

LOOKING FOR JESUS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

September 8, 2013

“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him” (Lk. 2:42-45).

There are thousands of “Christian” churches in the world today. After Peter made the great confession that Christ was the Son of God, Jesus Himself proclaimed, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:17-18). The Lord stated emphatically that He would build His church, which is singular in nature, indicating only one church. His statement does not indicate the acceptance or endorsement of thousands of different churches that claim to be following Him.

Notice in Luke’s account that it is possible to be looking for Jesus in all the wrong places. This does not mean that those looking for Jesus are not sincere in their search for Him, just that they are not looking in the right place. Christ’s parents assumed that they knew where the young Jesus was, but in the end they realized they were wrong.

They were religious and devout people that had a firm belief in the God of heaven. They had gone to the Passover feast in order to worship God and to fulfill the custom of taking their twelve year old Son with them. On their return trip, they assumed that Jesus was in the company of their kinsfolk or friends. This is the problem that many of us face in this life: we assume that we know where the Lord is when we are really overlooking Him. They had travelled a full day’s journey before they realized that they were wrong in their assumptions. They were confident during this journey that they knew where He was and their consciences were clear in that aspect.

However, upon realization that the young Jesus was not in their company, they repented and returned to Jerusalem. The word “repent” simply means to turn around. This term was employed by the Roman military and corresponds to today’s use of the military command “about face.”

What we want to understand is that when they realized they were wrong in their belief that they had Jesus with them, they simply went to the place where they could find Him. If we want to find Jesus today we have to go to the place where He can be found, His New Testament. We cannot afford to take the word of any man or woman regarding our salvation. We must find it in the inspired word of God and take His word for it when it comes to our eternal well being.

It is possible that we can be religious and sincere but wrong. If we cannot find authority and support for our beliefs within the pages of the Bible, we must be willing to repent and attach ourselves to the one church that Jesus spoke about and promised to build!

All we have to do is study the Bible with an open mind and make sure that the church to which we belong is the church that we read of in the New Testament. We must be willing to ask ourselves some tough questions:

1. Does the church I attend refer to itself by an authorized name, one that denotes that it belongs to Christ (Mt. 16:18)?
2. Does it organize itself the way the New Testament church was and is still organized (Heb. 13:7, 17)?
3. Does it worship in the way the New Testament church did and still does worship (Jn. 4:24)?
4. Does it recognize Jesus Christ as its only leader and head (Mt. 28:18; Col. 1:18)?

If we cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, we must begin our search for Jesus in the right place, the inspired Word of God. If we find that we are not members of the church we read of in the New Testament, we must be willing to repent, turn to Him, and obey His authority, not that of man.