

## **Prejudice**

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

We want to indicate why it was that Christ was a mystery to the Jews, why they did not know Him. In their case there was a special reason. It was not only the natural inability, the incapacity of the natural man so far as divine things are concerned, but there was, with them, an extra and a more positive factor than that.

It is true that all men by nature are without capacity for knowing the things of the Spirit of God, but unfortunately there is a realm in which things are more aggravated and accentuated than that, and the Jews represent that realm. Why was it that they in particular did not recognise and know Christ in all that He really was, in the wonder, and mystery, and glory, and meaning of His divine person? The answer is, it was the blindness and hatred of prejudice.

Now John seems to dwell upon that all the way through his Gospel. He deals with the Jews rather as a class. There are some notable, outstanding individuals in John's Gospel, but he brings them rather as a class into view. He takes the average, so to speak, and gives us the state of the average Jew of that time, and shows us the conduct and the temper of the Jews which made them insensible to the real values of Christ's words and works. He shows that, so far as the Lord Jesus was concerned, they had prejudged Him, without giving Him a chance. Without honestly enquiring, without an open-hearted investigation, without a pure-spirited, single eye desire to know the truth they had closed the door in prejudging. Therefore they became governed by prejudice, and prejudice gave the Lord Jesus no chance where they were concerned. He might work the mightiest miracles in their midst, even to the raising of the dead, so that they beheld those who had been raised from the dead standing in their very midst. He might give eyes and sight to one born blind, and bring that one amongst them, so that there was no mistaking the fact. He might do anything, and yet the door was closed to Him; prejudice had not only closed but thrice barred that door.

Prejudice always gives rise to hatred, and through their prejudice they hated Him. Hear His own words, "*but Me it hates*".

Speaking as a whole, the natural world of unsaved people do not hate the Lord Jesus. There has to be an extra element before there is hatred.

What we want to point out about this is just this, that, while that was true, how much they lost by prejudice. They made it impossible for themselves to know all that God had designed for them. Prejudice is a thing which does more damage to the person who is prejudiced than to anyone else. It did them far more harm than it did the Lord Jesus. It did them far more harm than it did His work. They were the chief sufferers, and the only way to know all that the Lord has for us in Christ is to keep an open heart, and a single eye, and a pure spirit. That often requires a first-hand investigation and enquiry, that we shall be ready to look into things for ourselves, and not prejudice on any ground whatever.

Leaving the whole question of motive out, prejudice may be the result of other things, but whatever may be the cause of it, it does more harm to the prejudiced than it does to anyone else.

You think of such a man as Nathaniel. About Nathaniel the Lord said some good things: "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*" He was no Jacob and yet Nathaniel was in danger of missing the greatest blessing that ever God had put in the way of a man, simply by prejudice. There was no motive there, as far as we know, but he was prejudiced by something that had got into the atmosphere by reason of a popular saying,

*"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"* You have only got to say something like that and it gets into the air, and it colours everything. People take it up, and if a certain thing comes from a certain place, and that certain place has been given a good name that is enough. Someone had at some time said, Oh, Nazareth! What a lot of bad things come out of Nazareth; can any good thing come out of Nazareth? That (shall we say) satanic, pernicious thing, which had been expressed in that form, involved the Lord Jesus, and when the Lord Jesus came and it was known that He had come out of Nazareth His chances were prejudiced, because of a popular saying, and Nathaniel was caught. He was a good man; there was no guile and no subtlety about him. There is no question of his moral integrity, he was a good man, but just caught in a popular saying, and because of that popular prejudice he was in peril of losing the greatest blessing ever given to mankind, the Lord Jesus.

There is only one way of curing prejudice. I am so glad that Andrew put his finger right on the real cure. When Nathaniel said, *"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"*, Andrew said, *"Come and see!"*

The Lord Jesus had to say to those prejudiced Jews, *"You will not come to Me ..."*. It is as though He said, You have made up your mind that you will not; you have prejudged the whole thing.

Even good and saintly people about whom you can say, there is nothing really wrong, may just be caught in some prejudice and be robbed of some supreme blessing that the Lord has for them.

That comes up very clearly in John 7. The Lord Jesus says, *"The world cannot hate you, but Me it hates."* Its hatred is the outcome of its prejudice, and its prejudice has caused its blindness. Prejudice is the most blinding thing, and so they did not see, and Christ remained One outside of their knowledge and apprehension.