


BECAUSE OF THIS ONE MAN

by Tom Wacaster



Many a tribute has been paid to Jesus of Nazareth. “Believers and mockers, skeptics and saints, the mighty and the humble; all have testified to the fact that this Man among men was more than a man.” Those who are diligent students of the Bible see in the pages of that inspired book a portrait of One Who was (and is) the epitome of selfless service and supreme sacrifice. Those who refuse to hear the Word of God cannot deny that the life of this One man made an impact upon the world that continues to be felt more than two centuries later. The ministry of Jesus lasted only three years. Yet in those three years we find condensed the deepest meaning of history and a manifestation of God “come in the flesh.” The impact He made upon history for generations yet unborn is summed up in His own words: “If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto myself” (Jn 12:32). He chose twelve apostles, not from among the scholars, or from among the leaders of the elite religious hierarchy, but from the common masses. With no possessions to call His own, and no friends among the mighty and rich, He associated with sinners and publicans - not to stoop to their sinful life, but to raise them up to a higher and nobler life. When zealots sought to make Him their king, He withdrew and boldly declared that His kingdom was not of this world. He was an encouragement to the down-trodden, a teacher of those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, a Great Physician to those who suffered from bodily ailments that robbed them of their strength and hope. He was kind and compassionate to those who sought His wisdom; and He was stern and straightforward toward those who were determined not to come to the light. He provided unmistakable proof that He was from God by the miracles He performed. Prompted by compassion for those who suffered, He demonstrated the power of God to overcome physical ailments so that men could see in Him the same power to overcome the spiritual ailments. His miracles were performed without ostentation and served to demonstrate the authority of His words. His life was so holy that He could face His accusers and ask, “Which of you convinceth me of sin,” knowing that they could find no occasion of stumbling in Him. Philip Schaff commented on the pure and sinless life of Jesus Christ:

“Who would not shrink from the attempt to describe the moral character of Jesus, or, having attempted it, be not dissatisfied with the result? Who can empty the ocean into a bucket? Who (we may ask with Lavater) can paint the glory of the rising sun with a charcoal. No artist’s ideal comes up to the reality in this case, though his ideals may surpass every other reality. The better and holier a man is, the more he feels his need of pardon, and how far he falls short of his own imperfect standard of excellence. But Jesus, with the same nature as ours and tempted as we are, never yielded to temptation; never had cause for regretting any thought, word, or action; he never needed pardon, or conversion, or reform; he never fell out of harmony with his heavenly Father. His whole life was one unbroken act of self-consecration to the glory of God and the eternal welfare of his fellow-men. A catalogue of virtues and graces, however complete, would give us but a mechanical view. It is the spotless purity and sinlessness of Jesus as acknowledged by friend and foe; it is the even harmony and symmetry of all graces, of love to God and love to man, of dignity and humility of strength and tenderness, of greatness and simplicity, of self-control and submission, of active and passive virtue; it is, in one word, the

absolute perfection which raises his character high above the reach of all other men and makes it an exception to a universal rule, a moral miracle in history. It is idle to institute comparisons with saints and sages, ancient or modern. Even the infidel Rousseau was forced to exclaim: 'If Socrates lived and died like a sage, Jesus lived and died like a God.' Here is more than the starry heaven above us, and the moral law within us, which filled the soul of Kant with ever-growing reverence and awe. Here is the holy of holies of humanity, here is the very gate of heaven" (Schaff, History of the Church).

Every great story has a tragedy that unfolds in its plot, along with the triumph of the main character. The history of Jesus is not a myth; it is not a novel; nor is it something written for mere entertainment. But the story of Jesus provides the ultimate tragedy and triumph. As God's mystery unfolded in that little, isolated, insignificant country, Jesus began to tell of His death. But His was not a natural death, for He died the shameful death of the cross, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty. So horrible was the death of the sinless Savior that the sun refused to shine at noon, and the earth shook as its Maker finally gave up the ghost. When He was laid in the tomb, the hopes of His disciples were dashed. An immense stone to seal the tomb, and a powerful Roman legion to guard its entrance, those fishermen returned to their fishing business, their dreams and expectations buried in the tomb with the Man Who walked and talked in their midst for three and one half years. Meanwhile, as the guest of Paradise, Jesus awaited that moment when He would roll back the stone that blocked the exit from that cold dark tomb, and come forth Conqueror over death and the grave. On the third day, He burst the bonds of death. God turned the tragedy into triumph. Today men can have a renewed hope because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The angels in heaven rejoiced at His birth. Men can rejoice today because of His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God the Father.