

God Looks on the Heart

In my first article in this series from John 2:23-25 we saw that people will often follow Jesus for all the wrong reasons. We looked at the fact that some people wanted to follow Jesus because of his signs or miracles. That is to say, they wanted to follow Jesus for what they think that he would provide them in material blessings that have value for this life only (John 6:26-27). Today I want to go from "signs-belief" to:

—Savior's Belief

"But Jesus on his part did not *entrust* himself to them, because he knew all people....." There's an interesting Greek word play that connects verses 23 and 24. In verse 23 the text says, "...many *believed*..." When we come to verse 24 we read that "Jesus....did not *entrust* himself to them because he knew all people." The word translated "entrust" comes from the same Greek word as the word "believed." John is saying that when Jesus performed "signs" many people put their *trust* in Him. But because Jesus "knew all people" he did not put his *trust* in any of them. Jesus is making a statement pertaining to all mankind and about the human condition in general. Why is it true that Jesus does not *entrust* himself to mankind?

Look at verse 25: "and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man." John is pointing once again to the *deity* of Jesus Christ. Only *God* can know perfectly what's in the heart of man and John is showing us that Jesus, in his deity, knows our heart motivations—out of which flow our words and actions. Jesus is God incarnate! In 1 Kings 8:39, speaking of God, we read: "... (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind)...." In the New Testament book of Acts 15:8, we read that it is "God who knows the heart..." God knows us from the inside-out; we can't hide our sin from him. Fallen mankind has a tendency to put too much of a focus on the externals. Jesus had no need for any mere man to "bear witness" to him about any other man because, in his deity, he knows every man from the inside-out.

To illustrate this truth I want to look at a passage in 1 Samuel 16. At this point in the narrative, King Saul has been rejected and Samuel is asked to go and anoint the new king that God has chosen for Israel. Interestingly, Samuel is told that this king would come from the sons of a man from Bethlehem named Jesse. When Eliab was brought out first, clearly Samuel was impressed. When Samuel saw Eliab's "appearance" and the "height of his stature" he thought, "Surely, [this is] the LORD's anointed." (vs. 6) You can almost see Samuel rising from where he's seated and getting ready to place the anointing oil on the head of Eliab, and God speaks: "Do not look on

his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but *the LORD looks on the heart.*" (vs. 7)

As the narrative progresses more of Jesse's sons are brought before Samuel and one-by-one they're all rejected. It's almost as if Samuel is confused at this point when he says to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" (vs. 11) Had Samuel missed something of what the LORD had said? Jesse replies, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold he's keeping the sheep." (vs. 11) Samuel wisely tells Jesse to send for this youngest son and they'll wait until he arrives. Get this picture in your mind's eye. All of Jesse's other sons had been prepared in advance to meet Samuel. They were "consecrated" which almost certainly includes the fact that they were bathed and were wearing clean clothes (Ex. 19:10; Num. 8:21). They were looking their absolute best. We can't say the same for David, though. After a time of waiting, David walks in. The text indicates that he came straight from the fields. Although we can't know this for sure, we can imagine that he's probably badly in need of a bath; he's physically nasty and even smells of sheep and the outdoors. Not the likeliest of candidates for a king. And yet, the text says that, "he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome." Immediately, "The LORD said, 'Arise anoint him, for this is he.'" (vs. 12) We learn much about David later on; he was certainly not a perfect man, but he was a man who, by grace, had a heart for God. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.