

The Unrecognizable Savior

There is a story of a Roman soldier who wrote a letter to his family describing some of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. He was part of the crew that crucified Jesus with the two criminals. As the soldier and Mary stood at the foot of the cross, purportedly, she asked which one was Jesus. Jesus had been beaten so severely that even His mother couldn't recognize Him.

I don't know whether the story is true or not. It fits with the prophecy of Isaiah 53, which accurately depicts the crucifixion hundreds of years before it occurred. This was the confusing passage the eunuch was reading when Philip caught up with him on the Via Maris (Acts 8). Listen to a few verses from that chapter.

And when we see Him,
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

³ He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God and afflicted.

⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon
Him,

And by His stripes, we are healed. Isaiah 53:2a-5 (NKJV)

The crucifixion was not the only time people did not recognize Jesus. John said, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11, NKJV). The Jews were looking for the Messiah and fulfilled Isaiah's prediction by not recognizing Him. "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive" (Matthew 13:14 cf. Isaiah 6:9). Even two of His disciples didn't recognize Him on the Emmaus road until He blessed the LORD for their meal.

Today, people do not recognize the handiwork of God. The evidence that there is a God is overwhelming. Yet, many opt out of believing or seeking Him because they must admit their responsibility to Him. It is easier in the short term to deny His existence or presence and happily go on their merry way, assuming they have no accountability to anyone. Listen to a few passages:

- The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Psalm 19:1 (NKJV)
- ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world, His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, Romans 1:18-20 (NKJV)
- ¹⁵ He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. Colossians 1:15-16 (NKJV)

In a great mystery within a mystery, the Bible discloses that Jesus is God in human form. He came to reveal God to us and demonstrate His will for humanity. However, as in our Romans passage, we often turn away from knowing God even though He has made known the reality of His existence. The evidence is clear, and we have no excuse.

In the rest of Romans 1, we learn the usual outcome of denying God. He reveals His wrath by giving people up to their passions and displaced worship. We are built to worship. When we neglect or reject God, we fill the void and “worship the creature rather than the Creator.”

Many Americans imitate ostriches and hide their heads in the sand. Some deny the realities of the current American crisis. Others deny the Creator's authenticity and standards, choosing to replace Him with their own designs.

I am grateful our ancestors and Bible heroes were imperfect people. God has always shown His power by working in and through flawed and broken people. God told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9, ESV).

General George Washington wrote to Brigadier General Thomas Nelson, Jr., in 1778 about the challenges of the Revolution and credited God with the Continental Army’s success.

The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations, but it will be time enough for me to turn preacher when my present appointment ceases; and therefore, I shall add no more on the Doctrine of Providence ...”

The MSM may not understand, but our forefathers and mothers attributed God, not the government, as the Giver of our rights. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson reminded the King and head of the English Church:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Jefferson declared the signers’ dependence on God when he concluded the document: “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

Say what you will about our flawed ancestors, but they had insight most modern Americans lack – they recognized their Savior and Lord. In his Last Will and Testament, John Jay wrote:

"Unto Him who is the author and giver of all good, I render sincere and humble thanks for His merciful and unmerited blessings, and especially for our redemption and salvation by his beloved Son."

Keep The Light of *Recognizing Jesus* Burning!
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