

THE WAY WE SEE JESUS

By

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When we sing “Glory in the highest” and “O come let us adore Him.” just what do we envision as the object of that adoration? If we are influenced by the general religious thought of the season (at Christmas time) our attention is on a child, a child only a few hours old” an infant that is helpless, who has yet to hear a command or face temptation. or do any kind of deed. In celebrating his birthday, he is always presented as a child, and pictured as a child with his parents dominating the picture. No other great person is celebrated in this way. When birthdays of men such as Washington or Lincoln, or any other person of note are celebrated, they are portrayed at the height of their careers. But when it comes to the birthday of Jesus, he is seen as an infant.

Granted his birth was unique. It was foretold centuries before, even naming the town of his birth. He was conceived by a miracle in the womb of Mary, without any sexual contact with man. These facts certainly set his birth apart from all others, but it is customary, when celebrating someone’s birthday, to focus on the person, not on the details surrounding the birth.

In the book of Hebrews the author wrote: “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him. He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man...” (Heb. 2:8-9).

“But we see Jesus.” What did the writer have in mind in these words? He summarized it by writing that Jesus by the grace of God, died for us, and has been crowned with glory and honor. This is what the apostle’s saw in Jesus.

Peter, who had been a close companion of Jesus in their daily activities for three and a half years, saw him exalted to the right hand of God, sitting on David’s throne (Acts 2:33-35). He exclaimed, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus...both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Paul wrote that God has “set Jesus at His own right hand in heavenly places” (Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1).

The apostles saw Jesus as the King, already seated on his throne. Peter wrote that he “is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Pet.3:22). In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he said that he prayed “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he

wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1.17-21).

These men who were chosen to be his witnesses, and who knew him best, saw Jesus as the king who had already been enthroned, not as one who would become king someday in the future. They saw him as having already “spoiled principalities and powers ... triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15). They understood the “hope of his calling...and the exceeding greatness of his power.” They saw Jesus as the summation of God’s eternal plan. The glory they saw was not that surrounding a child in a manger. It was after he had learned obedience through the things he suffered, after he had lived in humble submission to the Father, after he had died a shameful death, and after he had been raised from the dead and glorified at God’s right hand – only then did they revel in his glory.

There may be good reason for the world to keep Jesus in the manger, and focus on angels, shepherds, wise men, and the drama of the birth, rather than to see him as an adult. To recognize Jesus as he is, rather than as an infant, means that God has designated him as king, one with authority to rule over the present world. In man’s rebellious and sinful state, this is the last thing he wants. He doesn’t want anyone telling him what to do.

Rejection of Jesus as the Messiah was a foregone conclusion. Hence it was foretold in prophecy that he would be despised, rejected, and put to death. As scripture simply stated “He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not” (John 1:11). For the religious leaders to acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah would mean a total change in their lives. They would be forced to choose either to obey his commandments or to continue in their traditions in obvious rebellion.

The same dilemma is faced today by those who like to make a show of respect for Jesus at Christmas, but have no intention of taking seriously the claim that he is indeed king and Lord, and that all authority belongs to him. The world loves the joy and cheer, the record sales, and the strains of sentimental songs. It’s the happiest time of the year, as long as the one being celebrated is not taken seriously.

Jesus came to settle the most important issue in the world: the issue of life or death – eternal life, or eternal death. It is amazing that so few people, even so few Christians, have any personal convictions on the meaning of this issue, or give any thought to it.

We see Jesus as the one who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), as the one who “was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), as the one who “humbled himself. Becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phil 2:8), “who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb.12:2).

We see Jesus as the one who always did that which was pleasing to his Father in heaven (John 8:29), as the one who denied himself, who came not to be served but to serve, and

who was meek and lowly in heart, but has now been glorified in heaven and given all authority in heaven and earth.

Paul wrote that as we see the Lord's glory "we are transformed into the same image, from glory (His) to glory (ours)" (2 Cor. 3:18). John's letter says that "if he shall be manifested we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is. And everyone that has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Yahweh created man in His own image, and it is still His purpose to have every believer in that image. Not only should we be making every effort to be like Jesus, who is the express image of God, but this effort should be obvious to the world so that every believer is seen as different from the world. "Be not fashioned according to this world: but be transformed..." writes Paul (Rom.12:2).

Unfortunately the world sees Christians clamoring for the same fashion, including immodest clothing, idolizing the same depraved celebrities, engaging in the same pursuit of carnal pleasure, and practicing the same greed. Like Demas of old, they love this present world system more than God and His purpose.

This is the broad way, and it leads to destruction, as its travelers are filled with fears, uncertainties, failures and the dread of final defeat. They see nothing in Jesus but a helpless and harmless babe in a manger. They know nothing of the glory that transforms his believers, and fills us with peace, joy and hope.

We see Jesus, through the eyes of faith, as he is now in his exalted position with the Father, reigning from the heavenly, throne. "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor.15.25). This is not the way he appears to the world, as it struggles with its problems and cringes in fear of the threats of future chaos. But even now Jesus is in the process of delivering his people "from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom.8:21).

As we see Jesus in his glory, we need to demonstrate the vast differences between the way of the world and the way of God, between greed and giving, between designer fashion and the image of God.

We do not come to the manger, to a helpless child, but to the throne of the King of kings. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need" (Heb.4:16).

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