

Text: Matthew 16:21-23

Title: Jesus Reveals His Impending Death

Truth: We too easily lose focus on the things of God.

Date/Location: April 6, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Jesus introduces His death and resurrection.

I. Jesus Prophecies About His Upcoming Suffering, v. 21

A. He must go to Jerusalem. In Luke 13:33 Jesus speaks of Himself as a prophet who must die at Jerusalem. He coordinates all His movements in service of His journey to Jerusalem. See Luke 9:51 where this journey began.

Please do not take the “outside of Jerusalem” and correlate it with Hebrews 13:12 in a smarty-pants way to claim an inconsistency in the Bible. It is *obvious* that the Lord is speaking about dying at the city of Jerusalem instead of some other city. He is not making some technical statement that His death must occur “within the city walls” or “inside the city limits.” Doing this sort of criticism thing misses the point entirely.

Another way to miss the point is to start to try to figure out where all the other Jewish prophets died. Indeed, not all prophets died in Jerusalem. Some probably died of natural causes in a lot of different places. Probably John the Baptist died elsewhere at the hand of Herod—but he was not killed by the Jewish leaders. The blood of Abel was shed outside of Jerusalem, since Jerusalem did not even exist at that time. Zechariah (son of Berechiah) was murdered by the Jews right at the Jerusalem temple. What we are seeing here an important link of association between a persecuted prophet and his death at the hands of “God’s people.”

What is the point? The Jewish people and their leaders are going to carry out activities that will lead to the death of Jesus. They will be held responsible for the death of Christ. This will serve to heighten to the maximal degree the guilt of the nation as they reject God once again. They rejected God immediately after the Exodus by rejecting His appointed leader Moses. They did it in Samuel’s day

when they asked for a king (Saul). They did it throughout their history as they went into idolatry and God punished them by splitting the kingdom, sending the northern tribes to captivity in Assyria, and the southern tribes in captivity to Babylon.

In other words, the focus is not on the geographical location of Jerusalem, but of the people that are there, and particularly the apostate leaders.

In all this, we have not commented on one of the most important parts of the verse, a little word in Greek spelled “dei.” No, that does not have anything to do with diversity, equity, or inclusion! It is the Greek word that means “it is necessary.” Put plainly, there was no other option. He had to go to Jerusalem. It was God’s will. The “had to” idea applies to the next three verbs as well.

- B. [He must] suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, scribes. The arrest, the false charges, the physical abuse, the multiple illegal trials, the mocking, the examination by Herod, and then more physical abuse. This all was before He was turned over to the Roman authorities! What an indignity, injustice, and immoral situation He had to face on His way to redeem mankind from sin.
- C. [He must] be killed. While the Jews could not put anyone to death while they were under Roman occupation (John 18:31), they were in effect guilty *along with* the Roman authorities for killing Jesus. Guilt falls squarely upon their shoulders.

Lately I have been sensitized to the fact that there are people who deny that Jesus died. No serious Bible student could believe such a thing. In fact, no serious historical scholar (Christian or not) denies the death of Jesus either—and by Roman crucifixion. The historical and Biblical eyewitness evidence is overwhelming. Jesus was killed.

And He *had* to be killed. Otherwise, prophetic Scripture would not be fulfilled. For example: Luke 24:26, 1 Peter 1:11, Acts 3:18, 17:3; 1 Cor. 15:3, Isaiah 53:10, Zech. 13:7, Psalm 2:2, 16:10 (and Acts 13:37), Psalm 22:1, 6-7, 12-18, 20. The latter Psalm is somewhat debated. Through study I have come to believe this is a poetic expression of the troubles experienced by King David. Jesus memorized it and He appropriated it for His own use. Some

expressions seem almost too specific to refer to David, and if that is the case, David was in fact a prophet (Acts 2:29-30) and could easily have made allusions in his Psalm that were beyond his own life experience but would resonate with all those who are in extreme suffering. The Psalm generally is a pattern of how a godly person responds in suffering—by committing his soul to the Lord.

If Jesus was not killed, then He lied at this very critical juncture in His ministry. And if so, then He is *not* a prophet at all but a liar and a blasphemous liar. It is not even right to contemplate those ideas, however, because what Jesus said did in fact happen.

- D. [He must] be raised the third day. It's one thing to predict that you are going to die—that is easy. Of course, Jesus gave details so that it was far more than a generic prophecy. But to tell others in advance that you will be raised from the dead on the third day after you die? That is amazing. That is the real proof in the pudding that Jesus is no fake. Who else has done this—ever?
- E. The rest of the gospel (and the other gospels) and the entire New Testament is about the fact that Jesus did raise from the dead and that we must follow Him if we hope to achieve that same resurrection out from the dead.

II. Peter's Indignant Response, v. 22

- A. At least Peter spoke to the Lord privately! Too bad for him that it is recorded in Scripture for the world to read, so it did not end up being so private after all.
- B. Peter rebuked the Lord. This is like a father speaking to a son. What a role reversal!
- C. The initial phrase is hard to translate here, something like “May God help you” or “God forbid” or something like that. “Far be it from you” does not seem to me to be the best fit. Then Peter says, “This will not at all ever happen to you.” There is a double-negative here, like in John 6:37.
- D. Imagine taking aside the Lord and rebuking Him. What gall. What it shows is that Peter soon forgot his profession earlier in the chapter. He may not have understood its full importance either.

Basically he forgot his head and treated Jesus like the human being that Peter could see with his eyes, and not as the Son of God which was beyond what was visible in the incarnation to the naked eye. We must not treat God or Jesus like mere human beings that we can be angry at, or tell off, or rebuke like Peter here, or whatever.

E. Then imagine what would be if Peter had his wish—that the Lord never did encounter death and resurrection? Then we would “in no wise ever be on our way to heaven” with a double-negative reinforcing that. Without the death of Christ, no human being can be saved.

III. Jesus Replies with a Focus on the Things of God, v. 23

- A. Peter’s blasphemous suggestion showed that at that moment, Peter’s flesh was being used by the Devil as a tool to attempt to dissuade the Lord from carrying out his God-assigned mission.
- B. Peter could not see the Lord for what He is, but the Lord saw Peter for what he was at that moment of time. At that time, he was an offense to the Lord for suggesting something against God’s will.
- C. Finally, notice a common spiritual human disease: being mindful of the things of men instead of the things of God. How Peter was swallowed up with secular/human concerns. And how often we are as well. Let’s humbly accept the charge where it applies in our lives and repent of it.

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