

THE PASSION SERIES – THE GOSPEL OF JOHN CHAPTERS 12-21

For the next six weeks or so until Easter we will look at John's account of the final week of Jesus' life. It also coincides with the release of the movie "The Passion of the Christ". John's gospel is profound and I am sure this will be a life-changing series so please tell your friends to subscribe to Eternity-DBS.

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John 12:9-23 Then a great crowd of the Jews learned that He was there. And they did not come for Jesus' sake only, but also that they might see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. (10) But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death also, (11) because many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus because of him. (12) On the next day, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, a great crowd who had come to the Feast (13) took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him. And they cried, Hosanna! "Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord!" (14) And finding an ass colt, Jesus sat on it; as it is written, (15) "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King comes sitting on the foal of an ass." (16) But His disciples did not know these things at the first. But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. (17) Then the crowd witnessed, those who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead. (18) Because of this the crowd also met Him, because they heard that He had done this miracle. (19) Then the Pharisees said among themselves, Do you see how you gain nothing? Behold, the world has gone after Him. (20) And there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the Feast. (21) Then these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we want to see Jesus. (22) Philip came and told Andrew. And again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. (23) And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

THE HOUR HAS COME!

Lazarus has been raised, great crowds follow Jesus, they anoint him with perfume (verses 1-8), wave palm branches and cry Hosanna (v.13) and even the Greeks want to see Jesus. (v.21) This is a brief glorious moment of great fame before the cross. People believe in droves, the official religion of orthodox Pharisaical Judaism is collapsing. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees have been usurped by a prophet from Galilee - and the Messiah "He who comes in the name of the Lord" has arrived.

The old religious order will give way to the new. The corrupt practices of selling doves and paying for priestly offices and the compromised political alignments of the clergy and the devouring of widow's houses – all the cant and hypocrisy – is about to be overthrown. Jesus is the "new broom" of the Holy Spirit and the people know it. The sick are healed, the dead are raised. Good strict rule-keepers receive nothing while penitent sinners are blessed and helped and healed.

All religious systems of salvation are about to be put out of business and replaced by repentance and faith. Jesus is not just changing the rules – He is throwing out the rule-book!

No longer will anyone have to worry about which race they belong to, or whether they are circumcised or whether they have tithed their cumin or sacrificed a sheep. This Passover will end all Passovers.

No longer will there be special days and months and years (Galatians 4:9,10) or Sabbaths and new moons or items that are religiously taboo to taste or touch or handle (Colossians 2:8-23). The priest will no longer control access to God, the temple curtain will be torn in two and any sinner who repents and believes will be made a veritable son of God.

Jesus proved this with Lazarus. Lazarus had been dead for three days and stank and was therefore unclean. He was also unable to do any good works. By the religious canons of the Pharisees - Lazarus' sickness and premature death may also have been interpreted as judgment for sin. Yet he was raised from the dead and given life. The resurrection of Lazarus was quite obviously not due to rule-keeping or to the use of certain religious rituals - but instead was due to grace. The rule-keepers could do no such miracle –but the believers could.

Rule-keepers verses believers, works versus grace. The battle was on, and the believers – those who simply used personal faith – rather than rules or rituals, were winning by miles! (When I say an "end to rules" I do not mean an end to holiness, but rather an end to access to God being based on our ability to keep laws.)

I can imagine the Jews saying "I was sick for years and the priests could do nothing for me except pile me up with rules and obligations but Jesus came along and just asked me to trust Him and it worked!". Everyone could see the obvious. The old was going, the new had come. The Jewish religion was dying, its institutions were corrupt, its ceremonies were of no effect, it could not heal or bless or do any good. The outcasts and the lepers and the tax-collectors were getting more blessing than the scribes! God was working – but not through His system! He had abandoned it and was now working solely through Jesus. And the system knew it!

Even the Greeks had heard of Jesus and could see that He was accessible – that God's blessings could be accessible to them too - not through the Temple or through circumcision, but through Jesus Christ.

When the Greeks asked to see Jesus it meant that God in Christ was now becoming available to the Gentiles. The system crashed to earth, Jewish ownership of God was no more. A universal religion of repentance and faith - without religious rules or rituals, was born. This prompts Jesus to say to the disciples:

John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

This was it, the hour had come to end the old religious system and bring in the new. The time had come to make God accessible to all who believe - and to abolish religious rules and rituals. Judaism was tottering and it was now time to push it over and end it, to allow blessing to flow, and glorify Jesus as the One Way to God through faith.

But a price must be paid. No sooner would Jesus be clearly shown to be the doorway to God's power and grace – than the door would seemingly be slammed shut by His death. For three days it would seem as if nothing remained, the temple curtain was torn, and Christ was dead. But He would rise and ascend and send the Holy Spirit into our midst so that we might have access to God:

Ephesians 2:17-19 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to those who were near. (18) For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (19)

Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

Blessings,

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