

## The Mob Mentality 08-09-20

Matthew 27:20-35 tells us of how it was that an angry mob was able to compel the Roman governor into murdering the Messiah. Did this crowd hate Jesus and plot away for the opportunity to kill Him? No; instead, these are the people who just a few days before were proclaiming Jesus the Son of David. Yet it was the mysterious workings of a mob mentality that changed them from praise to poison.

God has for a long time hated the workings of a mob. "*You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.*" (Exodus 23:1-2). Specifically, God declared that mobs pervert justice. We cannot help but to see that when God declares in Proverbs 6:16-17 the seven things He hates, mobs are at the heart of that description. (*These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.*)

God hates the mob for its deluding effect on truth and justice. A mob thinks not with reason but with emotions. Specifically, it stores up emotions like anger (James 1:20) and indignation (Acts 5:17). Mobs twist our perception of truth to create good guys and bad guys, us and them, so that we can fixate our troubles on someone else. This enmity (Galatians 5:20) and strife (Acts 7:57-60) are the mobs best tools; it causes participants to shed their common sense and shame and decency and commit acts that the mob as individuals would despise. Mobs always results in evil behavior.

When we think of mobs, no doubt our minds are taken to protesting rioters in downtown areas, people who are burning buildings and terrorizing people, a genuine perversion of justice. These mobs are seen throughout the Bible; in Sodom (Gen. 19), in Gibeah (Jud. 19), in Ephesus (Acts 19), and Jerusalem (Acts 21, 22, 23). Each of these instances reflects how men perverted truth and justice to motivate a crowd to evil deeds.

But the mob *mentality* is much more subtle. Indeed, many participate in the mob mentality every day. Are you guilty of a mob mentality? Test yourself and ask if you follow the crowd in support or rejection of the latest fad. Do you often support ideas because you are fearful of appearing out of touch or you are wanting to seem aware of society? Sharing things on Facebook that you don't verify to be true; forwarding emails that are politically inflammatory; joining in the "us against them" mindsets that news outlets are more than willing and able to promote. Maybe you have never rioted in the streets, but when you have shared a provocative post, you have participated.

In Acts 2:23-36 Peter addresses the mob that had killed Jesus. As we said, they were not haters of Jesus, but were emotionally manipulated into being the crowd power of the Jewish leaders. Peter made it clear that even though they had not actually physically killed Jesus, nor plotted it, they were guilty of his murder by "lawless hands". This is important: when we join or support the mob, we can be held guilty before God for its works.

The Christ-like mentality is very different from the world. First, it declares that right and wrong are not determined by the world. Indeed, the world can NEVER tell us what is right and wrong (1 John 2:15-17). We need to have the Berean attitude in our opinions (Acts 17:10-11). We need to discern what is true and

wise BEFORE we pass it along. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22). We need to test the spirits (1 John 4:1) rather than let our emotions drive our behavior.

When we see mobs stirring up emotions like anger and hatred, we know that Christians will not be in that mob. We should be confident that when the mentality of the mob bleeds into our day to day lives, we will not be in that either. We believe Christ is the answer to all matters of justice and mercy; we know that the world has NEVER made the right decision in these things.