

LET HIM BE CRUCIFIED

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Lesson: Matthew 27: 1-31

Every year at the time of the Passover great crowds came to Jerusalem to worship the Lord in remembrance of how miraculously He led their ancestors out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land.

But the year our story took place, the Jews were not only worshiping and giving thanks by offering sacrifices at the altar, they were also accusing and crucifying the very God they pretended to worship.

You may wonder how they could be so blind and evil; how they could help but realize what they were doing. They had seen and heard about all the great miracles He had performed, giving the blind back their sight, making the deaf hear and the lame walk, raising the dead and even ruling the wind and the waves. They had listened to His teachings, so full of love and wisdom and they had received Him at the gates of Jerusalem as their king, spreading their garments before Him, and crying: "Hosanna, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 21:9). And yet, now, a few days later, they all turned against Him, shouting again and again: "Let Him be crucified."

How could this possibly happen? It is indeed difficult to understand how anybody could be that blind; but part of the reason is, as we are told in the story, that the chief priests and elders persuaded or swayed the multitude to turn against the Lord.

The chief priests and the elders, and the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes as well, all hated the Lord and wanted to kill Him. They were very learned men who had studied the Word more than anybody else and above all others they should have known who the Lord was, that He was Jehovah Himself come on earth to save mankind. But they did not want to know. They did not study the Word to learn the truth, to find out how they could become better people; but rather so that they could glory in their own learning and impress others. They wanted to rule for their own sake and not to serve the Lord.

The Lord knew all this, of course, for He knows all things, even our inmost thoughts and feelings, and He rebuked and warned these men so that they might see that they were doing wrong; but that only made them fear and hate Him even more.

They were afraid that He might turn the people against them so that they would lose their power, which they loved more than anything else. That is why they persuaded the multitude to demand that the Lord be crucified.

But they could not have swayed the multitude if the people really had loved the Lord the way they ought to. They could do it because all those people were selfish too. They had welcomed and praised the Lord when He entered Jerusalem, welcomed Him as their king; but not as the Lord and Savior of all men. They saw Him as a king who would free them from the Roman yoke and make them the greatest nation in the world, the ruler of all other nations. This was not what the Lord came to do, of course. The Lord is Ruler of the whole universe, both the natural and spiritual worlds, and He came to all nations and peoples on earth, and to establish His heavenly kingdom, and not to help one kingdom on earth conquer all the others.

When the Jews realized this they became disappointed and angry, and could easily be swayed by the chief priests and elders to reject the Lord.

It was a terrible thing to do, to reject, condemn and finally crucify the Lord, and one of our first reactions when we read or listen to the story is that those people must have been very, very evil, and that we could never have done a thing like that. Yet the fact is that sometimes we do things that are almost as bad.

What was it really that the Jews did? They wanted things their way, regardless of what the Lord wanted. They did not want to share Him or anything at all with others. They had made up their minds what they wanted the Lord to do, and when they found out that it was not going to be that way they became angry and rejected Him.

Sometimes that happens to us too. If things don't go our way we get angry and upset. Not that we actually tell the Lord that we reject Him—that is an awful thing—but we may behave in a nasty and cruel way to those who love us, our family and our friends, because they won't do exactly what we want. And the truth is that what we do to our fellow men we also do to the Lord, for He teaches in His Word: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

That is something we must always remember: we cannot truly love the Lord without being patient, kind and considerate to our fellow men, who are the Lord's children exactly as we are ourselves. We cannot hurt them and make them sad, without making the Lord sad too, and then we turn away from Him, because we listen to the evil spirits, the chief priests and elders, instead of the truth He teaches in His Word. *Amen.*