"THEY JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND"

(The Misunderstood Messiah)
Part I
Matthew 8:18-27
8/27/2017

INTRODUCTION:

***Don't misunderstand Jesus!**

Four examples of people who didn't understand who Jesus was, what He came to do, and what it takes to follow Him:

I. They didn't understand
THE COMMITMENT TO FOLLOWING HIS PATH (8:18-22)

II. They didn't understand
THE SAFETY OF HAVING HIS PRESENCE (8:23-27)

III. They didn't understand
THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING HIS POWER (8:28-34)

IV. They didn't understand
THE REALITY OF RECEIVING HIS PARDON (9:1-8)

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INTRODUCTION:

Of all who have ever walked the face of this earth, none has been so misunderstood as Jesus Christ.

EX: To Philip, Jesus said: *"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"*

Of His crucifiers, Jesus said: *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"* (cp. I Cor. 2:8)

After His resurrection to the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said: *"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken"* (Lk. 24:25)

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Four examples of people who didn't understand who Jesus was, what He came to do, and what it takes to follow Him:

I. They didn't understand
THE COMMITMENT TO FOLLOWING HIS PATH (8:18-22)

V. 18

The ***"great multitudes"*** were gathered merely for physical miracles (healings, etc.). The masses, seeking such healings, would have greatly hindered Christ from reaching others (including Gentiles - Mt. 12:18), and would have robbed precious time from His goal of preaching the Gospel.

"Because great crowds followed Jesus, and opposition had not yet begun, many would-be disciples wanted to follow Him. However, they would not pay the price." (Wiersbe, p. 34)

V. 19

"Master" = Teacher

Perhaps this scribe (copier and teacher of the O.T. Law) was intellectually impressed by Christ's teachings and at this time was momentarily inspired to follow the Lord.

"I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest" - This man, with stars in his eyes and visions of earthly glory in his mind, prematurely utters a pious promise to follow Jesus no matter where Jesus would lead.

Many today make shallow commitments to following Christ, but without counting the cost.

"Jesus knew that a strong profession does not necessarily reflect strong commitment" (MacArthur, p. 22)

"Many people are attracted to Him by excitement, glamour, or the hope of personal benefit. . . such a person sees the soldiers on parade, the fine uniforms, and the glittering arms and is eager to join, forgetting the exhausting marches, the bloody battles, the graves" etc. (Lenski, cited by MacArthur, p. 23).

EX: those soldiers who enlisted in the U.S. military for education benefits who ended up in Arabia for "Desert Storm"

V. 20

Jesus, knowing the shallowness of the man's commitment to follow, reminds him of the price he will have to pay if he is to be such a follower.

To follow Jesus wherever he would lead will often require sacrifice, doing without, difficulty, pressure, trials, hardship.

This man evidently thoughts that following Christ is all glory, all comfort, "a bowl of cherries."

Jesus' point: The foxes and birds have houses - places of comfort, shelter, and rest - but He did not even carry a pillow!

Christ's itinerant ministry would require Him to travel light and miss out on the comforts He deserved.

"Son of man" - a title that shows Christ's humiliation in becoming incarnate. Jesus, although He was God (Phil. 2:6), humbled Himself in becoming human.

The "Son of God" became the "Son of man" so that we, the "sons of man," might become "sons of God."
In a world that isn't fair, God never promises the Christian an easy, carefree life; but He does promise a blessed life with true purpose, meaning, and eternal reward.

EXCUSE # 1 - The <u>cost</u> is too great
(The <u>comforts</u> of this life keep many from surrendering <u>all</u>)

V. 22

EXCUSE # 2 - I'll serve You later
(The <u>customs</u> and <u>cares</u> of this life keep many from surrendering <u>now</u>)

See Luke 9:57-62 for 3 excuses.

V. 21

"Another of His disciples" **-** Evidently not one of the 12 but perhaps one of the 70

Note: Luke's gospel is more chronological, and it describes the selection of the 12 disciples (Lk. 6:12-16), then <u>later</u> the excuse-making "disciple" (Lk. 9:59)

"Bury my father" **-** There is no indication that his father had actually died, but he is man is excusing himself from following Christ so that he could go and <u>care</u> for his father until he died, and then he could get his lucrative inheritance (perhaps he was afraid he would lost his inheritance)

V. 22

"Let the dead bury their dead" - Obviously, physically dead people could not bury anyone. Jesus is saying let those who are spiritually dead worry about burying those who die physically. In contrast, however, following Christ takes pre-eminence over everything!

Christians can get so involved in doing that which is lesser priority, that they fail to do that which is paramount; that which shall come first.

"Jesus was not asking the man to be disrespectful to his father (who was not yet dead) but to have the right priorities in life" (Wiersbe, p. 34)

Jesus is saying: "Let the world take care of the things of the world" (MacArthur, p. 25)

Following Christ requires self-denial and cross bearing. (Mt. 16:24)

Following Jesus involves following Him on His terms and not our own!

II. They didn't understand
THE SAFETY OF HAVING HIS PRESENCE (8:23-27)

V. 24

The little Sea of Galilee, because of its geographical location, can become a raging sea in a matter of minutes.

"The ship" - was no huge ocean vessel, but was by today's standards a little boat (cp. Mk. 4:36).

"He was asleep" - Had they known who Jesus was, they would not have been worried that He was asleep. He, though He took upon Himself physical limitations, was still in total control of things - even asleep!

V. 25

Being fishermen, the disciples had been in storms before; they perhaps exhausted all of their efforts and finally in desperation go to wake up Jesus.

Can you imagine what they must have thought:
"How could He sleep during a time like this?!"
"Doesn't He realize what is going on?!"
"Doesn't He care about us?"

Sometimes we are tempted to ask such questions in the midst of turmoil, confusion, and severe trial, but remember Jesus has everything under control! (In Heaven, *"He neither slumbers nor sleeps"*)

V. 26
Matthew is contrasting the *"little faith"* of the disciples with the *"great faith"* (8:10) of the Centurion.

"Fear" is always the result of ***"little faith."***

Whenever we worry it is always because we are not trusting God like we should.

"Rebuked the winds and the sea" - Perhaps all Jesus said to the wind was "Stop it" and to the sea, "Peace, be still" (Mk. 4:39). All it took was the power of His word.

"Great calm" - the sea went from violent, raging, beating waves to a peaceful, serene, smooth calm.

It wasn't just a calm, it was a great calm. Not a ripple remained! The sea became like a sheet of glass. It was not a gradual calming, but it was a sudden and complete calm.

One second the disciples are rocking back and forth in their little boat, and the next, they were completely stationary.

The wind went from a howling, vicious torrent to non-existence; not a breeze remained.

v. 27

The disciples were amazed! They knew Jesus had power over leprosy (v. 3), palsy (v. 13), sickness (v. 14), and demon possession (v. 16) -- but did He have the power to instantaneously control the natural elements?! No one can do this! No one except God!

So they responded, *"What manner of man is this?"* He was no ordinary man!

The problem with the disciple's question is that it reveals that they still didn't know who Jesus was. They still thought He was a mere man.

Despite His authoritative teaching and His tremendous miracles, they still didn't see that He was the God-Man!

Psalm 89:8-9 - *"O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto Thee? of to Thy faithfulness round about Thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, Thou stillest them."*

"The winds and the sea obey Him" - when Jesus speaks the elements submit. When Jesus speaks, the humanly impossible is accomplished. When Jesus sends forth the command, "Mother Nature" proves she is not "Mother" but is an obedient servant to her Creator.

III. They didn't understand
THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING HIS POWER (8:28-34)

V. 24

"Possessed" - to possess means to inhabit or live inside and to control that which you live in

"Devils" - plural; their name was "Legion" because there were many demons who possessed these men (Mk. 5:9; Lk. 8:30). A "Legion" was the largest unit of the Roman army, 3000 - 6000 strong (Ryrie note)

"Two possessed" - "In their accounts of this incident, Mark (5:2) and Luke (8:27) mention only one demon-possessed man, but do not state that only one was present. For their particular purposes they chose to focus on the more dominant of the two men" (MacArthur, p. 41)

Marks of someone who is a Satanist or demon-possessed:

1. A pre-occupation with death (*"out of the tombs"*)

2. Violent behavior *("exceeding fierce")*

3. Super-human strength (*"exceeding fierce")*

   Cp. Luke 8:29 - *"He was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness"*

4. Anti-social isolation *("that no man might pass that way")*

5. An abhorrence for Jesus Christ *("what have we to do with thee"")*

6. Clairvoyant knowledge *("Jesus, thou Son of God")*

   There is no indication that these men knew Jesus; however, when someone is demon-possessed they can know things that they have never been taught; speak in languages they have never learned.

   "Thou Son of God" - a reference to Christ's deity! Note: The demons

have no choice but to fall down and worship Christ (Lk. 8:28)

7. Insanity, masochism, and immodesty

(Mk. 5:5 describes the demon-possessed person as *"crying"* and cutting/*"gashing himself with stones")*

Lk. 8:27 - This man *"ware no clothes"*

V. 29

"Art thou come to torment us before the time?" - The demons indicate that:

---Jesus has the power to torment *("thou")*

---Jesus has power over demons (*"us")*

---Jesus will one day at a particular time judge demons (they along with Satan will be hurled down into the bottomless pit (*"into the deep"* - Lk. 8:31; cp. Rev. 20:1ff)

Note: demons fear Christ and rightly so.

A shocking statement: "If people feared Christ like demons do, we would see revival." They *"believe and tremble"* - James 2:19

As Warren Wiersbe has observed, we could almost construct a "statement of faith" from the word of demons (demons do have faith - James 2:19).

--They believe in the existence of God

--They believe in the deity of Christ

--They believe in the reality of future judgment

--They believe also in prayer (v. 31)

V. 31

The unclean swine would be a fitting abode for the unclean spirits.

"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" I Jn. 4:4

Demons (even a legion of them) are NO match for Jesus Christ.

NOTE: The demons' response to Jesus Christ shows:

**Demons fear Jesus Christ (v. 29)

a. They know His holiness
(*"What have we to do with Thee?"* - implied answer: Nothing!)

b. They know His deity
(*"Thou Son of God"*)

c. They know His power and judgeship
(*"Art Thou come to torment us before the time?"*)

d. They know His sovereignty (v. 31)
(*"Besought"* - They begged Jesus; *"If Thou"* - They know that whatever Jesus decides to do, He does it; *"Suffer us"* - they recognize that they can do nothing unless Jesus allows it)

V. 32

A pig is an easily agitated creature to begin with; this demonic possession caused the pigs to desire nothing but death to seek to rid themselves of the evil demons.

To anyone (EX: animal rights activists) who would question why Jesus would do this to swine, the reply is: Jesus didn't do anything to the swine; the demons did.

God always gets blamed for man's or Satan's sin.

But why did Jesus allow it?

--*"God owns everything"* (Ps. 50:10-11) and can do with it as He pleases
--Jesus values men more than pigs or sheep (Mt. 12:12) (Wiersbe, p.34)

V. 33

After the demons left the men, they drastically changed. Luke 8:35 describes them as:

1) Sitting (at the feet of Jesus)

2) Clothed

3) In his right mind

4) Testifying (Lk. 8:39)

V. 34

"Besought" - to make a soft appeal, to encourage (one to leave)

They would not dare command or order Him to leave after hearing and seeing all that He could do!

You would think that the town would have rejoiced, celebrated, elected Jesus as "mayor."

You would think they would have been glad that these two menaces to society were straightened out!

But such was not the case.

It's ironic how, even today, Jesus is not wanted by all. The irony is that people have nothing good to lose from Him -- only everything good to gain!

This rejection of Jesus is a small picture of the large scale rejection that Jesus faced.

It's a microcosm of the macrocosm.

IV. They didn't understand
THE REALITY OF RECEIVING HIS PARDON (9:1-8)

V. 1

"His own city" - Capernaum; although Jesus grew up in Nazareth, Capernaum became His headquarters, His stopping ground; the city where Jesus performed a great majority of miracles.

V. 2

"They" - Four men (Mk. 2:3) who loved their paralyzed friend and believed that Jesus could heal him.

"Brought to Him" - When they could not gain entrance into the building because of the multitudes of people that crammed into the place, they went up on the flat roof, broke up the ceiling tiles, and lowered their friend down Mk. 2:4; Lk. 5:19).

"Palsy" - A paralytic who couldn't move and was confined to a bed.

"Jesus, seeing their faith" The faith of the four men and the faith of the paralytic

"Be of good cheer" - cheer up; take heart; be encouraged (wipe the frown from your face and the sorrow from your heart; don't be discouraged any longer); because your sins are forgiven!

NOTE: Nothing cheers a heart like the forgiveness of sin by Jesus Christ!

"Thy sins" - His own personal sins (no one but we ourselves can be blamed for our sins)

"Thy sins" - Everytime he missed God's standard of righteousness

"Be forgiven" - pres. pass. *"are being forgiven"*

Pres. tense = His sins were being removed at the very instant Jesus said the words.

Passive voice = it was Jesus who forgave Him

The word "forgiven" means to drive away or do away with. *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Ps. 103:12); whenever God forgives sins, He casts them *"into the depths of the sea"* (Mic. 7:19)

ILLUS: The Alaskan translation for "forgiveness" (MacArthur, p. 52)

V. 3

"This man blasphemeth" - In their hearts, they accused Jesus of slander against God.

They rightly recognized that no one could forgive sins except God alone (Mk. 2:7; Lk. 5:21). Their failure was in no seeing that Jesus was God.

Since they did not recognize Jesus as God, they thought He was committing a sacrilegious, belittling to God's prerogative, blasphemous statement.

They were right in their believe that only God could forgive sins (not any man or angel), but they were wrong in that they didn't recognize Jesus for who He was.

V. 4

"Knowing their thoughts" - Jesus, being omniscient, knew what others could not know - He knew the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It is "evil" to accuse Jesus of blasphemy, and it is evil to not believe He is deity incarnate.

V. 5

It is obviously easier to say *"Thy sins be forgiven thee"* since the validity of the statement cannot be so easily tested as *"Arise"* (Ryrie note)

Any one can say the words *"Your sins be forgiven thee"* - Such a statement is meaningless unless the one who says it has the power to do it!

Just talk with no power to back it up is cheap; it's impotent.

V. 6

"But that ye may know" - This statement is the clearest reason given in the Bible as to why signs and miracles were performed. They were to validate (vindicate, authenticate) both the Messenger and His Message.

Jesus did what only God can do because Jesus is God!

Forgiving sins is a prerogative of God only; and Christ's independent ability to forgive sins is one of the strongest indications of His deity.

Note: Other Scripture showing Christ's ability to forgive sin:

"Hath power on earth" -

"Power" = authority

"Hath. . . on earth" - Jesus while incarnate on earth had the same authority to forgive sins as He had in Heaven

"To the sick of the palsy" - Had Jesus not qualified (limited) His command to *"Arise"* to this paralytic, every paralytic on earth would have arisen at that imperative.

V. 7

"And he arose" - This miracle was:

1) Immediate (Mk. 2:12) - not a process

2) Undeniable (Lk. 5:25) - *"He arose up before them"* - right before their eyes (Note: It is certain that the people knew this man; this was not a "staged miracle" (a fake set-up) like so many of the supposed healings that occur at "healing meetings" today around America)

3) Complete (or total) - The man had his total strength, in so much as

he was able to pick up a bed and walk home with it!

V. 8

"They marvelled" - they wee filled with fear and awe

"Which had given such power unto men" - this statement reveals a major misunderstanding on the part of the people. God never gave such power unto men (plural), as if Jesus was just one among "men" to whom God gave such power.

Jesus uniquely had this power. No one else has power to forgive and no one else did what Jesus did on this occasion.

And Jesus was not just a man either. He was God in human flesh. The God-Man!

CONCLUSION: