

All four Gospel accounts record the praises with which the crowds greeted Jesus on the day which we traditionally call Palm Sunday. But Luke uniquely reports a small detail which helps us see beyond the superficial excitement of the crowds to the spiritual conflict which was going on. Despite the shouts of praise, the nation had actually rejected Jesus, and He wept over them because He knew God's judgment.

The superficiality of the crowds—the palm branches and the shouts of praise—and the judgment which was coming are a warning which calls us to examine our own hearts and culture. The differences between the actions of the people and the response of Jesus open for us an understanding of this passage and help us in our self-examination.

I. Jesus displayed a different response: He wept though the people rejoiced.

Jesus wept because He knew what Luke had been reporting for the previous ten chapters. He was rejected by the leadership and was truly received only by a small group among the crowds. The crowds wanted temporal deliverance only, and Jesus saw the coming judgment upon Israel.

See, for example, Luke 9:51, 11:29, 40, 42–51, 52; 12:1, 13, 32, 35–59; 13:1–9, 15, 24, 25–28; 13:33–35; 14:15–24, 25; 15:1ff; 16:1–31; 17:1, 11–19; 18:18–27, 31–33; 19:1–9, 10–27, 28–40.

The compassion of God, perfectly displayed in Jesus, is amazing, in that He wept over those who rejected Him, even having seen and heard so much proving who He was.

II. Jesus perceived a different fate: judgment not deliverance.

1. The crowds anticipated deliverance from Roman oppression and the kingdom of Christ on earth, a time of physical well-being.
2. Jesus perceived a different fate: judgment upon Israel, because they had rejected Him.
 - a. Judgment was already present in that the truth was hidden from their eyes (19:42). God blinded their eyes in judgment upon continued rejection of the truth. See John 12:37–40; cf. Isaiah 6:9–10; Matthew 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:26.
 - b. Judgment was coming at the hand of Rome, who put down a Jewish revolt and besieged Jerusalem in AD 70, destroying the temple so that not one stone was left upon another.

God was not giving people what they wanted (temporal deliverance and prosperity), but was offering what they needed (spiritual salvation). By rejecting the Savior, they gained judgment.

The same is true today. God offers what people need, because judgment is coming. No one is morally perfect. Everyone has rebelled against God. God does not offer simply a better life. He offers life, eternal life. The options are only two: eternal separation from God or eternal life.

III. Jesus possessed a different understanding: spiritual peace with God was first being offered in Jesus, the Son of God, rather than temporal peace from God being provided through a mere human messiah.

1. The people failed to understand that God had visited them.
 - a. “The time of God's coming to you” (NIV) or “the time of your visitation” (ESV, NASB) is that which can bring ill or good. God “visited” in Jesus to offer good, that is, peace with Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Cf. Ephesians 2:14; Isaiah 9:6; Acts 10:36.
 - b. Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but the vast majority of the people had not understood and did not believe in Jesus.
2. The people failed to understand real peace and that which makes for real peace (v.42).
 - a. The Gospels report in the very announcement of Jesus that He is the way of peace with God. The people needed salvation from sin. Cf. Matthew 1:20; Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1:29.
 - b. God's peace had come and walked among them. But the people wanted temporal well-being and did not see their need to turn from sin to God.

Knowing all this, their rejection of Him and the judgment upon them, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jesus saw beyond the praises and knew that by rejecting the Prince of Peace, the nation would not have true peace.

Do not be among those today for whom Jesus would weep. Do not be one who has heard the gospel but wants only a social, cultural, or tradition-oriented Christianity. Do not merely add Jesus to your life as a supposed way to attain temporal benefits. Instead, turn from sin and embrace fully the Prince of Peace to have everlasting peace with God.

We should rightly weep over such people who want only temporal blessing, who make only a shallow profession of being Christian. It should concern us and move us to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ to them. Let us not be indifferent to the lost, but weep as Jesus wept. He is all that He was acclaimed to be, the King who comes in the name of the Lord. He is the Prince of Peace in whom we rejoice.