**“His Own Received Him Not”**

God’s eternal plan involved His Son being born a Jew and focusing His earthly ministry on admonishing His fellow Jews to repent and turn back to God. His ultimate rejection by His own people, His death, burial and resurrection were always part of that plan (Isaiah 53). Rejection of Messiah was the last act of defiance by the Jewish nation and Christ fulfilled His mission by establishing His spiritual kingdom open to all nations. To this day, Jews and Gentiles alike must come to God through faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.

We often look to the Scriptures to try to understand how the Jewish leadership of Jesus’ day could have been so blind to the evidence presented to them. Factors that contributed to their resistance included the mistaken notion that Messiah was to establish an earthly kingdom, confusion over Jesus’ birthplace, Jesus’ failure to conform to their traditions and jealousy.

There was a fundamental disconnect between the Pharisees’ self-image and the way God viewed them. They saw themselves as the upstanding pious ruling class, the protectors and interpreters of Moses’ Law. They were looking for the coming of the Anointed of God and they would have expected Him to consult with them upon His arrival and to partner with them in the reestablishment of David’s throne in Jerusalem. But that is not the way things happened and they were devastated.

You see, God viewed them as yet another generation of wicked shepherds like those of Jeremiah’s day (Jeremiah 23). They were morally corrupt, arrogant, hypocritical and more impressed with their own traditions than with God’s Law. Christ came, not to praise them, but to chastise them. John the Baptist called them a “brood of vipers”. In His sermon on the mount Jesus told the people, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

They could have repented of their sins, but they were too proud for that. It is no wonder, then, that they were jealous when Jesus attracted multitudes. It is not surprising that they would look for reasons to criticize Him and ultimately to have Him killed. This Jesus of Nazareth was assuming the role of Messiah, not in partnership with them, but in opposition to them! His power to perform amazing miracles must have been given to Him by the prince of the demons!

Arrogance can blind us. Each of us must be truth seekers; conscientious enough to consider the evidence before us and humble enough to allow the evidence to lead us to the truth. The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day committed the ultimate blunder. But a person today who refuses to become a disciple of Christ is making a mistake of no less consequence to the fate of his or her soul.

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