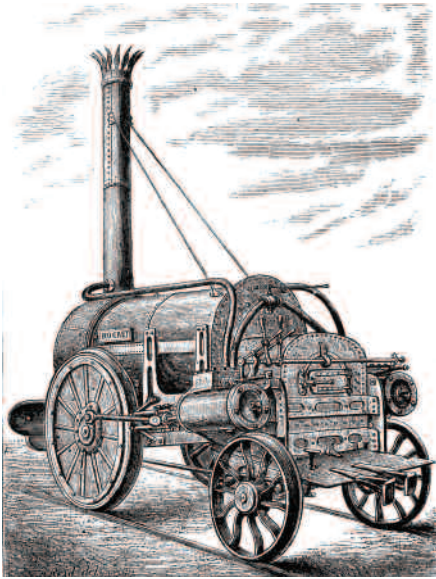


"Come and See"

Nothing opposes human progress so much as prejudice. When Richard Arkwright invented the spinning frame, an infuriated mob at Preston made him run for his life, because they reckoned the machine would ruin their industry. In Nottingham he met with the same senseless sort of opposition. There they burned down his mills.



George Stephenson had to face storms of ridicule when he publicised his steam engine, which could run more quickly than the old stage-coaches.

The astronomer Galileo discovered that, instead of the sun going round the earth, the earth revolves round the sun. Prejudiced authorities flung him into prison and tried in vain to make him recant, because this did not fit with their views.

Missing the Saviour

Blinded by preconception, mankind has often rejected the most glorious gifts. True prophets have been persecuted, benefactors slain. Through the deadly work of prejudice, men and women through the ages have unceasingly rejected and repudiated Jesus Christ, the Son of God, His gift sent to save the world. This was even the case during Jesus' life in Israel, 2000 years ago, as one eye witness records:

He came to his own, and his own did not receive him (John 1:11).

Jesus himself commented:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing (Luke 13:34).

Not willing? Why? Through prejudice. The Jews rejected the Saviour because he bore no resemblance to their expectations of the one who was to come, sent by God, to rule over them and the whole world for ever.

Modern Misconceptions

The same applies today. Some are prejudiced against Christ by what sceptics have said or written. To many, he has never been shown except in caricature. And there are those who are blinkered by philosophy or theology which often obscures the real Jesus.

Men and women also frequently judge Jesus by his followers. They point to poor conduct or inconsistencies in Christians' lives, which colour their assessment of him. Is this fair? Every genuine Christian is Christ's representative, but how many truly reflect his character? The answer is that we are all human, and therefore fallible, and so will sometimes fail to live up to his standards. That does not make Jesus less; it emphasises our need for forgiveness.

As students of the Bible, we should recognise that Christ was sinless, he never sinned. However, we see too that we all have the tendency to sin – to disobey God. In Romans chapter 7, Paul draws a picture of an internal conflict: he does evil unwillingly, because



it is the opposite of what his God-fearing conscience wants; but his tendency to sin makes him do wrong and unable to do the good that he wishes he could.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice (Romans 7:18–19).

To illustrate his point, Paul describes this battle as every individual having two parts:

- ❖ The 'flesh' (the lower animal nature)
- ❖ The 'spirit' or 'inward man' (the mind which thinks and reasons).

This picture reminds us that all Christians will fail at times, and everyone needs someone to deliver them from the power of this tendency to sin. In verse 25 Paul gives thanks that this is Jesus Christ, the indispensable Saviour, through his victory over sin and death.

Meeting Jesus

On one occasion when Jesus went to Galilee preaching the gospel, he caught sight of Philip and called out "Follow me" (John 1:43). Enthusiastically Philip sought Nathanael to share the good news, and the story is recorded in the subsequent verses.

In verse 45, Philip tells Nathanael the exciting news: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nathanael's reaction was clearly narrow-minded. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see" retorted Philip, challenging Nathanael to overcome his prejudice.

As soon as Jesus saw him coming, he exclaimed: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit." Nathanael remained sceptical, "How do you know me?". Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

This implies supernatural knowledge, because Nathanael was out of

human view. Not only did Jesus see him, he saw *through* him, and he saw no deceit in him.

This motivated Nathanael's change of opinion, and doubt became belief. He made his confession, "*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel.*" Nathanael had seen a miracle of insight and knew for certain that Jesus was who the Bible says he was.

First-Hand Experience

'Come and see' is the best cure for prejudice. Isn't it the same in all areas of life? Seeing the spinning jenny at work convinced the Lancastrians of its tremendous utility. Actual experience of the locomotive dispelled absurd prejudices and caused men to appreciate the potential of the railways.

Coming face to face with a thing or idea can quickly dispel dislikes and suspicions. Getting to know the idea or person removes prejudice and helps us make good decisions.

In the same way, spending time with Jesus himself, through the Bible record, will dispel prejudice against him. We get to know his character, his influence and his faultless example.

Come and see Jesus:

- ❖ Sitting on the hill with the crowd around while he pours out words of wisdom never heard before.
- ❖ Passing from place to place, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, raising the dead.
- ❖ Confounding his critics, who could not out-reason the carpenter's son from Nazareth.
- ❖ Gradually being recognized by some as the Son of God.



Come and see him meekly yet triumphantly dying on the cross, the innocent victim and yet the ultimate victor. This paradox is described in Colossians 2:15. Christ won a great victory over sin and death and wants to share it with us.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the moral and spiritual ultimate. His story did not end at the cross, because he rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is waiting to return to the earth as king. We still have opportunity to come and see him in the Bible, to get rid of any false preconceptions and to be part of the future world order. Don't let prejudice rob you of a place in God's plan.

Claud Lamb

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