

Christ Makes Historic Changes

By

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Christ's introduction to the world was made by John the Baptist, the rugged wilderness character who lived on locusts and honey. Bluntly and plainly he said that Jesus would change things: some would be baptized in the Holy Spirit and some in fire; the threshing floor was to be cleansed and the chaff burned up (Mt. 3:11–12). As a baby Jesus demanded only to be cuddled, fed and changed, but as an adult He demanded a change in His hearers. He began His preaching ministry with the command, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17).

Repentance means a change of heart as well as a change in action. It is natural for us to resist change, especially the radical changes Jesus advocated for His followers. This may be the reason the world so readily receives the infant in the manger but strongly resists Him as the King on His throne.

Jesus was no reformer. He wasn't merely trying to solve people's problems or improve their lifestyles, nor was He trying to restore them to the glory of their forefathers. The kind of change He preached meant a total break with the way the world was going, a complete turning around. So great is the change Christ wrought that He divided history into BC and AD times.

The Priest. Few people, if any, are ever prepared to have their religion changed. Even though the prophets had shown that with the coming of the Messiah there would be a new covenant with extremely different connotations, none were expecting the radical changes Jesus announced. To the woman at the well of Sychar, He explained that Jerusalem would no longer be of any significance in worship. This was a clear declaration that the religious system given by Moses was coming to an end. No longer would the priest at Jerusalem be required. Jesus became the High Priest, and all believers in Christ became priests (Heb 7:12, I Pet. 2:9).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place (the very presence of God) by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope..." (Heb. 10:19–23).

This was a revolutionary change from all forms of religion. With Jesus, man can relate to God without any human mediator, priest or pastor, and without any human system at all. There's no longer any need for any of the "religions" of the world. The way to God is through Jesus alone. "No one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). It's easy to see why the world prefers to keep Jesus in the manger.

The Provider. One of the most revolutionary doctrines of Jesus is that the government is neither man's provider nor security. We are to ask God, not the state, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is God who provides and sets the guidelines for our destinies. Is it any wonder, then, that the state so strongly pushes evolution in state parks and school systems and seeks to prohibit any mention or symbol of Jesus? The state lawmakers try their best to keep Jesus out of the process.

While the nation publicly proclaims, "In God we trust," the idea prevails that if we can increase military strength, we are safe, and if we can elect the right people to office, we will prosper. Jesus said that all power and authority belongs to Him (Mt. 28:18); therefore, the key to having our needs met is to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33).

The One born in a stable is the One in authority! Such authority dethrones and humbles man; it reveals him to be the dependent creature that he is, and this angers him. Rather than humble himself before the King, he would rather crucify Him. The issue is the same today as it was in the first century: the Lordship of Jesus. Will we take Him seriously and live by His commands or will we honor Him only with our lips while giving full allegiance to Caesar?

The Divider. From the beginning man has tried to form unity by molding all men into one image and establishing the concept of equality. If none are better or worse than others, then we must not discriminate against the filthy-minded, the homosexual, the blasphemer, the producer of pornography, etc. Equality under the law is a Christian concept, but that all people are equal is denied by Jesus. He saw some as children of God (Mt. 6:32) and labeled others as children of the devil (Jon 8:44). He said that He came to bring a sword that would divide believers from unbelievers. He urged us to discriminate, warning us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing and to "give not that which is holy unto the dogs" (Mt. 7:6). He stated that "If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19).

Jesus rubbed shoulders with sinners while revealing their sinful and hopeless condition. He was manifestly different. By this difference His disciples are to be salt and light in the world. The church has all but obliterated this difference in its effort to sell itself to the world and to that extent has diminished the purpose of Jesus. Tragically, churches in their exclusive sectarianism are quick to divide believer from believer over human opinion and tradition but slow to let the world know there is a division between evil and righteousness, temporal and eternal and between death and life.

Christ desires unity, a unity among believers. The equality He wants is that we be transformed into His image. In the last day He will divide the sheep from the goats, giving life to some and death to others. All will be changed, including the entire creation.

These are only some of the drastic changes due to Christ. They may seem like obstacles because they require too much. The fact is that such changes lighten our load and set us free, free from the confining fashion of the world and its fatal destiny, free from sin, guilt and death. What Christ promises is that if we break with the world and its claims, to submit fully to Him, He will not only make it possible for us to be all we should be in this world, but He will give us glorious life and immortality in the next.

Christ changed religion; He changed man's concept of himself and of God, and even man's relationship with God. He is now King on Heaven's throne, and all the world is under His authority. "Joy to the world; the Lord is come."

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