

Weekly Eagle News – Head of Schools

My Favorite Parents:

We now enter the Advent season, the part of the ecclesiastical calendar that recognizes the arrival of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago.

Jesus came as our Messiah, the anointed one of God, whose eventual death on the cross and the fact that God used his death to atone for the consequences of sin, makes possible our relationship with God – and is the central fact that undergirds the entire Redlands Christian Schools experience.

In our world today, the real meaning of Christmas is not well understood. In Mark 8 we have a narrative that reminds us that our modern world is not alone. Jesus asks his disciples who people say that he is. They reply that some people say that he is John the Baptist and others Elijah. He then asks who they say that he is. Peter responds with, “You are the Messiah.”

Reading that, you may think, “Great, Peter gets it.” However, immediately after Mark goes on to write about the fact that as Jesus began to teach them about the suffering and death that He would experience, Peter rebukes Jesus, basically telling him that these things could not happen to Jesus.

The reason for Peter’s perspective is that while he recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, he did not understand what that really meant. His perspective was shaped by the history of his age. During the intertestamental period (between the Old and New Testaments), a Greek general and ruler named Alexander conquered the known land. When he died fairly shortly thereafter, his kingdom was divided among four rulers. Two of them, the Ptolemies out of Egypt and the Seleucids out of Syria, fought over Israel. During a period of time when the Seleucids reigned, a wicked king named Antiochus Epiphanes sought to degrade the Jewish religion and sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple. These actions led to a rebellion in Israel led by the Maccabees, a father and his sons (and central figures in Hannukah). They successfully threw out the Seleucids, though the period of Jewish independence was short-lived as the Romans were on the ascendancy and they soon conquered the region.

This memory of the Maccabees and Jewish independence shaped the first century understanding of “Messiah.” Peter and most of the Jewish people of his day pictured the Messiah as a military and political ruler who would throw out the Romans and advance the cause of Jewish independence, perhaps even ushering in a restoration of the Davidic kingdom, the heyday of Israel’s power in the ancient Near East.

Today we still do not understand what Jesus’ birth was really all about. For some, there is a failure to recognize their need for a Savior, a lack of recognition for their sin and the consequences that brings. For others, there is a desire for a Messiah who simply makes their lives better in some earthly, materialistic or even self-help kind of manner. Then there are many where the whole season is devoid of any connection to the real Christmas narrative.

This Christmas let’s remember the real reason for the season – the birth of Jesus the Christ, the anointed one of God, whose birth, sinless life and death on the cross where he paid the price for our sins, makes possible peace and joy - peace with God and the joy of being in relationship with God.

Enjoy your week!

Brian