

The Negative Jesus in a Positive Story
by Hendrik Joubert

The gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed the most positive and uplifting message – the Creator of the universe sacrificing His Son as a peace offering to call those who would submit to their loving Master. When you consider the necessity of the Sacrifice, inevitably a negative side becomes obvious – why was such a drastic measure necessary?

A first thought may be to question the logic and credibility of the whole thing. This sounds like fiction, the Master of the universe sacrificing His Son to save those who offended Him. There are those who consider it just that, a fairy tale. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18. There is another negative, those who are perishing.

It is indeed a negative fact, but we accept and understand why the Gnostics and atheists will be condemned. Although some of them seem to be nice people, they openly reject the Lord, and that is wrong.

As you read along in the greatest positive story of all times you begin to notice that the Lord Jesus has a whole lot of negative things to say when talking to, as well as about, the religious leaders of the day. In a discussion with the Pharisees and the scribes Jesus applies a prophecy God made through Isaiah to them: You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸ 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹ 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'" Matthew 15:7-9

The loving Lord Jesus getting involved in some name calling!? As you read along you will find He also calls them a brood of vipers (Matthew 23:33) Here in Matthew 15:1-9 we see that they had the audacity to question the Savior about righteousness. The Lord accuses them of self-righteously changing what God had said, and doing so in a patronizing way. The help (honor) they would have given their parents was supposed to become a gift to God.

Being condemned for what looks like a noble act – choosing God over your parents – seems extremely negative, but when you consider who really benefited from this offering made to God, you realize just how devious they were.

When you read what God says through Paul in his letter to the Romans, you really appreciate just how wrong and arrogant this was. In chapter 10 of that letter Paul breaks down and says that his prayer for his people is that they may be saved, making it obvious that a whole lot of people stood condemned. Now that is negative. What was wrong with what they did as described in Matthew 15, becomes obvious. God acknowledges through Paul that Israel has a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge – that which God communicated to them to do. (Romans 10:2) Instead they make their own rules concerning what one has to do in order to please God. When men make the rules, worship becomes vain (Matthew 15:9) because the rules of men replace the rules of God. (Romans 10:1-3) Imagine replacing a rule made by God with your own – effectively the sinner telling the Savior what goes!

You read along as you think about the foolishness of sinners changing and making rules by which men may be saved and worship God. But then – you think – God has always had problems with Israel. They have always rebelled against Him by doing their own thing. Why could they not learn to simply accept and obey what Jehovah said?

A little later you drive behind a truck. You notice the sign "Worship with the church of your choice." It is great to live in a country where you may worship as you please. Then you think, but why are there so many churches, each with its own creed? Why can we all not simply do as the Bible says? Is the Bible so confusing? You think about the men who claim to be directly guided by the Spirit of God, and yet they cannot agree. Are we to believe the Holy Spirit causes division? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Ephesians 4:1-6) Then you think back to your reading earlier, about all the negative things Jesus had to say about Israel. Matthew 15:9 comes to mind, and you consider how applicable it is to our generation. When men make the rules worship becomes vain. Could it be...?

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it...Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" ²³

"And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS. Matthew 7:13-14; 21-23.

When you read this statement you realize that we may learn too late that we followed in the footsteps of those we condemned.