

# WHOM DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK AT JESUS?

SERIES: JESUS, SAVIOR OF THE LOST

By Ron Ritchie

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On April 15 of this year the *San Francisco Chronicle* had a banner headline in its "Nation" section that read, "Jewish sect is expecting its Messiah by Sept. 9". According to some leaders within the Hasidic sect, the "miraculous" Allied defeat of the Iraqi army is more than just a military victory. It is the sure sign that the long awaited Jewish Messiah will reveal himself before the Jewish New Year, September 9, sending the Jewish people back to Jerusalem "on clouds of glory." The article went on to say, "Although Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament, Orthodox Jews are still waiting for the righteous king of Israel to reveal himself." They also see September 9 as the first coming of the Messiah, in which Jews will gather back in Israel, the temple will be rebuilt, and he will inspire the nations of the world to make peace and to recognize him and his teachings. It continues to be apparent that when the Jewish people look at Jesus they reject Him as their Messiah and look for another.

Turn to Luke 11:14-36, where we will discover that the root of this rejection goes back some 2000 years. For as the shadow of the cross fell more and more over the life of Jesus, we find that the forces of evil expressed through the religious community were closing in with a vengeance. We will find our Lord depending on his loving heavenly Father for strength to cast out a demon, wisdom to confront the Pharisees, grace to correct a confused woman, and courage to challenge a wicked generation all because they had eyes but could not see that Jesus was their long awaited Messiah, "the Christ of God" (Luke 9:20.) As we study together the blindness of the people who watched our Lord fulfill his ministry among them as the Savior of the lost, we should be challenged in our own generation to ask ourselves the question, Whom do you see when you look at Jesus?

## I. Some See a Servant of Satan

Luke 11:14-26

And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb; and it came about that when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons." And others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. But He knew their thoughts, and said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

The last time the Lord had healed a man who had been possessed by demon, the demon had caused his victim to become blind and dumb (Matthew 12:22-32). According to Dr. Luke, this man had only the problem of dumbness. (See Discovery Paper 4144, When God speaks, are you willing to listen?, which

deals with the question, Are all dumb persons demon-possessed?) The crowd was very much aware that this man was demon-possessed and that he had been dumb or speechless ever since the demon had taken control of his life. This man was a symbol of the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel. Now, the nation of Israel had been established as a witness to the surrounding nations that there was a loving heavenly Father who bestowed rich blessings on his beloved children and was willing to bestow the gift of redemption on all those who placed their faith in him as the one and only God. As a result, all who had established a relationship with God the Father would find themselves in continuous conversation with Him in prayer and in singing praise to Him because of his faithful love and care for them as his children. God chose them when they were nothing, and gave them life, a message, and the opportunity to minister. But for the moment the nation was possessed by the demonic spirit of dumbness and could not praise their Creator and loving Father.

The healing caused a strong reaction. When the Lord cast out the demon of speechlessness and the man was set free to speak for the first time in years, the crowd marveled at his power as they always did, but none believed in Him as the Christ of God, the one who could set them free from the bondage of Satan and spirit of dumbness. They were amazed, but there was never a change in their hearts.

The prophet Isaiah described the spiritual leaders of his day as Israel's watchmen, who were blind, who all lacked knowledge; they were all mute dogs, they could not bark; they lay around and dreamed, they loved to sleep. (Isaiah 56:10.) Little did Isaiah realize that this spiritual tragedy would continue even in the presence of their Messiah. For a group of the religious community called the Pharisees and scribes, the separatists and legalists, had been watching Jesus since the beginning of his ministry, and they were seeking to find some cause to have him condemned to death. Up to this point they were seeking to build a capital-offense case against him on the charges of lawbreaking and blaspheming God. Now we are about to enter into our Lord's second debate with the scribes and Pharisees (see Matthew 12:22; the first debate was over the man made dumb and blind by a demon), and at this time they will level their third charge of blaspheming against him (see Matthew 9:27-34; 12:24). But they needed to prove their case in court. So at this time they cried out within hearing of the crowd, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul [the lord of the flies or the dung heap], the ruler of the demons."

Another group of people sought to test the Lord at this time, so they began to demand a "sign from heaven." The Lord dealt with the Pharisees' charge first, then he took on those who wanted a sign.

Knowing their thoughts, he challenged the Pharisees with four statements: First, he reminded them of the principle that civil war destroys a kingdom (11:17). Everyone knew the principle that any kingdom divided against itself is laid to waste; and a house divided against itself falls. Jesus was saying, "Now, some of you are calling me Satan and you are saying that as Satan I am casting out my own demons. Let me ask you two questions: (1) If Satan as well is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Why would Satan, the murderer, liar, deceiver, and god of this world spend any time casting out his own demons? Wouldn't that action bring his own kingdom down around his ears? (2) By whom do your sons cast them out?" There were Jews in Israel who practiced exorcism of demons, and this ability was recognized as a power given by God. If their exorcists operated by God's power, why did they say that his power was of Satan? "Consequently they shall be your judges."

Secondly, Jesus issued a spiritual challenge (11:20). "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." He was saying, "You have accused me of casting out demons by the power of Satan, and I have said that if that were true my kingdom would not last very long because everyone knows that 'any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste.' Now, I want you to consider the other side of the coin, the only other possibility. What if I have received my power by the 'finger of God?'" (This phrase "the finger of God" was first mentioned in Exodus 8:19 when the Pharaoh's magicians and all their secret arts could not get rid of the plague of gnats, and so they went and told their ruler that the invasion of gnats was caused by "the finger of God." We are also told in Exodus 31:18: "And when He had finished speaking with [Moses] upon Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tables of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.") Then they would be faced with the awesome reality that "the kingdom of God has come upon you," because the demon was cast out of the formerly dumb man, and one stronger than Satan stood before them.

The kingdom of God is not land or power over the nations at this time. Rather, it is a spiritual relationship with the loving and merciful heavenly Father, immediately possible when one places one's faith in Jesus as Messiah, Lord, and Savior. For Jesus had said in John 3:3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Once the King is invited to set up his throne in your heart, you have the privilege to ask the King for all the power necessary to deal with all the realities in the spiritual as well as the physical world. He is a loving, merciful Messiah who wants to come and set up his throne in our hearts and reign in our lives. Later some Pharisees would ask the Lord when he thought the kingdom would come on earth, along with the Messiah Warrior and his army, who would overthrow the Roman armies. Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21.) He was saying, "So if I was able by the invisible but powerful finger of God to cast out this demon, then I tell you that the kingdom that you have been looking for since the days of Abraham and David has come upon you, and in reality the door into that powerful but invisible spiritual kingdom is right in front of you. The invitation to be set free to speak to God again is offered to you. Walk through the door by faith and enter into the kingdom of God. And your heart will be filled with praise. All you'll want to do is speak it and sing it."

Third, Jesus used an illustration (11:21-23). "When a strong man [Satan], fully armed, guards his own homestead [fallen humanity in any generation], his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he [Christ] attacks him and overpowers him [through the Incarnation], he [Christ] takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder." And as it says in Colossians 2:13-15, "And when you were dead in your transgressions...He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions...having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." Jesus was saying, "Therefore, since I have attacked Satan's kingdom and defeated him, now I am free to set his captives free. He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scatters." Leon Morris in his book *Luke*, writes: "There can be no neutrality about this. When a man sees what the kingdom means he must be either for it or against it. Anyone who does not side with Christ in the battle against evil is against him. If anyone does not gather with Christ he scatters [the imagery is from gathering a flock together]."

Finally, Jesus issued a warning (11:24-26). At this moment our Lord pulled back the curtain of time and allowed us to look into eternity so that we could see the final act of a play called *The Life and Times of a Local Demon*. "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man [who is without Christ as King], it passes through waterless places [the lifeless deserts of the world] seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came [the healed man].' And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. [The soul of the man is cleaned up from the destruction of the demon, and no one else is in there.] Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." In this story our Lord was using the former demoniac as an illustration of the nation of Israel.

For John the Baptist had come and called the nation to repentance, and many of the Jews repented and were living their new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. But many did not. They got an emotional high being with John the Baptist, but after they heard the truth and said they had prepared their hearts, they went home and on their own tried to keep the law, to live a righteous life. They tried to get better and improve themselves, only to find out that the power of the flesh quickly faded and left them worse off than before they repented. Their souls were clean but empty of a real belief in the Son of God and thus open to a greater invasion of demons. Reformation without regeneration and the power and presence of the Holy Spirit leaves a man clean but empty of power to resist the next invasion of demons. (In observing this story we can also learn some characteristics of the activity of demons on a personal level: (1) Morally unclean spirits can possess unbelievers. (2) They can cause dumbness and blindness as well as many other problems. (3) They can be cast out of a believer who uses the power of Christ. (4) They wander looking for a place of rest among the souls of men. (5) They can find rest only by being invited into the souls of unbelievers. (6) There are different levels of evil among demons. (7) The less evil demon can recruit the more evil demons to return to the reformed soul. (8) They can make a former victim's life seven times as miserable.)

Picking up the spiritual principle, reform without regeneration and the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit leaves a man or woman emotionally and spiritually inadequate to understand and deal with life, whether there are demons involved or not. A recent case in point is the life of Werner Erhard as reported by Elizabeth Fernandez in the *San Francisco Examiner* on April 21, 1991. "He was once a used-car salesman who parlayed a keen sense of human nature into a hip and prosperous New Age enterprise, who shrewdly turned the middle class onto pop psychology. Over the years an estimated 750,000 people... participated in the self-improvement philosophy marketed by Werner Erhard... a program called **est**. Erhard established

himself as the king of communications and relationships, the man who helped the world become the best it could be. Now the guru has vanished from the public eye. Today he is venerated like a demigod, derided as a con man and defended as a misunderstood prophet and idolized as much as he is despised." She went on in a lengthy article to say that the IRS wants him for tax evasion and that he is being sued by his former employees as well as former students. Most tragically, one of his daughters is accusing him of molesting her and raping another daughter, which is yet to be proven in court. At this point you can hear the words of our Lord Jesus: "...and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

Whom do you see when you look at Jesus? Some see a servant of Satan, and...

## **II. Some See a Beautiful Son**

Luke 11:27-28

And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."

As this woman stood in the crowd and watched our Lord first cast out the dumb spirit and then face the accusing Pharisees who had called him a blasphemer in the presence of the former demoniac, her heart must have been filled with confusion and joy. In spite of her mixed emotions this woman and possible mother cried out, not knowing she was fulfilling the words spoken by a woman named Mary, heavy with child while visiting her cousin Elizabeth: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed." (Luke 1:46-48.) The woman in the crowd in essence said, "You have brought great honor and blessing to your mother, for if she could see you at this moment she would be so proud!" Jesus responded with a gentle rebuke: "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it. And my mother is blessed, but it is because she is willing to follow God and obey Him. And all who hear the word of God and observe it will be equally blessed." This was also true in the case of Mary the sister of Martha, who not only sat at the feet of Jesus but then obeyed the word of God, and in the case of Jesus himself, who not only sat at the feet of his Father but also walked in obedience all the way to the cross of Calvary.

Whom do you see when you look at Jesus? Some see a servant of Satan, some see a beautiful son, and...

## **III. Some See a Miracle Worker**

Luke 11:29-32

And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Now the Lord addressed the sign seekers. Back in 11:16 we found some folks in the crowd who had watched the captive demoniac set free, and they sought to test him, "demanding of Him a sign from heaven." The meaning of "sign" was that some of the Jews wanted another miracle from heaven, not realizing that Jesus was the sign from heaven and they couldn't read it. So the Lord issued one statement

and two warnings.

"This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation." The Lord had evaluated the wicked city of Nineveh (in what is now Iraq) and declared that if they did not repent in 40 days the city and all its people would be destroyed by his mighty hand. Jonah (800 BC) was a sign or miracle to these people because of his experience of spending three days and nights in the belly of a sea monster. It gave authority to his message of mercy and judgment, with the result that in 40 days the king and his people were convicted by the word of the prophet and realized without benefit of the Law of Moses that they deserved the judgment of a righteous God, and repented of their sins. Thus the Lord in his mercy spared them.

Jesus' sign or miracle to the Jews, with all the Law of Moses as well as the witnesses to all his miracles, would be only as he stated in Matthew: "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40.) The risen Lord and Messiah Jesus Christ would be the last sign to Israel, and if that sign of mercy was rejected, then would come the final judgment. He was telling them, "You are rejecting me on this side of the cross, but if you reject me after the resurrection then you will experience God's final judgment."

Jesus pointed to two witnesses against this generation. First, the Queen of Sheba (Saudi Arabia): "The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." She hungered for wisdom, and when she was told that a Jewish king named Solomon might have a clue, she traveled a long distance to find out anything she could from him. And after listening to him, she concluded, "Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness." (2 Chronicles 9:8.) And yet here a thousand years later, standing before this crowd was "...Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3.) Paul would later encourage the Corinthians believers that he preached "...to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24.) On Judgment Day the Queen of Sheba will be brought into the hall of justice as a witness against this present wicked generation who had rejected the "Wisdom of God." Then she will say to them, "I traveled thousands of miles to find wisdom, and he was right in front of you! Were you so blind, so deaf to miss him? And here you are, with God's wisdom living among you, and now it is right in front of you."

The second witness was the Men of Nineveh. The Lord drew the minds of the crowd back to Nineveh, since he had already mentioned Jonah, and warned this present wicked generation that "the men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here." When Jonah spoke to the wicked people of Nineveh who did not know their right hand from their left hand, they recognized the authentic voice of God and repented. And if this generation would not repent of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah after the resurrection, God would bring the men of Nineveh who had accepted the message of God through Jonah as witnesses against this wicked generation. For these people had not only seen the person and power of Jesus and heard his preaching, but then having witnessed all that evidence they still rejected him as their Lord.

Whom do you see when you look at Jesus? Some see a servant of Satan, some see a beautiful son, some see a miracle worker, and...

#### **IV. Some See the Light of the World**

Luke 11:33-36

"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light. The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you may not be

darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."

Jesus was standing before a nation that not only had been possessed by a demon of dumbness, but many were also losing their eyesight. For he had said earlier, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) But now some heard him say, "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it...under a peck-measure..." For the Lord God had given the Jewish people directly by the hand of Moses the law or truth of God's character and moral standards to live a life that would please him and bring joy to their lives. But they were to put that light "...on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light [the truth of God].. For he had also called his people to become the light of salvation to the surrounding nations. So they had been called to be "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14.) Light defines the reality of God's character and the reality of our character.

Then the Lord again issued a call to repentance. "When your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light [truth and reality]; but when it is bad, your whole body also is full of darkness." In essence this nation's lamp had gone out, and their hearts were filled with darkness caused by evil desires, pride and prejudice. Jesus' warning was, "You have a choice; watch out that the light in you may not be darkness." The apostle Paul would write to the Corinthians some 20 years later and speak of his Jewish brothers' blindness whenever they read the Law: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4.) Then Jesus contrasted the eyesight of those who were blinded by unbelief and that of those who could see that Jesus was the image of God. "If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays." Some saw him as the Light of the world. Some saw him as darkness. He was saying, "It's your choice."

The Christians at Stanford arranged a sunrise service at Frost Amphitheater this last Easter. After some wonderful music and the testimonies of two adults who had given their lives to the Jesus as Lord and Savior, I was privileged to speak a few words from the word of God. I saw several folks that I knew who were not Christians sitting on the lawn listening to the word of God. Up to that point they had rejected the light. Yet there they were-it was curious. Then as I invited the audience to invite the risen Jesus Christ into their hearts by confessing their need of him as their Lord and Savior, I was really thinking about these particular people. But at this invitation they remained unmoved by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I left with a sense of disappointment, grieving that once again they had rejected God's gracious invitation to salvation. Later I went to our Easter service at Shoreline and was sitting, rather drained, in the top row with my wife, when a friend walked up and introduced me to a young woman of about 20. He told me she wanted to share something with me. When I asked her what she wanted to share, she could not speak, but giant tears spilled down her cheeks. I then asked her if she had invited Jesus into her heart at the Stanford service, and she nodded her head and finally said, "Yes." My heart was overwhelmed with the joy of that moment. The light of the life of Jesus Christ had invaded her heart, and now her whole body is filled with light!

When those with bad eyes look at Jesus, they see a servant of Satan, a beautiful son or a miracle worker. But those with the clear eyes of faith are able to see Jesus as the Light of the world. My challenge to you this morning is, Whom do you see when you look at Jesus? Your answer is the difference between life and death, heaven and hell, even now. I would challenge you to ask God to give you eyes to see that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Messiah of Jews and Gentiles alike, who is not coming on September 9, 1991, but has already come. He was rejected by his people, placed on a cross for our sins, and buried; and God then raised him from the dead and declares him Lord of lords and King of kings. And there is no other.

I invite you to accept him as your Lord and Savior. Your eyes will be opened, and the dumbness will leave you and you'll end up praising God the rest of your life and on into eternity! But if you reject him as your Lord and Savior, you'll be left in your dumbness and your blindness forever. Don't do it! Don't spend another day looking for Messiah to come when he's here as the risen Lord and Savior. If you reject the appeal to invite him into your heart as your Lord, Savior, and Messiah, then comes the judgment. Now we hear the voice of mercy; one day it will be the voice of judgment.

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