

## **New Testament**

### **Reader 4**

## **The Crowd**

Two groups attended Jesus' crucifixion. The first group, His followers and acquaintances, intimately knew Him and stood at a distance from the execution site in sorrow and mourning. Rather the second group, the Jewish antagonists, displayed great public contempt. This latter consensually cried out for His death. Along with the Roman soldiers who oversaw this spectacle, the opposition witnessed a demonstration of God's power that gave them a second chance to accept Jesus as the Messiah. God ordained Calvary to deal with sin and death giving all men an opportunity for salvation!

**Daryl Cox/March 31, 2013**

### **Followers, Willingly, and Lovingly Separated to Jesus**

The Gospel author Luke identifies Jesus' followers and acquaintances as a separate group from the crowd who called for His death (23:48-49). Unable to stop the events ordered by Pontius Pilate, they stood at a distance from the site out of fear not wanting to identify themselves with the crowd. First Corinthians 2:7-8 defines why they stood at a distance. It says, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Those who loved and followed Jesus knew His identity.

Jesus changed the lives of His disciples. In addition to this impact on their lives, He revealed Himself to them as the Son of God. They rooted their loyalty in the truth that the Lord of glory came to earth as a man to live among His people. Prior to His death, Jesus' followers did not comprehend His coming. Many of them looked for the kingdom promised by the scriptures. According to the Apostle Paul, this lack of knowing premised Jesus' rejection and execution (1 Cor 2:8). Many thought that Jesus would deliver them from Roman oppression as Scripture foretold. However, their love for

Christ was the reason for their stand away from the crowd. They did not want to associate themselves amidst those who hated Him.

In like manner, as Christians, we should distinguish ourselves from the crowd of this world by our love for Christ. Does our love and knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Christ motivate us to live separate from the ungodly thinking and behaviors of this world? Does our love for Him cause us to withdraw from conversations that morally have gone south? Does it allow us to maintain relationships that are harmful to our calling and purpose? We should root our love for Christ in devotion to Him.

### **Antagonists, Spiritually, and Morally Hostile to Jesus**

Luke describes the crowd at the site as spiritually and morally hostile to Jesus. Along with the soldiers who brutally afflicted Jesus, the crowd contemptuously laughed and mocked Him with shame. Furthermore, they dared Him to save Himself. Others walked across the site shaking their heads in disbelief of Him. The two thieves crucified with Jesus similarly taunted Him to save Himself if He was the Messiah. The soldiers, who carried out the crucifixion, gambled for His cloths at the foot of the cross. Above all else, everyone wanted to see a supernatural deliverance of Jesus from the cross to prove His claim as the Messiah. Luke described this event as *theōria* (Grk: sight; Luke 23:48), meaning “a spectacle.”<sup>1</sup> The Lord’s crucifixion was a public spectacle of disgrace and humiliation, yet out of it Jesus cries, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34b). This prayer, in contrast to the many vengeful psalmic ones, would give opportunity to the crowd and eventually the world to correct the biggest error in the history of the human race, the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory.

### **The Resurrection’s Effect**

As the account continues, one of the thieves repents. Amid all the confusion and hatred, the one thief witnesses the majesty and glory of Christ that continued to flow from within His brutally disfigured and wounded form. This revelation touched his heart producing recognition of his wrong and Jesus’ identity. He repentantly cried, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The thief realized that

Jesus was Lord. Our first steps toward salvation include recognizing our wrong and confessing Jesus as our Lord (God manifested in the flesh). Jesus responded to the thief's confession and request; however, he gave no response to the continual hatred of the crowd. The Lord responds to faith. This thief embraced who Jesus was and found pardon. In a similar vein, we can receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost by embracing the Gospel (Acts 2:38). The Lord's promise of paradise to this man gave him hope beyond his impending death. It would also reveal the spiritual change that would take place for everyone who died prior to Christ's return for His people. No longer would believers go to a place in hades (hell) called Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). The sacrifice of Jesus' human and divine life would forever settle the issue of our sin with God and give us access to His presence in this world and the one to come. "Upon death, our spirits rest with Jesus in paradise until His return" (1 Thess 4:14b). Jesus' death on the cross gives us a new opportunity to repent and get right with God!

At His death, Jesus prays the submission of His life into the hand of God. This powerful prayer let God use the death and resurrection of Christ to abolish the reign of death over humanity. Jesus' taste of death for everyone set the stage for our release as the Hosea the prophet promised (Hos 13:14). God gave the people two signs that revealed who Jesus was and their error in crucifying Him. With the first sign, God supernaturally split the temple veil that led to the Holy of Holies. A veil 50 inches thick and 36 inches long completely tore apart. God no longer restricts us from His presence with this veil. He now lives in us through the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus opened the door to a New Covenant relationship with God by way of His death. The Father's presence in us through the Holy Ghost makes both fellowship with Him and worship real. Next, God sends a great earthquake as the second sign. He allows death to overcome Jesus and thus destroys it upon His resurrection ending its reign over us who believe (Rom 8:1-2). His death atoned the transgressions of all future believers and those who lived prior to His first coming. With sin now resolved, Gospel author Matthew tells us that many of the Old Testament saints physically rose from the dead upon Christ's resurrection and showed themselves to many in Jerusalem (27:52-53).<sup>2</sup> The

earthquake only opened the dead's tombs. They came out from their graves when Jesus rose from the dead (vv.51-53). This resurrection reveals the extensive effect of His death. God forgave and restored everyone who believed from Adam to Christ by Jesus' death, and He continues to restore those of us who believe since His resurrection.

This act also gives us hope. We have the promise of the future resurrection for the righteous. God answered Jesus' prayer of forgiveness for the crowd and their unbelieving expectation of His deliverance from the cross through these two signs. God did not deliver Jesus from the cross but delivered Him out of death by the resurrection. Using these two events, He convicted the crowd that they might repent and receive His forgiveness.

### **Man's Unbelief**

God never disregarded the unbelief of the people during the crucifixion. Once He dealt with the issue of sin by Jesus' death, He now turned to the crowd. God did not execute judgment upon them. Luke described a change in the crowd in his Gospel. When the crowd saw what happened, they "smote their breasts and returned to their lives" (23:48 NLT). In response to Jesus' request to forgive His executioners, God opened the eyes of the crowd and conviction followed as He revealed Jesus' identity and the error of their ways. Thus, they felt sorrow and distress.

By using the Greek *typtō* (v. 48) for smite, Luke suggested the events moved the crowd and caused them to experience remorse<sup>3</sup> for their actions.<sup>4</sup> They stood convicted of their deeds but remained unrepentant. As a nation, Israel continued to reject Jesus as their Messiah. God wanted to forgive the nation as well, but it likewise did not repent. When God convicts us, do we turn to Him in repentance? Change and forgiveness comes when we repent, too. The Gospel deals with our sin and unbelief to the point of seeking change.

## Remembering the Death and Resurrection of Christ

Let us keep in mind that God dealt with sin and death through Calvary in His ordained time, making salvation possible for everyone. He gives us four key points to consider:

- Rejoice and celebrate His victory over the world, sin, and death.
- Take the opportunity to know and serve Jesus as the almighty God in the flesh.
- Perfect your walk with His continued forgiveness and grace to overcome sin.
- Identify yourself as a true believer in Christ before the world.

God gives us the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel until Jesus returns. The Gospel offers a message of hope for everyone. Do not change the message, but faithfully stand for its truth. Our lives are a witness to this world.

## ENDNOTES

[1] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 290.

[2] (Matt 27:52-53; cf. Ezek 37:12; Dan 12:2 and Zech 14:5b)

[3] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 382.

[4] Darrell Bock, *Luke, 9:51-24:53: Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 1996), 1865.

## **The Reality of Jesus**

*What do the last events from Jesus' earthly ministry to the Great Commission for disciple making tell us about His reality? Through each God revealed His greater character in the name of Jesus—Whose power originates from His divine nature as God manifested in flesh to be the Savior.*

Jan Paron/April, 2013

Theologian Richard Bauckham contended that a wide spectrum of people, ranging from believers to would-be believers, pursue the historical reality of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> These inquirers can broaden their knowledge of Jesus' existence by studying His nature, life and missional agenda in the context of various events from His ministry. The Gospel evangelists authenticated the risen Savior with rich testimonies coming from eyewitness accounts of His redemptive works for humanity. To uncover Jesus' being I explore His divine power, discipleship mandate and commission instructions (Matt 28:19-20) with select messianic turning points from His final days.

### **Jesus' Power**

Jesus told His disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (28:18 KJV). Thayer's lexicon defines power (Greek: *exousia*, ἐξουσία) in this verse to mean, "power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed [generally translated as authority]."<sup>2</sup> Jesus' power originates from His divine nature as God manifested in flesh to be the Savior. God revealed His greater character in the New Testament through the name of Jesus, "Jehovah-Savior" (Matt 1:21, 23; Acts 4:12; Phil 2:9).<sup>3</sup> We learn more about God's revelatory nature from the last days during the life of Christ. One such occurred during the Last Supper when Jesus foretold His disciples of the glorious and resurrected Son of man (Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22; cf., Dan 7:13; Mark 14:62). In another, Jesus affirmed His identity to the high priest's trial query as "Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61). Thus, in both instances, God fully discloses His nature and authority in Jesus with the names Son of

Man and Christ, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9 NKJV).

### **Jesus’ Mandate**

“Go then and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19a AMP). The resurrected Jesus (i.e., Christ and Son of Man) commanded His apostles to continue His ongoing mission to spread salvation and take on the role of disciples making disciples. In doing so, He imparted sweeping foundational principles for discipleship that extended into the future for all those who would believe on Him through their apostolic witness (John 17:20). They carried out His mandate with power. The word then (Greek: *oun, οὖν*; Matt 28:19a) shows Jesus empowering His apostles through Himself (28:18). With New Birth, all believers have Jesus’ authority through His incarnation as the living God in all fullness. He authorizes this power for the commission through the nature of His name.

### **Jesus’ Instructions**

Jesus’ commissioned disciples to reproduce themselves. He instructed them to go (28:19a), baptizing (v.19b) and teaching them to observe everything He commanded them (v.20a). After spending three years with Jesus as He walked among the people, the original Twelve saw Him disciple others from Galilee to Jerusalem. Even during times of persecution, Jesus did not cease. For example, He proclaimed the good news (John 18:36-37); performed miracles (Luke 17:11-19; John 11:1-16); healed individuals and crowds (Matt 19:1-2); laid hands and prayed for children (Matt 19:15) and taught about kingdom of God ethics (i.e., Matt 19; Luke 18:18-27). Jesus even prayed for those who crucified Him (23:34) and pardoned the repentant thief (v.43) as He hung on the cross. Jesus modeled discipleship to the end.

### **Closing: Jesus at Emmaus**

Therefore, what can we glean from Jesus’ nature, life and missional agenda from the latter periods leading to the Great Commission? Kevin J. Vanhoozer noted that,



“Meaning is actualized not by the author at the point of the text’s conception but by the reader at the point of the text’s reception.”<sup>4</sup> Despite historical and spiritual proofs of Jesus’ existence, people receive Gospel testimonies at the point of its reception as Vanhoozer suggested. A sometimes unbelieving, postmodern world might reject eyewitness proofs; however, I recognize Jesus at Emmaus with eyes wide-open living within me today. “It is true! The Lord has risen” (Luke 24:34a NIV). As for me, I run to share this news and make disciples of all nations without end.

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## ENDNOTES

[1] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 2.

[2] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009), 225.

[3] David, Bernard, *The Oneness of God* (Hazelwood: Word Aflame Press, 2000).

[4] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearing the New Testament* (ed. Joel Green; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 301.

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## Jesus' Great Commissions

Pastor Daryl Cox/ May, 2013

During Jesus' three and a half year of ministry, He gave powerful witness that He was the Son of God. During one of His resurrection appearances, He commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations. Jesus assured them they would minister in like manner with the same Spirit and power. The disciples and other followers were baptized in the Holy Ghost speaking in tongues a few days after His ascension. This birthed the New Testament Church and gave continued witness of Jesus' death, resurrection, and lordship. We have the same commission to declare the name of Jesus Christ to our generation by His Spirit.

The Gospel author Mark revealed that while Jesus' followers felt fear and hopelessness after His crucifixion, their encounter with the resurrected Christ forever changed them. Commissioned and then empowered with the Holy Ghost, they went out and boldly preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:20). The Lord confirmed their message that Jesus was alive, working powerful manifestations through them.

What does the Gospel of Jesus Christ mean? It is the power of God to obtain salvation (Rom 1:16). Jesus' death and resurrection bridged the gulf between God and humanity giving access to the Almighty by faith and obedience to His word. Regardless of spiritual and moral condition, Jesus assured that no one would be cast out (John 6:37). The Gospel message concerns His death, burial, and resurrection according to Old Testament prophecy (1 Cor 15:3-4; cf., 1 Pet 1:19-20). Jesus shed His blood to remit or remove our sins (Heb 9:23). His death and resurrection provide the ability to stand before a just and Holy God without sin (Acts 13:39; Rev 7:13-15). The good news announces forgiveness and cleansing from sin because of the risen Savior, with the New Testament experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit for those who believe and obey its message.

Jesus' rising from death allows us to embrace the new faith. This new faith is Jesus as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). His resurrection shows Him as both the one God

and one mediator between God and humanity (1Tim 2:5). The Gospel stands above all religions of the world for no one rose from death and continues to exist today except Jesus who lives and stands victorious over darkness' power. Furthermore, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost speaking in tongues remains the greatest phenomenon in world history. A consistent event since the days of the apostles, it confirms the reality of Christ's resurrection. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a literal encounter with Jesus Christ, giving us boldness and life in our world. God continually makes it available to everyone.

Prior to His ascension to the right hand of God, Jesus commissioned His followers to teach all nations. We are to learn of Him (Matt 11:28-29), thereby bringing change to our lives. Next, they were to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This Jesus' disciples did. Beginning on the Day of Pentecost they baptized all nations who received their message in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38). Jesus is the name of God. – Father, Son and Holy Ghost are titles that reveal God in creation and redemption, but the name of Jesus embodies their fulness. As Son of God, He is God in flesh. We must base our confession of faith and baptismal formula on His name. Finally, Jesus commands that all nations repent and turn from sin to God. Upon this act of faith, a person will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

As Jesus said, "Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21a KJV). God desires to do miraculous things in people's lives before an unbelieving world. We have the unchanging responsibility to speak for Him, sharing our love and testimony of what Jesus has done for us with others.