

The Returning King

By Nathan Warner

While the world does not like the Gospel, it can tolerate parts of it, particularly the first half—Jesus from His birth to His death on the cross. As such, Jesus is just a tradition of the past to them and He has no relevance or power over their lives today.

This is why the world can handle the story of the baby in the manger who was born into this world to save it—because that innocent, helpless child doesn't seem very terrifying. "And what a sweet thing that people believe God is so kind and loving to send His Son to save us," they think. In the same way, the world can live with the picture of the Son of God hanging helpless and lifeless on the Cross. He doesn't seem very awe-inspiring or powerful there, does He? "He lived a good life trying to help people," they say, "and He was killed for it – there's an end of it."

As the worldly man goes about his business, he might hear a Christian say, "Jesus died for your sins! He died in your place so you wouldn't have to. He died so that you might be saved! Won't you accept the gift of salvation?" The world can tolerate the helpless and powerless Jesus who came to "save" them from themselves, just like they tolerate friends suggesting dieting plans and stock options. People love choice – they like to think it's what makes us human. The ability to choose what is good and bad for themselves is the world's most treasured "right." They really love the sense of power it gives them. This is why most people are okay with the story of Jesus offering Salvation as a free gift. They have the power to accept or reject it, like any sales pitch. What an empowering place to be!

The worldly man listens, as he listens to everyone who tries to sell him something. He weighs the requirements of the Gospel and decides turning away from trusting the things of the world and denying the sins he enjoys is too costly. "Thanks, but no thanks," he says. "I'm glad it worked for you and you've found your way, but I'm not a bad man, and I don't need saving. I am finding my own way. Jesus didn't need to die for me" The world loves the power it has to reject Jesus. It's up to them, and they can deny Him if they want, going about their business as if it never happened. Ah, the power of dismissal!

But before they can get away, the Christian says, "Yes, Jesus died, but He was resurrected, is alive, and is King above all kings!" The worldly man doesn't like the sound of this, because if Jesus is a King, that means Jesus is in control and should be obeyed. But the worldly man glances around and sees an unchanged world where people do whatever they want to do, where no lightning bolts fall out of the sky striking disobedient people dead. "What does that matter to me?" he asks. "There's no change to how things go – everything goes the way it's always gone, so it does not matter to me if He is alive or not. Look, you offered me your Jesus, and I appreciate it, but I'm turning you down, now let me go on with my day."

"Wait!" says the Christian. "Jesus is coming again to judge the world! You will have to stand before Him and answer for everything you've ever done. So, if you don't accept Him now, you will end up in hell." This has a peculiar effect on the worldly man. Anger comes to his face. Up until now, he's been in control; he's felt empowered. He was being offered something free and he turned it down, because he didn't need it. But now, he feels he is being threatened. How did this free gift suddenly become a threat that if you don't take it, you will suffer terribly? The helpless baby Jesus and the powerless dying Jesus has suddenly become the avenging King Jesus, coming to punish the sinful world.

The world hates the Gospel because of the living Jesus, because at some point, He can no longer be ignored, rejected, or denied. The world hates the Son of God Who will stop mankind's

“progress” towards throwing off His judgments—man’s power to “choose” his own way will come to an end. On that day, it will be Jesus’ turn to choose whether to reject or accept them, and He will force every knee to bow to Him.

This is why the nations rage and plot against God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ—they do not want His return to be true. Jesus told a parable about this: *“A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us’”* When the King returned, He rewarded His faithful servants, but He said, *“as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me”* (Luke 19:12-14; 27). Like these faithless citizens, the world rages, “we do not want Jesus to rule over us!” *“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us’”* (Psalm 2:1-3). While the King is away, the world plots against His return, seeking to keep their illegitimate rule by any means necessary. The Lord is patient with their plotting and scheming, *“not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9b), even while they align themselves with demons who they believe will help them cast off Christ’s rule. This is no surprise, for Jesus’ return means their judgment too. After all, when Jesus came the first time, the demons *“cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’”* (Matthew 8:29), *“and they begged Him not to command them to depart into the abyss”* (Luke 8:31). They know Jesus’ return means judgment. In the face of Jesus Christ, these forces are vain, but they are very real and working in the world against Jesus, for Paul told us *“we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). The world hates Jesus so much that even when God’s wrath is poured on them, they won’t *“repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons”* (Revelation 9:20a).

As the rulers of the earth spend their time raging and plotting against Christ’s return, *“He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then He will speak to them in His wrath, and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘As for Me, I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill.’ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to Me, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your heritage, and the ends of the earth Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him”* (Psalm 2:4-12), for *“behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* (Jude 1:14b-15).

The world should take care not to dismiss Jesus, for when He returns to rule the earth, man will no more be able to deny and reject Him. Instead, Jesus will deny and reject those who have rejected Him. Jesus said, *“Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32-33). To those who acknowledged Him before men, Jesus will say, *“Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared*

for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34b), but to those who have not acknowledged Him, He will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41b).

King Jesus is alive. He is coming to rule the earth, for He has said, *“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done” (Revelation 22:12). “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)*