

Following Christ Through The Gospels

Part Nine

As He continued to explain some of the secrets of Heaven the Lord Jesus used the parable of the labourers in the vineyard to emphasise the equal standing that each disciple shares in Him ((Mt. 20:1-16). Luke then poignantly articulated the plan of God, “And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (9:51). *Nothing* would have kept the Lord Jesus Christ from achieving the purpose for which He was sent! Sadly, the last opportunity given to the Samaritans to believe was rejected (Lk. 9:52f.), so He travelled along with the Twelve to Jerusalem. With such anguish He must have climbed the hills into the City (Mt. 20:18,19; Mk. 10:32-34; Lk. 18:31-33). His frustration would have been further tested as the mother of James and John pleaded that He grant unto them the highest place in His Kingdom (Mt. 20:20ff.; Mk. 10:35ff.). It was as if they hadn’t listened to a word He said! He explained to them again that He came to give His life a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).

As He was passing through “the midst of Samaria and Galilee” He met and healed ten lepers, - only one of which thanked Him, ... and he was a Samaritan! (Lk. 17:11-19) Entering Jericho He heeded the call of blind Bartimaeus to heal Him (Mt. 20:30-34; Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43), and He also met and changed the life of Zacchaeus while leaving the town (Lk. 19:1-10). As He approached Jerusalem, - coming in from Bethany to the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple mount, - He instructed his disciples to make preparations for the Passover, - the final Passover that He would share with them (Mt. 21:1ff.; Mk. 11:1ff.; Lk. 19:29ff.; Jn. 12:14ff.). Then, seated upon a lowly donkey, the Son of God entered into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:8,9; Mk. 11:8-10; Lk. 19:36-40; Jn. 12:12,13). As prophesied in the Old Testament He was hailed as the King, ... and yet these same people, - just a few days later, - would be calling out a different message. *Such is the fickleness of humanity!*

As Jesus surveyed the scene, and as God’s eternal plan for salvation approached its accomplishment, the dreadfulness of the prospect of Calvary drew ever nearer. The soul of the Saviour was troubled (Jn. 12:27), yet He knew the cross was the only means whereby the sins of His people could be atoned and the devil defeated (Jn.12:31). The people still continued in their unbelief (Jn. 12:37-41), however, the impact of His witness began to even affect the lives of the chief rulers (Jn. 12:42). With tears, He wept over the city (Lk. 19:41). How the people were so willing to allow the desecration of all that was His Father’s! (Mk. 11:15-17; Mt. 21:12,13; Lk. 19:45,46). In His final week before the crucifixion, He longed for the salvation of the nation of Israel, but their hearts were so turned away from Him that rejection of Him was inevitable. Even the parables that He told were to this end (Mt. 21:28-41; Mk. 12:9; Lk. 20:9-16). ... But, the time was not yet ripe for the Jewish authorities to arrest Him. Indeed, much of the content of His parables in those days was aimed at the Pharisees and their false sense of self-righteousness. Nonetheless, the Pharisees allied themselves with strata of society that hitherto they would have loathed (e.g. the Herodians, Mt. 22:15,16 also the Sadducees (Mt. 22:23ff., esp. v.34). However, Christ did not let up on His criticism of them (Mt. 23:1-36), ... and yet, how His heart broke for the spiritual state of God’s beloved Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 13:34,35).

Joined again by His disciples on the Temple Mount He began to prophesy concerning the end times (‘eschatology’). In Mt. 24, Mk. 13 and Lk. 21 note the repetition of such words as “signs and wonders”, “Watch therefore ...” and also the preciousness of the elect. Then as the pre-Calvary ministry of the Lord Jesus approached its conclusion He was at pains to emphasise to His audience the great difference between the real and the false. He told them the parables of the talents given to the three servants, and then of the five wise and the five foolish virgins, before finally telling them of the separation of the sheep from the goats.

But, what was to be their response? He had sought so faithfully to show these self-righteous the error of their ways, yet they outrightly and unambiguously rejected Him. They left Him, and they went away to assemble themselves together (Mt. 26:3), - soon old enemies would become friends in their quest for Jesus’ destruction. Who had He left? Who now remained with the Saviour? Only His disciples, ... and for how long would even they stay by His side?!