

## ***DO YOU WANT TO SEE JESUS?***

***They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." (John 12:21)***

### **Introduction**

Often, when I'm going somewhere, I bring a camera (even if it's just the camera in my cell phone). I bring it because I hope to see something beautiful or interesting to take a photo of.

And because I have such a hope and expectation, I find that I look much more carefully, and I see things I probably wouldn't otherwise see.

I've been semi-seriously developing my photographic skills for a few years now, and I find that I'm getting better at spotting beautiful and interesting things to photograph—although I know I will never see everything that is worthy of a photograph. But my hope and expectation, and my increasing skill is what allows me to capture images that I enjoy looking at over and over. And that same hope and expectation and developing skills are what allow me to enjoy seeing so much more!

Let me ask you a question: When you come to church on Sunday and/or Wednesday, what do you hope to see, to hear, to experience?

I often think of an incident recorded in the Scriptures where some Greeks went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover—as they probably did every year. And when they arrived, we read in John 12:21, ***They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE JESUS."***

### **GOING TO JERUSALEM**

These Greeks came to Jerusalem primarily to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, but they also wanted to see Jesus.

Why do you think they wanted to see Jesus? Let's just imagine for a moment.

Perhaps they hoped to see Him perform a miracle . . . maybe even a miracle just for them! Perhaps they wanted to hear Him speak because they had heard of His wisdom and profound teachings. Perhaps they just wanted to experience the excitement that often surrounded Jesus, either because of His miracles and teachings, or because of His confrontations with the religious authorities. Maybe they even felt a drawing in their hearts to Him as the hoped-for Savior.

So their desire to see Jesus may have been anything from a casual interest to an earnest hunger for something—or someone—profound, even life-changing.

What was the result of seeing Jesus? We're not really told whether they got to see Jesus or not! And Jesus' response to their request doesn't seem to fit with the request. We read in the next verses,

**23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. (John 12:23-26)**

How does Jesus' answer fit the Greeks request to see Him? Perhaps it has to do with what the people *wanted* to see, what Jesus said they *would* see, and what they *needed* to see. What they probably expected to see was Jesus perform miracles or give a profound teaching.

But what Jesus said they would see was His death—and then His glorification. And this death and glorification was a pattern that all who followed Him would also experience—if they wanted to see eternal life.

But how many of them *saw* that in Jesus' response, or in the actual events that would soon follow!?

So while it was a good thing for the Greeks to want to see Jesus, we need to think about their motives for wanting to see Jesus, and what they needed to see.

## GOING TO CHURCH

Now, let me ask, when we come to church each week, do we come to see Jesus? Do we even want to see Jesus? He did say, . . . ***where two or three come together in my name, THERE AM I with them.***" (Mt. 18:20), so there is His promise that He would be where those who come in His name are.

Are we like the Greeks who went to Jerusalem primarily to celebrate a religious festival, and also want to see Jesus—for various reasons?

Maybe we'd like to see a miracle—especially for ourselves. Maybe we hope to hear something unique and profound from His Word. But are we really expecting to see Jesus!? Is that even a reasonable expectation?

And would Jesus respond to us like He did to the Greeks, with a seemingly cryptic answer?

I'd like to suggest that He has responded to the request to see Him—a response that applies to us.

If we truly want to see Jesus so as to see and experience His power and wisdom, He said we must be born of the Spirit. . . . **Jesus declared [to Nicodemus], "I tell you the truth, NO ONE CAN SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNLESS HE IS BORN AGAIN."** (John 3:3)

The difference between the one who may only admire Jesus' teaching and character, and the one who trust in Jesus to be their Lord and Savior is this spiritual birth—which provides spiritual discernment, or the ability to see Jesus for who He really is.

Paul explains it this way in 1 Corinthians 2:14, **The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

## Conclusion

I would like to spend some time looking closely specifically at the teachings of Jesus on a variety of subjects. I want to do this because, Jesus said, **The words** [i.e., His teachings] **I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.** (Jn. 6:63b)

But I must warn you that there is danger in considering Jesus' teaching.

One danger is that we will separate Jesus' teaching from His Person. That is, we will admire and even accept His teaching without really accepting and responding to who He is and all that that implies. Jesus is not merely a good teacher or a good example. Jesus said, **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** (John 14:9b), and **the Father and I are one.** (John 10:30) Jesus is the living *Word of God*, who **was with God in the beginning, and . . . [is] God** (John 1:1), **through [whom] all things were made; without [whom] nothing was made that has been made.** (John 1:3)

Another danger is we won't respond to His teaching with faith and obedience. But when we only hear Jesus' teaching but don't respond with faith and obedience, our consciences become a little less sensitive and our hearts become a little harder, and we hindered from *seeing* Jesus.

A third danger is that we'll hear Jesus' teaching and think we've heard it before, and think we've "got it," and think there's nothing else to hear—and so it won't have any real affect on us. These also are hindered from *seeing* Jesus.

But the fourth danger is the greatest danger of all! In hearing Jesus' teaching it will radically change our lives—forever! And we'll *see* Him everywhere, all the time!

So, do you *really* want to see Jesus? Only you can answer that question. But we must all remember, one day we *will* all see Jesus! The only question will be, will we see Him as our Rewarder—or our Punisher!? The Bible says, **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.** (2 Corinthians 5:10)