

## DESPISED AND REJECTED

Two months ago, Forbes released its list of ‘The World’s 10 Highest-Paid Entertainers.’ Altogether, they last year earned one-billion three-hundred million dollars. They are Genesis; Sting; Tyler Perry, Trey Parker and Matt Stone; James L. Brooks and Matt Groening; Brad Pitt; The Rolling Stones; James Cameron; Taylor Swift; and someone who goes by the name *Bad Bunny*. If income is an indicator of popularity, then these are the most popular entertainers in the world. Only Tyler Perry is a Christian; the rest are reprobates. Trey Parker is one of the worst. He said in an interview, “All the religions are super funny to me... The story of Jesus makes no sense to me. God sent His only Son. Why could God only have one son and why would He have to die? It's just bad writing, really. And it's really terrible in about the second act.” So says one of the wealthiest, and most popular entertainers in the world. Fifty seven years ago, John Lennon, a member of the popular musical group ‘the Beatles,’ said:

Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I'm right and I'll be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first – rock 'n' roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me

Six years ago, Forbes published an essay which began with the following words: “I know this is painful. I too believed in its mythology and romance, its subversion and individualism, its ability to save. But rock 'n' roll is dead.” (Forbes, March 20, 2017) Jesus was in His lifetime very unpopular with some, He was so unpopular in fact, that crowds of people demanded His crucifixion. Yet, Jesus would prove to be the most popular person ever to live because He is the greatest person ever to live.

In the days of the divided monarchy of Israel, the people rebelled against God. Isaiah the prophet prophesied that God would punish them for their sins. Yet, Isaiah also prophesied that God, ever merciful, would provide an atonement for those that would repent of their sins. God would send into the world a servant, one who would serve both God and man. He would serve God by obeying Him, even obeying God’s command to die. He would serve men by living for them, even giving His life for them. He would not be tall and handsome, as were King Saul, and King David. There would be nothing about His appearance that would draw people to Him. Yet, people would not be indifferent toward Him. They would despise Him. They would mistreat Him, and finally kill Him, and they would do so because He was good, and they were evil. He would die an ignominious death, the death of a lawbreaker, a criminal, and so men would consider Him to be rejected, not only by men, but also by God. Yet, His death would be for the people. He would suffer for their sins. He would be a sacrificial lamb to atone for the sins of the people, and He would be it gladly. His inglorious death would bring Him great glory. He would redeem many. The Lord would be pleased with Him, and many would be His followers. Because of His great humility and sacrifice, God would exalt Him over all. Nations would come to believe in Him, and rulers of nations would humbly listen to His wisdom.

Jesus is the Servant about whom Isaiah the prophet prophesied, the Servant that God said he would send into the world to redeem it. Jesus was unpopular because He is the Son of God, and God is unpopular because people love their sin. Jesus would have some popularity among the people, because He met their material needs, as when He fed the four-thousand. (John 6:26), and because He met their spiritual needs. The religious leaders hated Him because He exposed their hypocrisy, and because they envied Him, because people were leaving them to follow Him. (John 12:19)

The religious leaders of Israel arrested Jesus, and, finding Him guilty of blasphemy because He said He is the Son of God, they turned Him over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for execution. Pilate, after examining Jesus, concluded that He was innocent, and offered to the Jews to let Jesus go, but they would not be satisfied unless Jesus were put to death. So, Pilate, in order to placate the Jews, commanded his soldiers to scourge Jesus. The soldiers did scourge Him, and afterward tormented Him. They made a crown of thorns and pressed it upon Jesus's head. They placed a purple robe on Him, and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and they struck Him in the face. Pilate again offered to release Jesus, but the Jews demanded that He crucify Jesus. So, as a matter of political expediency, Pilate gave the order for crucifixion. The soldiers nailed Jesus's hands and feet to the cross, and hoisted Him up, and there, on that cross, Jesus suffered agony until He died.

In the law of Moses, God commanded His people to offer animal sacrifices for their sins. Animal sacrifices cannot take away men's sins; the sins of men require the death of men, and so the animal sacrifices were provisional. In eternity past, the Son of God agreed with His Father that He should become a man so that He might die as a man, and for men. When He came into the world, men despised Him, and rejected Him, but His Father in heaven loved Him, and accepted His atoning sacrifice. Men despised and rejected Him, but their despite and rejection became the ground of God's love and acceptance of men. Moreover, God did not allow His beloved Son to remain in shame and death. Because of Jesus's great humility and love, because of His obedience and sacrifice, God raised Him from the dead, thereby vindicating Him, proving to the world that Jesus is the Son of God, and the greatest man ever to live. There will always be some who despise Jesus, but, over time, more and more will come to adore Him, until the entire world will praise His name.

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.