

JESUS CHRIST AND CULTURE

Greetings precious people, this week we will look at the affect that Jesus Christ had on the culture of His day and the culture of generations since. Next week we will look at how He continues to affect and impact cultures today through His Church.

The culture of Jesus' day had 2 major influences: Judaism (the religion of the Jewish people) and the Roman Government which controlled Israel at the time. The Roman Empire was greatly influenced by the Greek culture and was rife with paganism; the worship of many gods (which would eventually give way to various Roman leaders known as Caesar claiming themselves to be gods and demanding to be worshiped); greed; corruption; hunger for power and many other trappings.

The religious influence of Judaism had also become corrupt by greed; hunger for power and the perverting of the pure Word of God which had been entrusted to them. Of course when these elements are present there will be oppression of the poor; lying; cheating; stealing; and much hopelessness.

This is the culture that Jesus came into in order as He said in John 18:37, "For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Truth, God's Truth is never popular when it confronts a wicked and corrupt culture. One of three things must happen when Truth and a corrupt culture collide, either the culture will change by being influenced by the Truth; the Truth will change to adapt to the culture (this will NEVER happen with God's Truth), or the culture will seek to stamp out the Truth.

Of course we know from the Word of God, the Bible that culture did its best to silence The Truth. When Jesus confronted the corrupt religious leaders and "their" system, they became angry and sought to kill the Truth. Read a portion of what Jesus had to say to these men, Matthew 23:1-36 "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat... But all their works they do to be seen by men... And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

It is obvious that Jesus didn't read the books "I'm OK, you're OK" or "How to win friends and influence people". Jesus would not be accepted in about 90% of what is known as the "church" today with words like these.

What most people seem to be oblivious to in our "politically correct" culture is that we are sick, terribly sick. Unless a sickness like cancer is identified; called what it is and dealt with radically it will eventually bring destruction just as cancer will kill its victim if gone untreated.

The corruption of Israel ended up killing them. Previous to His sending His Son, God had sent prophet after prophet identifying the sickness of the nation yet they refused to listen and killed many of the messengers. Finally God sent His Own Son and we know what they did to Him. The nation of Israel was finally destroyed (though not entirely) in 70 AD by the Roman army. The survivors were scattered to all the corners of the world.

In spite all of this, Jesus had a profound impact on His culture and He continues to do so today through His body known as the Church. This we will look at next week.

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