

Confusion



On Palm Sunday we celebrate the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. People lined the road on which He traveled and even threw their clothing down for Jesus to travel on. Five days later those same people who were yelling Hosanna, were now shouting for Jesus's execution. What happened here? Were these people confused? When were they confused? Was it that Sunday or was it Friday?

Jesus said He had to die, but it's hard for me to believe that the people who followed Him in droves and praised His many miraculous healings would suddenly turn on Him and proclaim their passion for His execution. However, there may be an explanation.

The dynamics around this whole event are complex and confounding. When Jesus came down the hill into Jerusalem the horde of people that converged around Him were really only looking for a candidate to free them from the oppression of the Romans and they were certain that Jesus would qualify. Over the course of the next few days, Jesus's conduct indicated His abdication of that offer, which eliminated the support from the population. The clergy hated Jesus because He threatened their position of control over the population, their stature and their wealth. Once the clergy felt the citizenry was more in their control, they were more confident to take action.

Jesus compelled the clergy to take action at a time when they would have preferred not to. Jesus determined that the pageantry of His death should far exceed that pageantry of His "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem. While none of the events of that Thursday night and Friday morning fell within the legal constraints of Hebrew Law, none the less more people witnessed the trip Jesus made down the Via Dolorosa and His execution than were present five days previously.

The turmoil was not confined to the populace. Even the disciples were in turmoil over what Jesus had been saying. Peter told Him that He must be out of His mind to entertain thoughts of dying at this point in His career as a "Messiah" and even though Jesus rebuked him he never lost those concepts and when Jesus announced in all four gospels that every disciple would abandon Him, Peter announced that he would die before that would happen. By this time the disciples believed that if Jesus did go to Jerusalem His life was in jeopardy, so when He announced that He was going to Bethany (about 2 miles from Jerusalem) because He had to "Wake Lazarus Up" Thomas declared that he was ready to go even if it meant dying.

Now it's our turn to be confused! After Jesus told the disciples what would soon happen to the Temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Jesus about when these "End Times" would occur and His response is recorded in every Synoptic Gospel but I don't think that they understood that His depiction was that of a time prior to when He would return to rule.

His response should be very confusing to all who read it! He said don't be deceived by those who profess great knowledge or even to be "The Christ". How do you do that? The Bereans were more noble and listened to Paul's preaching but examined the Scriptures daily for the "Truth". That sounds like reading your favorite passages or once a week Bible study won't cut it or you will be one of those many who are "Lead Astray". **Important:** Jesus was addressing the disciples; our dilemma is that we are barraged by multiple theologies (not necessarily Religions in the strictest sense) that would like to extricate any and all Christian belief from your mind and heart. Also, Idols of Politics, Economy and Technology have the ability to lead you astray.

He said, "you will hear of wars and rumors of war but don't be alarmed, they must happen". He didn't say why! Are you alarmed? I'll bet you are! Maybe not by the "Wars" but by the second phase, Jesus gets to later, that is the "Famines and Earthquakes" (curiously He never mentions Plagues, Volcanos or Climate Change). These are alarming events and if you take seriously the news feeds, you **will be** alarmed. Many are so alarmed that the most popular question is, "why would a "Loving God" expose humanity to

these devastating forces?” and for the most part it’s impossible to come up with an answer that is acceptable to all.

The “Kicker” comes when Jesus says, *“they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake”*. We live in a “Free” country, as White Americans we have never known Tribulation (If you ask the population of color, you’ll get a different answer) never the less Religious Persecution is covered in the Constitution. Outside the US of A, Christians are Persecuted and Martyred on a daily basis. Approximately 1,000 + or – Christians are martyred annually but about 2.3 Billion Christians live in dangerous neighborhoods, in poverty, are cultural minorities and are ethnic and linguistically different.

Jesus’ expectations are that there will be many Apostate Christian, False Prophets leading others astray, Lawlessness where hearts will grow cold and love will decline. Optimistically, there will be those who endure to the end of these times and they will be the ones who proclaim this “Gospel of the Kingdom” throughout the whole world. **Be Reminded:** the time Jesus is describing would begin almost immediately after His ascension and would not depart until His return, so we are the ones who need to endure what ever part of this narrative we are presented during our lives and through that perseverance disseminate that “Gospel of the Kingdom” to those who are struggling to keep going.

So, what’s the bottom line! Jesus pointed out, *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* Solomon said, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”* Moses said, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as an adornment between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

That set of instructions is “Challenging”, wouldn’t you say? We have an advantage over those who first heard those messages and that is the presence of the Holy Spirit but you have to “Listen to Him” and you have to “Act on His Instructions” in order to be effective. On top of the Holy Spirit, we have the Bible but you have to “Open It Up”, read every page not just the ones you like, pray for understanding and make every effort to love as Jesus loved even if you’re not perfect.