

Jesus' Family Thought He Was Crazy

Early on, as Jesus chose His apostles, taught truth, and worked miracles, His “mother and brothers” (Mark 3:31) were very concerned: “But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of His mind’” (3:21).

Why might they have thought that Jesus, as the New American Standard says, had “lost His senses”? Some possible ideas might be...

1. He had left His home, His business and any income.
2. He was on a collision course with the religious elite.
3. He had attracted a varied, strange group of followers.
4. He had started forgiving the sins of other people.

But these things, instead of making us think Jesus was crazy, lead us to appreciate Him all the more. Using the same four points we say...

1. He was willing to dismiss His own earthly security.
2. He was willing to set aside His own personal safety.
3. He was willing to live beyond the verdict of society.
4. In forgiving, He showed Himself to be God's Son.

He was not crazy, beside Himself, or out of His senses. He knew what He was doing every step of the way. He was showing who He was. And by example He was showing us how to live today!

- **by Robert Hines**

A Corrupt World

Though no one can predict the future of our nation, we can say with confidence that God is in control, His cause will triumph, and He judges nations. ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God’ (Psalm 9:17). ‘Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people’ (Proverbs 14:34).

Gibbon's famous work, ***The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire***, lists five reasons for the fall of Rome. There are several parallels between ancient Israel and Rome, and even more disturbing, between Rome and America.

1. *The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society.* American families are under attack by humanists, homosexuals, and Hollywood. Some don't even know what a family is any more (Matthew 19:4-9).
2. *Higher and higher taxes: the spending of public monies for free bread and circuses or the populace.* America is on the greatest spending binge in history. Many have forgotten how to work; they expect the government to support them (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8).
3. *The mad craze for pleasure: sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.* Many Americans are so obsessed with sports that they have no time for Bible studies (2 Tim. 3:4; Hebrews 11:25).
4. *The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within - the decadence of the people.* Babylon's wall, water, and wealth could not prevent the Persian invasion (Daniel 5). No armament can protect a nation that has rotted from within – not even America's.
5. *The decay of religion: faith fading into mere form; losing touch with life and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.* Most churches have become social clubs, pursuing entertainment to attract bigger crowds. Many audiences no longer expect to hear book, chapter, and verse (2 Timothy 4:1-4). They have replaced the house of prayer with food, fun, and frolic (Matthew 23:12-14).

Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.

- **by Rick Duggin**

For One Indulgent Moment

What some will pay for a moment's reckless folly is recorded again and again in the Book of Ages. Do you think these people got their "money's worth?"

1. Adam and Eve, for one bit of luscious fruit when they were not even hungry, brought sin, suffering, shame, and death upon themselves and the human race (Genesis 3).
2. Lot's wife, revealing her longing for the things that pertain to earth, took one look back at Sodom and became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19).
3. Esau, to satisfy one day's fleshly appetite, lightly esteemed his birthright and forfeited his right to the ancestry of Christ (Genesis 25).
4. Achan, for a garment he could not wear, and silver and gold he could not spend, paid with all his possessions, his family, and his life (Joshua 7).
5. Samson, for the caress of a hypocritical woman, lost his eyes, and finally his life (Judges 16).
6. David, to enjoy another man's wife, hands to posterity a tale of his life with adultery, shame, and tears, boldly written for all to read (2 Samuel 11).
7. Ahab, coveting another's little vineyard, permitted his wife to have its owner killed, claimed it for his own, and heard his own funeral preached in these words, "In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall the dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (1 Kings 21).

- ***Selected***

"Thou Hast Left Thy First Love"

He has been married to his college sweetheart for fifteen years now. They have two kids, a lovely house in the suburbs, and lots of friends. He's got a good, secure job. Everything looks great. But, in recent months he has been depressed and unhappy. His wife, noticing these changes, has been worried about him. Is he having a "mid-life crisis"? Is there another woman? Finally she summons up the courage to ask him what's wrong.

He assures her that there is no other woman. He would NEVER do such a thing. What's the problem? "To be totally honest", he says, "I just don't love you anymore." Her pain is deep, and obvious. But, the husband hastens to add: "Don't worry. I'm not going to leave you and the kids. I'll still be here. I know it would be wrong to get a divorce. I'll fulfill my obligations. We'll keep going on."

How do you think the wife will react? Do you imagine that she will be relieved? Will she be happy to know that their marriage will continue, but only as an outward show? Is that enough? Can "fulfilling obligations" take the place of "I love you"?

This imaginary account has too many real life counterparts. We think there are a number of spiritual parallels, too. How many Christians have lost their real love for the Lord? Oh, yes, they continue to go through motions. They worship regularly, and even show up for some of the special things. But, it is done out of obligation, not out of genuine love. Will that suffice? NO! Jesus says, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. . . repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place" (Rev. 2:4,5). The Lord desires service based on love. Nothing else will do.

- ***by Greg Gwin***