**Malchus & an Ungodly Crowd**

*by Harry Osborne*

In all of the Gospel accounts, the writers record the events surrounding Jesus' betrayal. While recounting those events, each writer tells about one man whose ear was cut off during the incident. The Gospel of John tells us that Peter wielded the sword and identified the man whose ear was cut off as Malchus, a servant of the high priest (Jn. 18:10).

Malchus was a part of an angry and illegal mob that came for the express purpose of facilitating the murder of Jesus. The plot to seize Jesus and frame Him on false charges was a plan that had been in the leaders' minds for a long time. As the servant of the high priest, Malchus certainly had prior knowledge and participation in the scheme. What he saw and heard on that night was, no doubt, beyond his expectation.

In the late hours of the night when the seizure began to be implemented, Peter was ready to fight in order to protect Jesus. No doubt, Peter swung his sword in an effort to cut off the head of Malchus, but got only the right ear when he dodged. Jesus did not need the sword of Peter or the action of any mere man to protect Him. He commanded:

Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus? (Matt. 26:52-54).

Jesus’ concentration was not upon Himself, His physical well-being or personal vengeance. His guiding principle was the desire to fulfill God's plan as prophesied in Scripture, thus, bringing salvation to man - even those involved in a murderous plot. That is the reason he called upon His disciples to "permit even this" (Luke 22:51). Throughout the life of Jesus, we see the same focus on doing the will of the Father and fulfilling all righteousness. It is this servant's heart of our Savior that Paul exhorts every Christian to emulate (Philippians 2:1-11). The servant of the high priest should have learned from the servant of God about the proper nature of service.

Though Jesus desired the fulfillment of Scripture and the resulting provisions for salvation, He was still concerned for those who executed the evils foretold in prophecy, thus condemning their souls. None of them were forced to act contrary to their will. None were entrapped to evil action by God (James 1:13-14). Jesus faced them with the evil nature of their actions and the evil nature of the hearts that purposed such treachery. He reminded all of the lack of justice in their cause:

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, ''Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns" (Lk. 22:52-53, NIV).

This insightful assessment of their heart and actions should have caused the mob to go home in shame. The fact that it did not was a testimony, not to the ineffectiveness of Jesus, but to the hardness of these sinners' hearts. However, Jesus was not finished yet.

Luke's Gospel records for us an unimaginable act of compassion by Jesus upon one of the mob intent upon murdering Him. After Malchus' ear had been cut off, Jesus "touched his ear, and healed him" (Lk. 22:51). If ever there were a case of overcoming evil with good, this was it (cf. Rom. 12:17-21). This act of kindness and compassion in restoring a man's ear did not change the will of the mob. They went on to seize, abuse and ultimately murder Jesus. They had been given proof of Christ's divine power, but it made no difference to them. The record implies Malchus went along with them all the way.

This account has often caused me to wonder about Malchus. What were his thoughts when Jesus restored his ear? Was there the slightest guilt in his mind as he saw the One who healed his ear being spat upon, beaten and nailed to the cross? In years to come, did he ever remember this act of compassion by Jesus? The Bible never answers those questions.

What is said, however, suggests something worth considering. Whatever Malchus may have thought privately, he did not defy the crowd in an effort to defend Jesus. His failure to change sides was not due to a lack of evidence about Jesus' true nature. Malchus' problem was that he chose to stay in an ungodly crowd rather than follow Christ - ***despite*** the evidence!

Similarly, the problem with most people who fail to follow Jesus today is not the absence of clear evidence about His nature. We have a fully revealed record in the Bible which gives far more complete, testable evidence about the nature and person of Christ than Malchus ever thought of having. Those who reject Jesus today simply love the world more than they love the truth - that is the problem!

There are many today who would prefer the company of an ungodly crowd over following Christ. Why do many make that choice? It is not rational to reject the only One who can save us (Acts 4:12). However, those who turn their backs upon Jesus love the crowd of sin and evil too much to leave it for the Lord. The Bible speaks about such people:

**John 3:19-20** And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

**John 12:42-43** Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Our attitude towards sin should be that of the apostle Paul. He urged, *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret"* (Eph. 5:11-12).

When we stand back and really see the path of sin and its fruits, we recognize it is truly a way of shame. Our country is filled with those who can attest to the shameful end of alcohol and drug addiction - of lewdness and promiscuity - of hatred and strife. The astronomical rates for divorce and teenage pregnancy are vivid reminders of the horrors of fornication. Whether it be the horrible murder rate in our society or the growing tendency towards character assassination by those feigning service to God, the carnage of sin is high. Yet this is the path chosen by many over true service to Christ.

Is it not time that we see the path of sin for what it is and reject it for the path of peace in Jesus Christ? He promises, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

If we come as believers in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, we can easily learn His will for us. Believers are told that we must confess our faith in Him (Rom. 10:10). We are also told to change our will away from the world and towards Christ in repentance of our sins and then be baptized for remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). Our lives are then to be directed by His will in all things commanded by Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). We never learn of Malchus obeying Christ despite the compassion shown. Will you ignore Christ's gifts or obey?