



April 23, 2006

A Matter Of National Security ??

Fear takes many forms and may manifest itself in a number of ways. On an individual level this may take the form of harboring suspicions concerning others and their possible actions. At other levels fear may take on other forms, sometimes with dire consequences for an entire culture or nation. This is what we see unfolding in the plot to kill Christ. God had chosen a time to send his son into the world at which point He knew that Christ would be offered up as a sacrifice for sin. This demonstrates not only planning but wisdom in knowing how to engineer this to achieve a specific result. In looking at this we find that the attitudes manifested toward Christ during the first century drew on the cultural traits of the people that God had set aside for his own.

Moses observed this in his address to the children of Israel as he prepared them for his departure. We read, "**Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people...**" (Deut 9.13). In stating this God denotes that He had not delivered the Hebrews from bondage because of their own goodness. "**Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.**" (Deut 9.6). This is not to cast a negative light on the Jewish population. This characteristic would later serve the purpose of God in fulfilling His plan to redeem mankind from sin. To that end Moses warned the people that they should "**Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.**" (Deut 10.16). While the law, given by God through Moses, was one of what appears to be a series of tedious rituals and procedures, the Lord was interested in His people understanding the greatness of the gifts that he had bestowed on them. Throughout their history, as is true of mankind in general, the Hebrews continually sought God in times of trouble and departed from Him in times of peace and prosperity until finally God allowed their enemies to overtake them. Joel also warns later that they needed to "**...rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.**" (Joel 2.13). It was the state of the heart that mattered, not ritualistic adherence to a set of rules for the sake of the rules. The love that God had for his people was to be foremost in their minds.

During the time of Christ, the fear of the savior, on the part of the Jewish religious leadership was one that transformed their thinking into something that was evil, but which accomplished the will of God. "**Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.**" (John 11.47-48). Notice the fear that takes root. In spite of their recognition that Christ performed miracles, and obviously he did these by the power of God, they transformed Christ into not only a threat to their power and popularity, or control of the nation, to an irrational idea that the Romans would come and take away their nation because of the things that Jesus taught. What they did not realize was that this fear would perform the very thing that God had intended, the sacrifice of His son for the sins of the world.

How many times today do we find people who see God and His word as not just an imposition, but a threat to their way of life. Why is this? God seeks to bless and save, not destroy, and yet we find that the world seeks to undo the effect of the gospel and its validity. This is the influence of the physical worldly mind which tends to give in to the influence of the devil as he seeks to destroy the work that God does through the presence of His word. Fear is something that may cause some to avoid anything that speaks of service to God and efforts are made to insulate one's life against the power of the gospel and any guilt that might be felt for not doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord.

On the other hand it is fear that causes many to read the scriptures and become fearful, even while professing a belief in Christ. How is this manifested? We sometimes hear someone say that they cannot believe that God will not save those who are not scripturally baptized for the remission of their sins. Others find it hard to contemplate the fact that there are things in God's word that must be taught and practiced as God had stated them. Fear leads to false doctrine and the creation of a false sense of comfort. Christ stated, "**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**" (Matt 7.13-14). A lack of the proper type of fear will cause to believe that which the word of God does not teach, practice a doctrine that God will not recognize, and ultimately cost us our souls. On the other hand, a proper fear of God will propel us to find what we must do to be saved and once we have found it, do it. Paul states, "**Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**" (2 Cor 7.1).

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