
“If You Had Known . . .”

“When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation’” (Luke 19:41–44)

The coming of Jesus into this world was the greatest of all events. This is true because of the unbelievable condescension of His action: The second member of the Godhead became man. John wrote, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus came farther than a man would have to go if he were to become an ant, farther than if a man were to become a speck of dust. When we think deeply about it, our minds spin with wonder. What could be a greater event than this?

Moreover, His coming is the greatest of all blessings because of the purpose of His action: His earthly life and death provided the indescribable gift, for He delivered us from hell. Paul said, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). His humanity answered to the *identity* that was needed. God required our sacrifice for sin to be made by One who had fully identified with us. In addition, His deity answered to the *intensity* that was needed. The sacrifice was so great, so burdensome, that only Deity could bear it. No human being could have withstood the weight of the sin of the world. Therefore, God sent Jesus to become the God-Man, the perfect fusion of Deity and humanity in one personality, the One who would be the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Beyond these truths, His coming towers above all other events because of its endurance, its eternality. It reaches from earth to heaven, from time to vast eternity. It reaches backward to

the Patriarchal and Mosaical Ages and forward to the entirety of the Christian Era (see Hebrews 9:15, 16). It brought a new age, an age of complete cleansing from sin (Hebrews 9:26).

John wrote, “This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life” (1 John 2:25). He who came was eternal life (1 John 1:2), He promised us eternal life (1 John 2:25), and He went back to heaven to prepare for our future eternal living (John 14:3). His coming bestowed upon those who would receive it a life that transcends earthly life, with all its struggles, temporality, and pain. It imparts abundant life now and everlasting life at the Father’s side in the world to come.

However, the most amazing thing about His coming is the fact that many did not and do not recognize the value of His coming.

Jerusalem missed it. Jesus said of her, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matthew 23:37). Luke also wrote, “When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes’” (Luke 19:41, 42). Jerusalem was the city of the temple, of the religious teachers, and of the Sanhedrin. It had been the city of God’s presence; yet this city—this place where God had chosen to place His name—crucified Jesus. It was the city that belonged to Jesus; but “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

The chief priests, rulers, and elders missed it. These were the scholars, the religious teachers, and the members of the highest court of law. Jesus prayed over them from His cross, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). Then we read,

And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:34b-37).

He came to the religious authorities, those who supposedly were looking for Him, and they killed Him. They knew where He was going to be born (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:4-6); yet when He came, they rejected Him as their Messiah (Matthew 21:42).

Later, as Peter stood before the Sanhedrin, he said, "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11, 12). They knew the Old Testament Scriptures, but they did not know whom the Scriptures proclaimed (John 5:39).

How could this be? God had placed before them all the proof that was needed for them to believe that Jesus was the One He had sent (John 5:31-36). The truth has to be that they rejected the evidence that they were given because they had put their hearts on something else!

The people who taunted Him missed it. They stood at the foot of the cross that was providing their only hope for salvation and blasphemed the Savior who had come to die for their sins. How could they do such a thing? Peter said, "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also" (Acts 3:17). They set aside the credentials of the Christ that were given them and allowed themselves to be persuaded by the false teachers around them, rejecting the day of the visitation of the Son of God. They missed what the crucifixion meant, who was being crucified, and how they were part of this pivotal moment in the history of the world. They saw the blood of their re-

demption, smelled it, and perhaps were close enough to touch it; but they rejected and mocked it. In doing so, they "regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant" by which they were being offered salvation and sanctification (see Hebrews 10:29b).

In one sense, the world has missed it. John said, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10). Like those who stood at the foot of the cross, the masses of the earth have ignored the Spirit of grace. Through the cross, two gates stand before us: one that leads to eternal life and one that leads to eternal death. The majority, through a perversity of spirit, look away from the door of hope and choose to walk through the broad gate of death.

Why is this the case? All of us should run to receive Him with grateful and obedient hearts. Someone, long ago, was asked, "If Jesus came into our world, this modernized world, would we receive Him?" The answer was quickly and rightly given: "No, we would crucify Him just the way the people in the first century did!" The reason is fairly obvious. If we look at what happened when He came, we see that their reaction basically came down to rejection of the truth. Does man really want the truth, or does he want something else? Jesus was the Truth from God, but who wants the real truth? Jesus was God's Way, but who wants the real way? Jesus was the Life, but who wants God's life, real life? All of life in this world centers on our honest reception of Jesus the Son of God and His sacrificial death on the cross.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He said that the people there had received an unusual opportunity, that they had thrown their opportunity away, and that they would answer for what they had done with this golden opportunity. Likewise, a moment of decision has come to us. We must do something with it. What will we do with the open door to either eternal life or eternal death?

"So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

Eddie Cloer



Russell Cromwell, many years ago, established Temple University. He traveled around the country presenting a lecture entitled "Acres of Diamonds" to raise funds for the University. The story around which he built his lecture was about a man in South Africa who wanted to become rich. He owned a farm; but, instead of working it, he traveled throughout his country looking for diamonds. He became frustrated in his search, gave up, and drowned himself. Following his death, a man bought his farm. One day he saw something sparkling in a little stream on the farm. It was examined and found to be a

diamond. After further investigation, this farm was found to be one of the largest diamond mines in South Africa. The man who had feverishly looked for diamonds did not know that as he walked across his farm he was walking across "acres of diamonds." Jerusalem, the chief priests and rulers, the soldiers, and the people did not know that the One they were crucifying was the very One they had been looking for, the One who had brought them everything that their hearts desired. In their greed for something else, they threw away the most precious gift that God will ever give to man.