

His enemies understood what His disciples did not

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LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—The chief priests and Pharisees took Jesus more seriously than His own disciples. At least it appears that way in one instance.

Jesus had been crucified and sealed in His tomb. The disciples had scattered to the four winds, evidently afraid for their lives. In spite of Jesus' many references to His impending death, they didn't seem to grasp that He meant what He said. He was, after all, the Messiah, the one who was to redeem Israel. How could the great Messiah be a dead Messiah?

Neither could they grasp His sometimes cryptic references to His resurrection from the dead. Early in His ministry such oblique comments as "destroy this temple and raise it up in three days" did not exactly spell out what the game plan was. Later on, as the day approached, He would call His disciples aside and tell them clearly what was about to happen. Still, they didn't grasp it.

"Far be it from you, Lord, that this should happen to you," they said, as if the very destiny for which Christ came did not need to be fulfilled, that we would not need a Savior to conquer our worst enemy.

The irony in all this is that the chief priests and Pharisees knew exactly what Jesus was saying. After the crucifixion they approach Pilate to ask of him a favor:

"Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:63-64, NKJV).

It would be nice to know how they came to understand this when Jesus' only clear references to His resurrection were to His disciples privately. Was there an informant among the disciples, a Judas type or even Judas himself? Did the private conversations become somewhat of a public discourse?

While we might not know how they came to understand Jesus' words, we do know this: that Jesus' enemies understood what Jesus said and took it more seriously than His disciples. Could it be that the enemies of Christianity today recognize the threat that the teachings of Jesus present to their world-view in ways that the followers of Jesus do not? Could it be that they see what we do not?