

HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS ABOUT!

(Our Lord planned ahead and set in motion the events that would coerce those in authority to take a stand with regard to him, who he was and what his message was.)

“Where do you want us to prepare the Passover Supper for you?” some of Jesus’ disciples asked him. “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘My appointed time is near; I will celebrate Passover in your house.’” That did not just happen. Jesus planned ahead. The last time he was in Jerusalem he had made arrangements for this time in Jerusalem. What he did know was that this would be his last time in Jerusalem. Events were really heating up and sides were being drawn. What I believe is that Jesus did a lot of advance planning even as he played his cards pretty close to the vest.

Ask yourself about those crowds. Do you think they just happened? That all those people in favor of Jesus just happened to be lining the road as he appeared on the back of a donkey? Think about it. He had sent word. Jerusalem. Passover. The Kidron Valley Road. The Sunday before Passover. Be there. I will be there. I will make my entry into Jerusalem. It is my appointed time. I will purify the Temple.

That is why they were all there. That is why there was this sense of anticipation, enthusiasm, exhilaration, elation, expectancy on the part of so many. This was going to be it. This was what they were all hoping for. Jesus would finally declare himself. They had seen his power. They had heard of his mighty works. He had cured the sick and raised the dead. Now was the time to restore Israel and throw off the hated yoke of Rome. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of God! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest! It was all arranged and now it was beginning to unfold.

Those large crowds came on each Sabbath to their synagogues in Galilee and even Samaria and Judea and that is where his word was spread. This year, at Passover, in Jerusalem, on the Sunday before Passover. Passover was the definitive feast of freedom—freedom from the past slavery in Egypt, freedom from their present slavery to the Imperial Rome. From those gatherings Jesus’ message of freedom and authentic power went forth. His hour had come!

But Jesus’ power is not like other ruler’s power. It is to serve. Part of the very issue he would force had to do with what kind of power people were going to put their faith in. In Jesus’ mind he would force the issue because there comes a time when people have to stand up to be counted. Even the dramatic form of his entry was planned. By sending his disciples to procure an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass, he was planning on the people recognizing a prophecy from Zechariah the prophet (Chapter 9, verse 9)

*“Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion!
Shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king shall come to you;
A just savior is he,*

*Meek, and riding on an ass,
On a colt, the foal of an ass.”*

And while there were so many of the good and ordinary people who were filled with expectancy there were many others, the wealthy religious leaders and business men and estate farmers and the King Herods of the world who were filled with trepidation, fear and dread. They were afraid that this Jesus was going to ruin everything. Everything they had built up and put in place to make their lives easy. They began to think that for the good of the nation and of themselves, he could not be allowed to continue to stir up the hopes of the people. That would ruin everything they had worked out with the Romans behind closed doors. No. He had to go. And so, that became their game plan. Jesus will win over the people unless we do something.

Why? Why does Jesus force the issue knowing that this will be the reaction of some? Because there comes a time when the truth must emerge, when each one must stand up to be counted, when each one will have to declare for all to hear who this Jesus is. Grace is costly. Who do people say that Jesus is? Who do you say He is? Each must answer. But more by deeds than by words. We will see many of his closest followers falter this week and deny and flee. Later they will rally. They will return. There will be Easter but that is for next week. This week begins the week called holy. What will our deeds say about Jesus this week?

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.