



Let me tell you how you build a revolution, manufacture a coo or make political change happen. First, you find those areas where people are discontented and you fan those feelings. Next, you point out the errors and atrocities caused by those who are presently in places of power and authority. Then, you start to motivate and mobilize the masses by talking about your ideas and how you feel a society should function, explaining how things would be different for all if the principles you hold to be true were adopted.

You must realize that in order to make your political changes come to pass, you need to draw in people who can financially back your revolt or political change. Plus, you have to recruit men and women who are in places of authority, especially those with political influence and military power. Finally, when the masses are behind you, with your backing in place, you need to precisely choose the exact time to mount your campaign to topple those in power. That is how you snatch victory and gain power in the political game. Knowing some of your political leanings - I have a copy of these steps that you can get after the service.

I. The View from Palm Sunday? The Power at Jesus' Disposal

To win a political victory, many things need to fall into place. It struck me the other day as I was looking at the Easter story, that if I were one of Jesus' disciples who followed Jesus up to the day of his arrest in the garden, I would have thought Jesus had put together one of the most comprehensive political plans that I had ever seen. Everything, all the details seemed to be falling in place. So that with little effort or danger to us as His followers, He could take control of Israel and usher in His Reign as the Messiah of Israel. I am sure that Judas, John, Peter and the rest of the disciples were becoming increasingly excited as they watched everything seem to be coming together on a political level. Let me show you what I mean:

a. The Time in History was Perfect

If you look at the time in which Jesus lived you would have realized that Israel was ripe for a change and revolution on their political scene. The Romans had oppressed the people by taking excessive taxes and ruling with a swagger that infuriated the Jews. If they wanted to they could steal your property, demand your forced service, and if they so desired, to crucify you. Actually, at this time in history, there was a shortage of good sized lumber in Israel because so many people had been crucified under the harsh rule of the Romans. Pilate, the Roman ruler, kept making stupid moves that infuriated the Jews and King Herod, the Jewish regent, was a dangerous man who killed off anyone who might take his job (including most of his family members.) Linked with that was a fierce nationalism and hatred of anyone who ruled over the Israelis. You remember that one of Jesus' disciples was called Simon the Zealot (Matthew 10:4.) Simon had been part of this secret group who all carried a concealed knife which they promised by an oath to kill any Jewish person who was a collaborator with the Romans. This Jewish political fervour was all backed by expectancy, that maybe soon the Messiah would come to lead Israel out from their bondage and ushering in the power and rule of God. Just like in the time of Moses, God would miraculously set His people free again and the enemies would die at the hands of God. The time was ripe for a leader to lead the Jews, to channel the feeling of a people who were more than ready to move against their oppressors, who were ready to follow anyone that had the credentials of the hoped for Messiah.

b. The People Where Ready

If you were to ask Judas if Jesus could muster the people who were needed to make a revolt successful, he would have said, *"NO PROBLEM!"* The powerful people were falling in place. There were men like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (John 7:50 - 52), who were men in the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish Religious counsel. There were Synagogue leaders like Jairus whose daughter (Mark 5:22) was raised from the dead. Men like the Centurion from Capernaum whose servant was healed would be ready to take up arms within the Roman Military forces in defense of Jesus. There were also others who had been touched by Jesus who would follow his leading and bring other powerful people with them. The money people were also falling in place. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2), the rich young ruler (Luke 18:21 - 23,) the ladies that traveled with Jesus, whose husbands were well off and well connected would be ready to give toward His cause. The masses of people were ready to follow Jesus.

Wherever He went, crowds amassed around Him; there were 5000 at one gathering (Luke 9:13) and 7000 at another. With every healing, every demon cast out, every multiplying of food the crowds increased in number. The word was spreading farther afield about Jesus and it had reached this critical mass point that wherever He went, the crowds mobbed them.

This leads us to the scene on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1 - 11.) As Jesus entered the city riding the donkey, led by Lazarus (who recently had been brought back to life by the words of Jesus) a crowd forms. It doesn't take long until they start waving palm branches and yelling, *"Hosanna to the son of David!"* (The Messiah was to come through David's family tree.) As they spread palm branches and laid their coats on the ground in front of Him, all it would have taken was a few well planned words and He could have moved the crowd to a revolt which started on the road, ran through the Passover throng and lit a flame of revolt across the nation of Israel.

The powerful people were growing in numbers, the money backers were falling into place and the masses who had been dreaming of a Messiah and praying for a way to throw off the yoke off the Roman's were increasingly convinced that Jesus was the one who could change their lot in life; it was all starting to fall into place.

c. The Disciples were Ready

They were convinced that the man, not only was Jesus the Messiah, (like Peter had actually said out loud in Matthew 8:29.) After Jesus confirmed Peter's statement as being true, each person including Judas said they were ready and willing to die for Him. (Matthew 26:35*) They had spent time with Him and they felt ready to be leaders in whatever government Jesus would set up.

d. There was Jesus Himself

No one could draw a crowd like Jesus could. No one else in history has ever been able to pull off the miracles that He did. People had seen Him restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and the ability to walk to the disabled. He cured leprosy, calmed storms with a word, walked on water, collected money out of fishes' mouths, feed 5000 & 7000 people with a basket lunch and raised at least 3 dead people back to life. I mean, there is a political leader with a little bit of potential! Who wouldn't follow a man like that? PLUS, when He spoke, He always said the right thing. His words somehow always burned in your heart and people kept saying, *"No one has ever spoken like this before!"* Because of that, the crowds followed Him into the desert (Matthew 14:13,) the crowds brought those needing healing to Him (Matthew 15:30,) and the crowds kept growing larger and larger (Matthew 19:2) following Him wherever He went.

The package was ALL in place. With each successive day, things were getting more exciting. And after the Palm Sunday's near riot, it wouldn't take long until the political machine was so powerful, so dynamic that nothing could stop it; JESUS WOULD BE KING! Any journalist, anyone in the inner circle and the religious leaders of His day SAW a ground swell of public support, powerful backers and personal charisma which looked like soon it would be UNSTOPPABLE. That is why the Priests felt they had to move at the Passover season and stop Him before it was too late. Don't miss this; JESUS had within His grasp, on a purely human level, the ability to make His move politically. Plus He had His power from on high. He had enough power to set up His kingdom right there in Jerusalem; it was HIS FOR THE TAKING. Victory was within His grasp.

II. On Friday...He Blew It

If you interviewed Judas near the end of his life or some other disciples on Good Friday or on Saturday after the Crucifixion, they would have told you that they had never seen or heard of anyone blowing it as bad as Jesus did. They would have told you that it was almost as if His life was on self destruct the way things unfolded.

What angered Judas the most was that Jesus seemed determined to push His financial backers away from Him. For example, He would have told you that Jesus made unbelievable blunders like as He talked to the rich young ruler. Instead of saying, "*Give me a portion of your wealth so I can make a difference in our world,*" Jesus said, "*Go sell what you have and give it to the poor.*" Then instead of widening His influence among the Priests and Rabbi's, Jesus started calling them white washed Seplicers or white washed tombs (now there is a way to make friends and influence people!) As for the Masses, every time He did some great miracle He told them to keep it quiet and not tell anyone. Well that kind-of ruins any possibility of getting your name in the press in the right light, doesn't it? Then there was the missed opportunity on Palm Sunday, the right word would have turned that crowd into a massive people's revolt ready to make Him King.

That pattern continued right up to the last day. As they came with to arrest Him in the garden with their soldiers, good old Peter cut off the High Priests' servants' ear. What does Jesus do? He picked up the man's ear, blows the dirt off of it and healed it back into place. With everyone standing there in amazement, all He had to do was turn and give them a powerful but angry look and I bet they would have all ran away. But instead He says, "*OK, I'm ready to go now.*"

Later when Pilate was feeling guilty and his wife hassling him, Jesus could have talked His way into a lighter sentence but He said nothing. When He was before King Herod all he had to do was a few magic tricks and Herod would have let him go. What would have happened if, as the guards blinded folded Him and were beating Him, He called them by name, telling them who hit him; that would have changed their attitude? Don't forget, if He could raise the dead, calm a storm with a word, He could have stopped anything that happened on the way to the cross; He could have gotten off the Cross with a word.

He had victory within His grasp and His political machine was all in place. His backers ready, people of power poised to give their support and the Masses had been dreaming of revolt. Then He threw it all away, He cancelled His financial supporters, distanced Himself from the influential people and He didn't whip up the waiting masses with His eloquent speech and majestic power. In short, He snatched defeat right out of the Jaws of Victory.

III. What does it all Mean?

You see, it is one thing, as Jesus came to earth, if the circumstances around Him carried along like a person on a train which is running out of control and all He could do was ride the events around Him to their natural conclusion. It is quite another thing, if, at every step along the way, the opposite was true; Jesus could have side stepped the cross but chose instead to walk toward it for our sake. Listen to what Jesus said in John 18:36, *“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”* He stated this because He had not come to become an earthly king, He would not let those around Him make Him an earthly king.

Luke 9:51 clarifies this even more when it says, *“As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”* Jesus wasn't walking toward Jerusalem to become its King; He was walking toward Jerusalem because He had a destiny with a cross just outside the walls of Jerusalem. His actions were a definite and deliberate act of His will. Understanding the cost He must bear, He laid all His options aside, (earthly and heavenly,) and chose the cross. It was there He bore your NAIL and mine.

Why? He knew that only His death, His sacrifice could wipe away our sin. Let me read three scriptures for you that explain why Jesus needed to walk resolutely toward the cross:

- Romans 3:23, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Simply stated, because each of us knows that we live a life that is far from perfect and only if we are perfect can we live with God eternally, each of us is in need of Saviour; someone to cover those times when we fell short of doing what was right.
- John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* We couldn't work off our past actions and God, because of His love for us, allowed His Son to take the nail for us. His Son had to die so that we could have eternal life. He saw exactly what you and I are like in our darkest moments and He accepted your nail and mine. Although He could have left the cross, left you to bear that sin, He stayed out of love for us.
- Romans 6:23, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* That is why Jesus set aside all the other options and chose the cross. For God, understanding how eternity works and how there needs to be a balancing of a perfect life for a messed up one came to die for us.

Let me explain how this works. It is something like when I went golfing this summer with 3 other men. I golf once every 7 years if I need to or not but I was invited to play golf in something called a Texas Hold'em tournament. The idea is that each person plays golf through each hole, they only count the score of the person who did the best on that hole. That meant that my 9 strokes and 4 lost balls were not counted; instead Bert Cachero's birdie was counted. It was wonderful. I would hit the ball, walk 10 yards, hit it again, watch it sink into water or sand and the score card didn't mention my strokes at all. All that was mentioned was Bert's number. The Theological term for this is Positional Sanctification. It means that we are forgiven for our sin (to many strokes) NOT because of what we have done but because of who we know.

As we have been looking at how Jesus took the nail for us over these last 3 weeks, to help us understand that the story isn't really complete until we grasp what it meant for Jesus to

'resolutely' walk toward Jerusalem toward the cross. It meant that when He had within his reach, the perfect situation in history to kick off a coo with financial resources in place, the people of power ready to get involved, the disciples ready to give their lives for the cause and the masses ready to follow Him anywhere, He laid it all aside in order to carry out God's plan and move in love, on our behalf, toward the cruel cross. Some would say that on that fateful Friday, Jesus snatched defeat right out of the Jaws of Victory. But you and I know different. What He did was make a deliberate move, which led to his death and resulted in our sins being forgiven and our eternity being changed. It all happened because He took the nail for us. Keep this nail; put it some place where you will see it and let it remind you what it cost for Jesus to become your Saviour.

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