

## Why Christ Came

Christ often taught by using negatives—that is, explaining what is *not* true. He believed that the people should be aware of false teachings and notions in order that they might avoid being confused by them. We find several such comments in Jesus' teachings about His coming to the earth. These "negatives" help to clarify the truth about why He came.

### **HE CAME NOT TO JUDGE THE WORLD, BUT TO SAVE**

In John 3:17 Jesus said, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." On one occasion, James and John wanted to call down fire upon certain Samaritan villagers who would not receive Jesus because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. Jesus rebuked them, saying, "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56).

God's plan and desire is for the salvation, not the destruction, of the world. He is not eager to punish the sinner; He wishes "for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Some have pictured God as a fiendish monarch watching man, eager to find fault; but this is not the picture presented in the Scriptures. When Jonah was displeased because God had not destroyed Nineveh, God reprimanded him for having that attitude. He said, "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, . . . ?" (Jonah 4:11). God is grieved when man will not be saved. His purpose is to save.

The first coming of Christ, then, was for salvation and not for judgment.

### **HE CAME NOT TO DESTROY THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS, BUT TO FULFILL**

Jesus told His followers, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). He declared, ". . . not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). The law was not to pass away *until* every part of it was fulfilled.

While some have used this passage to claim that the Old Testament is still binding, it teaches the very opposite. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. He *did* fulfill them. He fulfilled the prophecies, and He fulfilled their requirements by living up to the demands of the law. Other passages also teach definitely that the law of Moses was fulfilled and is no longer binding. (Read Hebrews 10:9, 10; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:24, 25.)

The Transfiguration teaches the same truth. In the presence of Moses and Elijah, God said concerning Jesus, "Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5). There was a time when people were to hear Moses and the prophets as the voice of authority, but now Christ must be heard and recognized as the standard.

### **HE CAME NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE**

Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). He could have summoned plenty of ministers if He had desired them, even heavenly ministers. The resources of heaven and earth were at His command, but He did not come to be served.

Let us remember Jesus' lesson on true great-

ness: "But the greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). To emphasize and exemplify this lesson, He girded Himself with a towel, the towel of lowly service, and washed the apostles' feet (John 13:5).

The world today seems to be filled with people whose chief aim in life is to be served. They want always to be receiving—from their associates, from the government, from the church, from every possible source. Even members of the church may complain because they are not ministered to. Being served should not be our concern in life. Our work is to minister. Are we waiting for Jesus to come again, gird Himself with a towel, and wash our feet? Does He need to place a child in our midst and teach us the way of true greatness? He has already taught these lessons; let us learn from them.

### **HE CAME NOT TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS**

On one occasion Jesus challenged His disciples: "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13). When He Himself was criticized for eating with sinners, He gave this answer: "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12).

Jesus gave attention to those who had been neglected by others. When John needed assurance that Jesus was the real Messiah, the messengers were instructed to tell him, "The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5). This would confirm to John that Jesus was the Christ, for it was predicted that the Messiah would do these very things which Jesus was doing (Isaiah 61:1). Yes, Jesus went to those who had been neglected by others. This example does not justify us in keeping company with bad people for any purpose other than to help them.

### **HE CAME NOT TO BRING PEACE, BUT A SWORD**

Although He spoke of love and peace, Jesus declared, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Religion is to be

held above any other tie. As long as evil abounds, there must be divisions. The Christian does not desire peace at any price—not peace at the expense of truth. We must choose truth even when it brings enmity. We must determine to follow Christ even though it means the loss of friends. In this sense, He brought a sword:

"For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:35–37).

When there is a choice to be made between our fleshly family members and Christ, we must choose Christ. We cannot be His disciples if we love father or mother, brother or sister, or any other person or anything more than we love Him. Jesus Christ demands first place. If He is Lord at all, then He must be Lord of all.

### **CONCLUSION**

Have you misunderstood the reasons why Christ came? Are you living as God wants you to live? ■

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### ***Times To Meditate On God's Word***

Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord (Psalm 1:1–3). According to the first psalm, the "blessed," or happy, man is one who meditates upon God's Word. Verse 4 reveals that "the wicked are not so." When is the righteous person to think about the Scriptures?

***Meditate by Day.*** If we delight in God's Word, it is in our hearts during our daily activities and in the rush of business. A Christian's mind is saturated with the Word of God; it can be used at all times (see Psalm 119:11).

***Meditate by Night.*** We may think of this as referring to moments of relaxation. One of the most vital tests of a person's religion is his thoughts during his leisure time.

***Meditate in Worship.*** In the worship service, when we sing and pray, do we meditate upon the words? In partaking of the Lord's Supper, do our minds go back to the cross? Worship must exist in the heart before it can be expressed.