

LEARNING TO RECEIVE JESUS

INTRO: Altar calls or offering the invitation relate to inviting people to come forward and become Christians. This is often stated, *“Come, receive Jesus into your heart,”* or *“If there is someone here without Jesus, invite him in now as we stand and sing.”* For us it usually includes more information like being baptized in water.

The historical setting for this is the long-running evangelistic endeavor. We called them *“gospel meetings”* some called them *“camp meetings.”* 200 years ago till more recently a preacher would travel from one place to another where the residents of that community would have been apprised of an upcoming event. Without T.V., Sunday Shopping, and Sporting Events that called both adults to attend and children to practice, often Sunday morning, there was time and room in the mind to sit and listen and make important, life changing decisions.

As time moved on progress stole more and more of the precious commodity of time. Gospel Meetings became not month-long but a week, then Wednesday to Sunday, then possible Friday through Sunday and now it is difficult to get people out at all for more than the *“obligatory”* Sunday Morning Worship. Which means it is more difficult to locate an audience with one or more in a searching for Jesus atmosphere. **ILLUST:** Have You Found Jesus.

LESSON ONE: *GETTING READY TO RECEIVE JESUS INTO OUR HEART*

INTRO: No matter how religious you feel or what your upbringing consisted of, Jesus is not automatically part of you. We are not automatically part of Jesus or His church because our family is, or due to the good reputation we have in the community. There is a process, one outlined in the Bible and individuals must receive Him. Jesus does not force himself on us.

I) **JESUS WAS NOT EVEN QUICKLY RECEIVED BY HIS OWN PEOPLE**

A) *He Was Rejected By His Own People- John 1:11- “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him”*

- 1) They were *“his own”* because they were Jewish as Jesus was.
 - (a) The first *“own”* is neuter and probably refers to his town.
 - (b) The second *“own”* is masculine and refers to his own people
 - (i) It is nearly impossible to be impartial to one’s own countrymen.
 - (ii) We almost always cheer for our home teams, etc.
 - (iii) But they knew him!!! See the natural, *negative* result in **John 13:53-55.**
- 2) But they were *“his own”* in another way. They were His own prepared people
 - (a) John the Baptist had a particular job, it was to get people ready for Jesus-**John 1:6-8**
 - (b) John was doing the job of preparing the way for Jesus, by giving them an introduction.
 - (c) He talked to and baptized many in prospect of Jesus’s arrival- **Matthew 3:1-11**
 - (d) He told them to *“believe on the one who is coming after him, that is Jesus”*-**Acts 19:4**
 - (e) Here are some specifics:
 - (i) *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*

- (ii) There is one in your midst whose sandals I am not worthy to untie
 - (iii) I baptise you with water, He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.
 - (iv) Then one day he saw Jesus and said, "*behold the Lamb of God... away the sin of the world*"
- 3) So, these people who rejected Jesus had been prepped to the contrary! (this is subtle)
- (a) BUT, these good people were looking for what was NOT promised.
 - (i) Under Roman Rule, they waited for a Savior to free them. **Jesus is a Sin Saviour!**
 - (ii) The religious leaders had **rejected Jesus as a walking oxymoron!**
 - (b) In the scathing rebuke found in Matt. 23, Jesus lashes out with 8 "woes."
 - (i) The leaders had painted an incorrect portrait!!!
 - (ii) So Jesus said many times, "*you have heard.. but I say unto you.*" cf **Matt. 5:38,39**
 - (iii) Both things were in the Bible!(eye for eye and turn the other cheek).
 - (iv) Naturally the regular people were obligated to follow their leaders.cf. **Matt. 23:1,2**
 - (c) **As a result, many did not know how to receive Jesus!!!**
 - (d) **When we THINK we know what we need, when we THINK we know what we have, when we THINK we know how to be saved, we are OFTEN in trouble.**
 - (e) **Those who knew Jesus well thought the knew his origin also. They didn't !**
- B) But Those Who Did Receive Him Were Blessed Beyond Mere Words- John 1:12,13**
- 1) "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*"
 - 2) **Saying it differently, Jesus gives us what is impossible to find elsewhere cf 14:6**
 - (a) **Sometimes we question smaller points which may not have biblical answers**
 - (i) **Like "*is one saved if his hand slipped out of the water when being immersed?*"**
 - (ii) **Or, "*suppose a person was not told his baptism was for forgiveness of sins?*"**
 - (b) **But we should never question the uniqueness of Jesus!**
 - (i) **When Andrew called brother Peter he introduced Jesus as the Messiah. -John 1:41**
 - (ii) **Messiah referred to the long awaited one to be sent from God.**
 - (iii) **Genesis to Malachi point to His coming. The N.T. opens with it happening. Matt.1**
- II) MAKING READY FOR THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS**
- A) The coming of Jesus from heaven to earth might seem like happenstance to us**
- 1) Parents had to go on a trip just then.
 - 2) Ended up in Bethlehem with no proper accommodations

- 3) Then due to threats the family had to flee the country
- 4) Does this sound like a plan made in heaven??? Well it was! (God planned this)
- 5) **When we base our decisions on what we think is reasonable we need to check the Bible!**

B) To Prepare To Receive Jesus:

- 1) **We must rid ourselves of all idols:** love of money, things, popularity, priorities, and whatever would give Jesus second place at any time.
- 2) **We need to accept Jesus as our one and only saviour- Acts 4:12**
 - (a) For example, Jesus is accepted by idolaters as one to add to the pile of many.
 - (b) But if he alone is not our Saviour, He is not our Saviour at all! Again-**John 14:6**
 - (c) Remember the inspired words of **Matthew 16:13-16**
 - (d) Muslims believe that Jesus is a prophet of God
 - (i) He is the precursor to Mohammed as John was to Jesus
 - (ii) They say Jesus was a Muslim-*“one who submits to the will of God”*
 - (iii) But they reject His divinity, that he was NOT God in the flesh and was not the Son of God.
- 3) **We must take ourselves out of the picture-** Galatians 2:20
- 4) **We need to understand that we and God are not making a deal.** His part and our part.
 - (a) We have no bargaining power
 - (b) Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling

CONCLUSION: Bruce Larson, in Believe and Belong, tells how he helped people struggling to surrender their lives to Christ:

"For many years I worked in New York City and counseled at my office any number of people who were wrestling with this yes-or-no decision. Often I would suggest they walk with me from my office down to the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue. In the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a beautifully proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, is holding the world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under this burden. 'Now that's one way to live,' I would point out to my companion, 'trying to carry the world on your shoulders. But now come across the street with me.'

"On the other side of Fifth Avenue is Saint Patrick's Cathedral, and there behind the high altar is a little shrine of the boy Jesus, perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort he is holding the world in one hand. My point was illustrated graphically.

"We have a choice. We can carry the world on our shoulders, or we can say, 'I give up, Lord; here's my life. I give you my world, the whole world.'"

For discussion Col. 1:26-28; 3:16 and Rom. 8:10

ILLUSTRATIONS USED IN THIS LESSON

Believe And Belong

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