

The Misunderstood Christ

by Bill Crews

Misunderstanding is surely one of life's greatest tragedies, and one of the most needless. And most of it is due to people either not wanting or not trying to understand. Misunderstanding has been allowed to separate lovers, break-up marriages, destroy friendships, disrupt communities, divide nations and pit nation against nation in mortal conflict. It has been allowed to alienate brethren in Christ and to sow discord in congregations. Most people, unfortunately, still think it worse to be misunderstood than to be guilty of misunderstanding.

Jesus the Christ came to live among, to show His love for, to teach and to save men from sin, but He was, and still is, more misunderstood than understood. Even His own disciples, even the apostles themselves, frequently misunderstood His words and His actions. No one has been more misunderstood than He. After He cleansed the temple, and *"the Jews"* asked for a sign (miracle), Jesus replied, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* He referred, of course, to His crucifixion and resurrection, but they could think only of the temple in which they were standing (John 2:19-21). His simple statement was distorted and used against Him and His disciples for years to come (Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58; Acts 6:14). Jesus, after teaching the great multitude and miraculously feeding them with a few loaves and fishes, *"perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone"* (John 6: 15). They misunderstood His kingdom and His kingship. The people misunderstood who He was (Matthew 16:13-14). Again and again Jesus told the apostles that He was going to be crucified and then raised from the dead on the third day (Matthew 16:21ff; 17:9, 22-23; 20:17-19), but they did not understand (Luke 18:34). Some of His words on the cross were misunderstood (Matthew 27:46-47). Some of His disciples misunderstood the purpose of His ministry, had the wrong hope, and then gave up hope when He died (Luke 24:21). **Consider:**

1. **Men misunderstood His mission to earth.** His true mission is set forth in Luke 19:10 (*"to seek and to save that which was lost"*); 1 Timothy 1:15 (*"to save sinners"*); John 10:10 (that we *"might have life, and have it abundantly"*); Matthew 20:28 (*"to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"*). Nearly all of the Jewish people were expecting the Messiah to appear in dramatic and bold fashion, be accepted and anointed as their earthly king, lead them in throwing off the yoke of foreign oppressors, and reign from Jerusalem over an independent Jewish nation. Jesus did nothing to encourage these false notions, but even sought to correct them (Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; John 18:36-37). To this very day many who profess to be Christians think that Christ came to the earth to set up an earthly kingdom and now believe that at His second coming He will succeed in doing what He failed to do at His first. Please read Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:5-6 and 5:9-10.
2. **Men misunderstood His miracles.** The miracles performed by Christ were primarily designed to produce faith in Him by confirming His message and His claims. This is clearly shown in John 2:11, 22-23; 5:36; 3:2; 4:53; 11:45, 47, 48; Acts 2:22. Eye-witnesses of the miracles wrote accounts of them for the same purpose (John 20:30-31). However, it is obvious, from the rush of people to Him with their sick that many simply wanted their sick relatives and friends to be healed and were not interested in His teaching or His claims. In John 6:26-27 Jesus said to some: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life."* In their case the miracle of feeding the 5,000 did not tell them that here was a man sent from God who had a message that could bring them eternal life. They were more interested in carnal things than in spiritual. See what many disciples did in John 6:66; because

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