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The Baptist Hour Messages

REJECTION OF A REVELATION

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Scripture: John 1:1-18

"He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not"—John 1:10-11.

The Gospel of John opens with a resplendent burst of glory. Words worthy to be emblazoned across the sky in letters of gold reveal the eternity of Christ, His equality with God, and His identity with God. He is declared to be Creator, Light, and Life. And as if this were not enough, the Apostle tells us that the eternal Christ became flesh. He pitched His tent of flesh among us as God's revelation of grace and truth.

Our finite minds cannot grasp it. Human language cannot express it. It is not a discovery of man, but a revelation from God. It is John's way of saying, "Immanuel," God with us, and "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." It is his antiphonal response to the angelic choir's, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace . . ." (Lk. 2:14).

Why this revelation of the Eternal in

time? Matthew Henry many years ago expressed it. He came to save the world of His own making, to revive the light of His own kindling, to restore the life of His own infusing, and to renew the image of His own impressing.

REJECTED, UNKNOWN

But in the midst of this symphony of beauty and grace is heard a discordant note. Breaking in upon this paean of praise is the rumble of rejection. "He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:10f.). Silenced on earth is the angelic host. Instead of a harp we see a cross. Rejoicing is replaced by rebellion. Across the way that leads to life, we discern the path that leads downward to death and hell.

Thomas Curtis Clark in "The Tragedy" pictures it in these words:

He gave the world, in darkness pent,
The boon of his surpassing light;
The world found healing in its beams,
But turned him out into the night.

He gave the world his heart of hearts,
And bore the burden of its woe;
The world gave him the knotted scourge,
The cruel rod's remorseless blow.

He gave the world the hope of heaven,
And to its gates the wanderers led;
The thankless world could not find room
Where he might lay his weary head.

He gave the world the crown of life,
His life accounting but as dross;
The world received the matchless gift,
And gave to him the martyr's
(Saviour's) cross.¹

Tragic is this rejection of Christ on the part of His contemporaries. But a far greater tragedy is the awful truth that multitudes today follow in their train. Though Jesus came almost two thousand years ago, still multiplied millions do not know that He came. Even more direful are those who have heard, yet continue to reject His grace and love. In all probability the vast majority of those to whom I speak, and who are not saved, fall into this latter group. Are you in that number?

WHY REJECTED?

Why did the contemporaries of Jesus reject Him? Why do you reject Him? The answers to the one question most likely will apply to the other. The Pharisees rejected Jesus because of religious snobbery. He did not fit their preconceived ideas about the Messiah. The Sadducees turned from Him because of their love for position, power, and wealth. Said they, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away our place and our nation" (Jn. 11:48).

Note the order: our *place* and our *nation*. Place before nation, before Christ. At least one man rejected Jesus because of his wealth. Judas betrayed Him for greed. Pilate failed Him because of moral cowardice. The impenitent thief on the cross blasphemed Him because of a char-

acter crystallized in sin. Multitudes of people ignored Him through moral turpitude and indifference.

Do you see yourself in this ancient picture? Perhaps the costume is different, but man is ever the same. Behind every sin is selfishness or egotism. Whatever you permit to stand between you and Jesus—that is your sin of rejection!

ONLY JESUS CAN SAVE

My friend, whatever your religious background, remember that — not you — but God sets the terms of salvation. Of Jesus the Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Position cannot save you, wealth cannot save you, neither self-righteousness nor wisdom cannot save you — only Jesus.

The consequences of rejecting Christ are terrible beyond our comprehension. The Pharisees lost their temple and its religious ritualism. The Sadducees lost both their *place* and *nation*. The rich ruler went away in sorrow, for like another his wealth had required of him his soul. Judas and Pilate became suicides. The thief entered outer darkness. To summarize: lost religion, lost position, lost nation, lost soul, lost lives — do you not find your case in one or all of these? Worst of all — each of these who persisted in his rejection of Jesus until death wrote *finis*; "in hell he lift (ed) up his eyes, being in torments" (Lk. 16:23). The Bible teaches that that is the fate of all who through their rejection of Jesus do not have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 20:15). Is your name written there?

However, amidst the tragedy of rejection there is the triumph of reception. Though the Bible thunders God's wrath upon those who refuse His grace through Christ, it always ends with a note of hope, an offer of assurance. Many did and do reject Jesus, "but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Jn. 1:12). He will give it to you, if you will receive Him.

¹Christ in Poetry, Thos. C. Clark and Hazel D. Clark, Association Press, N. Y., 1952, p. 155.

CHILDREN OF GOD

There are so many wonderful words in this verse. It speaks of a multitude or of one person. Contained in it is the gracious gift of God. The word "sons" should read "children." Sometimes the Greek word for *son* was used to refer to adopted children. But the word used here basically refers to birth, and denotes one's own children to whom the parent has communicated a portion of his own life.

This thought looms larger when we look at the word "power." It is better translated *right* or *privilege*. However, the all-inclusive idea in the word is "out of being." In short, when you receive Christ as your Saviour, God imparts to you His very being, His nature. Thus we receive eternal life, for He is eternal. We acquire His righteousness, for He is righteous. As children of God we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

The content of this word is akin to the many uses by Jesus of the words "I am." "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35). "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12). "I am the good shepherd; I am the door" (Jn.

10:11, 9). "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6). Thus when God imparts His life to you out of the nature of His being, He becomes bread and light for your soul; He becomes your Shepherd, even the door into the Father's house. He becomes for you the way for your feet, the truth for your mind, and life for your soul.

RECEIVE JESUS

How do you receive Jesus? John adds, "Even to them that believe on his name." To believe means to accept Jesus at face value, to acknowledge Him as God's Son and your Saviour. It means to trust your soul to His keeping. It means to commit yourself to His will, way, and work.

Wherever you are, at this very moment, right now, believe in Him, welcome Him into your heart! Trust your soul to His eternal care and security! In so doing you will receive God's very nature. Have you done so? Yes? Then, you are a child of God!

HESITATION IN THE FACE OF OPPORTUNITY

October 12, 1958

Scripture: John 1:43-51

"And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see John 1:46.

If you had just one chance in a lifetime to trust in Jesus as your Saviour, what would you do? Look at one soul as it came face to face with Jesus. While not specifically stated in the Scripture, it could well have been his only opportunity. In a very real sense every such opportunity is the last. For the moment let us assume that it was. Imagine yourself in this man's place.

Face to face with Jesus for what could well be your one, or last, opportunity, yet you hesitate. For each of us NOW is the

only time. A Bible proverb says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). A non-Biblical proverb in like vein warns, "He who hesitates is lost." That you might better understand yourself, *look at this man who hesitated in the face of opportunity.*

Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee. He was a good man. His parents were loyal Jews. Unlike his friend Philip, who had a Greek name, Nathanael's name was Hebrew. Furthermore, these parents were pious people. When their son was born they recognized him as a "gift of God," for that is the meaning of his name. Doubtless he had been reared in proper Jewish fashion. It is not strange then that Jesus should recognize him as "an Israel-