

# Christ Rejection

by Harold Erickson

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*Christ rejection brings a man a reward of no kind, leaving him in a state of slavery and moral decay.*

**Duration:** 45:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 24:1-2, Luke 19:41, Hebrews 13:13

**Topics:** "Moral Decline", "Godly Authority"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the characteristics of a judgment situation. He mentions that in America, people often request shorter church services, while in Russia, they have longer services with multiple sermons and choir performances. However, the speaker suggests that there may come a time when people will be grateful for longer services. The fourth characteristic of a judgment situation is the relaxing of moral standards. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing God as the ultimate authority and the consequences of a generation deciding to be its own god.

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## Transcript

Once again, we are together for the purpose of looking into God's Word for a period of days. And I trust that you will come with prayed-up spirits, with hearts and minds that have been watered by the rains of heaven, into which the seed of God shall fall, and bear a rich and wonderful fruitage. We shall go directly to a portion of Scripture which will form the basis for the message of this evening.

You will find it in the nineteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel. Verse forty-one, And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children with thee.

They shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. The costliest business in the world is Christ rejection. That is true in the life of an individual.

It is true in the lives of nations. It has been true in the dispensations of history. There is not one single incident anywhere that would indicate that Christ's rejection brings a man a reward of any kind.

It leaves ashes in one's mouth. It leaves debris and broken monuments along the roadways of the nations. And it produces a mournful song in the ages that are gone.

The tragic thing about Christ's rejection is the fact that though men think that by keeping Christ out of life they have somehow gotten a freedom that they otherwise would not have, the reverse is true. For Christ's rejection brings about a slavery that cannot be broken. You see Christ is the only one who breaks the chains.

And when we exclude him out of life we are slaves forever. The shackles remain and there is no freedom. This morning in my church in Rockford I preached on that verse in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews.

The thirteenth verse. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the cap bearing his reproach. And as we looked at that text I became aware of the fact that God had done something remarkable out there in the place of reproach.

God did something remarkable out there. Take for instance Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place of religion.

It was the place of sacrifice. The place of the temple order and the temple sacrifices. All of them which had been originally ordained of God.

But the time came when God was doing a new thing. The hour of fulfillment had come. And when the Son of God hung upon the cross and called out in that loud victorious voice, It is finished.

He was of course primarily stating that God's great scheme of redemption was finished. But underlying that was the implication that all other schemes of religion had had their day and now they were done. And that meant that the typology of the Old Testament had found its complete fulfillment in the Lamb of God.

In the old days in Jerusalem whenever the day of atonement came round an animal was slaughtered. A sheep. And the blood was sprinkled over the mercy seat within the veil.

The meeting place between God and man was sprinkled with the blood. And then as we find in the 16th chapter of Leviticus as well as the 6th chapter of Leviticus those animals which were killed and whose blood was used only once a year to be sprinkled upon the mercy seat these animals were never used as food for the priests as was the flesh of other animals that were brought week by week. Upon them the priests lived.

They had their livelihood from their flesh. But not so that one beast that suffered on the day of atonement. That flesh was taken outside of the camp and burned to indicate that our Savior would suffer the fires of judgment outside of the camp.

Now the Jew the religious Jew who had stood around in that morning around Pilate's judgment seat and called out crucify him he thought that he had ostracized Christ. He thought we had gotten rid of him. He's a common criminal.

See there he hangs out there. Beyond the wall. Beyond the camp.

We are done with him. But you see friends the reverse was true. For in that Christ hung upon that cross Jerusalem was forsaken and ostracized.

God was saying I am establishing a new mercy seat. The old one is over there in your city. It has no value anymore.

And though the priest continued until Titus broke the city to pieces forty years later though the priest continued to worship sprinkle their blood and kill their sacrifices God was not in it. For God had established a new mercy seat out there on the hilltop of Calvary. That's the meeting place between men and God today.

And if you and I are to meet God we cannot do it on the basis of the old ritualism. We must come and meet God across the mercy seat of the living Son of God who gave himself for us. That's the great truth.

And the reason I bring this in my friends is the fact that the Lord Jesus had stated this before he ever died. He stood in the temple the latter part of the 24th chapter of Matthew spoke to the Pharisees and he said Your house shall be left unto you desolate. As if to say you can carry on all the sacrifices and all the religion you want to after this but it's a dead farm and you have nothing but a shell left.

I will be crucified out here on a hilltop and that will be the center of the new family of God. That will be the new mercy seat. That will be the place where men and women shall meet their God and no place else.

You see the view of that day was brought to a sharp conflict and a very sharp alternative he could either choose to stay with the old religion or he must choose to take Christ. There was no middle ground. There is no middle ground today my friends.

None whatever. Now going on a little bit further may I point out that the dispensations themselves proclaim that Christ rejection is costly business. Now someone may say well but you cannot claim that it was actually Christ rejection in the dispensations before the cross.

Well I'm not going to be finicky about terms. It was God rejection for there was a revelation of God in every single one of these dispensations and men and women turned their back upon it. For instance the first dispensation which we call the dispensation of innocency finds Adam and Eve sinning against God and the judgment being expulsion from the garden.

We come to the next one the antediluvian which turned away from God. The record is in the sixth chapter of Genesis God was not in all their thoughts. God saw that their imagination was only evil continually.

They were lawless. They were God forgetful. God said yet 120 years and it will be through.

The judgment will fall and it did. And the flood came. And then we have the postdiluvian dispensation during which time God began the Hebrew race under Abraham.

And the Hebrew race continued for a time ended up down in Egypt. There in the slavery of that awful place the judgment came upon that nation young in its days because they were not walking in the ways of God. Then came the law during Israel and pardon me I should have brought in this fact that it was the Abrahamic dispensation that ended in the oppression in Egypt.

It was the postdiluvian that ended in the dispersion of tongues where God came down to scatter them. Then we go on to the law which was a long dispensation. The people said the will of the Lord as it's revealed at Sinai we'll be glad to do it but they never did.

They sinned against God. They turned to idols. And the result of that was the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of Israel for the thousands of years since.

We are living in the day of grace. My friends there will come judgment upon this day as well. It will come in the form of a great tribulation.

And even the kingdom age the seventh one will end with a judgment when Satan shall be let loose for a little while and the battle shall be centered in Gog and Magog. You know that God is beginning a new octave in the millennial kingdom or in the eternal kingdom as it were and there, there will be no judgment. So we've seen how in all of these dispensations there is this judgment aspect as long as sin is in the world.

Now I would like to carry you a bit further tonight and point out some intrinsic elements in a judgment situation. And by that I mean simply this. We can take any one of these ages and analyze them.

And we can realize when that particular age is becoming ripe for a judgment because of its rejection of the basic revelation of God to it. Now will you notice that these were present in these various dispensations. First of all basic to a judgment situation is the changing concept of God.

As the dispensation wears on in every single one of them there comes a time when there is an overemphasis on the patience and the love of God and the God of judgment is ruled out. But what about our own age in that respect? That's exactly right. We are living in that hour now.

By and large the theology of our world at the present moment has very little use for a God of judgment. For a God who judges unrighteousness. For a God who judges individuals or nations.

And yet the one great teaching of the scriptures regarding retribution is this. That God is a consuming fact. And that God is a God of judgment when men fail to keep their hearts open for his grace and his dealings in grace.

Now let us remember that it makes a lot of difference what a man believes. There are some who say well religion after all is not a matter of theology. We might go along with that to a certain extent.

So much is to admit that real heart religion is first of all a matter of divine life from God before it's orthodoxy. There is an orthodoxy apart from life, we know that. But on the other hand let's remember that there is in life a triangle.

First of all you have the thing a man believes or his theology. Then you have the experience of that and then you have the expression of it. And every one of our lives is in this triangle.

I believe therefore I experience something and therefore I express something. And if I do not believe in a God of judgment I shall never know any real fear of God and I shall therefore not express any concern about what will happen to men and women. In fact let me put it this way.

The entire missionary program of the church is built around the concept that the heathen world is desperately lost. And if we do not have such a concept we cut the nerve of missions and our expression of concern for those without Christ will be an anemic expression at the best. God is the God of judgment.

Then secondly man becomes concerned with his own glory instead of the glory of God. At the tower of Babel men said let us build a great tower that may reach to heaven in order to make us a name. Now I do not share the conviction that their main purpose was to get up to heaven on a tower.

I rather think they were a little too intelligent for that. But the real thing was this. They were planning to build something so massive so large, so sky-reaching that all succeeding generations would remember their name.

God said let's go down and take a look at it. You know my friends you can't build anything so high but what God has to come down to get a good look at. God has to come down.

A year ago I flew on one of the first jets that left Los Angeles for Chicago. We flew at 29,000 feet. And it's amazing how small everything on the earth is at that particular level.

Why the Grand Canyon looked like a little ditch that had been dug by a little child's sand shovel. Whatever man makes no matter how massive or how great God has to come down to look at it. Kind of humbles us, don't it? Nevertheless, there is this tendency that man begins to deify his own works.

He speaks of his progress his great buildings his wondrous advances. You remember that the king of Babylon according to the book of Daniel stood one night upon his palace and he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? You know what God did with him? The next day he was walking around on all fours like an animal eating grass and sleeping out under the dew at night. That was the judgment of God.

God can do that. The third usual manifestation of man's rejection of God is the fact that he becomes a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God. The lust for his own luxury and entertainment becomes an overpowering obsession with him.

He gives himself to it inordinately. A little more than a year ago I was in Egypt and after having gone a whole night's journey south of Cairo we came to some great ruins the ruins of Karnak and Luxor. And there at Karnak is a great banquet hall that was built four thousand years before Christ.

It's still massive with great long halls of pillars. And our guide told us this is the banquet hall of the great pharaohs of Egypt. It was not all finished at one time.

It was built over a period of several thousand years. Then he went on to point out the pictures and the inscriptions. If you've been there, my friend you remember the decorations very well.

And as I stood in that great banquet hall I could not help but think of all the great historic names of an era long since buried who had walked in and out of that great banqueting hall. What argues of eating and drinking and bodily satisfaction had been perpetrated within the columns of that building. Why did we walk through those ruins? Because God let his judgment come upon ancient Egypt in all her glory.

She had done exactly what I mentioned right here. She had first of all overthrown the knowledge of the true God. She had become completely blinded to the glory of God because of the glory that had been manufactured by man.

Then they had given themselves to pleasure rather than to being lovers of God. But we have the same thing today. Our own nightclub and theater and TV business our inordinate drinking of liquor and using of tobacco.

All of it goes to prove that America today has become a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. The amazing thing is that all of this is happening at a time when religion as such has taken a tremendous upsurge. And yet at the same time we are spending 50 times as much for entertainment in America today

as all the churches spend for the work of Jesus Christ in one year.

That's the kind of a civilization we are living in. We are living for one world only. For luxury, for fun, diversion.

Anything pleasant to desire is right. Whether it be a car, another man's wife or money. The question no longer is whether it's a moral thing to acquire these things.

The question is how do you get them without getting caught. That's the way America is living today. Now you've heard people say all the churches are always begging for money.

Let me ask you a question my friend. What do you get in a tavern or a theater or a boxing arena that you don't pay for? And perhaps it will silence you when I reiterate once again that for entertainment in America today the American public is paying out 50 times as much every year as the church takes in to run its business who is asking for the money. Let me say something else that I trust will reach your heart.

We have a great many people today who think they are conversant. They've gotten weary of the world in which they live but they are still at heart seeking entertainment and so they want a little cleaner entertainment and they seek religious entertainment instead of fleshly entertainment and they come to the church and in many places the church gives them instead of the fleshly and unclean entertainment that the world offers the church gives them something that appeals on a much higher level and they claim conversion. I wonder how much of it is really genuine.

Now certainly the church ought to be a place where there is a bright and joyous and happy atmosphere, of course. But don't for a minute let the church think that it can compete with the world in this sphere. We have something the world can never give to anyone.

We have the gospel. And the amazing thing about the gospel is that for more than 19 centuries we have been telling this story that is in this book over and over and over tens of thousands of times and it still is the only thing that will heal a sin sick heart. There's nothing else that will do it.

Here in America we may have become surfeited with preaching but don't forget that there are tribes in New Guinea and Laos and Cambodia and the Amazon who have never heard it. And to them it is like music on their ears. And over in Russia the people do not send in requests to the deacons that the services be curtailed and made shorter.

It's only in America we do that. I talked to a dear friend not long ago who was in Moscow who sat through one of those services. He said there were four sermons that day all in one service, you know.

And there were six special numbers by the choir and periods of prayer in between all in one service. Now if we did that in America the whole crowd would walk out on us. But the time may come when we'll be awfully happy to sit through a five hour service because there won't be any other like it around for a good piece.

Let's go on a little bit further. We've dealt with three characteristics of a judgment situation. The fourth one is the complete relaxing of moral standards.

And this I would say is probably the crowning element in this situation. This indicates more than anything else that judgment hangs over our heads. It's always a forerunner of judgment.

Don't forget friends that we in our country have seen some fearful things lately. All I need to do is to remind you of what you've already read. The police scandal in Chicago.

The quiz shows on the radio. The payola. To keep the disc jockeys playing certain tunes until the public acclaimed them the number one tunes.

And the only reason they did was because they were being paid fancy sums to keep them playing. This breakdown of integrity in America. The awful stench from within the labor unions.

And last but not least the fearful consumption of alcoholic beverages and the moral laxity in the realm of sexual morals. These things are ruining our nation. And Gibbon when he writes about the rise and fall of the Roman Empire gives these situations in ancient Rome so graphically that you would think he was writing about the 20th century and America.

These are the things that spell judgment. We have for instance pornography in literature. The borderline pornography in advertising.

The newsstands loaded with material that has only one purpose. That is to make the reader aware of the slime and the filth that men can revert to when there is no thought of God in his heart. With of course the idea of exciting every reader to lower depths of morality or immorality I should say than he has ever known before.

And the last facet of this whole situation is the rejection of God's message and the ignoring of the prophets of God. That was true in the dispensation of flood. It was true in Israel.

Jesus said which one of the prophets did you not kill in Jerusalem? Which one of them? They all suffered the same fate. It says that in the latter days men shall heap unto themselves teachers having itching ears. You know as well as I do that those dear souls who still believe in the utter supremacy and authority of the word of God are in the minority in our generation.

There is no question about it. Now then, in closing shall we ask ourselves what happens then when a situation like this is created? Does judgment come at once? No, not always. God does not come with earthquake or fire or atomic bomb.

There is a slow moral judgment that begins to work within the body of humanity even before any outward judgment comes or before a civilization tumbles into decay. Let's look at that for a moment. The first thing that we notice is that there is a restraining grace that is removed.

When a generation cannot be rescued when a generation decides to be its own God God says, all right I have been trying to hold the reins now they are yours. You can do the driving. That's tragic.

That's fearful. Oh, my friends, how we ought to pray God that somehow in the primary election as well as the election next fall that somehow God doesn't throw the reins over to us but that he keeps men in office or puts men into office who will somehow at least nominally recognize that unless God is the God of our nation there is no hope for us. For when God turns the driving over to us we are lost.

Furthermore, darkness displaces light. The sun goes down slowly. The twilight zone comes wherein men become confused and the faculty for the grasping of truth is gone.

Now remember that unless there is the illumination of the Spirit upon revelation revelation will benefit us not at all. The word of God tells us that concerning Israel when Moses is read there is a veil over their face. Are the writings of Moses revelation? Of course they are.

Did they penetrate into the heart of Israel and produce regeneration and a divine reaction? No. It says when the revelation was read the veil was upon their faces. So God always couples revelation with illumination as long as his Spirit is at work.

But when men and women are seeking only their own wisdom and reject the wisdom that is divine God hangs the veil over their faces. Revelation may continue to be read but the spirit of illumination is gone. God has silently and slowly withdrawn it.

Truth, in order to become operative in the human heart must be grasped by the faculty of faith. And faith is only operative in that honest and humble heart that is ready for surrender to the Saviorhood and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Only in such a heart is God operative.

Well, there's much more that one could say but let's close with this word. There is death to every divine aspect of life. God is not in all their thoughts that comes in the latter course of every dispensation that ends in judgment.

They all do. There again we see the inevitable working of the law of sowing and reaping. He that soweth to his flesh whether he be an individual or a nation or a generation he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

And our day and age is reaping frustration and emptiness and futility. And the further along they go without taking God into that transforming experience that revolutionizes life the more futility and emptiness there is. And in all of this the infinite patience of God is holding the more cataclysmic aspects of judgment in abeyance.

Now let's get down to the individual in the closing moment. My friend everything is made up of individuals. It is what I do as an individual that decides what the collective effect is going to be.

It is what we as men and women do in our reaction to the materialism of our day and in relation to the God-forgetfulness of this hour that determines the collective result. How about it my friend? What are you doing? Let us never forget that God calls all men to salvation where the gospel is being heard. He calls men through his word.

But salvation opportunities unless they are used eventually come to an end. And the soul is not benefited. In fact its condemnation becomes the greater when men refuse to turn to God.

And the soul darkens. And the Lord himself spoke of that hour when he said if the light that is in them be turned to darkness how great is that darkness. There came an hour in that dispensation before the flood when men's laughing ceased when every face was suddenly became suddenly serious.

Before that it had all been a joke. This strange fanatic Noah claims he's heard from God. He's building a boat up there in the desert.

How in the world does he think he's going to get it out to the ocean? Believe me he's not going to get up to pull that old scow down to some place where he can get water on it. And I can imagine that for many,

many years there was no man who was so greatly the butt of every jive and jeer as was Noah. For it was a fanatical thing to build a boat of that size on dry land unless you were dead sure that God had told you to do it.

And he was. God had not only told him but he was in communion with God about the thing all the time. But they did not listen.

And then one day it began to rain after God had shut him in. And the fountains of the deep began to break up. And the water began to rise and to begin with.

I suppose men thought they better stick to their guns and still joke about it a little bit. But it's no joking matter. We've got a flood down in Rockford today which will reach its crest tomorrow which has left several thousands of people homeless.

But when it begins to go above the houses and cover the hills and reach to the top of the mountains then men become serious. But it's too late. Tonight my friend let me point out to you that the great event that will close this dispensation is something the world has never seen before.

The flood was a slow thing. The waters rose slowly and men died slowly as they went to the tops of the highest mountains. But the thing that's going to happen next in this generation is something that will happen in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.

Without a moment's warning millions will disappear. The people that you thought were fanatic. The people that you thought took their religion a little bit too seriously.

The people who maintain their separation from the low and fleshly things of this world. Suddenly the world will wake up one morning to find they're gone. How are we going to explain this strange phenomenon? But it will happen.

You cannot read the Bible and get away from that my friend. You cannot spiritualize the great truth that Jesus spoke when he said, ye men of Galilee why stand ye looking up into heaven? This same Jesus whom ye see going into heaven shall so come again in like manner as ye have seen him go. He shall come again in like manner.

You cannot spiritualize that away. I want to ask you very seriously tonight my friend. Are you going to be a victim of that dread day when the millions that constitute the true church of the living God shall have been snatched away and you will be left? That will make a pretty serious morning.

Men will cry unto God in that hour when they have not done so before. It's costly to reject Jesus Christ. It is eternally costly.

Shall we pray?

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