

Luke 22 – 23 Jesus on His way to the Cross

A little later we're going to remember in God's chosen special way, the means of our salvation – Jesus' death on the Cross and His resurrection three days later. We're going to remember by taking the bread and wine – the symbols of Jesus' body broken and His blood shed for us. But I want us to spend a few moments before that in looking at Jesus Himself in the last hours before His sacrifice.

Can we start at the meal which has come to be known as the Last Supper, where Jesus and His disciples celebrate the Passover together. We find this recorded in Luke's gospel, chapter 22, verse 7 onwards. [Read verses 7–23]

Jesus' disciples see the Passover meal as remembrance of when God freed their people Israel from slavery in Egypt. Jesus is **here** giving them and us the way God wants us to remember how **he** brought freedom from **slavery to sin**.

Jesus knows where he is going. He knows what is going to happen to him. He is completely clear about what will happen to him in the next few hours. In chapter 18, verse 31 Jesus says, *“We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”*

Oh yes, Jesus knew **exactly** what was going to happen there in Jerusalem – his disciples didn't understand what he said to them, that he would have to suffer, **they** didn't understand – but Jesus, the Son of God, knew exactly what he would have to go through and why.

In the passage we read just now, Jesus says that *“The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed,”* [verse 22]. Jesus knows that he has to go the way that has been decreed, the way that has been decided by God, the **only** way that can bring salvation to man. He knows that Scripture has to be and will be fulfilled in His suffering on the Cross and in his resurrection.

Jesus knows what is coming.

Having said that, let's look at Jesus – there is so much we could say, I know, let's just look at a couple of aspects as 'what is written about him is reaching its fulfilment' [according to verse 37]

If you or I knew that we were going to go through tough times, even pain, even death, I think we would probably be very preoccupied with those thoughts – what was going to happen to us, what pain we would have to bear, how we would cope, how we would be able to go through the pain and the suffering. If we knew we were going to have to suffer in some way, I guess – well I **know I** would feel this way – my thoughts would be very much on **me**.

As Jesus is arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane in chapter 22, as he goes on trial before Pilate and Herod, as he is mocked and scourged, and as he is crucified in chapter 23, we see Jesus showing compassion. Jesus is **compassionate**, even at a time when there were other things to weigh heavily on his heart. Jesus is the Son of God; God is love; his heart of love and compassion does not change, even as he approaches the darkest hour.

We see 4 examples of this: 1. We find him in verse 47 of Chapter 22 in the Garden of Gethsemane, men have come with swords and clubs to seize him. Jesus' disciples think they should put up a fight to defend him, and one of them strikes off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus however brings peace to the situation – the only person to be hurt in the next few hours will be **him**. *“And he touched the man's ear and healed him,”* we read in verse 51. Jesus shows mercy and compassion even at this hour, even to those intending to destroy him.

The next morning Jesus is tried and falsely convicted. He is to be crucified. He carries his cross up to where he will be crucified.

2. In Chapter 23, verse 27 we read of many people following him, including women mourning and wailing for him. But at this time, when Jesus had already gone through flogging, and every step along the way must have been tortuous, his mind was not on his own suffering, but on **their coming** suffering – verse 28 *“Jesus turned and said to them ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children.’”* Why? Because by rejecting the Son of God, they would have no future to enjoy. Jesus had wept over Jerusalem in Chapter 19 because they did not recognise the time of God's coming to them. Jesus is here showing that same love and compassion for these people who are caught up in his destruction. He feels for **them**.

Let's move on and see that even on the Cross, as he hangs there, suffering intense pain, naked and dying, going through all that Satan can throw at him, even there he is compassionate towards those around him.

3. Chapter 23, verse 34: *“Jesus said, ‘Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’*” The soldiers have physically put him on the cross. The people around him are mocking him, sneering at him – in some grotesque way enjoying the spectacle. But this cry for God the Father’s pardon reaches out to all who have played a part in some way in his crucifixion. *“Jesus said, ‘Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’*” What amazing mercy, what amazing grace, what amazing compassion and love for a people who are -it seems - destroying him. His mercy, grace, compassion and love reaches out to all he has made – that includes each one of us.

4. You’ll remember that on the cross next to that of Jesus hangs a convicted criminal, deservedly being punished for his wrongdoing. He sees Jesus suffering on the cross despite having done **no** wrong. He **recognises** who Jesus is, the Son of God and King of the Jews, even at this late stage in his life. We read in verse 42, *“ ‘Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise’.*”

Jesus has compassion on this criminal – no matter what crimes he has committed – when he asks Jesus for mercy, Jesus grants him forgiveness – this is why Jesus is suffering on the cross, he is bearing suffering to bring forgiveness of sins to all who call on him. The criminal on the other side of Jesus is urging him to save himself and them – **he** misses the point, Jesus does not save himself so that he **can** save others.

Throughout his life, Jesus was compassionate in loving, healing, forgiving those around him – just the same now, on his way to the cross, even while he was on the cross, **Jesus is the compassionate Saviour.**

Secondly we see Jesus **confident** in the rightness and eventual victory of the plan of salvation. Like a train on its tracks, Jesus moves unswervingly towards the Cross, because he knows this is the only way, God’s way, there is no other way of salvation. We see this on various occasions as Jesus’ crucifixion draws near.

We see as he takes the Passover meal with his disciples, that Jesus is confident that he will come through the suffering he is going to have to experience, and he **will** enter into his kingdom. In verses 16 and 18 of chapter 22 we read that Jesus will not eat the bread nor drink of the fruit of the vine *“until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God ... until the kingdom of God comes.”*

As Jesus prays in Gethsemane, in verse 42 he says, *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* He sees the enormity of what is to happen to him, but he trusts in God the Father – he is confident that he will come through his suffering and enter his kingdom. We read that God sent an angel to assure him of God’s presence with him in his time of trial, to encourage him as he goes through his suffering.

When the chief priests and teachers of the law question him in his trial, they ask Jesus if he is the Christ, the Saviour, the Son of God. He says to them in verse 69, *“... from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”* No matter what he has to undergo in the next few hours, Jesus is **confident** that this is the way that he will enter his kingdom. Through the cross and in his resurrection from the dead, he will be enthroned in his kingdom. He is certain of this.

We have already seen Jesus’ words to the criminal dying on the cross next to him, *“Today you will be with me in paradise.”* Again Jesus shows his confidence of what is to come, *“today you will be **with me** in paradise.”* These are the words of the Son of God, in control, even as he approaches death, knowing that his suffering is nearly over, and his kingdom will soon begin.

But look also at his final words which Luke records here, in verse 46 of chapter 23, *“Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’”* He cried with a loud voice, showing he was convinced and certain that his fate was safe and secure, his suffering and sacrifice would be vindicated. He is confident that he will be victorious, death will be defeated, Satan will be crushed, Jesus’ kingdom will begin.

We started off by reading in chapter 18 that Jesus said to his disciples, *“We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be turned over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”* He knew that after his suffering on the cross he would be raised to life again. He trusted God the Father and was confident that this would happen, as the Scriptures had foretold.

On that first Easter Day, Jesus' resurrection was comprehensive proof that his confidence in God the Father had not been misplaced – after suffering on the cross, after letting Satan do his worst, Jesus rose again, defeating death and Satan. After bearing the punishment for sin in his body, the punishment we deserved, Jesus won a victory which brings forgiveness and freedom from the guilt of sin. Confidence vindicated.

So as we've looked only very briefly at the events as Jesus goes to the cross, we've seen that rather than dwelling on the suffering he knows he is going to go through, our compassionate Saviour continues to be just that. His heart of love and mercy cannot stop showing compassion to those caught up in events around him.

Jesus **knows** that he is the Son of God, he **knows** that salvation can only come if he the sinless one suffers and dies for the sins of man. He knows what is going to happen to him in Jerusalem. But he is also **confident** that he will have the victory. God the Son trusts God the Father, and Jesus will be raised to life to begin his kingdom. He **will** be king. The sign on the cross read "*This is Jesus, King of the Jews*", but he wasn't the king that the Jews were expecting – he is to be King of a heavenly kingdom. Jesus is the Saviour, the Lord and King of the kingdom of God, because he **died**, he **rose** and will **come again**.

We've focused on Jesus. Why? Because what he did in those three days has a miraculous and life-changing impact on each of our lives. I trust that you each know something of that in your lives.

Let me close this section of our meeting by reading some words from Psalm 103, verses 8 – 14. [Read]