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Sermons on Matthew

Destroying Jesus

Matthew 12:14-21

With Study Questions

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11/20/2005*

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Matthew 12:14-21

Then __the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:14).

Choosing a Path

So what does one do when confronted with the reality that he might be wrong? Does he dig in or does he rethink his position?

The prudent considers well his steps. ¹⁶□A wise *man* fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident (Proverbs 14:15, 16).

Does he pray about it?

_If any of you lacks wisdom, __let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and __it will be given to him (James 1:5).

Does he seek the counsel of those wiser than himself?

_A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will _attain wise counsel (Proverbs 1:5).

Does he search the Scriptures?

_All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, _and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for __instruction in righteousness, ⁻¹⁷⁻ __that the man of God may be complete, __thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Does he humble himself until he's assured before God that he is now moving in the right direction realizing that God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud (1 Peter 5:5).

OR...

Does he do a cost benefit analysis, weighing just how difficult it will be to do, or believe the right thing?

_The lazy man says, “_There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets_” (Proverbs 22:13)!

Does he try to find people who will agree with his error?

Like one who binds a stone in a sling Is he who gives honor to a fool (Proverbs 26:7, 8).

Does he try to rationalize his fault via immeasurable calculations like the amount of anxiety or mental health it will take to make the right decision? Or perhaps he justifies his ungodly decisions with the great trump card of all the evil things done in the name of religion?

Does not _He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He *not* know it? And will He *not* render to *each* man __according to his deeds (Proverbs 24:12)?

Let us never underestimate our capacity for ungodliness! These men who stood before the living Christ, the archetype of righteousness and holiness, had flesh and bones just like us. They had glands and blood that boiled. They felt pressure and inner conflict. They knew they were wrong. We know this because Mark records the anger of Jesus in this event. But they were not governed by sound judgment or godly scruples but by hardness of heart (Mark 3:5).

I recently met with a gentleman who had been offended by a small group of people. He was about to see them all so he came by my office to ask me how I thought he should respond to the encounter. He was angry but he wanted to prepare himself to avoid unseemly behavior on his part. I gave him some counsel then told him I would check to see how well he did.

Marriage, parenting, business relationships, relationships with neighbors and friends would all operate at a more desirable level if people would prayerfully and humbly seek the counsel of God before reacting. And then do the ethical thing even if it is awkward or costly.

The Ultimate Junction

And of all the paths which stand before men, of all the junctions in our lives, the divide in the road presented by the person of Jesus ascends to the zenith of consequence for it unveils a man's destiny.

Thus says the Lord: “_Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the _old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find __rest for your souls (Jeremiah 6:16).

And, of course, the old path is Christ Himself (John 14:6).

Antichrist Symposium

In the present text, instead of walking in the old path, they plot against it. They plot against Jesus. *Plot* sounds like a verb but the word _____ *symboulion* is a noun making it more akin to a symposium or a conference. When confronted with undeniable insurmountable truth they held an anti Jesus symposium. Like Joseph's brothers they would conspire against their kinsman.

Does not their rejection of the miracle-working, prophetically unquestionable Lamb of God seem to border on the criminally insane? Would not this movie have to be cast with those who are capable of playing the role of lunatic? They must have been out of their minds! In fact Luke, writing of this event records,

But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus (Luke 6:11).

“Rage” here is an interesting word, _____ *anoia*. It is a compound word consisting of the negative particle *a*, (meaning none, no or not) and *nous* which means mind. It can be simply understood as mindlessness. They weren't participating in some genuine quest for justice against a man who was posing a threat to their otherwise peaceful and orderly community—as in the charade we see in many of our antichristian court cases today. It was the beginning of a well ordered, conspiratorial quest to destroy something they knew to be true and the person who they knew to be the Truth.

And lest we seek to mitigate the culpability of men throughout the ages who have followed suit, the Scriptures seem to indicate there is no less knowledge of the truth of Jesus on the part of humanity throughout history. It is not the physical presence of Christ nor His miracles which

ultimately hold men to account before God. It is something we still have—His word.

__He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him— __the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Destroying Jesus

This particular conspiracy to destroy Jesus culminated with His actual crucifixion. But the resurrection of Christ posed an incessant problem for the antichristian. The destroying of Jesus has become a continuous, albeit unsuccessful theme of history. The soldiers were paid to lie about the empty tomb (Matthew 28:11-15). Teachers would come into the church affirming a man named Jesus but denying that He was the Christ—the anointed one of God genuinely and fully absolving sinners of their guilt (1 John 2:22). The spirit of these antichristians would seek to reduce Jesus to a non-corporeal¹ (not coming in the flesh) inspirational figurehead (1 John 4:3); affording Him great patronizing respect but denying the essence of His life and claims.

Ripping the garments off of Jesus and adorning His head with false crowns will be massive as we embark upon the holidays before us. Of course there is the incessant quest to yank the person of Christ from any public or government venue unbecoming of His authority or law—Merry Christmas, I mean Happy Holidays. But what I am talking about is the bedraggled new, yet old discoveries entertained during Christmas and Easter regarding the *real* Jesus as he poses for Time and Newsweek. If you can't destroy Him, morph Him.

This is how men conspire against Jesus today. They attack the biblical propositions which assert who Jesus actually is and what Jesus truly did. And they compile all their intellectual and academic muscle in this pursuit. But like these Pharisees it is a mindless endeavor motivated by hardness of heart.

The True Jesus

The church must continue to seek to present Jesus in His fullness. A lesser Jesus may certainly be more acceptable and temporarily more

¹ Docetism and Gnosticism.

expeditious to fill the house and pacify our psychological woes. But a lesser Jesus—an Oprah Jesus or a Dr. Phil Jesus—is not the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He would not suffer Himself to be presented as anything less than what He is; nor should we for a moment indulge such a profane thought.

The apostle Paul did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Jesus made the bold assertion that the Scriptures were about Him (John 5:39). So the whole counsel of God can be understood, at least in a sense, as the whole counsel concerning Christ. This is what must be shouted from the pulpits. The true Jesus must proceed from lips of the Christian: The Jesus who is God (John 1:1); the Jesus who is our only true and High Priest (Hebrews 9:11); the Jesus who is the King of all kings (1 Timothy 6:16); the Jesus who is the Lord of all the earth (Psalm 2); the Jesus whose lips utter the prophetic words of God (Matthew 17:5); the Jesus who is the resurrected Savior (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). The Jesus who is the advocate for sinners who need forgiveness (1 John 2:1); the Jesus whose body was broken and blood was shed to wipe our sins away (John 6:53). Let us come to this Jesus as we prepare our hearts to dine at His table.

Questions for Study

1. What are steps a Christian should take when making decisions (pages 2, 3)?
2. What are pitfalls in decision making (pages 3, 4)?
3. What is the ultimate crossroad for man (page 4)?
4. What was at the heart of the Pharisees plot to destroy Jesus (pages 4, 5)?
5. How do men seek to continue to destroy Jesus (pages 5, 6)?
6. What should the church—Christians—continue to do no matter what the cost (page 6)?

