

The Plans Of God And Men Luke 21:37-22:6

As we read these precious words of scripture, we need to always keep in mind who Jesus truly was as He went about ministering to the people of His day. Yes, in His human condition, He was a man, a man much like you and me. But that's not all. Jesus was more, much more. He was also the Almighty God who had actually created the very ground that He was walking on each day.

And yes, the pathway, the journey He walked each day was all part of a plan, a divine plan that He, the Lord Jesus, had been a part of making, a plan that had been worked out and put into place in eons past by the Holy Trinity of God, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and again, yes, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Himself.

And because Jesus was part of the making of that divine plan, He already knew the exact steps that He was to take each day as He journeyed on towards that inevitable moment in time, that moment when He would breathe His last there on that cross.

And yes, some bible teachers might argue that Jesus really didn't know everything that was to take place. Because He had actually said so on the occasion when He was asked about when he would return for the final closing of human history on the earth. And so, yes, in some manner or other Jesus could limit Himself in His awareness of some things.

But may I simply say to you that while I am personally not able with my immature faith to know what that limitation was all about, I do know what these scriptures reveal. And they reveal clearly that at this moment in time that is spoken about here, Jesus knew that His remaining days were extremely limited, that within just a few days, He would be betrayed by Judas, He would be tried in a mock court of the Jews and then crucified on a cross by the Roman soldiers.

And also dear Christian, Jesus knew above all else that it was the exact right thing that needed to take place to bring salvation to the souls of mankind for their sins, to you and to me.

Remembering again that He, Jesus, was Himself part of that "Plan-Making Trinity of God" who made the plan that was unfolding daily. And as He moved step

by step towards that cross, yes He knew that as horrible and as painful as they would be, He needed to get on about those next steps. And so he did!

Listen, beginning here in verse 37 of Luke chapter 21,

³⁷ And every day he (Jesus) was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸ And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him. (Luke 21:37-38)

And then in Luke chapter 22 verse 1,

¹ Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. ³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd. (Luke 22:1-6)

You will recall that over the past few weeks, we have been studying about the events that have led up to this moments that we are reading about here, that Jesus had just been speaking to His disciples about those ominous and foreboding events that would surely take place sometime out in future days, events that these scriptures call "The Last Days".

Jesus knew that His days ahead of Him were limited and as the "faithful watchman on the wall", He knew that He needed to give these people, and especially His disciples, these final warnings and encouragements.

And as we studied about those future days that still lay ahead of us, we had asked ourselves the question, "if we believe that those days will surely come to pass and are perhaps even now drawing near, how should we then live during our remaining days?"

And we read those words given to us in 2 Peter 3, that ask that very question,

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? (2 Peter 3:11)

And then our answer . . .

¹¹ . . . You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (2 Peter 3:11-14)

Sadly, it seems that we seldom take these warnings from the Lord Jesus very seriously. That yes, when we hear them, we think on them for a while and we make plans to do things differently. But then, as time passes, our enthusiasm wanes and eventually we get back to “business as usual”. We get back to all the pressing matters of the daily life around us.

My mind goes quickly to the events of 9-11 when the terrorists high-jacked airplanes and killed so many, many people. That was truly a wake-up call from God! And I believe that many heard that wake-up call, at least for a moment.

But looking back now, it's easy to see how, eventually the effects of that warning faded away, and most all of us simply got back to “business as usual”, back to our “natural way” of doing things.

A few people continued to heed the warning, but probably not in the way that God intended. Those few are now called “preppers”, the ones we see building underground bunkers and stocking up with food and weapons.

Is that kind of response completely wrong? I don't really know. But I do know that it is not the response that we just read about. Those words again

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This is the response that God really desires from us. We are not to simply get back to “old business” in our old “natural way”. But rather, in Christ, there is to be a new and different way that we should be about our daily lives.

Today, as we examine these words of scripture, and especially the people spoken about within them, may we consider the conduct of each person as they went about their days, most of them in their “natural way”!

Turn there again and follow along with me beginning in verse 37 of Luke 21, and then moving on forward into the first six verses of Luke chapter 22.

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Here in these words, right after having heard the warnings from the Lord Jesus about the sure and certain last days of the earth and the severe judgment that the people on the earth would suffer, we have an account of the way in which all these different people got about the next steps in their daily lives.

Here, we observe the Lord Jesus, fully aware that these few days that lay ahead of Him would be some of His last days. He was faithfully getting about the ministry that He had come to earth to do, each day teaching and preaching.

You'll recall that only a few days earlier, He had made His triumphal entry into the City of Jerusalem, with people shouting Hosanna and casting their clothing and palm branches before Him.

And in the days that followed His arrival, He quickly got about what He called “His Father’s business”. In another place, He had said, “I came not to do my own will, but to do the will of My father who sent me”. And in another place, He said, “I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.” And He was being about doing exactly that!

Here in the previous few days, Jesus had driven the money changers from His Father's House, the temple. He had often debated with the Scribes and Pharisees. And He had taken a special opportunity to declare a stern warning regarding the terrors that would come upon men during the end of days.

And now here, we read about the three or four days just before the night in which he was betrayed. And although He knew exactly what was about to take place, He simply stayed the course and got about what He was supposed to be about, "His Father's business" . . . to "seek and to save those who are lost".

Every day He taught the people in the temple and at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet.

Jesus simply got about who He was and about the purpose for which He had been called to be among us. He came "to seek and to save those who are lost". He came to preach the gospel to anyone and everyone who would listen. And He allowed the rest of the people to be about who they were, to make the choices that came naturally to them.

His had not been an easy calling and pathway to walk, with so many people rejecting His truths and now were continually planning ways to have Him killed.

Thankfully, He was the Lord Jesus, fully God as well as being fully man. And He was not discouraged by the constant contention and rejection. And He simply continued on with the purpose for which He had been sent. He preached His "Good News" to all those who would come to hear Him.

And then note here also that at the end of the day, He would remember to go back to the source of His comfort and be renewed in His Spirit.

We know that to be so, because in several other places in these gospels, we found Jesus secluding Himself on the Mount of Olives to pray and to commune with God His Father, and there replenishing His strength for the next coming day.

And this is wisdom that you and I should follow. We must not keep "spending out" our Spiritual and physical energies without replenishing them.

Yes, we truly can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, but we must keep going back to His Well for fresh water, else we will surely live a weakened life.

Again, may I repeat myself and say that here in these simple words, we find Jesus being about who He was and the purpose for which He was sent.

Next, we read about some of the people, those whose hearts were being drawn to Him, coming to the temple in the early morning hours to hear His words of truth.

These were the kind of people that preachers of the gospel hope for, eager ones, people who will get up early and gather to hear the "good news" of salvation.

And because God does not give us needless words, we should also take further notice regarding the word "early".

Yes, it was because Jesus wanted to take advantage of every minute of His remaining time on the earth. But it was also because, early morning truly is the best time for hearing and thinking and comprehending.

Some people declare that they do not do so well in the early morning. But may I say that that is not usual. In the early morning our minds have not had time to become cluttered with all the many worries and concerns of the day.

So then, on the authority of these words, may I strongly urge you to rise up early and to spend time getting to know the Lord and communing with Him.

Moving on into chapter 22, we find people who are not eager to know the Lord Jesus and to receive His truths. First, the chief priests and the scribes who are said to want to kill the Lord Jesus. And may I say that these people were also simply being about who they were and what they do, their "natural way".

They were men who were guided by their fears and they became liars and deceivers, eager to dispose of this obstacle that now stood in the way of their pleasant lifestyle and comfortable beliefs, the Lord Jesus.

Then next, we encounter the one who is behind and within most every evil thought or deed, the master of all deceivers, the powerful adversary, satan who is also being about his "natural way", said here to be able to enter into the hearts of men and cause them to do and to say things that accomplish his purposes.

This folks is a strange phenomenon that our minds can't quite grasp, that a demonic being can influence and even enter into some people and take control over them.

And not just wretched evil people, but also able to strongly influence even the finest and most devout of followers of Christ, as satan would do with Peter, influencing Peter to try to talk Jesus out of being crucified.

Now here, we find satan actually entering into Judas, and strangely, to do the exact opposite of what he would attempt with Peter. Here, satan took control over Judas to cause Judas to betray Jesus to His death on the cross, the very opposite of what he would do with the Apostle Peter.

This says to me that as "crafty" and as intelligent as satan is, he still does not know how to combat the plans and the purposes of God. And he never will!

And then here, consider Judas, the one who would betray Jesus. He too was being about his "natural way". By his behavior, we know that he had never truly accepted Jesus as his Savior and Lord. And in his lost condition, he was easily deceived by the wiles of satan.

And his name has become forever synonymous with the concept of betrayal and deceit.

And then, all together, we have the three conspiring, satan, Judas and the Jewish leaders, making their plans to kill Jesus, obeying their natural tendencies and doing what came natural to them.

Folks, may I offer an observation about all of these things that are taking place in the hearts of men and demons? First, that yes, they are being about their "natural way", who they are, and what they do. But then again, within the midst of all their evil doings, God is also doing what comes naturally to Him, He is fully at work, bringing about His will, His plans and His purposes.

We must remember that God is really the Grand Director of all the activities on the earth. Listen to these words from Isaiah chapter 45, verse 5. There God tells us,

⁵ "I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; ⁶ That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, ⁷ The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. (Isaiah 45:5-7)

God truly is the "Grand Director" of all things. And while these men and demons do go about who they are, the fact is, the Lord Jesus came to the earth for the very purpose that these evil ones were planning amongst themselves to do.

How could that be except that Jesus' death on the cross to save men's souls had been planned and orchestrated within the Trinity of God long before the foundations of the earth had been laid! And unbeknownst to these men, they were simply carrying out God's divine plan.

Now, let's admit that at best, those thoughts are incomprehensible to our natural minds, men plotting evil, but with that evil to be able to accomplish the divine plans of a Holy God so that your and my soul might be saved. That is too lofty, too marvelous a thought for our minds to comprehend, but it is still true, nonetheless.

And God knows about our weakness of understanding. He said in Isaiah chapter 55,

⁸ . . . my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

And so, as we see the evil plans of men coming to fruition and as we know that their plans will result in the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, we must also believe and accept that it was really the unfathomable love and grace and mercy of God being carried out!

So then, what must you and I gain from these words today? It is this!

Yes, men and angels will always be about who they are and what they do. If they be evil, then evil they will do. Satan and his demons will always be deceiving people and plotting evil. And many men and women will join with them in their evil plans, some knowingly, but others unknowingly.

But as for you and me, as believing Christians, we don't have to be the way those people are! You and I have the living presence of Christ abiding within us. We are "New Creatures". Our old "natural way" no longer has control over us. We have a "new natural way" within us. We have a new heart and a new mind and a new spirit, filled with the presence of Christ to guide and direct our "new natural way".

And what a blessed thought that is! We can now do as we read at the beginning of our study. We can live holy and Godly lives as we look forward to the day of our Lord and speed His coming, making every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

Praise be to God for His indescribable free gift.

Pray with me.