

Holy Week - Monday:

To remind ourselves of what happened yesterday.....

Jesus instructs two of his disciples to go on ahead of him into a town where they will find a donkey tied there with her colt. Untie them and bring them to him.

As the disciples were untying the animals they were challenged by some of the people there who asked them what they were doing. The disciples responded with the answer Jesus had previously given them. Jesus foreknew where the animals were to be found and also the disciples would be challenged. The disciples responded with the answer Jesus had already given to them and they were able to walk off with the beasts.

Jesus is now ready and heads to the city of Jerusalem. Crowds followed singing and shouting Hosannah. There was great excitement and eager expectation. The Hebrews had long been told a new King would come, a Messiah who will enter the city riding upon the colt of a donkey.

As Jesus entered the great city, the people gathered spreading their cloaks on the road before Jesus in honour of the King. Branches were cut from the trees and these were laid upon the ground where Jesus was to pass, hence the name Palm Sunday.

Not everyone was pleased, the religious leaders of Jerusalem were nervous. The pharisees told Jesus to silence the crowd and rebuke his disciples from shouting their claims about Jesus being the messiah. Jesus responded, if the people did not shout out, these very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40).

This act of Jesus fulfilled a 500 year old prophecy from Zechariah 9:9

As we know looking back, the nation of Israel was looking for a Messiah to rescue them politically and free them nationally, however Jesus came to rescue them first from a much greater foe and tyranny, sin and death. This was Jesus first priority, everything else would come later.

The people in their excitement missed the most important part of Jesus ministry, the nation was spiritually blind.

“as (Jesus) approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you , had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies....will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you.’

(Luke 19:41-47)

The people missed God’s coming, as we shall see on this day they rejoiced and celebrated but later in the week they cried out crucify.

Monday (Cleansing the temple)

The sun rises early, just before 6am in Bethany, the small village on the Southern slopes of the Mt of Olives, only 1 1/2 miles from Jerusalem.

Jesus spent the night with his friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha. What joy there must have been as the friends united again since the rising of their brother Lazarus who had spent 4 days in the tomb before Jesus called him out, raising him back to life.

The excitement and eager anticipation of the day before as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a carpet of palm leaves and cloaks and cheered on by the crowds. It was a good day and the evening rejoicing with friends end and begins a new week with a very different mood.

The Antonia Fortress

In 35Bc King Herod rebuilt the Baris, a strong fortress to protect the temple mount. It was located on the NW corner of the temple and called the fortress of Antonia (named after Herod's friend Marc Antony).

The fortress stood 115 feet high and was partly surrounded by a deep ravine 165 feet wide. It functioned as the HQ for the Roman soldiers, a palace and barracks. Overlooking the temple this fortress was home to a garrison of 600 soldiers. It is believed it was here at the Antonia fortress that Pontius Pilate judged Jesus.

Everyone was expecting Jesus to turn down the street towards the Baris to challenge the authority of Rome as they expected the King to subdue their enemies. However Jesus didn't take the journey towards the fortress but instead set his sights upon the temple.....It was here that set a chain reaction off which was to see Jesus hanging from a cross by the end of the week.

Cleansing the Temple

When Jesus entered the temple he saw people having to pay to enter the temple and purchase sacrifices from those selling in the court of the Gentiles. As Jesus looked at the merchants and the money changers a holy zeal and a righteous indignation welled up within him. They had turned his Father's house into a market place when it was meant as a house of prayer for all nations.

Psalm 69:9 - for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

Isaiah 56:7 - '.....for my house will be called a house f prayer for all nations'

Jeremiah 7:11 - Has my house, which bears my name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching you declares the Lord.

Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.' "

Scandalous

As the religious elite watched on, in horror they thought he has now crossed the line. It was one thing for Jesus to preach and heal in the streets but to come here and overturn our traditions is another. Then to call this his Father's house was blasphemy - who was this carpenter now claiming to be - equality with God - blasphemy.....

From this point onwards there was now no turning back. The chain of events had started and the plot to kill Jesus had begun. Do you know what happened on Tuesday? Find out tomorrow.

God bless. Rev. Ken