

I Don't Think You Understand Me

Occasionally, even with ample preparation and care dedicated to an event, a misunderstanding takes place. Christ's return to Jerusalem just prior to his crucifixion ranks as one of history's prime examples. The Lord took great care to follow the prophecies of Zechariah and still humanity ran with the concept in the opposite direction.

In the First Book of Maccabees (The Apocrypha) 13:51 the people of Jerusalem celebrated a decisive but costly victory, in part by, waving Palm branches before those who set them free. Invading forces had defiled the Jewish Temple by erecting a statue of Zeus with in as part of an attempt to Hellenize Jewish culture. Those who refused to follow pagan customs were arrested and executed. Mothers who circumcised their male children were put to death along with their child. A Jewish priest, Mattathias, and his family resisted the invading regime's orders.

The Greco-Macedonian forces struck first by slaughtering hundreds of Mattathian followers at their isolated desert encampment. Mattathias and his sons survived to organize the resistance movement. They learned well from their defeat, as they no longer utilized the traditional full armed frontal assault. Mattathias and particularly his son, Judah Maccabees pioneered modern guerilla warfare tactics. Eventually, via surprise raids on enemy camps and literal cut-throat, blood-flowing-in-the-streets campaigns, thousands of occupying foreigners were eradicated and the temple regained, repaired, cleansed, and reconsecrated. This episode in Jewish history took place less than two hundred years before Jesus entered Jerusalem. The annual feast of Hanukkah celebrates the Maccabees military victory.

There was no mistaking the type of leader the people were expecting Christ to be. *(The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."* John 12:12-15, New International Version)

The prophecy from Zechariah that Christ was bringing to pass provided a stark contrast to the victorious war lord entering the gates of Jerusalem astride a masterful battle steed. Jesus chose to ride a young donkey barely able to obtain forward motion under Christ's weight. *(Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.* Zechariah 9:9-11, New International Version.

The fact that the Jewish nation was once again occupied by an invading foreign army less the two centuries after the Maccabean victory apparently escaped the crowd's consciousness that day in Jerusalem. Christ was trying to communicate that, through His sacrifice; victory would be spiritually complete and therefore, permanent. A King achieving victory and peace through His death rather than a sweeping military victory was too much to grasp, even though every Jewish child of the time could quote Zechariah.

How often do we misunderstand what God is doing in our nation, community, church, or family? Man's best results are temporal even when all "goes according to plan". God's most misunderstood plan resulted in a permanent end to injustice and evil. The only reason we do not see this victory is because we do not trust enough to fully walk in it. Simply, we as Christians must follow God rather than our own understanding. Trusting in the Lord is essential. Full comprehension is optional.

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