

When Jesus Makes You Angry

There is one aspect of the passion week—the week between Jesus’s triumphal entry and His arrest—that has always intrigued me. The Gospels recount many wonderful events during this week, but I’ve always been amazed that the crowds’ enthusiasm on Sunday rivaled the excitement of Swifties at a Taylor Swift concert. And yet just a few days later, the Jews were screaming for Jesus’s death.

Whoa! That escalated quickly. These people didn’t simply change their opinion about Jesus. They were infuriated. They have morphed from “glad He had come” to “mad He was here.”

What changed? They felt cheated. Jesus had all the markings of the kind of Messiah they wanted and expected. He didn’t cater to the religious bigwigs; He interacted with the everyday common folk. And His miracles met legitimate needs.

Jesus would’ve been a great political candidate in today’s culture. He interacted with people from all walks of life. He didn’t seem to cater to special interest groups. He had a universal health plan that was more than amazing—it was miraculous. And what He could do with a few fish and bread would eliminate poverty. Who wouldn’t vote for this guy?

That’s how the people saw Jesus. With all that Jesus offered the Jewish people, they were most interested in a political messiah. In their minds, their religious lives were already taken care of. They were good with God because they had the law and the temple. What they needed was someone to drive out those pesky Romans. And now here was Jesus coming into Jerusalem in a very bold way: riding on the colt of a donkey. When kings conquered, they rode into the vanquished city on a horse, an animal of power. The king was showing he had power. But a donkey? Jesus was displaying an attitude of humility rather than prideful victory.

OK, so Jesus was coming in a different manner, but His choice of riding in still spoke of a king, albeit a humble one. Surely such an entry meant He was going to set up His kingdom now—and the only way He could set up His kingdom was to remove the ones in power. Right?

That’s not what Jesus did, and that’s why the people may have felt duped. The religious leaders definitely wanted Jesus out of the picture, so they worked the crowd into a frenzied mob. I don’t think that was hard to do because Jesus wasn’t delivering on what the crowd fully expected a messiah to do. The religious leaders played off their frustration.

And five days, they had turned from shouts of delight to shouts of death.

God does so many wonderful things for us, and it’s easy for us to be thankful for His work in our lives. But if we’re honest, we also get frustrated when God doesn’t do what we expected Him to do. I’ve had conversations with people who got downright mad at God when He didn’t do what they assumed He would do. We can move as quickly from reverence to rage as the Jews in Jerusalem did.

What the crowd in Jerusalem failed to see was the big picture. Jesus had a greater end in mind than just being a physical Messiah. His end game was their deliverance and victory over a greater oppressor: their own sin. For those who trusted Jesus as the Messiah He truly was, they experienced a victory far greater than political freedom.

When God doesn’t do for you like you think He should, trust Him anyway. He has something bigger in mind. In fact, if God doesn’t meet your need the way you wanted or expected, thank Him. He’s got something better in store for you.