

***HE HAS SET HIS FACE TOWARDS JERUSALEM – SAMUEL CLOUGH***  
***A PICTURE OF THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY THAT ACCOMPANIES JESUS' APPROACH TOWARDS JERUSALEM***

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***Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. – Luke 9:51-54 NKJV***

**I. JESUS' APPROACH TO JERUSALEM**

- A. Luke's record of Jesus' approach to Jerusalem in Luke 9:51-54 is set in the context of Jesus' personal journey to the cross. Earlier in the chapter Luke recorded Jesus' prediction of His own crucifixion and suffering (Luke 9:22) along with a clear admonition for the disciples to embrace the same determination in their own lives if they want to follow Him (Luke 9:23-27). When we come to Luke 9:51-54 two things are clear:
1. Jesus is going to Jerusalem and no man can turn Him from that goal.
  2. Jesus is going to suffer and die in Jerusalem.
- B. The Messianic backdrop is clear when Luke records a calculated approach to Jerusalem. There was a lot of expectation for the day when Messiah approaches Jerusalem and executes judgment on the nations, but the shocking thing that Luke records for us is that the Judge will approach Jerusalem in mercy before He comes in judgment.
1. In understanding the context of Jesus' approach to Jerusalem, Luke gives us a full picture of the heart of the Messianic Judge.
  2. The King subjects Himself to humiliation before He takes His rightful place as king in Jerusalem. This humiliation reveals the tender heart of the Judge and that the Judge desires mercy before judgment. The shedding of His own blood and the humiliation of His own body reveal the tenderness of His heart and the depths of His desire for and commitment to mercy.
- C. The reader should clearly understand then that Luke is describing this approach to Jerusalem in such a way that it parallels the approach to Jerusalem at the end of the age when judgment will be executed. The two approaches are remarkably similar. The difference is that the first is to open a window a mercy before the second in which the window of mercy is closed and judgment is executed. That window of mercy was unexpected by Jesus' contemporaries.
- D. Luke also gives us a very clear picture of the forerunner ministry when Jesus desires to approach Jerusalem at the end of the age. Jesus sent the disciples as forerunners but, like John the Baptist, they were a picture of a much larger sending of forerunner messengers that will precede and accompany His approach towards Jerusalem at the end of the age.

**II. HE SET HIS FACE**

***...when the time had come...He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. – Luke 9:51 NKJV***

- A. Luke 9:51 must be understood in the context of Luke 9:21-27. Jesus had already embraced the suffering and rejection that would come when He entered Jerusalem. He knew what was going to happen when He entered Jerusalem and He was determined to enter the city.
- B. The suffering and agony of the cross could not deter Him from His Father's will. Doing His Father's will was His primary consideration, not the shame and suffering of the cross. Nothing could deter Him. This is why He called His disciples to have this same sort of resolution in their hearts and follow His heart posture (Luke 9:23-27). He did not just follow the Father's will fatalistically, but He approached Jerusalem with determination.
- C. Jesus understood the shame of what He was about to do. In this context, He called the disciples to not be ashamed either of Him or His words. He knew His words about embracing the cross were offensive to men. He knew that what He was about to do in Jerusalem would be humiliating and that men would be forever ashamed of the idea of God hanging naked and humiliated on a cross as the means of cosmic redemption. In that context, Jesus spoke very direct and serious words – we are not to be ashamed either of Him or His words. Instead we are to set our face like Him (Luke 9:23).
- “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed...” – Luke 9:26 NKJV***
- D. Luke's description of how Jesus set His face and His heart (Luke 9:22,51) reveals how fierce His dedication was to entering Jerusalem and securing mercy on the cross. It is not a passive commitment to mercy, but a fierce commitment to enter the city and fulfill His Father's will.
1. When Jesus approaches Jerusalem at the end of the age for judgment, His dedication to His Father's desire will be just as fierce and terrible. *He will execute judgment with the same tenacity that He secured mercy with.*
  2. The same fierce dedication that caused Him to embrace and run towards the cross will also empower Him to enter the city in judgment and destroy all unrighteousness. The fierce resolve that covered Him in His own blood on the cross will also cover Him in the blood of the nations when He enters Jerusalem again (Isaiah 63).

### **III. HE SENT MESSENGERS BEFORE HIS FACE**

***...sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. – Luke 9:52 NKJV***

- A. ***Luke gives us one of the clearest examples of the forerunner ministry*** – Jesus was giving a foretaste of the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3. Once Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem, He sent messengers, or forerunners, before Him to announce His coming.

1. In ancient times, a king would send an envoy before him to prepare the people to receive the king. This messenger would be entrusted with the authority of the king and command the people to prepare the king. In the same manner, Jesus will send messengers before Him to command the nations to receive Him as the ultimate King and Judge of the nations.
  2. Once Jesus had set His face to enter Jerusalem, He sent these messengers to prepare the people for His arrival. In the exact same manner, when Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem again at the end of the age, He will release a forerunner ministry of messengers that will be sent to proclaim His coming with clarity and authority. It is very likely that we are entering that period of history when Jesus is again beginning to set His face towards Jerusalem and we will begin to see the forerunner ministry released on a global scale to declare to all the nations that Jesus is coming as bridegroom (because of love), king (to rule from Jerusalem), and judge (to judge sin and wickedness).
- B. ***They were sent before His face*** – When Jesus decided to approach Jerusalem, He sent messengers before His face. This has two very clear implications:
1. The messengers were sent from the place of intimacy. Jesus will commission messengers that are before His face. He does not send random messengers but those who have sought His face.
    - a. Those who will be sent as messengers are not those who have sought ministry, but those that have sought Jesus Himself. He will send those who are “Friends of the Bridegroom” whose chief delight is not in their ministry or power, but in Jesus Himself (John 3:29).
    - b. One of the primary purposes of the prayer movement in our generation is to prepare these messengers by putting them before Jesus’ face in the place of prayer and fasting. Houses of prayer are incubators where messengers are being formed “before His face” that they might be sent before the earth sees His face.
    - c. Forerunners choose to give their life to proclaiming specific messages before the church at large emphasizes them. In the same way, they begin to live before His face in order to prepare the church to live before His face and the nations to experience His face.
  2. Messengers carry a very serious ministry of preparing the earth to receive Jesus. This is a great and a terrible calling. John recalls that when Jesus sets His face to enter Jerusalem again that the nations will cry out in fear and terror because of the glory of His face.  
***“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?”***  
***– Malachi 3:2***  
  
***...said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?”*** – Revelation 6:16-17 NKJV

***Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. – Revelation 20:11 NKJV***

3. These messengers both live before His face and are sent out before Jesus' face appears to the nations to prepare the earth to receive Him. In the kindness of His face towards believers and the terror of His face towards wicked nations we see the fullness of bridegroom, king, and judge. For some His face will be great comfort, for all it will be great glory, and for many it will be great terror.

**C. *Luke records that they entered a village of the Samaritans*** – Jesus focused most of His ministry on Israel though He interacted with and responded to gentiles that sought Him out. Jesus had previously sent out His disciples and specifically commanded them to only go to Israel and not to Samaria or the nations (Matthew 10:5-6).

1. When He set His face for the confrontation with the enemy in Jerusalem, the messengers He sent went through Samaria. A forerunner ministry not just in Israel but also in the nations precedes the confrontation in Jerusalem, both the first confrontation on the cross and the second one with the nations that is coming.
2. At the end of the age, the forerunner ministry will not just go to Israel; it will be throughout the nations of the earth. This ministry will take a significant amount of time to unfold because God is going to release a witness in every nation. Not only will every nation hear the gospel of salvation, they will hear the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 24:14).
  - a. At the end of the age, that gospel will be that the King is coming. It is very possible that this ministry will occupy the better part of a generation to announce Jesus' return and prepare the people for it.
  - b. The modern missions movement is going to have to establish strong eschatological foundations for the final missions thrust of history. Many are focused on fulfilling Matthew 24:14 but few are emphasizing the context of Matthew 24:14 and it is an eschatological context. The gospel is going to the nations is for salvation, but it is also for the preparation of every nation to respond to the return of Jesus.
3. This preparation ministry is to prepare both men individually and nations for His return. It will meet much opposition but it is a required ministry.

#### **IV. THEY DID NOT RECEIVE HIM BECAUSE OF JERUSALEM**

***But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. – Luke 9:51 NKJV***

- A. ***The messengers of Jesus' return to Jerusalem will not be received on a global level*** – The messengers He sends will face incredible opposition. There will be a harvest as many will turn in repentance, but the kingdoms of the world will reject them. The messengers He sends will have the same experience as John the Baptist who turned many to repentance, but also faced stiff opposition.
1. Many in the church will reject the proclamation of the messengers just as the town in Samaria rejected Jesus' disciples. Samaritans were an ethnic mixture of Jews and people who had settled in the land. In the same way, those in the church that have tolerated mixture will reject Jesus at the end of the age.
  2. Samaria also represents the nations of the earth that surround Israel. Governmentally, the nations of the earth will reject the proclamation of Jesus as a real, political King and finally surround Jerusalem to extinguish the city that is Jesus' desire.

- B. ***They rejected the messengers because Jesus' face was set for Jerusalem*** – Jerusalem will be the divisive issue at the end of the age. It will be a stumbling block to all people.

***And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all the nations of the earth are gathered against it. – Zechariah 12:3 NKJV***

1. Israel has always been a stumbling block to the nations and so too at the end of the age. The people of the earth will literally be divided over the issue of Jerusalem and the Jewish people.
2. Jerusalem will be the stumbling block of the nations precisely because Jesus has set His face on it. The controversy that surrounds Jerusalem and the Jewish people is entirely because He has set His face on them.

***For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you [Zion] touches the apple of His eye." – Zechariah 2:8***

## V. THE HEART OF THE MESSENGER

***"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But he turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." – Luke 9:54-56 NKJV***

- A. Even though the messengers He sends will face tremendous opposition and pressure, it is critical that they have the heart of Jesus. Though He is coming as judge, everything He does is rooted in love. It is the fire love in Him that causes Him to judge and the messengers He sends must know that flame of love.
- B. Jesus rebukes the disciples because they wanted to call down judgment on those who have rejected Jesus. They did not have the true heart of the Judge who loves mercy.

- C. Jesus' heart is revealed in the fact that He entered Jerusalem for mercy first before He enters Jerusalem for judgment. His mercy is also on display in the gap between the two entrances into Jerusalem. He gives the nations time to respond to mercy offered. The heart of the Judge is for mercy first of all. As Art Katz used to say, "It is not judgment that is penultimate, but mercy."
1. His intentional entrance into Jerusalem to face the horror of the cross forever declares the nature of the Judge. In all His glory, He is seen as a "Lamb slain" in the midst of the throne (Revelation 5:6). He is forever, even as Judge, a Lamb slain who willingly surrendered His life to provide mercy for all who would repent. We will tremble at His tenacity as Judge, but tremble even more at the greatness of His mercy.  
***And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain... - Revelation 5:6 NKJV***
  2. Jesus' love of mercy is also in display in the intentional sending of messengers before His face into the nations of the earth before He enters Jerusalem. Before He enters the city for final judgment, He wants every nation to have the opportunity to prepare for His coming. Messengers are sent before His face to prepare the nations to receive Him in repentance so that they will not face His wrath.
- D. Messengers must remain fully rooted in the love of God, or the pressures they face will cause them to become bitter and forget what spirit they are of and lose the heart of the coming Judge in the very act of preparing the earth for His approach.