IT MADE SENSE

Posted on April 7, 2021 by Eddie

If we look to governments, systems or political parties to defend or save Christianity, we are looking in the wrong direction. We have forgotten whose kingdom we serve and who is on the throne.
Category: Observations

It's the week after the Easter holiday and I've found myself musing on the events surrounding the crucifixion. I heard and saw a lot of things that emphasised the personal reasons surrounding Jesus' death. He died for *my* sins, when he was on the cross he thought of *me* and so on. Now, this is obviously a very important part of the story but there is more to it than this.

The Gospels record that Jesus died because he fell foul of the Jewish authorities. Yes, there are all sorts of theological implications of his death and resurrection, but the first cause was that the powers that be wanted him dead. The charges against him were trumped up and the witnesses at his trial couldn't even agree amongst themselves, but the authorities wanted rid of him. Clearly, there was a mix of motives. Some wanted rid of Jesus because they were offended by his apparent blasphemy - making himself equivalent to God. This was a serious offence in Jewish life. Others were undoubtedly jealous of the attention that Jesus attracted. There was also the historic concern that charismatic teachers like Jesus had more than once led to conflict with Rome and brought massive retribution on the whole Jewish people. Better get rid of one man, than have all the people perish.

The point is, that from the point of view of the Jewish authorities it made perfect sense to hand Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified. He was in the way and had to be got rid of. Of course Jesus didn't deserve to die, but they wanted him dead, anyway, because the system they were working in was corrupt and unjust.

Not having the power to execute him themselves, the Jews handed Jesus over to the Romans. Pilate couldn't find any reason to crucify Jesus, but in deference to the Jews and with a supreme indifference to human life, he ordered him to be killed anyway. The *civilised* Roman Empire was just as corrupt as the Jewish leadership.

We are sometimes given the impression that the Jews and Pilate were incidental to the action. They were there to ensure that Jesus died so that individuals can be saved, but their role was no more significant than that. If you think like that, you are missing out on part of what was going on. Jesus was crucified because human systems, have no place for the incarnate Son of God and he must be neutralised and disposed of. Yes, he died for our sins and to take our punishment, but he also came to establish his own Kingdom which is in opposition to the powers and principalities of human systems - and human systems don't like it.

The thing is, human systems haven't changed in the last 2,000 years. Governments and systems of

all forms still claim our ultimate allegiance and call us to reject the Son. In some places the opposition to Jesus and his Kingdom is overt and draconian. Here in the West it tends to be more subtle. Governments give Jesus a bit of recognition, they make space for the church (on their terms) and they appear to give freedom, but injustice and godlessness is still central (and always was). This doesn't mean that governments don't make good decisions; they do. Nor does it mean that we shouldn't take our responsibilities as citizens serious and vote for the candidate we consider the best. However, if we look to governments, systems or political parties to defend or save Christianity, we are looking in the wrong direction. We have forgotten whose kingdom we serve and who is on the throne.

The Jewish leaders and Pilate thought that they had the power of life and death over Jesus, but they didn't. Nor do our governments have the power of life or death over his body, the church.