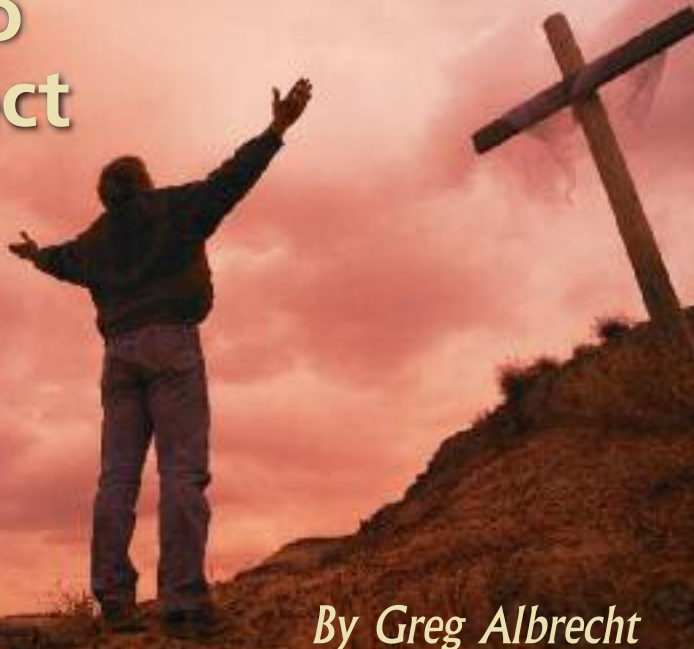


PLAIN TRUTH[®]

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION[®]

What Do You Expect From Jesus?



By Greg Albrecht

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey, in a customary and appropriate gesture of welcome for a king, people in the crowds spread their cloaks on the road in front of him. Throwing down one's outer garments in the path of a king demonstrated submission to his authority, in effect this symbolic gesture said something like this: "I place myself at your feet. I bow before you, even if you must walk over me."

Matthew, Mark and John all say that the crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem cut branches from trees and spread them on the road. John specifically says that these branches were palm branches. Waving a palm branch had a long history—in many ancient cultures the palm branch was as a part of victory celebrations. In the Jewish religion, the palm tree and the word "Hosanna" both played a role

in their Feast of Tabernacles—but that festival was in the fall, while the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was in the spring, just before the Jewish Passover.

The palm branches were most probably used by the crowds because they expected Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as a sign of victory. But what was the nature of the victory they desired and expected from Jesus?

Hosanna!

As Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem the crowds yelled out "Hosanna" (Matthew 21:9). *Hosanna* is a combination or contraction of two Hebrew words: *yasha* (deliver or save) and *anna* (beg or beseech). The crowds were effectively pleading "We beg you to deliver us!" and "Please deliver us!"

The intent of this prayerful cry was to "Save Us Now." *Hosanna!* The crowd was saying to Jesus,

us now," but we must ask ourselves what the crowds really meant when they welcomed him in such a way.

The crowds welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday as the king they so desperately hoped for and desired ...but in a few days, when Pilate asked another crowd in Jerusalem to choose to give freedom to either Jesus, who was innocent and without sin, or to Barrabas, a common thief, felon and no doubt repeat offender, they chose to save Barabbas.

On one day the crowds greeted Jesus and yelled out "Hosanna!" A few days later, because he didn't perform in the way they expected, they yelled out "Crucify Him!" It is truly a great irony—they begged Jesus to save them but they refused to spare him.

Save us now was the cry of the crowd. In a matter of a few days the crowds who prayed for Jesus to save them from the brutality of Rome

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"Save us NOW—not tomorrow—Give us what we want NOW!"

The citizens of Jerusalem suffered under the brutal oppression of the occupying armies of Rome. They desperately wanted one of their own to rise up and defeat the Romans, giving them political freedom and peace. There's nothing wrong with welcoming Jesus with shouts of "Hosanna—save

decided to save a criminal and condemn Jesus (the king who would not save them in the way they wanted) to be brutally tortured and crucified.

From Cheers to Jeers

I often remember the illustration of something Napoleon is believed to have said. The story surrounds one of Napoleon's triumphant returns from the field of battle. As he returned home from a military victory, cheering crowds welcomed him. When Napoleon's army rode through the crowds in victorious procession one of his generals riding next to him turned to Napoleon and complimented him, imagining that Napoleon had to be gratified to hear the cheers of the crowds.

Napoleon is said to have responded with a comment something like, "Nonsense, should I fail to please the people in the very near future, these same people who are cheering me today would be the first to send me to the gallows."

When Jesus turned out to be someone other than who people thought he should have been, then many quickly started looking for another savior.

Welcoming Jesus to Jerusalem, many in the crowd were not merely hoping for him to go out and conquer the Romans by the sword. Some undoubtedly had heard, and perhaps even seen, the resurrection of Lazarus only a few days before. They were convinced Jesus could give physical healing from diseases.

Those people, like so many of us often do, believed what they wanted to believe about Jesus. They expected what they wanted from Jesus. What about you and me?

- Is Jesus someone we can use or someone we are invited to follow?
- Can we reduce Jesus to a catchy bumper sticker slogan that promises to give us what we want to have and achieve—and to compel others to behave as we believe they should?
- Surely we must not use the name of Jesus to justify our own



The crowds welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday as the king they so desperately hoped for. They welcomed him because of what they thought he would give them—not for who he was and what he actually came to do. What are we looking to Jesus for?

self-centered desires. The invitation Jesus gives us is to follow him.

Many in the crowd who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with cries of "Hosanna!" had heard of the resurrection of Lazarus, they had heard that Jesus had healed the blind, cripples and lepers—they wanted him to **save them now!** They wanted Jesus to give them relief from the oppression of Rome. They wanted Jesus to heal them of diseases and give them freedom from military and financial oppression.

What Do You Want Jesus To Do For You?

Many in that Jerusalem crowd welcomed him because of what they thought he would give them—not for who he was and what he actually came to do. What are we looking to Jesus for?

- Many people in that crowd:
- Didn't want Jesus to be humble—they wanted him to be brash and offensive.
 - Didn't want Jesus to take away their religion—they wanted to keep all of their cherished religious traditions and commandments.
 - Didn't want Jesus to be vulnerable—they wanted him to be aggressive and powerful.

- They didn't want to hear about Jesus dying—they wanted to hear about Jesus conquering.

- They didn't want to hear about God's love and forgiveness—they wanted to hear about vindication. They wanted the Romans to "get theirs"—they definitely did not want the Romans to be forgiven.

- They didn't want to hear about accepting hostility and violence and turning the other cheek—they wanted Jesus to crucify their enemies.

- They didn't want Jesus to be who he was—they didn't want his kingdom or his gospel—**they wanted Jesus to be who and what they wanted him to be.** They wanted him to leave their religion, customs and traditions alone. They wanted what they wanted out of Jesus.

There's an incredible scene in the movie "Gandhi" that I shall never forget. Even if you did not see the movie you no doubt recall that Gandhi was the heroic Indian leader who proclaimed and exemplified non-violence as a response to the brutality and oppression of the British who occupied and controlled India, using the land and its resources to fuel its expanding empire.

In a biblical sense, in terms of the teachings of Jesus, we might say that Gandhi, while not a Christian, exemplified the teachings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in turning the other cheek, not responding in kind to violence, and ending the cycle of violence by not responding to it.

The scene I have in mind from the movie "Gandhi" is when the British and their Indian hirelings came to break up a demonstration being led by Gandhi. The British military arrived with soldiers, trucks, guns and ammunition. The Indian resisters, led by Gandhi, had nothing with which to defend themselves—in fact they were a group composed primarily of older men and women.

The British ordered Gandhi's peaceful demonstration to disperse. They were told that if they wouldn't move, they would be moved by force. Gandhi told his followers to stand firm, and not to respond to the threat of violence with violence.

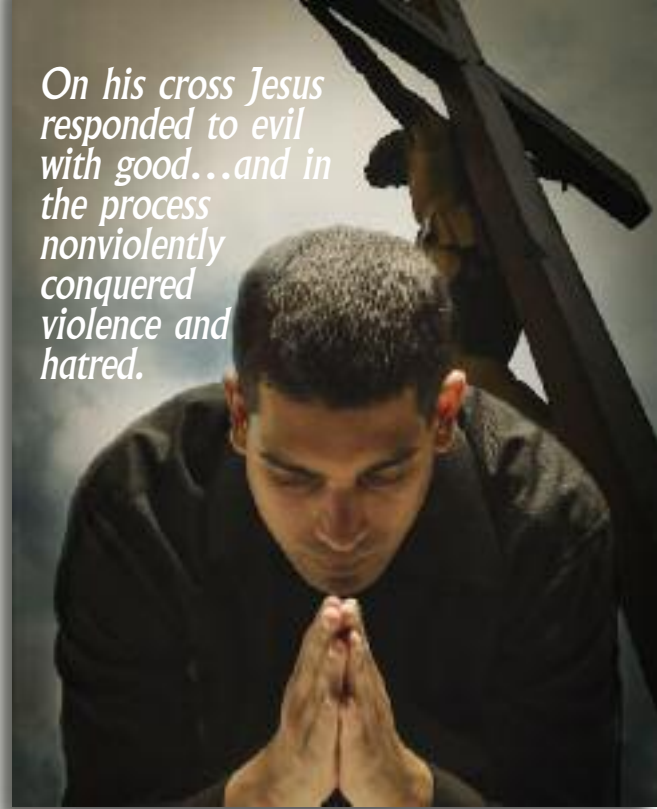
Then the brutality started. The young and strong soldiers advanced on the demonstrators, who had no weapons and were older and weaker by comparison with the soldiers. All day and all night the bloodshed continued—the resisters received the beatings but they did not strike back.

The movie depicts an English reporter watching this savagery, and then sending his report back to the British Isles. He said, "This day the British Empire has lost any claim to moral justification. Without firing a shot, the Empire was defeated and dismantled, non-violently."

The Significance of the Cross

Jesus went to his cross, as the Lamb of God—he went to demonstrate the love of God, he went to accept all of

On his cross Jesus responded to evil with good...and in the process nonviolently conquered violence and hatred.



our hostility, all the hatred and rage of humanity. On his cross Jesus responded to evil with good, and without responding in kind, ended the cycle of eye-for-an-eye retaliation and in the process non-violently conquered barbarism and hatred.

Of course, no one who witnessed the death of Jesus on his cross thought it was a victory. It didn't seem like salvation. It seemed like a defeat—it seemed like utter and total humiliation. **But let's take a trip in a time machine back to the cross of Christ**, and with the very mind of Christ, report on the meaning of the cross.

What would a reporter in whom Jesus lived his risen life say, reporting from the foot of the cross? The bulletin would be something like that of the English correspondent after witnessing the non-violent response of the followers of Gandhi as they were repeatedly beaten, yet without retaliation.

A Christ-centered reporter would announce, at the foot of the cross, "Today, without raising his hand to respond to his brutal beating, torture and humiliating death on his cross, Jesus of Nazareth single-handedly defeated the kingdoms of this world." □

"I'm still a rookie second officer but even I know it's not supposed to happen like this."

"The captain called 'Before Landing Check.' That's normal. The first officer and I moved the appropriate switches, levers and buttons, and chanted the usual incantations. That's normal. The trusty old Boeing 727 responded with its arcane dialect of flashing lights and flickering needles. That's normal. And the all-important landing gear panel is now showing three green lights assuring us that the wheels are locked down. That's normal. But the landing gear control panel is also glowering at us with a trio of red lights, telling us that the green lights are not to be trusted. That's not normal."

Read the rest of this story as you take off with Captain Grant Corriveau in *Uplift—A Pilot's Journey*. During your flight you will be fascinated by many other true stories shared by Grant as he invites you to experience his life-long journey of discoveries. Warning: keep your seatbelt fastened. There will be unexpected turbulence through your flight. Captain Grant will reveal, through his story and rise in the ranks in the aviation industry, culminating in the pilot's seat in the cockpit, that not everything we need in life is learned in classes and training seminars.

Uplift is everyone's journey, told through the eyes and experiences of one pilot's career—one pilot's journey. Come along for the ride and you will be uplifted.



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