

Leading toward Easter: The Determination of Jesus Luke 1-19

While looking through the first nineteen chapters of the gospel of Luke, I recorded that which I beheld. . . .

We see Jesus announced (Lk 1:26-56); born (2:1-20); dedicated, and blessed (2:21-39); growing up (2:40-52); heralded (3:1-20); baptized (3:21-22); tempted yet victorious (4:1-13); ministering (3:23; 4:14ff); teaching, rejected, driving out evil spirits, healing, calling followers, praying (with others and alone), blessing and cursing (6:17-26); exhorting, encouraging, loving, anointed, supported by some, sleeping during a storm, silencing a storm, deploying apostles, meeting physical needs, and then . . .

The Twelve returned from their trip of preaching and healing--expecting to rest, recuperate and fill Jesus in on the experience. This seemed like Jesus' intentions too; however, the crowds found Him and them. Jesus welcomed them, spoke to them, healed them and then miraculously fed them. Then, they all finally got their leisure time.

Once, Jesus asked the disciples who they believed He was. When Peter proclaimed, "The Christ of God," Jesus dropped "the bomb" that He must suffer much and be killed. Then He pointed out the cost of choosing to follow Him: The degree of difficulty of following Christ depends on how closely one wants to follow.

Eight days later, Jesus headed up a mountain to pray. He took Peter, James, and John. Something spectacular happened up there which conveyed the glory of Jesus ever so brightly. His Father, himself spoke, identifying Jesus as His Son, who was to be listened to.

The next day it was business-as-usual: crowds coming up; people being healed and freed from demons; Jesus teaching; people being amazed--and then Jesus states that someone's going to betray Him. But His followers didn't understand. Instead, "the boys" argued about who's the greatest and who can and can't drive out demons.

Meanwhile, Jesus knew the time was drawing close. He knew the day was coming when He'd be taken up to heaven, yet He also knew that He must suffer tremendously before that day arrived. So, He mustered up the "guts" of His humanity and His intense, undying love as deity, and it is stated, "Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (9:51).

For Him, there was no turning back. He made up His mind and set His life's direction toward Jerusalem. It wasn't a popular destination for His followers and He knew what awaited Him if He went. But greater than that expectation, He knew what awaited all of God's children if He did not go. His love for us was the deciding factor and the determining glue which fixed His mind on reaching Jerusalem.

Jesus set His course and continued His ministry "as He made His way to Jerusalem" (13:22). He held much compassion and sorrow for that city. He knew of the treatment given prophets and others sent to her. He had longed to draw her near to His heart, but she was unwilling.

Some Pharisees (not the typical self-righteous, plotting ones of that time it seems) came to warn Jesus that King Herod wanted Him dead. They strongly suggested He leave and go somewhere else. But Jesus had a plan and a goal to reach, and He was intent on reaching it. He kept on going. He told them that the next time they saw Him they'd be saying blessings to Him (13:35).

Jesus continued on with His traveling as well as teaching, healing, and encouraging. He taught and taught, just like a man who knows He's going to die and still has much to say. All the while, the self-righteous Pharisees were muttering about Him and sneering at Him.

"On His way to Jerusalem" (17:11), He continued His ministry. Over and over He did what He came to do among people, as He kept His focus on what He primarily came to do for people. He mentioned the rewards and celebration for those who follow in His footsteps: "many times as much" as what one surrenders "in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life" (18:29-30).

He pulled the Twelve aside to restate the plan, "We are going up to Jerusalem" (18:31). He told of the fulfillment of prophecy that would take place there. He told of His betrayal, the mocking, insulting, spitting and flogging He must face. He told them of His death and He gave a burst of hope in saying He would not remain dead, but would rise from the dead on the third day after they kill Him! All this news and the disciples still didn't understand. At least they'd heard it all.

While in Jericho, He healed a blind man's eyes. He changed a tax collector's heart. He cleared up some misconceptions about the kingdom of God. ("He was near Jerusalem" at this point --19:11.)

Moving closer, "going up to Jerusalem" (19:28), He paused at the Mount of Olives to have the disciples go acquire some transportation. They brought a colt to Jesus. He mounted it and rode into Jerusalem with "the whole crowd of disciples joyfully praising God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: `Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord'" (19:37-38).

As Jesus "approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it" (19:41). If only she'd known what would bring the time of God's coming to her. And so, Jesus began the last week of His life, having met His goal of going to Jerusalem.

He arrived seated
on a colt;
He'd depart nailed
to a cross
--all because of His deep
and undying love
for you
and me!

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