

ELIMINATING BARRIERS

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.” —GALATIANS 3:28

The inclusion of women in the bloodline of Christ, which Matthew gives, eliminates three primary barriers. Socially, there existed a huge Jewish/Gentile barrier. The Jews had set themselves apart from the rest of the world. You were either Jew or Gentile, but the fact that three of the five mothers listed in Matthew’s genealogy were Gentiles sends a message that in the Kingdom of Christ, regardless of status, Jew and Gentile stand together on common ground.

In Jewish culture, shepherds were considered at the bottom rung of society, yet they were the first to be informed of the birth of the Messiah. The appearance of the angel, Gabriel, announcing the birth of Christ, followed by the grand display of angelic choirs was for the benefit of these poor shepherds. At the other end of the spectrum were the wise men, the Magi from Persia who were Gentiles. When they saw the baby Jesus, they bowed down, worshipped Him and presented their gifts. In the Kingdom of Christ, both Jew and Gentile, shepherds and wise men come together, breaking down social barriers.

There is also a sexist barrier Jesus eliminates. Sexism is prejudice which leads to discrimination on the grounds of gender, especially against women. It was to Mary God first announced the Messiah was at hand, and it was to Mary Magdalene, Christ first revealed Himself after His resurrection. In Jewish law, the witness of a woman was not permissible in court, but it was to women God gave the privilege of being a first witness to Christ both before He was born and after His resurrection.

Our identity is not defined by male or female, but by our humanity. Thirdly, sin barriers are broken down. Though different sins have different consequences, the Gospel wraps them all together. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Jesus said, “For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it” (John 12:47). When we judge the world, we create barriers. Jesus was born into this world so that He might offer Himself from that position of humanity as the only sinless One who could take upon Himself the sin of the world. The ultimate identification He made with humanity was when He hung on the cross and identified fully with every sin ever committed. He willingly took responsibility for it all, eliminating every barrier, and brought about a common ground of reconciliation between God and all people.

PRAYER: Dear Father, I pray that everyone will meet Jesus at the foot of the cross. Thank You, Lord, for having eliminated every barrier to make that possible.

TO REFLECT UPON: How has Christ eliminating all barriers helped me in my witness to others?