

# Getting to Know Jesus

Thomas Robinson, March 13, 2011

## *Luke 9:7-17*

<sup>7</sup> Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening [around Jesus], and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, <sup>8</sup> by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

<sup>9</sup> Herod said, “*John I beheaded, but **who is this about whom I hear such things?***” And he sought to see him.

<sup>10</sup> On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. <sup>11</sup> When the crowds learned it, they **followed him**, and he **welcomed them** and spoke to them of the **kingdom of God** and cured those who had need of **healing**.

<sup>12</sup> Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, “*Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place.*”

<sup>13</sup> But he said to them, “*You give them something to eat.*”

They said, “*We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.*” <sup>14</sup> For there were about five thousand men.

And he said to his disciples, “*Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.*” <sup>15</sup> And they did so, and had them all sit down.

<sup>16</sup> And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. <sup>17</sup> And they **all ate and were satisfied**. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

## *Philippians 3:8-12*

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of **the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through **faith in Christ**, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – <sup>10</sup> that I may **know him** and the **power of his resurrection**, and may **share his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because **Christ Jesus has made me his own**.

## *John 1:10-14*

<sup>10</sup> He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet **the world did not know him**. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to **all who did receive him**, who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to **become children of God**, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the **Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth**.

## Getting to Know Jesus

Nearly half of the New Testament is devoted to the Gospels, telling the story of Jesus, helping us to know him. During his life, the question, “Who is this?” was asked in urgent and remarkable ways with strange answers. The Gospels reveal rather than explain.

Modern authors provide a kaleidoscope of images of Jesus (peasant revolutionary, cynic philosopher, magician, myth, rabbi, apocalyptic prophet, etc.); reflecting the authors.

Knowing Jesus is the heart of Christian faith – a real relationship. Not mastering his teaching (as with other great religious leaders). The distinct nature of the Gospels is to describe past events, but always so that we can get to know a present, living person.

This was the transforming experience of the first disciples, and it’s still the core of this faith. In Jesus we come face to face with God. Abstract concepts of God (monotheism, trinity, grace, forgiveness) all have a face. In Jesus we come face to face with ourselves. What it means to be human – our nobility, suffering, pain, temptation. All seen with new light.

A church is a community of people sharing the journey of learning/knowing Jesus through all kinds of relationships among ourselves and people around us. Worship brings the past into present reality with power and celebration. Singing uses our aesthetic senses of music and poetry to reach deeply into our imagination. Prayer affirms his living presence and power with us. The Lord’s Supper brings Jesus’ life, words, death, resurrection, and presence into this moment together. Giving expresses a response of gratitude and generosity for God’s great gift of himself in Jesus. A Message reflects on these realities.

## Resources for Knowing Jesus

The Gospels are basic. A few facts can be learned from other ancient sources, but the four Gospels are the earliest, most authentic, most challenging sources for our knowledge. All “apocryphal” gospels are later, often wholly unreliable. The four Gospels embody the memories of Jesus’ earliest followers as they reflected on who Jesus was and is. They are written so that the life-changing experience of Jesus can touch the lives of later people.

The Gospels are the climax of a larger story. They are intimately related to the history of God’s promises and instruction and prophecy given in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Jesus brings no new religion but opens the promises made to Abraham to all the world.

The Gospels are diverse. We read four different Gospels – all authoritative and distinct. Historical fact is important, but more important is coming to know God in Jesus. The diversity of the Gospels draws us each into the process of knowing the living Jesus.

We hear the testimonies of others about knowing Jesus. These begin with the rest of the New Testament. Paul testifies to the life-changing power of Jesus and the distinct character of that knowledge. Jesus’ story is my story. (Phil 3:8-12; Gal 2:20). John takes us into the irony of Jesus as the unknown Lord, and the power of his incarnation.

We get to know him through our own life experiences. Jesus never stays in the past and he never leaves our lives unchanged. These become our testimony, the adventure of Jesus.

## Blockages to Knowing Jesus

Many things can keep us from Jesus. Basic ignorance of him. A world view not open to God. Popular misconceptions and confusions often propagated in our time. Assimilating Jesus to other religious leaders. We ultimately must open ourselves to let him define our life.

Our ego and will are the greatest challenge. Jesus enters our life in his own distinct character. He is advocate and friend, but he is also creator and Lord. We discover ourselves – who we were made to be, who we can become, our worst and our best – in knowing him.