

EASTER

Passover (Palm Sunday) 33 A.D.

Discussion

As we are reminded of the events and activities of the day when Christ entered Jerusalem, we see a world of violence and great unrest. Within the "church", the organized followers of Judaism, God's chosen people, are being led by corrupt religious leaders of the day. These leaders are distorting the truth to suit their own agendas, currying favor with the Roman government, accepting money for allowing abominable things to occur inside the Temple, actively participating in the crooked practices of the money exchangers, merchants and tax collectors; while denying the truth of God's Holy Word and His specific instructions to them. They were actively misleading the very people that God had placed in their responsibility, while covertly plotting to kill — actually murder — Christ, a teacher, a rabbi; one of their own.

Outside the Temple walls, violence erupts, as the religious zealots decide to take the law into their own hands. Activists, full of righteous indignation and political agendas that oppose the status quo, regularly incite acts of violence in an attempt to unseat the current leadership and intimidate all who come to worship. Add to this the Roman Guard, imposing Roman rule on the citizens of Jerusalem, with no more concern for the significance of Christ's arrival than anyone else in the packed streets of the city. Accustomed to the use of force, brutal force if need be, they patrol the streets to suppress the zealots and any who will call for a new king and freedom from Roman bondage.

On this Passover, in excess of 500,000 people come into the city for the required sacrifices and Temple activities — yet days later, only 500 people will admit to having seen the risen Christ. During the week of Passover, upwards of 100,000 lambs are slaughtered; and yet the Lamb Of God will be the only real and meaningful sacrifice in a city and country far from God.

Many had heard of Jesus' great miracles and of his raising of Lazarus from the dead. The crowds press forward on the Sunday before Passover, as Christ enters the city riding on a donkey. Curious but unbelieving, most go about their Passover rituals with little notice of Christ except when he teaches in the Temple during the week. Little do they realize that behind the crowded streets and the crooked money changers and the market place full of merchants using corrupted weights for measure and excessive prices, is a group of religious leaders bent on murdering Christ. Yet in love and grace and great humility, Jesus enters the city to offer himself to save them and us from God's wrath and eternal punishment.

As we consider those days, we should also reflect on our day. Are we facing those same challenges? Has Christ become irrelevant? What is happening with the leadership of His Church? Is the Church today remaining true to the Word of God, or has compromise entered in? Is there corruption, service for money and personal gain, or political agendas? Where is the vision and the focus of the Church today as we prepare to celebrate His death and resurrection? What is the world like today compared to then? Has mankind really changed? Do we not continue to see injustices, greed, malfeasance in office, and corruption at every level of society? Don't we need Jesus today more than ever? I submit that our celebration of Christ's resurrection this year should reflect our understanding of the incalculable value of His sacrifice and the foundation of the true church.

In a world where injustice, greed, corruption, and lack of moral values exist, we need Christ more than ever. He Is our Rock and our Foundation; and today we need to cling to that rock and rescue the lost. They are dying around us in greater numbers than ever before, misled by compromise and false teachings within the "Church", and surrounded by a godless society which does not see the relevance of, or need for, a "savior".

One way to celebrate His resurrection is to revisit the story of the resurrected Christ as he walked along the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). As one of the great proofs of His resurrection, we can take tremendous joy in the story and look forward one day to walking with Him ourselves in our resurrected body — all because of His great sacrifice for us even before the world was created.

Praise God for the Good News! Jesus has risen from the dead; and we are saved by His blood!

Happy Easter everyone

Wes