

John 1:1-13; Mt. 2:13-23; The Rejection at Christmas I. Rejection Foretold II. Rejection by the Leaders III. Rejection by the People

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, many in our world find the story of Jesus's birth too good to be true. They are happy to sing the songs- and even say- Merry Christmas- but do they understand the importance of this event. Many compare the nativity to the story of Santa- a generous man who freely gives gifts- it's a nice story but nothing more- to many people. But the historical event of Christ's birth is one that has been rejected for years- even as Christ Himself was rejected. Although Jesus came to seek and save the lost- coming to His own- His own did not receive Him as we found in John 1. But truth be told- we too can add to the rejection of Jesus. When the trees and the lights become the focus- we also have pushed Jesus aside. The first Noel is crowded out by the things we want the most- happy feelings and good memories. So how do we distinguish the pageantry of this season- with the importance of Christ's birth? Well- today we see that the rejection of Jesus Christ was a part of His humiliation which was necessary for our salvation. With this theme: Jesus Christ was rejected from birth so that we might never be forsaken.

I. Rejection Foretold

Jesus Christ came to this world because of our sins- He came to save us because God loved us- but the promise of a Savior to be born is not the only truth foretold in Scripture. We also find that His rejection was an established fact- the hostility and enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent promised in Gen. 3- would unfold in the battle against Christ's very existence. We can see this truth illustrated in the life of Moses. As a type of mediator- Moses was born in the context of bondage. His people were slaves in Egypt- and the Pharaoh had decreed that all baby boys were to be cast into the Nile River- Ex. 1:22. But, as we know, God spared his life and Moses grew up in Pharaoh's very house. But later on in ch. 2- Pharaoh had a second attempt on Moses' life after Moses killed an Egyptian and Moses had to flee to Midian. So the leader of the nations would reject this one whom God would

use to deliver his people. But not only the foreign powers- even Moses' own people in Ex. 2 would say- who made you prince and judge over us. Or in the desert- Numbers 12- his own family grew tired of his leadership- and tried to take away some of his authority. His siblings did not embrace his office! So you can see that through the image of Moses- God's appointed leader would be rejected by both the leader and the people- foreign powers and his own nation. This is fleshed out in the well-known words of Is. 53:3- He was despised and rejected by men- a man of sorrows, and acquitted with grief. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Despised means that He was considered vile- worthless- of little importance! The Son of God- as rubbish! Being rejected means that He would be forsaken- made destitute- turned away from. Not considered- and not wanted! And this is what we find during His life- from beginning to end- suffering and humiliation. As LD 15 says- Christ sustained in body and soul the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race. By his suffering, He set us free from eternal condemnation and gain God's grace for us! He needed to be persecuted and rejected- for us to be saved!

II. Rejection by the Leaders

As we begin to consider the life of Jesus- we can see from the start that the leaders of that day hated Him and tried to kill Him. When Christ was born, the Israelites were under the bondage of Rome. Just as Israel was enslaved to Egypt- now they were enslaved to the emperor- Caesar. It was Caesar's decree that compelled Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem. And while there were there- the time came for the baby to be born. And after this child finally arrived, we know that Herod tried to kill the Him in Mt. 2:16- even killing all baby boys under 2 years old. This murderous outrage swallowed all the little boys- just as in the days of Moses. Herod was king- this child must not be allowed to live- he thought! But God in His wisdom had sent Mary and Joseph to Egypt- as they fled from Herod's wrath and to save the promised child. In this way, the Father called His Son out of Egypt. Yet, even after Herod died in Mt. 2:19- Herod's son sat on the throne so Joseph and Mary went to Nazareth instead of Bethlehem. So

that- as it was foretold- Jesus would be called a Nazarene. It was the rejection of Jesus by the rulers of that day that brought about the fulfillment of God's word! Christ's suffering was not random- but a necessary part of God's plan. But not only was He rejected by the political rulers- He was rejected by the religious rulers as well. We saw this last week- when Jesus healed on the Sabbath the Pharisees became indignant. As Jesus says in Mark 12- the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The builders of that day rejected Christ- the Pharisees and High Priests did everything in their power to stop His work- to keep the crowds from following Him. It was these who stirred up the crowds so that they cried out- crucify Him. They conspired together- and made their wicked plans. The leaders of that day refused to bow the knee before the true King- they grasped what little power they had- and refused to submit. They did not want this man to be their king- so they rejected Him and plotted against Him. But Christ will dash them- breaking them like a rod of iron breaks a clay pot! Kiss the Son- or He will terrify you with His wrath! As Psalm 110 says- He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath! Although rejected by kings- this child would one day be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

III. Rejection by the People

But not only did the rulers- the common people also had a difficult time accepting His person and work. As we read from John 1:11- His own people did not receive Him. They did not take Him in- they did not embrace Him or join themselves to Him. It is telling that when Herod asked the priests and scribes- where is the Christ child to be born- they knew that He would be born in Bethlehem. But they did not go to Bethlehem- no- they still stayed in their palaces in Jerusalem. So when the Christ child was born, they needed to lay Him in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn. There was no room because there was no place for Jesus in the heart of the people. During His birth- He was the infant lowly. A few shepherds had to be told to go and find Him- because the people were not looking for Him to come! And during the ministry of Jesus- the crowds may have followed Him, but for the wrong reasons. They were looking for bread- for a cheap meal- or they were looking for healing- they like the

miracle worker. But when the teaching became difficult- most forsook Him! Men did not want to associate with Him- when He spoke the hard truth they turned their back. They grew weary of Jesus- even trying to throw Him off a cliff in Luke 4. His home town- Nazareth- tried to execute Him- truly a prophet is without honor in his home town. As Mt. 23 says- Jesus desired to gather His people like a mother hen gathers her chicks- but they would not have it- they were unwilling! Coming to His own- the people of the covenant- the descendants of Abraham- those who had the law and the prophets- His own, chosen people- but they rejected Him. And when we come to the end of Jesus' life- the people seeing the beaten and bleeding Jesus-these cry out- away with Him. Crucify Him- give us Barabbas instead- Luke 23. The crowds wanted a convicted killer instead of their rightful king! He was rejected at every point- even His own disciples fled when the shepherd was struck. His own circle of friends produced a traitor as Judas sold him for a few silver coins. The seed of the woman at enmity with the seed of the serpent! His own brothers did not believe- but rather challenged his authority! The cornerstone was rejected- cast aside in favor of their own desires. We do not want this man to rule over us- Jesus came to be rejected by men. Praise God for His humility- for His willingness to suffer for us- in our place!

To conclude, Christmas is the first step of Christ's humiliation. The incarnation- where the Son of God takes on the flesh of man. We often see the manger scene as a safe, warm and cozy beginning. But this was part of His humiliation- He came knowing He would be rejected! He was born of the virgin- and He suffered as we confess. As humbling as it was for Jesus to be rejected and despised by both the leaders and the people- the most humbling moment came when Jesus was on the cross- when He cried out- my God, why has thou forsaken me? The Father turned His back on His Son- so that we might never be forsaken! He was rejected- so that we might be eternally embraced! Men hid their face from Him- so that God would turn His face towards us! Jesus Christ was rejected from birth so that we might never be forsaken.