

Sermon – 16/03/2014 am

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

Study Text: Luke 18:31-34

Here we are in the third month of the New Year. Not long ago we were celebrating the New Year. We were thinking about what we would do this year. We were planning a holiday, looking forward to a new baby, a new job, or a new car. We were not planning to die. We may contemplate our own death but not in the detail that Jesus speaks of – and certainly not when we are only 30 years old. It is interesting that even men in their nineties do not plan on dying any time soon. But Jesus often spoke about his coming death.

None of us thinks our death will achieve anything do we? Some look forward to fertilizing a rose bush with their ashes, but that's not much. Whatever we hope to achieve is in our life, not our death. We look forward to building a house, raising children, healing sick people, getting a sports trophy or maybe eradicating poverty in the world, but it will always be in our life, not our death. But Jesus kept focussing on his death as being the goal of his coming into this world.

In the passage before us Jesus speaks about suffering, being killed and, listen for it, rising from the dead. It was probably not long into the New Year, the year AD30. He was in the prime of life and was a very popular teacher and healer. He was on his way up to Jerusalem, after a wonderful ministry in Galilee, when he took the Twelve aside to tell them of his impending death.

This was not a premonition – it was prophecy – written prophecy. It was not some dream that he had. He was not reading his star chart – do star charts ever say you will die this year? Probably not, but I do not know because I do not read them, and I hope neither do you.

As we look at the words of Jesus predicting his death and resurrection we note that this is not the first time he speaks like this. Back in chapter 9, after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ of God, Jesus said he must suffer and be killed and be raised on the third day; this was probably about a year before his death. Some readers point to a second prediction in 9:44 where he speaks of being betrayed. What we see here in our text is therefore the third prediction; although some point to other verses and say this is the seventh prediction (e.g. Leon Morris).

What is interesting are the similarities between 9:22 and this verse in 18:33. There are some differences also; in particular that he will be delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked and spat on. This has implications for the manner of his being killed; the Jews stoned those sentenced to death while the Romans crucified them.

1. In the Prophets

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. This was the holy city where Jews went to worship God. He was getting closer when he took the apostles aside to tell them what would happen in Jerusalem. He told them that, 'all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished/fulfilled' (18:31). 'Son of Man' is how Jesus often spoke of himself. It is a title derived from Daniel 7, and as such has Messianic significance.

The fact that this title is derived from the Old Testament shows that Jesus was familiar with the Scriptures. He was familiar with the prophets and what they wrote about Messiah. While most Jews believed that Messiah was coming, they did not think of him as a suffering servant; despite the clear words of Isaiah 53. They thought Messiah would be a conquering king and great leader like David, who would deliver them from the Romans.

The Jews thought Messiah would establish his kingdom on earth. They once tried to crown him as such a king (John 6:15). Jesus would have no part in such things, later saying to Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36). But the apostles, like the rest of the Jews, were 'brainwashed' into this false understanding of Messiah. We should not be too critical. 'Brainwashing' continues in the church today, particularly in matters of Biblical prophecy.

Jesus, of course, understood the prophets perfectly – being the author of such prophecies. He not only understood what was written but also that it must be fulfilled – it must be fulfilled in him. All Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is the word of God, so all must be fulfilled. Much of it is already fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. There is also prophecy referring to his second coming, and this is yet to be fulfilled.

Isaiah records words of the Lord saying, 'So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return void but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper the thing for which I sent it' (Isaiah 55:11). Just before this in chapter 53 Isaiah wrote of the suffering servant of God, the Messiah of God. He wrote of Messiah being despised and rejected (*cf* 9:22). He wrote of Messiah being smitten and afflicted, pierced and bruised, and cut off from the land of the living'.

2. Insulted and Killed

What Jesus told the Twelve would happen to the Son of Man was in full agreement with what was written in the prophets. In the earlier mention of his death and resurrection he spoke of being rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes (9:22), which is just what Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 53:5). Here in chapter 18 Jesus said he would be mocked, insulted and spat upon, which is just what Isaiah wrote. He said he would be scourged and killed, again exactly as written in the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah refers to him going to the grave, but yet as 'seeing his seed' and 'having prolonged his days' (Isaiah 53:10), a reference to his resurrection.

Rising after three days was prophesied in Jonah who spent three days in the great fish (Matthew 12:40). The prophets did not refer to his being delivered to the Gentiles as such but the manner of his execution, namely crucifixion, necessitated the hands of Gentiles. Moses lifting up the snake in the desert, and his reference to the curse of God being upon a man hung on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23), point to Messiah being crucified.

It is amazing that Jesus could predict in such great detail the manner of his suffering, death and resurrection. No other man in history has been able to do this. Jesus could do so because of what was written in the prophets. Clearly his death was no accident. It was at the hands of wicked men but was 'by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God' (Acts 2:23). It was according to the Scriptures.

The death of Jesus of Nazareth on a cross outside Jerusalem is engraved not only in Biblical history but in human history. No sensible person has ever denied that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. It was prophesied, it happened, and it is recorded in history. History is divided by this man, this Son of Man and Son of God.

Jesus not only predicted his death but also his resurrection. No wonder his disciples did not understand what he was saying. No man ever spoke like this before. Matthew tells us that when Jesus spoke like this Peter took him aside to rebuke him (Matthew 16:22). Luke simply says, 'they understood none of these things' (18:34). These words no doubt would have applied to us if we had been there. Maybe they still apply to you. Some who call themselves Christians still do not believe that Jesus rose again on the third day.

3. Incomprehensible

It is sad but true that not a few who go to church and partake of the sacraments understand little more than the disciples did at this time. They may believe that Jesus died on the cross but not necessarily that he rose again. They find they cannot believe in the virgin birth or the resurrection because these are beyond natural human understanding. They may be taught that it does not matter anyway.

Many see Jesus as a great teacher in the mould of Mandela or Ghandi. They think it a shame that he did not live to be an old man like Mandela; imagine how much more good he could have done in this world. We have seen how Jesus corrected the rich young ruler in his use of the word 'good' – God alone is good. So let us not be thinking of Jesus in this way and comparing him to mere men of this world.

Jesus was born to die. It is his death and the power of his resurrection that changes the hearts of men and women in this world, not his good life. His death was not a tragic accident; it was the reason he was born into this world, according to what is written in Scripture. He died at the exact time determined by God. They tried to kill him when he first spoke in Nazareth but his hour had not yet come.

When that hour came Jesus was in Jerusalem ready to suffer and be killed. He knew the will of his Father in heaven. It was written in the prophets. But at this time, 'This saying was hidden from them', from the Twelve. As we said, they were brainwashed by the rabbis. Despite being with Jesus for over two years they did not understand these things. The prophecy was so incredible and their sin so blinding that only God could open their eyes to this glorious gospel.

The wonderful thing is that God did just that. They saw Jesus arrested and they saw him suffer. They saw him hung on the cross and they thought this was the end. They were filled with sorrow and fear as they went into hiding. But then they saw the empty tomb and they saw the risen Jesus. They remembered the words that we read here in Luke 18 and in other passages.

In Luke 24 we read how the women, prompted by the angels, remembered these words of Jesus. The Twelve remembered these words because they were so incredible but they later believed every word Jesus spoke. Norval Geldenhuys writes, 'Precisely because it was so incomprehensible to them, the pronouncements remained fixed in their minds, so that after his resurrection they could recollect everything clearly'.

After his resurrection, when they were all together, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they went out to tell the gospel to the whole world. What Jesus said and what it meant was no longer hidden from them. They were no longer doubters but believers. They were not preaching their own ideas but what they had seen and heard, and what written in the Scriptures. Paul refers to the gospel in terms of 'according to the Scriptures'; 'Christ died for

our sins according to the Scriptures and was buried and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures' (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

I trust that it has all come together for you and that you are not missing any pieces to the puzzle, as a preacher once said. Is there anything here in the words of Jesus that you do not understand or find hard to accept. If so, I pray that you will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Our faith is based on facts not fiction. These facts or events were in the mind of God from eternity. They were revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. They were fulfilled in the New Testament. They remain facts today and always.

Jesus did not at this time explain **why** he had to die and rise again. He did this after his resurrection (Luke 24:47). We will also leave this to another time.

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