

They Esteem Him Not

Having thus published the laws of His kingdom, the Lord proceeds by acts of grace to bring “the kingdom” nigh to His elect Israel (in chapters 8 to 12). And what a kingdom! The strong man’s house is spoiled. Death and disease flee away before the King’s bidding. Lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, the storms obey, the devils fear; and yet, though mercy rejoices against judgment, His people Israel will not receive their King.

Much of this is common to the other Gospels, for Christ’s rejection by the Jew has a bearing both on His course as Servant, and also as showing out the deceitfulness of the heart of man as man. For which reason many of these scenes are given, with characteristic omissions or additions, both in Mark and in Luke’s Gospels.

But here the rejection of the Heir of the kingdom, and the nature of His kingdom, are set forth with a fulness of detail unequalled in any other Gospel. Of the King Himself Matthew tells us – and the words are only here – “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,” (Matthew 8:17). Of the spirit of His kingdom, we have the reiterated witness, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” (Matthew 9:13; 12:7); words, which as they are peculiar to this Gospel, very distinctly mark the character of that rule which He brought to sinful men.

Then as to His subjects. Here only do we read, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” (Matthew 8:11, 12). Israel will not have Him. Had He come with law, exercising lordship, He should have been called a benefactor (Luke 22:25). But because He comes with grace, to meet the vile, to save the lost, therefore His own receive Him not. Still He preaches “the gospel of the kingdom,” (Matthew 9:35).

Compare the same expression in Matthew 24:14 with the parallel passage in Mark 13:10.) – an expression peculiar to Matthew – for He is moved with compassion, because they fainted, and were as sheep having no shepherd. All, however, whether John the Baptist’s, His own, or the Apostles’ ministry, is rejected. “He is despised, and they esteem Him not.”

(Four Views of Christ: The Characteristic Differences of the Four Gospels by Andrew Jukes, 1853, Kindle, 2019, Page 31 & 32 of 113, Paragraph Structure Modified)