

Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ, Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

Jesus and Politics

We live in troubled times. It has probably always seemed that way to God's people. There is even a temptation to say that these are the worst of times. This is probably not true, but the feeling may persist.

There is an urgency about our times that often leaves us wondering if there is not something more we should be doing. The signs of destruction and anger and hatred all around us seem to cry out for quick and decisive action (if we only could figure out what to do). There must be some way to halt our incredible plunge into ruin as a nation and as a people.

What can we learn from Jesus?

There is no better place to begin than with the life and teachings of Jesus. He was an example sent from God to enlighten us on how to live in this world. The times that he lived in were troubled times as well. He came into a world that was governed by a wicked and corrupt regime in Rome. Puppet governors served the Roman Caesar in the land of Israel, men such as Herod and Pilate. Those who were nominally Jewish held positions under Caesar and exercised their tyranny over the people. Israel seethed with unrest and rebellion. One of the apostles had belonged to the party called the "Zealots" noted for their rabid opposition to Rome.

What can we learn from Jesus about how to deal with ungodliness and evil in society and corruption in the government? It is to the gospels that we must go for an answer. Further clarification can be found in the writings of Jesus' apostles as they carried his teachings further and further abroad into Roman and Greek society.

What was Jesus' plan?

First of all, Jesus did not rush into his work. He was thirty before he left the carpenter shop to begin his ministry. Under the Law of Moses a priest could not begin his service to God until the age of thirty. Jesus waited.

He began his ministry in a decisive act. According to God's plan he presented himself before John to be baptized. God declared from heaven that this was his beloved Son. From the waters of baptism Jesus arose to set forth on his task to save the world. He said simply, "I am come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There were two main thrusts to the efforts of Jesus. One was to select a core group to train and prepare to carry on his ministry after his death. As people began to flock to hear his message, he selected from them 12 men whom he appointed as his apostles. They were to spend the next three years in intimate contact with Jesus. Except for brief tours when Jesus sent them out alone, they were with him up to his death on the cross.

The second thrust of Jesus was to spend his time in preaching and teaching God's message whenever and wherever he might find an audience. Sometimes his audience consisted of only a single person. There were private conversations with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus and the Samaritan woman from Sychar among others. At other times his audience numbered in the thousands. Sometimes the crowds seemed to hang on his every word. At other times his words were treated with contempt and the crowds melted away.

Jesus sought to change the course of events.

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Manchester
Church of Christ

Meeting at
595 Tolland Turnpike

Sun Bible Classes—9 AM
Sun Worship—10 AM

Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless

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The message that Jesus preached had to do with individual righteousness. There were no great legal battles that he waged. There were no letter writing campaigns organized. Pilate's palace was not picketed, nor did he advocate the overthrow of the corrupt priests. Jesus sent no messengers to Rome to plead for changes favorable to righteousness.

On the other hand, those in high places were all familiar with what Jesus was doing. They knew the opposition that he held to their lives and their actions. Herod thought at one time that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. He thought that would explain Jesus' power. Herod had personally dispatched John by having him beheaded at the request of his wife, Herodias. (How many evangelists are there today who imitate the Spartan life of John who existed on wild locusts and honey? Or, how many are willing to walk in his footsteps in his stand against evil in high places?)

Jesus did not make friends of those in high places. His friends were to be found among those who did the will of God. James wrote later, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who

chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." Jesus was one who was careful in his choice of friends. He made no distinction among those whom he would teach, but he was careful in his use of the word "friend."

The plan of Jesus for changing the world was simple. He taught plainly. He taught continually. He taught truthfully. He taught sincerely. And he always taught the Word of God. Finally, he offered his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Whether by life or by death, Jesus sought to change the course of events; he sought to change the way people thought and the way they acted.

If we are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, then we will imitate his example. In our lives we will seek to imitate the example of Jesus. We will also strive by every means possible to tell the world what Jesus said and what he did.

God intended that His words be planted in the hearts of men, not in the congressional record, not on signs held up at football games, not on plaques in public places. The word of God in the heart of a man will bring a change in life that will have no regrets.

God's Plan for Making Disciples

There is a simple statement found in the eleventh chapter of Acts: "and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." In the first century all disciples of Jesus were Christians and all Christians were disciples of Jesus. To be one was to be the other.

There also were no unbaptized (unimmersed) disciples of Jesus in the first century. Thus there were no unbaptized Christians. Jesus made this clear in the instructions that he gave after his resurrection. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

Perhaps someone has told you that baptism "is not necessary." Perhaps they would like to take that matter up with Jesus. For Jesus, discipleship involved baptism. The Bible plainly connects being a disciple with being a Christian. You need to be a disciple of Jesus by being baptized.