

NOT WANTING JESUS?

It seems inconceivable to me that there would be anyone who would not want Jesus' presence in their lives. However, the fact of the matter is that there were many even during the earthly lifetime of our Lord who wanted nothing to do with Him. An especially vivid example of that is given in the 8th chapter of Luke, in the account of the casting out of a legion of demons. One would think Jesus would have been welcomed by all in any community. After all, someone who could cast out demons from undesirables and heal their sick, what more could you ask? The problem came, however, when Jesus cast them out they, at their request, were allowed entrance into some nearby hogs. Hogs, being "unclean" animals by the standard of the Law, were a fitting dwelling place for demons. The problem arose when the hogs, so confused and maddened by the intrusion of the demons, stampeded into the lake and drowned. As word spread concerning this remarkable miracle, a multitude came to Jesus, not to praise Him for transforming a demon-possessed vexation into a respectable member of the community, but rather "besought him that he might depart from them" (v. 37). With the loss of so many hogs, surely this man would not be a good influence on the economy!

Much like these people, many today are not comfortable with Jesus. Even the very mention of His name is seemingly offensive. The fact that belief in Christ has transformed many from drunkenness, drug addiction, sexual perversion, thievery, etc. into law-abiding citizens and neighbors means little to those who are struck by fear at the mention of His name. These seek to protect their children from His influence by not only forbidding any mention of Him by teachers, but also penalizing children who would dare refer to Him. Any favorable reference to Him or to His followers must be censored out of history books for fear young impressionable minds might be impacted.

Some would exclude Jesus because of the contrast between their way of living and that of Christ. Evil so fills their hearts and lives, it is

impossible for them to feel comfortable in the presence of even any who would devoutly follow Him. In our day, they would consider Him archaic, misinformed and intolerant. For instance, He was in agreement with the scriptural definition of marriage as affirmed by God in the beginning—the marriage of a man and a woman (Matt. 19:4-5). In a sex-obsessed society, many would feel uncomfortable hearing Jesus say, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). It is much easier, it seems, to ask Jesus to "depart from them."

There are others who have no particular quarrel against Jesus, but because of other factors in their lives they simply find no room for Him. Although perhaps not purposely, but simply by filling their lives with material concerns, they find neither time nor energy for Christ, Bible-reading or church. Other things become more demanding, clamoring for attention. The voice of Christ becomes perhaps nothing more than a distant memory.

What about you? Would you have been among those in the multitude who asked Jesus to depart? Would you, either purposely or without thought, send Him away? Or would you welcome Him into your life? Does the idea of His presence cause you discomfort? Maybe you're like Peter, who, impressed by Jesus' powers, said to the Lord, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). But He found that by the Lord's grace, he could find cleansing and acceptance, even to the point of being a faithful apostle and dying for Him.

-Ron

