

Why Do The Good People Have To Die?

Friday April 2, Jerusalem – Empire News:

This afternoon, sometime after 3:00 PM, Jesus of Nazareth, an itinerant man of faith called 'King' by some and a 'Blasphemer' by others, breathed his last and said, "Father, into your hands, I commend my Spirit."

His passing brought to a close a three year ministry which began with Jesus' baptism by his cousin John (a.k.a. John the Baptist) in the Jordan River in a remote area of the province of Judea. John, who was hailed universally as a prophet, testified that he saw God's Holy Spirit descend on Jesus at Jesus' own baptism by John. John freely testified that Jesus was God's beloved Son. John predeceased Jesus. He died while in custody in Herod Antipas' prison. Palace officials call John's death a sordid affair.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea 33 years ago. He was predeceased by his father Joseph of Nazareth, a carpenter by trade. Joseph was a direct descendant of an ancient King of Judah named David, who lived some one thousand years ago. King David is linked to a prophecy that one of David's great grandsons would be born in Bethlehem, called the Son of God, would change the world and establish an eternal kingdom whose inhabitants live forever.

Jesus is survived by his mother Mary. Sources close to Mary testify that Jesus was indeed a miraculous child conceived in Mary by the power of God while she was engaged to Joseph, yet she remained a virgin. Roman and Jewish religious authorities vehemently deny the account of the virgin birth of Jesus and call the story preposterous.

Following his baptism, Jesus called twelve disciples, or students, from Galilee and other regions. They traveled with Jesus. Among his disciples were professional fishermen, tax collectors and even a member of a religious/political group known as the Zealots (right-wing Jewish fanatics bent on overthrowing the Roman rule of Judea and Jerusalem by violence). Jesus' disciples were unavailable for comment, as sources close to them confirm they are in hiding from Roman and Jewish authorities.

Jesus was not a zealot. Sources close to him, speaking on condition of anonymity, described him as a peaceful man who encouraged love of God and love of one's neighbor. Jesus included even a sworn enemy in the definition of neighbour. Jesus commanded his followers to pray for their enemies and do good things for them. These sources testified that Jesus performed miracles in public. He made the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk and drove demons out of people. He cured all manner of diseases, fed thousands of men women and children with a lunch made for one teenager, walked on water, and made a storm stop by merely telling it to be quiet. His greatest miracles were raising a girl, a teen-aged boy, and a man named Lazarus, from the dead.

Jesus never married but he upheld marriage. His first known miracle was to change water into wine at a wedding reception. Sources close to Jesus claimed that Jesus performed this miracle in their lives. He transformed them from ordinary people into people who could love their enemies and overcome obstacles which kept them from living their lives to the fullest and living lives for God. Jesus wanted his followers to see his love for them as intense as the feelings a bridegroom has for his bride. He wanted his followers to see his desire to live with them forever in the desire of a bridegroom to begin a new life with his bride.

Jesus never had a family, yet Jesus loved children. He preached that the kingdom of God included children. He promised that anyone who believed that he was the one and only Son of God is, by reason of that faith, made a child of God and part of God's family.

Sources close to the disciples indicate that Jesus had, in fact, predicted his eventual arrest, trial, conviction, crucifixion and death. He also predicted his resurrection on the third day after his death. Some of Jesus' predictions came true yesterday and today. He was arrested late yesterday (Thursday) evening and tried by Jewish authorities. Legal scholars call Jesus' trial a mockery. It was held in secret and at night. He was convicted and sentenced to death for the religious crime of Blasphemy; specifically, for declaring he was God's Son. Jews could not carry out the death sentence, so they appealed to Rome this Friday morning. Pontius Pilate repeatedly denied their request, as Jesus had done nothing wrong under Roman law that would merit his death. Pilate had Jesus severely beaten to placate the crowd. When this tactic failed, he gave the crowd an opportunity to vote to release Jesus. But the crowd voted to release Barabbas, a convicted killer instead. Pilate finally gave into the desires of the majority and sentenced Jesus to die on the cross. He died sometime after 3:00 PM today.

Before Jesus died, this reporter witnessed some incredible events. In his public trial before Pilate, Jesus confessed that he was a king and the Son of the Jewish God. Jews allege there is just one God and all other gods, including Roman gods are counterfeit. Jesus also confessed that his 'kingdom' was not of this world; it was in another world or spiritual realm. The Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus were particularly cruel. After scourging him, they dressed him up in a purple or royal robe and put a crown of thorns on his head. They further beat and mocked him. When up on the cross, his own people asked him to prove he was king by getting down off the cross. They hissed and booed him mercilessly. Yet Jesus asked God to forgive those who crucified him because 'they didn't know what they were doing'. After Jesus died, this reporter heard the Roman Centurion in charge of the crucifixion say, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" Jesus body was placed in a nearby tomb before sundown. A Roman seal was placed on the stone which sealed his grave and a guard was posted.

All the worst in humanity seems to have assaulted Jesus. Religious authorities, who should have venerated him, reviled him. Beloved disciples betrayed and denied him. The mob he had preached to, and who adored him, turned on him. Roman law, the rule of law that should have protected Jesus, was abandoned because the Empire feared an unruly mob. This reporter believes that the guilt of the friends and foes of Jesus came shining through. We all demonstrated our guilt by either contributing to his death by going along with treachery practiced by the political and religious authority involved, or failing to stand up for him.

The events that have unfolded these past two days were a gross miscarriage of justice. There are many people who deserve to die, like Barabbas, yet he walked away a free man. Jesus, an innocent man, died in his place. Jesus had done nothing to deserve scourging, crucifixion and death. Just think of what Jesus might have accomplished if he had lived another 33 years! Why did this most promising life have to end? What will happen Sunday, the third day after his death? Will there be a resurrection? Or will Jesus prove to be just another deluded prophet? Only time will tell.

Staff Report

Empire News, Jerusalem Bureau

Come hear the rest of the story Sunday April 4 at our Sunrise service at Bear Creek Provincial Park, 8:00 AM, or at Grace Lutheran Church Sunday morning at 10:30 AM. And be sure to look for my Easter Sunday column in the April 4 of the Cap News.

May you enjoy a Blessed Easter!

Pastor Ed Skutshek