

Jesus continued His last trip from Galilee to Jerusalem. Mark has not mentioned any of His previous visits. The other gospels relate numerous incidents and verbal exchanges He had there. Mark is silent about these but gives considerable detail from here on in. This visit was for the Passover, one of three annual occasions the men of Israel were to appear before Jehovah. The other two were the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. One can easily assume Jesus faithfully made the trip three times a year in obedience to Moses' Law. Upon each of these occasions Jerusalem was host to great crowds of Jews from throughout Palestine and more distant lands. The Songs of Degrees (Ascents), Psalms 120 though 124 were sung by these pilgrims returning to the temple marking their progress while on their way.

On the way Jesus took His disciples aside attempting again to warn and prepare them for what was to come upon Him. How many times did He do this?

In Jerusalem He would be delivered (they were not told here by whom) to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they would condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles. The Lord's own words make clear the guilt of the Jewish nation, through its leaders, and the guilt of the Gentiles. All mankind is guilty. No finger-pointing is warranted.

Yet even John who was one of His closest confidantes didn't enter into the idea that Jesus must suffer first and then be glorified before He reigned. (One would suspect that only Mary of Bethany who listened at Jesus' feet realized what was going to happen to Him.) Each time Jesus went into more detail. We who read this can easily see that He was fully aware of what lay before Him. He set His face toward Jerusalem. His resoluteness must have set off some alarms in the disciples' subconscious for they felt afraid. This visit would not be an ordinary feast day.

How insensible! Shortly after being explicitly told He was going to die James and John came to Him seeking an unnamed favor. Whatsoever they desired? They were the first of the disciples Jesus called to be fishers of men. They now wanted to stake out their place in His kingdom. They had both seen the glory of the coming of the Lord on the mount of transfiguration. They were certainly (rightly) sure of His destiny to reign and also rightly confident of His love for them, even if clueless as to God's the time table. He immediately challenged them questioning their ability to drink the cup He was going to drink of and be baptized with the baptism He was going to be baptized with. They confidently asserted they indeed were. This reminds us Peter's bold self confidence was shared by at

least some of the other disciples. He assures them they would indeed suffer as He did. (And they did after his death and resurrection and ascension. James was the first apostle to be martyred while John lived a long full life of ministry, including exile, for His ascended Lord, but died an old man.) But Jesus withstands any temptation to assert His authority prematurely or independently of the Father. He simply says these places of honor were not His to give and would be assigned to those for whom prepared. He was the Sent One, the faithful subject Servant of God who would not usurp power from His Master.

The brothers' brazen move seeking the choice positions in the kingdom did not go unnoticed. The ten other disciples were incensed. They were just as ambitious. Here was another teaching moment. Jesus' kingdom is not like the kingdoms of men. They exercise lordship over their subjects. They rule. Whoever will be greatest among us is to be one who serves others. Peter must have recalled this when he wrote decades later:

*1Peter 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

The Lord is the supreme example of the willing and faithful servant. His service was unto death. He gave His life to provide a ransom for many. Not all have accepted this enormous ransom but it is effectual for any ("the many") who will. Have you?

As they approached Jerusalem from across Jordan the road passed through Jericho. Yes, that ancient city, Jericho, which Joshua had destroyed fourteen centuries before, Joshua 6:26, and rebuilt, as forecast, some 500 years later, 1Kings 16:34. As they were leaving a blind man sitting by the road asked someone who was passing by. When told "Jesus of Nazareth" he cried out "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Note the unbelief of the callous bystanders who tried to hush him. The Lord in His mercy stopped and commanded they call the man to Him. "Lord, that I might receive my sight... Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole... And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." Note the faith of this man. What a witness to the unbelieving crowd traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover. He called upon Jesus as **Son of David**, His rightful title to be king. He confessed **Jesus as Lord**, (not merely "Rabbi," a

customary title of respect for any teacher). He had faith. When made whole he was given the liberty to go his way seeing. **He freely chose to follow Jesus.** He was given his sight just in time to see his Lord and Savior die on the cross.

(over)

Is your donkey ready? How many had read Daniel's prophetic timetable, Daniel 9:24-27, and had been counting down to that day? How many had read and believed Zechariah's prophecy?

*Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass?*

How many had prepared their donkey's colt for the King? At least one was ready. Let us be ready when He comes for His Bride. We don't know the day or hour as the Jews could have. Get ready to go, now. Don't put it off.

After a night on the outskirts of Jerusalem, in Bethany, the King rode into Jerusalem to the praises of the disciples and the crowds apparently excited by their enthusiasm. Lowly man! Not upon the white horse of a victorious conqueror but the common beast of service, cultivating fields and carrying riders and burdens. The Lord had always walked, but He rode this time. Not on a magnificent leather saddle with many ornamental trappings but simply some travel worn clothes of his disciples. Not a newly paved highway and festive roadside bunting but some branches cut from the trees along the wayside strewn in His path, along with some clothing of the spectators, an act of deference and submission on their part. They cried aloud:

***Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.***

He willingly received the voluntary honors and worship of the common people. (Hosanna means "Oh save!" It was an exclamation of adoration as well as a plea for rescue. The names Joshua, Hosea and Jesus are examples of this word used as a name.) The annoyance of the priests and officials is not mentioned by Mark. Jesus knew what awaited Him but He made sure they and the whole city had a genuine opportunity to receive Him as their King. Their refusal would assure the doom of their nation. He walked into the temple, looked around, and left for Bethany where His friends, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, awaited Him with an open home, open hearts, and another good nights sleep.

Before the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebucadnezzar, Ezekiel recorded a vision of Jehovah leaving His temple on His traveling throne, upon His grand chariot

with giant wheels within wheels. Now Jehovah was back, without the throne and chariot, and not to stay. I believe Jesus walked into the temple and carefully and thoroughly inspected it as the One who owned it. Jehovah had returned to His Temple. He wasn't pleased with much of what He found. Jesus cast out the money changers the next day.

The next morning after spending the night, significantly, outside of Jerusalem, He returned to the city. Hungry after His walk He sought a snack from a wayside fig tree, but finds none. Lots of leaves (which normally don't appear until the fruit is ripe) but no figs. Mark's statement "For the time of figs was not yet" is telling. Why curse the fig tree for having no fruit if it wasn't the time for fruit? Why did Jesus even seek fruit if it was not the season for it? But why then, if it wasn't the time for fruit, were there abundant leaves? The tree was symptomatic of the hypocritic condition of the City He was approaching. It was zealously religious and nationalistic but without fruit for God. Lots of leaves, an out-of-season show of "life" but no fruit. Jesus forecast a similar appearance of life in a spiritually barren Israel before the tribulation preceding His return. Sadly, professing Christendom has become like that today. Judgement awaits, but first the rapture.

Significantly, the Jews returned to their land and established a new nation in 1948, almost 1880 years after it was destroyed by the Romans 40 years after Jesus was crucified. But they have returned in unbelief. Nothing has changed spiritually. The nation is today an excellent example of man's national self-reliance. By the providence of God it has so far successfully defended itself from a number of unwarranted attacks from neighboring nations. Although there is a significant "orthodox" minority, nationally Israel is presently a secular nation which does not acknowledge God or attribute any of its success to God. Although we believers may regard them as God's chosen earthly people they do not regard themselves as His. And neither the secular majority or religious minority acknowledge Jesus as Messiah (Christ) nor as Lord. They have returned to the land in unbelief. They have twice been driven from it because of unbelief, about 600BC and 70AD. Now back again there is no scriptural guarantee they will not be driven off again. Eventually they will stick there, and after the Rapture they will receive an imposter as their Christ and be subjected to their horrible, unprecedeted final tribulation. Worse than the holocaust under Hitler? Yes! But the Lord Himself will appear to judge and rescue a remnant of Israel and save the whole earth from imminent self destruction. They will cry "Hosanna" from the heart then. He will establish His long awaited kingdom of righteousness and peace on earth, good will toward men!

By Ron Canner, March 21, 2007