

## More About Jesus, Week 9: Jesus Loved His Country

### (Luke 13)

by Paul Hammons

When we think about patriotism, we typically think of an intense pride in our country - a desire to see our nation exalted and praised, to see its interests to succeed, to see its people prosper. We see a willingness to sacrifice on behalf of its security and strength.

We don't typically think of Jesus as a patriot, but in fact, he was the image of what true, godly patriotism ought to look like.

Jesus came into the world at a time when Jewish nationalism was everywhere. Multiple uprisings had taken place as men tried to secure freedom from the Roman invaders. And Jesus did come into this world for the purpose of freeing his people (**Luke 1:68-75**). In fact, he was the culmination of God's providence and power through Israel for its salvation.

In many ways, he was the embodiment of all that God wanted Israel to be. And Jesus took great joy when he saw his countrymen living up to the ideal of what it meant to be a Jew inwardly, not just outwardly. When Jesus was introduced to Nathanael, who would eventually be named one of his disciples, Jesus said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit" (**Jn 1:47**).

The expression reflects more than just an appreciation for his apostle, but a recognition that God had a plan for Israel, His people (**Exodus 19:5-6**). They were called to be holy, lights in the world to the Gentile nations around them (**Deuteronomy 4:6-7**). The vision was truly glorious.

But as glorious as the idea of Israel was, the reality filled him with sorrow throughout his life, as he "came unto his own, and his own did not receive him" (**John 1:11**). When his countrymen tried to make him king, he refused (**John 6:15**), because that wasn't the kind of deliverance they truly needed. Jesus didn't come to free his people from Rome or from any human government. He came to free them from sin. And they weren't interested.

Jesus wanted nothing more than for his people to listen to God's warnings and repent.

In Luke 13, Jesus told the parable of the vinedresser, in which he is not the master coming in wrath, but the steward who wants more time for his vineyard to flourish:

*"A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" - Lk 13:6-9*

Later in that chapter, we read Jesus mourning for his people, even when he knew what they were about to do to him:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is forsaken." - Lk 13:34-35*

**Jesus was a model of godly patriotism** – not the attitude that puts our country on a pedestal above all the others. Not the one that supports and defends the nation, right or wrong. And not the desire to prosper even at the expense of other people in other countries. Instead, Jesus loved his country enough to tell it the truth about its sins.

And even more powerfully, Jesus loved his country enough to give his life for it. During the American revolution, Nathan Hale once said, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." But Jesus' sacrifice meant so much more, because his vision of freedom for his people was to give them TRUE freedom (**John 8:31-36**).

How much do we love OUR country? Enough to rebuke its ungodly practices? Enough to share the gospel with the neighbors who might respond with hate? That's the patriotism that Jesus modeled for us!