

Continuing in verse 30 of John 13, "After Judas had received the bread from Jesus, he went out immediately and it was dark. {31} Therefore, when he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. {32} If God be glorified in Him, God shall glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him."

Now, the translators tend to some extent, John, who presents this to us, create a really difficult sentence here. What Jesus is saying is, "We now come to the time when it must happen. My glorification must now take place," and it is pretty hard to think about what Jesus is about to go through, as glorification. This is really going to be a hard night but at the end of it all, He will be glorified.

Jesus continues in verse 33, "Little children, I'm only going to be with you a short time. You are going to look for Me, just like I said to the Jews, where I go you cannot come. Now I'm going to say the same thing to you. {34} I give you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

My, that's a tough saying, because Jesus will also say, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And here Jesus says to His disciples gathered around this table and I have to presume that this same commandment was rattled on down through the ages and falls on our shoulders as well, that "You should love one another as I have loved you." We all have that obligation.

Peter To Deny Jesus 3 Times

"Simon Peter says, {36} "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "You can't go, you can't follow where I'm going now, you will follow me later." {37} Peter said, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake." {38} Jesus answered him, "Would you lay down your life for my sake, verily I say unto you, the cock will not crow, until you have denied me three times!"

You know, it happened exactly like that, and that is an odd thing in a way. Was Jesus saying this, predicting this and therefore Peter had no choice but to deny Him. I don't think so. I think Jesus knew Peter so well that He knew that brash Peter would follow so closely that he would face the challenge, but that he was also so weak that when the challenge faced him, he would deny Jesus Christ, not once, not twice, but three times.

We don't know how Peter's face looked when Jesus told him that 'before the cock is going to crow, you're going to deny Me three times,' but I'm sure he looked like someone hit him.

I Will Come Again!

Jesus then hastily came on to say, John 14 verse 1, "Don't let your heart be troubled, believe in God, and believe also in Me."

You have to have trust in this situation. Now there is every reason in the world why these disciples should be troubled that night. It was not going to be a very pleasant night for them at all. Now Jesus said, "Don't be troubled, you believe in God, believe in Me. {2} In my Father's house there are many rooms, if it were not so, I would've told you. {3} I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also."

Man that's a tremendous statement that Jesus is making here. For one thing He said, "I will come again!" I was flabbergasted some time ago when I read a statement in the news somewhere of a very high percentage of preachers in the pulpit, church pastors, who do not believe in a literal second coming of Jesus Christ.

And yet Jesus said, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. If I go and do this, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also. {4} Where I go, you know, and the way you know."

I'm sure this was a bit of relief for the disciples.

"Thomas said, {5} "Lord, we don't know where You are going, and how can we possibly know the way? {6} Jesus said to him, (those famous words), I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.""

I'm reminded of what C.S. Lewis said about Jesus, he said, "For anyone to say that Jesus was merely a great teacher or a fine man or a great philosopher is to damn him completely, because Jesus either was what He said He was, or He was a fool, a madman."

Jesus just said, "No man can come to the Father except by Him.

I'm sorry. There are not a whole bunch of roads to God. There are not a whole lot of doorways into God's Kingdom. Jesus said, "There's one way, one truth, one life, one doorway to the Father. But by Me."

"If you had known me," {7} "you should have known my Father also, from now on you know Him and actually you have seen Him."

Wow, "Philip heard that and he said, {8} "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be good, that will be enough for us." {9} And Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long, and you have not known me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say then, show us the Father?""

Now this is again what C.S. Lewis was driving at. You can't just declare that Jesus was a great teacher when He sits here and tells us that "If we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. He either is God in the flesh, or He's crazy as a bedbug, because that's the claim that He made to these people."

Jesus continues in verse 10, "Do you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I speak to you, I don't get them from myself. My Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. {11} Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, but if you can't do that, at least believe for the work's sake. {12} I am going to tell you the truth, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.""

You know, I have read that in the past and wondered about it a little bit because when you consider how great the works were that Jesus did, how many people He healed, how many suffering people that He rescued, you consider all the miracles, walking on the water,

all these fantastic things, and then you read the Book of Acts, you do not get the feeling that those people did greater works than He did?

So what is Jesus talking about? Well at the end of 3 1/2 years or so of Jesus Christ's ministry, He had something in the neighborhood of 120 disciples. That's all! One hundred and twenty disciples. A lot of people believed on Him, but they were afraid to confess Him. Some of them believed on Him and then turned back and went away. One hundred and twenty disciples!

By the time the Book of Acts is finished, there was probably 10, 20, 30, 40,000 members of Christ's disciples, believers, across the Roman Empire. I don't suppose we have any way of knowing, but there must've been somewhere between five and 8000 of them in Jerusalem alone. So it's true to say that the disciples, definitely converted more people in their work, and in their time than Jesus did in His time.

Jesus then went on to say, {13} "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If you will ask anything in My name, I will do it!"

What Jesus is talking about here is the covenant relationship in which two people who become blood brothers have complete familial obligation to one another. You ask me for it. I have to do it. I ask you for it, you have to do it and you know in order to place that kind of trust in another person, you have to really love them and believe in them completely. And that's all that Jesus asked of us, and it is a lot.

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