



“What Are You Looking For?”

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When Jesus was about thirty years old, He left the obscurity of home and the carpenter’s shop to begin His personal ministry. After being baptized by John, going through forty days of fasting and then confrontation with the devil, Jesus then commenced with His personal ministry and calling His inner circle of disciples to train under Him. These same men would later be the foundation of His kingdom here on earth. One day when John the baptizer was with the other disciples, Jesus came walking by. John told two of his disciples standing with him, **“Behold the Lamb of God!”** John’s gospel records this encounter in **John 1**. When John pointed Jesus out to these two men, the two then left John and followed after Jesus.

John 1:38 “Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, **What seek ye?**

They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?”

The question that Jesus asked was not incidental. Some translations say that He asked, *“What are you looking for?”* Some say, *“What do you want?”* That is an important question that I believe Jesus still asks those who show any interest in following Him today. We’ll consider this important question in our study today.

Jesus’ disciples confessed in **John 16:30**: **“Now are we sure that thou knowest all things...”** Yet we often find Jesus asking questions. But His questions were always rhetorical. He knew everything, so why did He need information? No, Jesus’ questions were meant to lead the person to discover some truth or cause introspection or cause one to think. When the two curious disciples of John left him to follow Jesus, He asked them, **“What seek ye?”** Or, *What are you looking for? Why are you following Me?* At least one translation says, *What do you want?* It’s interesting that Jesus introduces Himself to them with such a question. Here are two men who are obviously drawn to Him in some way and are interested in Him. But Jesus wants to know why, or perhaps we should say, Jesus wanted THEM to know why. Well, they answered, **“Rabbi, where dwellest thou?”** *Teacher, we want to know where you live. Where are you from? We want to know something about you.* Jesus then extends that wonderful invitation: **“Come and see.”** And they followed Him to where He was staying. Can you imagine going to wherever

Jesus was living or staying at this time and being invited into His home, whatever it consisted of at that point? The record says that they spent the day with Jesus. Wouldn't you like to know what was said in the course of those hours together? Whatever Jesus said to them, they left there that day believing that He was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and their lives forever changed.

There are many people who are interested in Jesus. When they hear of Him they, like these two disciples of long ago, follow after Him. But the question Jesus asked in the town of Bethany so long ago is a question that we need to answer today as well. *What seek ye? What are you looking for?*

Throughout His three-year ministry, multitudes of people followed Jesus, but they did so out of very different motives. There were those who followed out of curiosity: *Who is this captivating teacher? Who is this unusual man who says such strange, unorthodox things?* Even some officers who were sent to arrest Jesus and came upon Him while He was speaking returned awestruck and emptyhanded, telling those who asked why they hadn't brought Jesus back to them, **"Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46)**. There were scores of people throughout His ministry who were intrigued with Him as a rising figure. They didn't quite know what to make of Him. Maybe they admired Him for one reason or another. They were certainly drawn to Him, but that doesn't mean they were necessarily His disciples. Then there were those who followed Him to see His miracles. While it is true that the miracles of Christ—and He performed many of them; most that are not even recorded in the scriptures—were for the purpose of bearing witness to His deity and God's approval of Him, and therefore to cause people to believe in Him and in His words. However, many were more impressed with His miracles than they were with His message, thus missing the point of His miracles. In **John 11**, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, then He disappeared with His disciples to another city. They should've learned some important and wonderful things from that great miracle at the tomb of Lazarus. They should've immediately recognized that He was the Christ, the Son of God, everything that He claimed to be. But also within that miracle was the important lesson that Jesus Himself was the resurrection and the life, and because of His resurrection, we have the hope of rising from the dead. But after some time, He returned to Bethany and the Bible tells us that a great crowd went out to see Him for a different reason.

John 12:9 "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead."

They were intrigued by the miracle. The next day, He began His triumphal march into Jerusalem and a multitude of people who were still impressed with the miracle of raising Lazarus, surrounded and celebrated Jesus as He rode on the back of a donkey into the city. Jesus caused a great stir that day, but they weren't really following Him because they believed in Him as their savior and because they were pledging their lives to Him. I say that because of what the Bible says about it:

John 12:18 "For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle."

You might be thinking, *That's wonderful that these people were so impressed by His power that they followed Him!* But you see, that fickle crowd that was crying, **"Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!"** that day would be just a few days later crying, **"Crucify Him!"** These people were searching for *miracles* from heaven, but not necessarily a *message* from heaven.

We likewise read in **John 6:2** that when Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee, a great multitude followed Him because **"they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased."** Well, again, what's wrong with that? Read on and you'll see what happened when Jesus performed the next miracle of feeding the multitude. They misunderstood the whole thing. They were merely interested in what Jesus could give them; not what He could make them. They not only followed Him for His miracles, but for the loaves and fishes. Jesus looked out over that multitude of hungry souls and took five loaves of bread and two small fish and multiplied it into a feast that fed some five thousand with leftovers. What was their reaction to that? They followed Him around to the other side of the sea and said, **"Lord, evermore give**

us this bread.” In other words, *Keep it coming! If you can feed multitudes, we’ll vote for you as our leader. You’re just like Moses, who fed the people with manna from heaven!* Jesus said:

John 6:26 “Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”

You read on and you’ll see that they had the audacity to then say to Jesus:

John 6:30 “They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?”

They had already seen the miracle! They had eaten of the feast that He had miraculously provided and now they want more. *If you’ll keep doing that, we’ll believe!* Look at Jesus’ response.

John 6:32-33 “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”

He said that the bread they were seeking was the kind that Moses gave their fathers in the desert, but their fathers died. They didn’t live forever. But He told them that whoever eats the bread of life—that is, whoever abides in the teachings of Christ—will have spiritual life and will live forever. Jesus said that if we don’t eat of His flesh and drink of His blood that we will have no life in us. That is not talking about the Lord’s Supper, but rather accepting and following the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not the kind of bread that these people were following Jesus for.

John 6:66-68 “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

You see, the disciples who were truly committed to Jesus were following Him for the words that He spoke, the teachings that he brought to earth, the saving truth and eternal life that He represented and offered. So, do you see why Jesus would ask those first two disciples *what seek ye?*

Then there were those following Jesus who were seeking an earthly kingdom. We see that in this same chapter. Look at what happened when Jesus fed the multitude.

John 6:14 “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

Now before you get too excited, read on. They recognized Jesus as an extraordinary figure, believing that in some way He was connected to God, but:

John 6:15 “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”

Well, didn’t Jesus come to be a king? Doesn’t He indeed have a kingdom? Yes, He has a kingdom, but it’s not the kind that these people wanted Him to have. They were following Him out of political motivation. They were subjects of Rome, servants of Caesar, and they despised that. Those living in first century Palestine resented paying taxes to Rome and being subject to Tiberias Caesar. They longed for and had a great expectation for the Messiah to come as an earthly ruler who would break the chains of the Romans and restore the sovereignty and might of David’s ancient Israel. We see that over and over again throughout the ministry of Jesus. Some even went so far as to long for that kingdom because they thought it would mean personal positions of power, wealth, and preeminence. They misunderstood the whole thing. When Jesus came rejecting the notion of such a kingdom, instead teaching that His kingdom would be a spiritual kingdom, they rejected Him.

The sad fact is that very few people truly followed Jesus seeking what He came to bring. Many followed, but few followed for the right reasons. He brought truth and light to a people who rejoiced in lies and loved the darkness. He brought pardon and peace to a self-righteous people who didn’t see themselves as sinners in need of God’s forgiveness. That wasn’t their great need, in their minds. He brought a new and living way. He came as not only savior, but as Lord and King, to a people steeped in their own

human traditions which they viewed as higher and more important than the law of God. Few people followed Jesus for the right reasons.

Well, that remains the case today. Did you know that even today, few people follow Jesus out of more than just curiosity? They see Him as a great teacher, they believe that He has some novel philosophies to live by, they admire His kindness and compassion and extol the good deeds that He did, especially for the sick and suffering. They may even go so far as to acknowledge that He is divine. They might say that He is the Son of God, but they really don't understand what that means or the implications and ramifications that has on their own lives. Consequently, they have a shallow view of what it means to actually believe in Jesus and to be His disciple or follower. They have the idea that to follow Jesus is just to be nice and do kind things, to make the world a more happy, comfortable place for people, and if Jesus can do anything for them, it is probably just to make them a nicer, better, more well-rounded person. But listen: Jesus didn't come to affirm human goodness and merely bring out kindness and generosity in people. Friend, Jesus came to call sinners to repentance!

Matthew 9:13 “...for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

You are a sinner and I am a sinner, and He came to call us to repentance and into a new life! He came calling people to live holy and righteous and separated lives. He came requiring the total sacrifice of our own will and our own desires. He came requiring that we leave mother, father, sister, brother, and friend to follow Him and be His disciple. Many people will follow Him as long as it doesn't mean that kind of sacrifice and commitment and changing their lives. But you CANNOT follow Jesus as a novelty or out of curiosity.

Like them, many today follow Him for His power, what they think Jesus can do for them physically or otherwise. The miracles of Jesus were to show that He was the Son of God (**John 20:31**), and that the message of salvation that He was preaching was true (**Matthew 9:6**), but Jesus is not walking the earth today performing those miracles. They are in the past and were recorded in ancient holy scripture to show that He was the Christ who came to earth and that the apostle's testimony about Him is true. That was the overall purpose.

Jesus is not going about today giving sight to the blind, making the crippled walk, or raising the dead back to life. But He IS opening eyes blinded by sin and ignorance, filling them with the light of the gospel. Not as many people are interested in that. He IS making lives crippled by sin whole by the gospel, by changing and purifying them, re-shaping them into a new creation. But people aren't interested in giving up their sinful lives to become what God wants them to be. Jesus IS giving new life to those who are dead in sins and trespasses (**Ephesians 2:1**), yet out of many pulpits today you won't hear a lot about sin and salvation from sin. Jesus really didn't come to make all of the sick well. He didn't come to make the poor rich. He didn't come to take away all of the social ills of society. Rather, “...*the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” **Luke 19:10**). Do you run to Jesus as a solution to your problems in life? Do you fall on your knees and turn to Him when there is a crisis, but when there's no trouble, you really just don't want Him interfering with your life? If so, you are like that miracle-mongering crowd of long ago.

There are still those who follow Jesus for the loaves and fishes, just like those of long ago. They follow thinking their problems will go away, they'll be rich and prosperous if they only have enough faith. That is the mantra of the 'prosperity gospel' movement: that faith is somehow the key to wealth and worldly success. They are looking to satisfy their fleshly needs and emotional desires, and to do so with religion. The sad thing is, churches today are catering to that. They offer nearly every service and amenity of everyday life that one might want. They cater to the hungry crowds seeking fun, frolic, a good time, entertainment, excitement, socialization, education, social improvement, and on and on...Consequently, worship in the minds of people isn't really so much about what pleases God, but what draws the biggest crowd and generates the most excitement, passion, and emotion. Preachers and churches plot and strategize how to best market themselves and their brand so as to attract the worldly crowd who are

seeking the loaves and fishes. I know that because if you take all of that away, just see how many people will remain. See how many people will come.

Religion today has been tainted by that pragmatic view of evangelism and the gospel. Jesus didn't come to bring a social gospel to the world. He came to bring a saving gospel because we were dead in sins and trespasses and needed saving from our sins. Being saved from our sins means repentance and putting our faith in Christ, obeying Him, and surrendering our lives to Him. Frankly, a lot of people aren't interested in that.

Just like those who followed Jesus in search of an earthly kingdom, there are those who follow today out of a political motive. Many have made the message and mission of Christianity into something besides what it really is. They follow Jesus seeking social justice, not salvation and justification. They use religion as a political force, when the fact is, Jesus had very little to do with the politics of His day. He never encouraged anyone to resist Caesar. He never sought to incite insurrection. In fact, He taught the opposite. He taught that His disciples were in the world, but not to be of it. The affairs of this earth were to be of little interest to them.

Matthew 22:21 "...Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

John 18:36 "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

So, now, maybe we can see why Jesus asked these men from long ago, *What are you looking for?* I would ask you today, what are you seeking? Why do you claim to follow Jesus? May I ask you today why you are what you are? Have you given that much thought? Are you really seeking truth? Salvation? Or is the religion of mom, dad, or your friends good enough for you? Do you have convictions based upon what the Bible says about the church you are a member of: how it worships, what it believes, what it preaches? Have you investigated those things? The question is: What seek ye?

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