

Gospel of Matthew

9:1-8

Authority!



When I was a young man, I investigated the world's major religions. I discovered that the best way to investigate a religion was to begin at the beginning – who started the religion and what was he or she like? I was much more interested in who they were through what they did than the ideas that they taught. It is who a person is, revealed through what they do that qualifies such a person to have any kind of standing with which to have input in other people's lives. Otherwise the prophet, philosopher, sage, are just another fraud, another hoax! If the message radically conflicts with who our actions and attitudes reveal us to be – such a person should not be listened to – not even one bit!

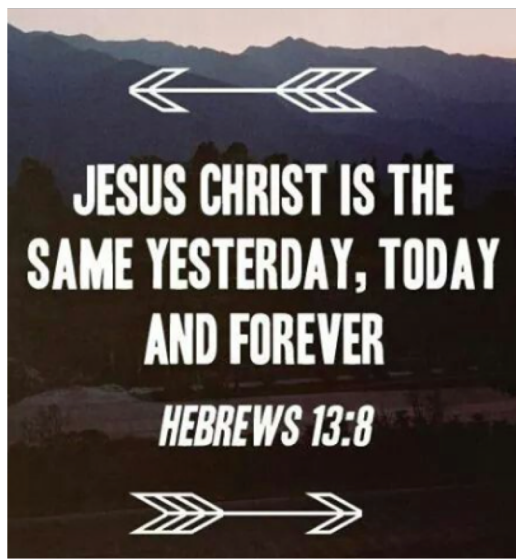


For instance, the cult leader David Koresh of the sect, of the Branch Davidians, an offshoot of the 7th Day Adventist movement – so basically a cult within a cult. Good looking young man, intelligent, really good communicator, so good, in fact, that many people were willing to sell everything they had and join a commune that he had begun. But my understanding is that David Koresh liked young girls and would use them for his own sick gratification. Do you think that anyone should listen to anything David Koresh ever taught? Absolutely not! He was a monster, a pervert, purely a man without conscience, and with a great evil leaking out of him. He was a man that was using God to play God! He was a completely self-absorbed FRAUD! Anyone that would listen to him and take him seriously has truly got a screw loose themselves!



Time after time after time I found that the founders of the world's religions and cults were really warped, strange, and corrupt people, who had a uncanny pied piper kind of ability to get people to follow them without holding their personal behavior to any set standard of decency. In the case of Christian cults, it was even worse, because the followers of these cult leaders had the word of God and yet failed to judge their leader's behavior or their teachings by it's authority, as if, being God's representative on earth, a prophet or prophetess, they were somehow above the Laws of God in the way they conducted themselves in their leadership and in their personal life! None of these people passed the smell test! There was something rotten about every one of them!





But when we hold Jesus up to that same standard, we see a great difference. He lived with his disciples blamelessly. Amazingly, they never saw Him sin – not in word or in deed. They never saw Him preach one thing and do another. It was apparent that He operated out of

pure motives. He loved people - not to use them for his own gratification or to stoke His ego, but because He really loved them and cared for their lives.

He is the spittin' image of God the Father. They are absolutely on the same page in their desire to love people and to save them . *“I and the Father are One”* taught Jesus. He had ultimate authority because of it!

We were discussing this last night, actually. Some preacher was proclaiming that God does things primarily for His own glory! It is a very popular misrepresentation of the actions of God, in my opinion. God is not this gigantic but insecure ego that must be seen and recognized as the greatest power in the universe, or else! All the great acts of God had quite a practical purpose, grounded in His mission, a mission so ingeniously encapsulated by John in his **John 3:16**, that – *“God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish (eternal death) but have eternal life”*! That thread runs throughout the scriptures. God’s greatest works were not for His glory but for His love! He gained glory, for sure, but only so that humanity might know Him, because they had forgotten who their Creator was. So He showed them with unearthly Power who He was, that they might turn to Him *and live!*



[Rom. 8:32] - The cross is not an act of ego, but of love! God was not stroking His glory at the cross, but pouring Himself out, giving all, suffering in weakness, cursed, dying!

“And I, when I am lifted will draw all men unto



myself” – **Jn. 12:32.** If anything may reach the hard hearts of humanity, it is the pathos of Christ, the suffering of Christ that may break through and reach them! So God went there, *“to seek and to save that which was lost - ”***Matt. 18:11!**

Parallel accountings - **Mark 2:3-12 / Luke 5:17-26**

Jesus healed this man because of who he, (Jesus), was. He was going about doing what His Father had charged Him to do - seeking and saving! He had authorization, authority, clearance from on high to save the lost, to heal! He heals this paralytic - recreating neural pathways - *so that* (there is always a “*so that*” with God) *so that* He might show that He could also do what only God could do - save, forgive sins, transfer people from spiritual death into spiritual life, and with spiritual life, into ETERNAL LIFE! That takes authority, and Jesus had it, and He knew what to do with it!



We see haters and doubters here in the story. There will always be haters and doubters, but that is exactly who Jesus came to seek and to save! Sometimes in the gospel accounts, Jesus looks like

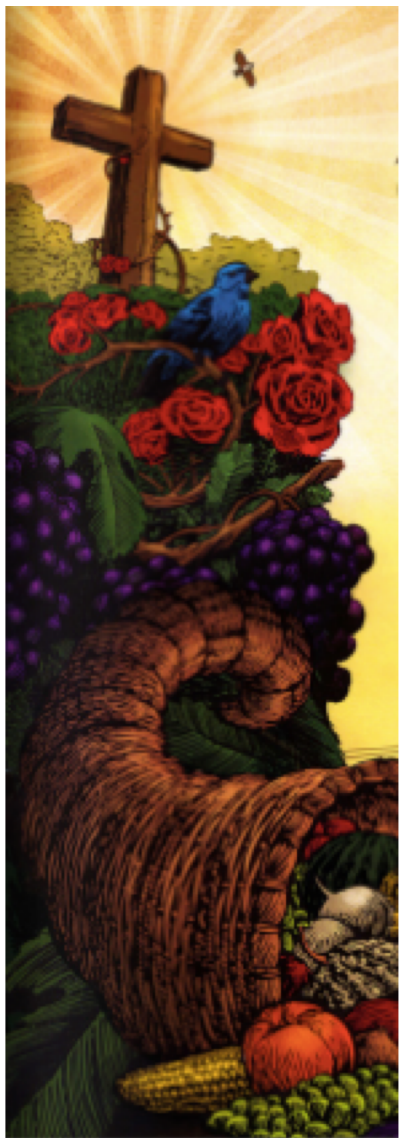


He hates the religious people. They were just so hypocritical, sanctimonious, and contrary. But a number of them also believed, even though His message to them was extra sharp.

But God targets His average enemies and He woos them to Himself, seeking always to convince them that He is exactly who He said He is, and that we can assess whether He is true by what He does.

To be sure, God's judgment and wrath against those who reject His loving leadership and who *remain* His enemies is terrible! That is why Isaiah cautioned...

[Isaiah 56:6,7] - *“Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near!”*



God is the giver, and we, as always, are receivers of His generosity. God gives, we receive. What do we properly say when someone gives us something of value? We say “*thank you*”, of course! This Thanksgiving season we say thank you to God for His greatest gift of all - the bounty that keeps on giving! He doesn’t just give us the “stuff” we need. He gives us Himself! He invests Himself in loving us, and we on our part return that love by obeying Him and investing ourselves into His great plans and purposes!