

Jesus Christ – and Him Crucified

A few years ago a judge in Southern California rejected a nativity display that had been presented in the Santa Monica Park for the past 60 years. This was a life sized display in 14 booths that depicted the birth of Jesus. An atheist had argued successfully against the display.¹

This was nothing new. Atheists, infidels, pagans and heathen have won similar court rulings all over the U. S. The common denominator of the opponents of religion is that they do not believe in God, and Jesus represents God wherever they find him. They are like the antediluvian people who are described in Romans Chapter 1—they refuse to have God in their knowledge. They, therefore, reject anything that reminds them of God, or Jesus.

Sometimes professed Christians make the same mistake. They hide like cowards when the issue of Christ comes up. These are like the ones Jesus pointed out in Mark Chapter 8,

Mark 8:38 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

There are many ways to reject Christ.

It is told that in colonial America when a man suffered under the displeasure of the community the citizens rode him out of town on a rail. The rail was a wooden fence-rail cut by hand. Sometimes the citizens tarred and feathered the victim. Abraham Lincoln remarked once about the practice by saying, “If it weren’t for the honor of the thing I would just as soon walk.”

¹ . [AP article *Judge rejects Nativity displays in Santa Monica*, By Gillian Flaccus — Nov. 19, 2012 8:10 PM EST]

Riding a person out of town on a rail was certainly a rejection. Besides that there are other methods to accomplish the same purpose. And of all the ways that a person might be rejected it is difficult to imagine a more thorough rejection than crucifixion.

Many of the Jews of today reject Jesus

A citizen of Tel Aviv once went to court against a stone mason who refused to chisel AD dates on the gravestone of the citizen's father. The court referred the case to the Rabbinate (the highest religious body) for an opinion. The Rabbinate rejected the citizen's appeal, saying that the Christian-Gregorian calendar was unacceptable since it was based on the birth of Jesus. The court, however, overturned the Rabbinate's opinion, noting ruefully that the rabbis' statement was dated 1972 AD! The Jewish calendar was 5733 then.²

Many of the Jews of today reject Jesus as the Christ and will not acknowledge any of the Christian calendar dates.

Christianity offends the Jews in many ways, but chief among them are two: they reject the idea that Jesus is the Messiah of Old Testament Prophecy; and they refuse to believe that they crucified their Lord.

The Apostle Paul rejected Jesus at first.

Early in the Apostle Paul's life as a Pharisee he was zealous to stamp out belief in Christ as the Messiah. But later he changed.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter,

1 Corinthians 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

The One who had been for Paul a person to reject—by then he not only embraced the crucifixion of Christ but he determined to know nothing else.

² Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc. "Court Commits Same "Error"

Corinthian faith rested upon the crucified Christ.

Paul had decided that he would know nothing among the Corinthians but that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He had been crucified.

The faith of the Corinthian Christians, therefore, rested not upon the persuasive Greek philosophy, not upon the Epicureans or the Stoics who might be heard at the Areopagus in Athens. It rested upon a crucified Galilean who had risen from the dead.

This was quite a turnaround for man who had been ravaging the church and dragging off men and women to prison.

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- The faith of the Corinthian Christians, therefore, rested not upon the persuasive philosophy of the Epicureans or the Stoics as might be heard at the Areopagus in Athens.
- It rested upon the crucified Christ and His words of promise.

The people of Jesus' own hometown rejected Him.

Mark, in his gospel, tells of a day when Jesus returned to Nazareth, his hometown from which he had been evicted on a previous visit,

Mark 6:1 Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

Before Paul rejected Christ—the Jewish nation rejected him and that included Jesus' own home town.

- The people of Jesus' own hometown rejected him.
- Even his own relatives rejected him.

His own people did not receive Him.

John the apostle wrote,

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

- When He came into the world the people of the world did not know Him and He is their Creator.
- His own people did not receive Him.

He was despised and forsaken

The prophet Isaiah wrote concerning the Messiah,

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

- He was despised.
- People felt contempt for him.

His brothers did not believe in Him.

John also wrote concerning the regard Jesus' brothers had for him,

John 7:2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. 3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do

these things, show Yourself to the world.” 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- Not even His brothers believed in Him.

The Jewish authorities opposed Him.

The Jewish authorities, on the other hand, rejected Jesus because He ignored their demand that they must approve what He taught. In addition, He represented a threat to their positions of authority in Jerusalem. An incident in the temple vividly describes their opposition to Jesus.

Matthew 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” 24 Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 “The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ 26 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.” 27 And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The chief priests and elders rejected Him and his teaching because they did not know where Jesus got his credentials. They did not know where he got his authority. He was therefore unauthorized to teach. In all their opposition to Him they did not understand that He is the One who gave them the Law through Moses. He had come to teach them the true meaning of the Law but they would not receive it.

The wicked husbandmen

A time came when Jesus spoke to the Jewish rulers in parables. The scriptures say that He told them two parables. The second of the parables was this:

Matthew 21:33 “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A

WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 4 “When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 “The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 “Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 “But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 “But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 “They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

In this parable Jesus exactly described the characters of his enemies. They not only rejected him, but they killed him.

But Jesus told his disciples that this is the way the Jews would treat him,

Mark 8:31 and He began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Yet even in this rejection God would work out his purpose.

He Whom the Jews rejected became the chief cornerstone.

The gospel of Matthew tells of the results of the rejection by the ones to whom the owner of the vineyard had entrusted his vineyard,

Matthew 23: 40 “Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” 41 They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.” 42 Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures,

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;
THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,

AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?

23:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.” 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

The Psalmist wrote,

Psalm 2:1 Why are the nations in an uproar

And the peoples devising a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth take their stand

And the rulers take counsel together

Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

3 “Let us tear their fetters apart

And cast away their cords from us!”

They rejected the Lord because they felt as if they were in handcuffs when under His government.

“We have no king but Caesar”

The Apostle John described the incident when the opponents of Jesus brought Him to trial before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate; the accusers told Pilate that Christ had declared Himself to be the Son of God.

John 19:8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” 11 Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” 12 As a result of this Pilate made

efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

Pilate wore a ring on which were inscribed the words in Latin: “the friend of Caesar.” He belonged to an exclusive club which bore the same name. His choice was that if he released Jesus he would be releasing a man who claimed to be a king in opposition to Caesar. That could cause him to be charged by the Jews as an enemy of Caesar. His choices were—reject Jesus and remain a friend of Caesar, or free Jesus and face expulsion from the exclusive club of the Friends of Caesar. Expulsion from the Friends of Caesar meant exile or death.

John 19:13 Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” 15 So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

This was the final and complete rejection of Jesus as the Christ.

They were like their fathers

- The Jewish leaders were in many ways like their fathers.
- Their fathers rejected the prophets of the Lord and the Law the Lord had given them.

In the 2nd Book of Kings we read,

2 Kings 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” 14 However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. **15 They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the**

LORD had commanded them not to do like them. 16 They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. 17 Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. 18 So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah. 19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. **20 The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.** 21 When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin. 22 The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them 23 until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.³

They rejected His statutes, His covenant, and His warnings, so He rejected them.

Some time ago the Treasury Department of the US received an allocation of coins for redemption. Among them was a coin which they rejected. But a clerk redeemed it and gave it to a congressman of North Dakota, who sent it to the Smithsonian Institute for identification. Later he received word that the coin belonged to the year AD 284, and was circulated in the time of the Emperor Diocletian.

³ Emphasis mine, author.

The coin turned out to be extremely valuable as a relic and was worth many times its weight in gold. It was a coin that was rejected, but proved in the end to be precious.⁴

The Apostle Peter wrote about Jesus, saying this,

1 Peter 2:4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone,

AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNERSTONE,

8 and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

The final rejection

In the year 1602 there appeared in Europe at Leyden a pamphlet telling about a Jew who had taunted and struck Jesus as he passed on his way to the cross, shouting at him, “Go quicker!” Jesus is said to have answered, “I go but you shall wait until I return.”

This is the legendary story of the wandering Jew, a man who was condemned to wander the earth as a homeless fugitive who would wait

⁴ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

until Christ comes again. The story is imaginary, a fable. However, the design of the story was to illustrate the loneliness of sin. In the scriptures we read about Abel that after he murdered his brother, "...he went out from the presence of the Lord." (Gen. 4:16). Sin always drives a man out—out from his friends, out from himself and out from God.⁵

Sin separates man from God.

And there is nothing in man that can enable him to reconcile himself to God. The lesson is that if you reject Christ then you will wander in sin—forever.

Jesus said,

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

The ones the Lord rejects on that day are the same ones who have rejected him—here. They are the same ones who have rejected the grace of God offered to them through the gospel.

He knocks at the door.

Macartney, in his book of illustrations, describes a painting by the artist Holman Hunt in which Christ is depicted as a weary traveler

⁵ C. E. Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations*, p. 337.

standing at the door—the dews of night distilling upon his brow, a lantern in one hand, and knocking with the other, the head bent forward eagerly to hear if there is an answer to his knock. Macartney said that this is perhaps the most moving thing in the Book of Revelation, not the sound of many waters, not the sea of glass mingled with fire, not the fourfold hallelujah that rings out over a reconciled and conquered universe, not the New Jerusalem, but Christ knocking at the door.⁶ For the Lord Himself said,

Revelation 3:20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

⁶ C. E. Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations*, p.p. 49-50.