

Why the Jews Rejected Jesus

“Let Him be crucified!”; “His blood be on us and on our children!” (Matthew 27:22b, 25b). In all history, there is no parallel to the rejection of Jesus by His own people. How can we account for this catastrophe? The Jews had been looking for their Messiah, so why did they reject Him when He came?

HE DISAPPOINTED THEM

Jesus was a disappointment to the Jews. They had their minds made up about the Messiah before He came. They had the mold ready and waiting. When He refused to fit into that mold, they were greatly disappointed. They had read the Old Testament prophecies of a coming king who would sit upon David’s throne, and they had given these a literal construction. They expected an earthly king. Jesus one time “hid Himself” (John 8:59) because they were trying to make Him a king by force (John 6:15). This misconception of the kingdom even extended to the disciples. They were constantly disputing about who would be greatest in the kingdom. After Jesus’ death, the apostles lamented, “We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). The conversation of Acts 1 reveals that the disciples still did not comprehend the nature of the kingdom even after the Resurrection.

The Jews were disappointed when Jesus told them that His kingdom was not of this world. He made it plain that He was not a rival of Caesar, but they wanted that kind of a kingdom. They had pre-judged; they were *prejudiced*. Prejudice still prevents many from accepting Jesus. They have their minds made up before they investigate His Word. If He does not meet their expectations, they turn away from Him.

HE CONDEMNED THEIR MATERIALISM

Materialistic thinking and living were condemned by Jesus, and the people resented this attack on their lifestyle. We read of Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee and going into the country of the Gerasenes (Luke 8:26–39; Mark 5:1–20). A man who had many evil spirits met Him at the boat. Jesus healed the man, and the spirits infested a herd of swine. After the pigs drowned, the owners asked Jesus to leave the country. Two thousand hogs were a great loss! The fact that a man was clothed and in his right mind meant nothing to them.

The teachings of Jesus minimized the material and exalted the spiritual. Jesus had much to say about the futility of seeking riches. He posed these thought-provoking questions: “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). He insisted that spiritual ties are stronger than fleshly, that the soul has preeminence over the body. He taught that the kingdom of heaven has precedence over earthly governments and that God is over Caesar. Those who wished to live as if they were mere flesh and blood would not accept Him! Today is no different: Those who love goods more than God are offended at the teachings of Christ and reject Him!

HE CONDEMNED THEIR TRADITIONS

Jesus condemned the religious customs and traditions of His day. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the most prominent Jewish sects. Jesus accused them of lip worship when their hearts were far from Him. He labeled their

worship as vain worship because it was according to the commandments of man (Mark 7:6, 7). He called them hypocrites.

While the Jews were offended by Jesus, their primary objection was not to the positive truths which He taught. Many of the truths He presented were revolutionary and difficult for them to grasp, but that was not the real problem. His exposure of error was what offended people, because they were unwilling to change. His words burn to this hour. One of the aims of Jesus' teaching was to uproot human religions with their elaborate ritualism, pomp, and pageantry. Because He condemned their religious practices, the Jews refused to accept Jesus.

There are those today who are offended when error is condemned. They do not seem to think that a person can have the mind of Christ and yet be critical of any modern religious doctrine or practice. However, one *must* condemn error wherever it is found if he is to be Christlike! Some think that having the mind of Christ means being too sweet-spirited to disagree with anything, but they have the wrong conception of the mind of Christ!

HE WAS TOO HUMBLE FOR THEIR LIKING

The Jews rejected Jesus because of His humble origin and His simplicity. It was not at all in harmony with their expectations that He should come out of Nazareth. His birth in Bethlehem was not such as would be expected of royalty. When Jesus came into His own country working miracles, the people asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55a). Jesus was too plain, too humble!

To test men's faith, Jesus gave them simple

things to do. For example, He asked the blind beggar to go and wash the clay from his eyes in John 9:6, 7. Paul testified that God has chosen foolish things in order that the wise might be confounded (1 Corinthians 1:27, 28).

There is an excellent example of this same principle in the Old Testament, the story of Naaman (2 Kings 5). Why did Naaman become angry when the prophet told him what to do to be healed of his leprosy? Because of the simplicity of what he was told to do! He was to dip in the Jordan River! Today, God's way is too plain, too simple, for many—especially for those who want a spectacular religion, those who crave a glamorous regime. They are ashamed of the simple religion of Christ. If Christ were here on earth now, they would be ashamed of Him! This is one of the main reasons so many add to the religion of Christ, and this is why many subtract from it. The simplicity of the Lord's Supper causes many to refuse it. Baptism appears so foolish to many people that they turn from Christ and reject Him. If you would be pleasing to God, never become dissatisfied with the simplicity which is in Christ. Paul warned the Corinthians not to be "led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

CONCLUSION

Have we rejected Jesus and His will for us? Does He fail to meet our expectations? Have we balked because He condemns our materialism and human religious traditions? Have we rejected His simplicity in what He has asked us to do? We must not reject Him as the Jews did in the first century. ■

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