

What Jesus Do You Listen To?

Written by Bill Perkins

Last month I read through the four Gospels and looked for instances where Jesus referred to his death and resurrection. As I did, I found myself amazed at how many times his disciples heard him speak on the subject without understanding its significance.

Destroy This Temple

In John 2:19 we find the Lord's first reference to his death. After clearing the temple, the Jews asked him for a sign to prove he was the Messiah and had the right to do what he'd done. The Lord told them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

You might think such a statement would prompt a question from the disciples. But it didn't.

An Asset Became a Liability

I'm fascinated they failed to understand something so important. Perhaps their greatest asset, recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, became a liability. Why? Because they believed they knew what the Messiah would look like, and it included conquering their enemy—Rome—and ruling over an eternal kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). Meaning, he wouldn't die.

This belief served as a filter to remove any contrary information—facts that might contradict their view. Their minds were like radar systems programmed to identify friendlies while ignoring enemies. So when Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection, they simply discarded it. They overlooked its enormous significance. From their perspective, such a thing could never happen—he must have been speaking symbolically.

The Jesus I Follow

I find the disciples' experience instructive. Like the disciples I often fail to hear what Jesus is saying to me. And like them, I think it's because I only hear what I expect him to say, which is based on my past understanding. In a sense, the Jesus I follow is an aggregation of my experiences and studies.

Yet I wonder how similar that version of Jesus is to the real Jesus. How many times has the real Jesus said something to me that would explode my understanding of him? How many times have I missed that exploding truth because it doesn't align with my version of Jesus?

The Real Jesus

This is why I love reading through the Gospels every month. I'm constantly called by the real Jesus to listen to him—and not the Jesus I've created. And I'm reminded daily of my need for God to break through my hard heart to hear and understand the real Jesus, especially when he says the unexpected.