

Why Do So Many Reject Jesus?

Jesus came to offer forgiveness, meaning, purpose and eternal life! Yet so many people reject Him. Why? Why do so many people turn their backs on Jesus? Jesus answered that question in Luke 4:18-19. Jesus returned to Nazareth his hometown. Historians tell us that first century Nazareth had a population of twenty thousand people. Jesus began, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach the gospel...” Jesus announced His messiahship. For hundreds of years Israel waited for the Messiah. At last He arrived! Jesus spelled out four pictures describing those who receive the good news of salvation.....

The first picture is that of the spiritually poor. “...He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor...” The Greek word for poor refers to a beggar. It was used of someone in total destitution who crouched in the corner begging. Jesus wasn't dealing with the economically poor. He's referring to spiritual bankruptcy. Every sinner must realize he is spiritually bankrupt. In God's eyes he is empty handed. The people of Nazareth thought their good works would earn salvation. Jesus shattered that view. Jesus said, “The only people the Messiah is going to be able to bring salvation to are those who recognized their spiritual destitution.” We are sinners separated from God.

The second picture is that of spiritual prisoners. “...to preach deliverance to the captives...” God sent His Son to free the prisoners. The sinner is bankrupt because he cannot purchase his own salvation. The sinner can also be viewed as a prisoner. Jesus offers release or forgiveness. People are put in prison because they are guilty. Spiritual bondage results from the penalty of sin. The sinner is a prisoner. Jesus releases the prisoner because He offers forgiveness of sins. Jesus took our penalty. He died in our place.

The third picture is that of spiritual blindness. “...and recovery of sight to the blind...” This is not physical blindness but spiritual blindness. The sinner is without resources to commend himself to God and thus poor. He bears the debt of sin and is therefore a prisoner under the justice of God. He is also blind in that he cannot understand or see the truth. Over and over again Jesus is described as the light of the world. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”

The fourth picture is that of the spiritually oppressed. “...to set at liberty those who are oppressed...” The oppression is a person overwhelmed by the pain of life. It is the distressed person who has lost all joy. What is that oppression? It is sin. For the Jewish people it was the wearying, heavy burden of trying to keep the Mosaic Law which was impossible. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Unfortunately this sermon delivered in His hometown enraged the congregation. They were so angry they attempted to murder Jesus. The synagogue meeting ended with an attempt to throw Jesus off a cliff! The people of Nazareth didn't view themselves as poor

or prisoners or blind or oppressed. They were proud, arrogant and self-satisfied. How dare Jesus identify them as sinners who needed a Savior! They missed the salvation Jesus offered. Jesus came to give riches, freedom, sight and deliverance. That's what He offered to the people of His day and He offers the same to us today. When the poor realizes his spiritual destitution, when the prisoner understands his guilt and doom, when the blind cries out because of his spiritual darkness, when the oppressed feels the crushing burden of sin- Jesus always responds.

What a tragedy to grow up in the same town as Jesus and yet miss the Messiah. Don't live in the Mat-Su Valley and miss the offer of eternal life.

Ethan Hansen
Pastor, Faith Bible Fellowship
Big Lake, Alaska