

THE BELIEVER'S FOCUS: JESUS

First Peter 1:8-9

"I'll believe it when I see it!" How many times have we heard these words. For the Christian, the reverse is true: *we'll see it, when we believe it!* Many people today, from all over the world, from diverse backgrounds, would gladly testify that they have "seen Jesus". They would immediately qualify it by saying that their sight of Jesus didn't come through their natural eyes, but it came spiritually. Even in this world there are numerous examples of things that most people have "seen" but could never visibly show anyone else. Such things as, *seeing* the correct approach to tackling a problem, or, *seeing* what someone was trying to say. But seeing Jesus is different again. It not only involves the intellect, it incorporates the emotions and the spirit.

1. What are we encouraged to do in Hebrews 2:9? (Note the request in John 12:21)

2. Thomas said that he wouldn't believe until he saw Jesus in the flesh (Jn. 20:24). When Christ appeared to him, what statement did He make about those who hadn't seen Him? (Jn. 20:29)

3. Peter said that even though these believers hadn't seen Jesus, they had responded to Him positively. How did he say they had responded to Him? (vs. 8)

4. What was the result of these Christians believing in and loving Jesus? (vs. 8)

Joy seems to be the most natural response when in right standing in God's presence (Ps. 21:6). While laughter can disguise a broken heart, joy is the fruit of a healed heart (Ps. 28:7). The believer is filled to overflowing with joy (Ps. 126:2-3). This joy manifests in laughing, weeping, and shouting (Lev. 9:24; Ezra 3:12-13).

5. What happens when God's people are in His presence according to Psalm 16:11? (Acts 2:28; Jude 1:24)

These believers were not experiencing times of prosperity or even popularity, yet in the midst of their trials they were filled with inexpressible joy.

REASON FOR JOY

The believer's response of joy was not the initial response to God. To not be right before God, and approach Him with frivolity would seriously bring into question whether a person truly recognised their condition before God. We note in the parable of the sower and the seed, that the one who received the seed with great joy, soon fell away when the heat of the day came (Matt. 13:20). Therefore we should not be surprised when we see new people in our services inexplicably weeping.

6. Why might this happen, and why shouldn't we be surprised about this?

Consequently, when a person realises their true condition before God, they might cry out with Isaiah "*Woe is me, for I am undone!*" which literally means- "I'm cursed, for I'm falling apart, everything I thought was good about me I've discovered is worthless!" (Isa. 6).

Joy is a great medicine. It produces life and healing in our bodies (Prov. 17:22). It makes us pleasant to be around. But it is not something we can produce. God gives it to us. It is like a garment that He clothes us with. When we repent and ask for forgiveness, and invite Christ to be our Lord, God saves us from our sin and exchanges our filthy rags for robes of righteousness. He then gives us the cloak of joy (Ps. 30:11; 132:16). Thus, our joy is a result of our salvation (1Peter 1:9).

A CLEAR FOCUS: JESUS

Times may get tough for God's people. In fact as the Day of Christ's return is brought nearer we are told that pressure and opposition will increase against us. But like the Israelites under the oppression of Egypt, we will grow stronger and larger (Ex. 1:12). We keep our focus on Jesus by a lifestyle of worship to Him. We tend to talk most about what we think most about. By talking about Jesus with others, we focus on Him. By remembering His words to us. By considering how He wants us to react to a situation- *how would Jesus handle this?* or more appropriately *how would you react to this Lord?*

7. What is the goal of our faith? (vs. 9)

8. Had they received this goal yet? Explain.

Amen.

