

## **Reception of Jesus**

Read: Isaiah 1:1-20, John 1:1-42

HN, SS 8/2/04 am

Study: John 1:10-13

Psalms: 8, 66:1-5, 63:1-8, 31:1-5

Would there be anyone to receive me when I got back? That was my thought as I arrived back in town a few days ago. Would anyone be free to pick me up at the airport? Would anyone be at home to let me in or would I be locked out of home?

Worse still what if my family was home and they had decided they did not want Dad back – they wanted the house to themselves. I would go and ring on the bell, knock on the door, and even though they were inside they would not let me in. What a terrible thought – I am thankful I did not have such a fear as I arrived back.

But when Jesus came into this world, this world which he made and therefore belongs to him, how was he received? When Jesus came to the people whom God had chosen and prepared for his coming, how was he received? We don't know who you are – go away. We have made our religion nice and comfortable. We don't want to be disturbed. This is the tragedy told in our text today. It is a tragedy not only of Bible times but one that continues today, repeated in the life of many people.

Behold I stand at the door and knock.

### **The World**

Everything that exists was made by the Triune God. Nothing exists that he did not create. Therefore all that exists ultimately belongs to him. We must remember this universality of the gospel – and of the jurisdiction of Christ. There is no room for dualism, no room for regionalism or any sectarianism in the economy of God. The whole world – including all people – belongs to him because he made it.

So when Jesus came into this world, when the Word took on flesh – he was coming to a place and a people whom he made and whom he sustains. However it was a fallen world, it was a sinful people who had rebelled against Him. The world had rejected His rule and His authority. Born in sin people prefer darkness to light. They are blind to the truth even when it comes and stares them in the face.

Back in the Garden of Eden man took his eyes off the Lord as he gazed at the tree, the tree that was pleasant to the eyes and its fruit desirable for wisdom. The focus of man's life became the things of the world, the created things rather than the Creator.

As I sat on the train for almost a day returning from Jabalpur to Delhi I listened to these educated Indians talking about doing good and helping one another. One lady had been to see some guru and picked up new ideas. Another man had a story to tell from his school days about doing the right thing. One was a junior doctor who of course only wanted to help people and shunned money. Another had a book about positive thinking and how to succeed in business. Each was content with his own understanding of what was the right way to live. Each doing his own thing. Each doing what is right in his own eyes.

Jesus *was in the world and... the world did not know him*. The world did not recognize him. The world did not acknowledge him. The world thinks that it does not need him. Sin has blinded men to their greatest need. 'Man's greatest need is to know his greatest need' as the saying goes.

No time, too busy, is what many say to him today. The Creator and sustainer of all things came into the world – he is in the world but the world says to Him too busy, or we're just fine even as

hopelessness and the fear of death rules in the human heart. Darkness is preferred to the light that is offered in the person of Jesus Christ.

### His Own

In some sense I could understand how these travellers in India failed to recognize the great self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. They had not been prepared as I was through reading the Scriptures. They had not had the privilege of hearing the word of God preached.

The Jews were a people chosen by God and prepared by him to receive this great revelation – the Word became flesh – God the Son coming into this world. God spoke to Abraham and led him in the way he should go. God chose this people for himself, his own people. *You shall be a special treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine* (Exodus 19:5).

God spoke to his people through Moses and through the prophets. He gave His commands and his promises. He told clearly of the great day when the deliverer, the Messiah would come. And they were expecting him to come.

But what happened. *He came to his own but his own did not receive him*. Despite all the preparation, despite all the teaching his very own people did not receive him. He was born into their race, their culture. He spoke their language but they did not receive him.

Jesus told a parable which hit hard with the Jewish leaders on this very point – the parable of the tenants in the vineyard (Mark 12). A man rented out his vineyard when he went to a far country. He sent servants to collect the rent at harvest time but the tenants beat them and sent them off empty handed. Again and again this happened. How could they do this – it was after all his vineyard. Finally he sent his son – they will respect him – he will be able to sort things out. But the unthinkable happened – not only was the son not given his rightful place as owner. He was killed and cast out of the vineyard.

*He came to his own but his own did not receive him*. The Jewish leaders knew that he had spoken this parable against them. Indeed they sought to lay hands on Jesus there and then for saying such things. This is the great tragedy related in the first half of this gospel of John. He performed works of wonder, signs of his divinity, but they did not accept such a powerful witness.

This is the great tragedy today among those who have heard the gospel, who have been prepared through teaching and preaching of the word. Some have heard it for years, some for decades and still do not believe. They have not received Him, they have not personally believed in the name of Jesus Christ; when *there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12).

What does it mean *his own*? This is what we read here – there is no further specification. Is it his own place, his own house, his own people? Yes! Clearly the second time it refers to something animate because they do something. It is in fact in the masculine gender this second time but the neuter on the first time.

Not acknowledged by the world that he created. Not received by the people he had so thoroughly prepared. Was the incarnation, the coming of the God the son to no avail? God forbid! Even under the old covenant the people kept turning away, they refused to listen and obey the word of the Lord. He judged them time and again but there was always a remnant.

### A Remnant

*But* – but Gods purposes will never be thwarted. He came to his own, to the Jews. But they did not

receive him. *But as many as received him... to them he gave.* This is the wonderful truth of the gospel. Whosoever, or as many as believed, they are saved by the grace of God. John makes this very clear as he starts this gospel. Contrast Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews ch 3 with the sinful Samaritan woman ch 4. The Jew did not receive the witness of Jesus (3:11), but the woman did receive the Christ.

Receiving Jesus means receiving him who is the light and the life. The light of course reveals what is hidden, what is secret in the heart. The light exposes sin for what it is – rebellion against God. John preached repentance and so did Jesus. *Repent and believe the gospel he said* (Mark 1:15). This is implicit in believing for we believe in the name of the Son of God – the name of power and holiness.

The tragedy is that men love darkness more than light. But to those who humble themselves, those who confess their sin and believe in that great name – what do they get? They are given the right to become children of God. He, God the Son, gives the right for he is sovereign. That is a fundamental truth.

As many as receive him – they are given this right, this authority to become children of God. Those who believe become children of God. *You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ* (Galatians 3:26).

The text makes it very clear how we become children of God (John restricts using the word son to Jesus unlike Paul). We are born of God. It is new birth by the power of God. It does not depend on human power or initiative. The Jews claimed to be children of Abraham – which they were by their ancestry. But John is here telling of something very different – children of God are born of God. Human ancestry means nothing in the family of God.

Is there anything that is keeping you from receiving Jesus Christ – pride, sin? Do you believe in his name or are you depending on something else – human ancestry, human intuition or good works. To become a child of God there is only one thing that matters and that one thing is to believe in His name – *the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.*

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