

Holy Week - Tuesday

The Great Debate.....

It is now Tuesday morning in Jerusalem. The disciples attention is drawn to the fig tree Jesus had cursed the day before. Look at it now, it has withered and died! They remembered Jesus had spoken of the power of faith and how a tree would be uprooted and even a mountain could be moved by faith.

As this week progresses, the disciples will need to draw deep upon their faith to see this week through. For each one of them would be tested beyond anything they had yet experienced. The time of testing was coming and how bitter it was going to be.

The chief priests, Scribes and elders wasted no time since Monday's events at the temple. They conspired together, plotting murderous thoughts against Jesus. Their anger grew each time they considered this carpenter from Nazareth's claims to be equal with God. We must put a stop to this blasphemer, who does he think he is?

Jesus asked this question of his disciples just last week, saying, "Who do people say I am?" It was Peter who gave the right answer, 'For you are the Messiah, the Holy One of God'. The identity of Jesus is the worlds most important question. The answer we give will determine our response to him. We will either call him liar, lunatic or Lord.

The religious leaders agreed on a plan of action. A series of traps would be set to ensnare Jesus by his own words. A series of questions would be presented to him which are impossible to answer without him incriminating or discrediting himself. They hoped he would trap himself with his answers and be either arrested by the authorities or the people will stone him to death.

So four questions were cleverly constructed to ensnare and humiliate Jesus in the most public way. The plan would surly work, we cant lose, the plan is perfect, or so they thought!

1. By whose Authority (Mark 11:28)

When Jesus is asked the question He doesn't take the bait - seeing through their plots and schemes, He turns the tables and asks them a question and tells them, I will answer your question if you can give me an answer! So Jesus asks them, "John's baptism - was it from heaven, or from human origin? Tell me!" (Mark 11:30).

The religious leaders hadn't anticipated this. Now they were backed into a corner. If we respond from heaven they knew Jesus would say why then don't they believe the one whom John spoke of who was to come after him? And if we respond he was only a man they risked the anger of the crowd as the people held John in high esteem as a prophet sent by God. So they said, 'We cant answer the question!', So Jesus refuses to answer their question.

Jesus however doesn't leave it there. He offers 3 parables which was not lost on the Pharisees.....

- a) The two sons
- b) Murderous tenants
- c) Guest at a wedding feast

They knew Jesus spoke these in judgment against them, this just added fuel to the fire.

Question 2: “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (Luke 20:22)

The first trap failed but there are still three more to come. This question would highlight Jesus allegiance, it is impossible to answer. This question raises strong emotions. The answer Jesus gives would either be to support Rome by paying the taxes and lose credibility with the people or to object to paying the taxes and risk being arrested for insurrection. The crowds were silent, waiting for Jesus’ response.

‘Give to me a coin’, Jesus asks the crowd, ‘Whose image is on the coin? Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God’ (Matthew 22:19-20)

It was a perfect answer. We are made in the image of God, therefore we are to give to God what belongs to him - Ourselves, all that we are, All our Heart, All our Soul, All our Mind and All our strength. The answer amazed the people and stunned the conspirators.

Trap 3 A question about the resurrection - whose wife will she be?

The Pharisees and the Herodians have been silenced, their failed. Now the Sadducees try to lure Jesus into trap number 3 and put a question to him about the resurrection, which Sadducees do not believe in. (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40).

Jesus even silences the sadducees, telling them they are in error, have you not read the scriptures. This would have infuriated the pride of the Sadducees by calling them ignorant of the scriptures.

Now sadducees are silenced and their false doctrine about there being no resurrection corrected by Jesus. The Pharisees, Herodians and now the Sadducees have all failed. They are embarrassed and angry, their hearts burning with a deep anger and hatred.

The final question (Which Commandment is the greatest?)

This time the Pharisees want no failures and so send an expert. Who better to send than one who is clever at asking questions and making arguments than a lawyer. So an expert in the law asks the final question. “Which of God’s commandments is the greatest? (Matthew 22:34-40). Jesus summarises the law, love God first and love your neighbour

Every trap has now failed, Jesus turns the tables and has a question for those who attempted to trap him. We read what Jesus does next in, Matthew 23:1-39, Mark 12:38-40 & Luke 20: 45-47.

Returning to Bethany

The disciples heads must be spinning, they rejoiced in Jesus wisdom and ability to answer impossible questions which were asked to trap him. But now they also sense the tension and danger which lay ahead for Jesus after the humiliation of the religious leaders. They know in their hearts, this isn't going to end well!

Judas agrees to betray Jesus

It is traditionally considered Tuesday was the day Judas set out to betray Jesus. Why he actually betrayed Jesus may never be fully known. He did set a price for the betrayal of 30 pieces of silver. Love of money reveals Judas’ heart. John’s gospel calls Judas a thief motivated by greed and money.

Even these events long foretold and written in the Scriptures.....

Psalm 41:9 says, "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he shared my bread has lifted up his heel against me"

Zech 11:12-13 also specifies how much the life of Jesus was worth to Judas in betrayal - 'so they paid me 30 pieces of silver"

It's been an eventful day. As the sun was setting, Jesus is resting with his disciples on the Mt Olives. The disciples draw Jesus attention to the magnificence of the temple and all of the buildings in the city. Jesus responds with words that would have struck terror into the hearts of any who heard him speak.

A time is coming when not one stone will be left on another, all will be thrown down. This begins a conversation about events that would see this fulfilled in AD 70 which we now know was when Emperor Titus went to war against Jerusalem destroying the city and the temple.

The time frame spoken to Daniel by the Angel Gabriel has been reached. The second time frame which involved the sixty two sevens is now reaching its culmination.

There is one final set of seven to be fulfilled. Jesus spoke about the events which would lead up to the final seven year period spoken of in Daniels prophecy and this is still waiting to be fulfilled. See Matthew 24.

From Palm Sunday, the triumphant entry, Monday, overturning the tables in the temple and Tuesday overcoming the traps set by the religious leaders, its been an eventful week. What is planned for Wednesday of Holy Week? we shall find out tomorrow?

God bless. Rev. Ken