

The End and the Beginning

- The journey to Jerusalem and the events leading up to the resurrection are woven by Matthew into a riveting tale which is headshakingly full of detail – there are leading characters and “bit players”
- But all are telling us something about the significance of the events and God’s objectives. Matthew wants us to understand and take in their significance.
- And these events, some of which will happen within days, and others long after, point towards an end and a beginning ,the ending of the old and the beginning of the new. So lets just pick up on two events.

The End and the Beginning

- The Cup

In Matthew 20 :22, in response to the mother of James and John's request for her sons to be seated on either side of Jesus in his Kingdom, he asks this strange question:

“can you two drink the cup I am going to drink?” They say they can.

But what is this cup, that Jesus is referring to?

In their case it's the shame and degradation they will experience in following Jesus –James is martyred quite early on.

And in this context Jesus makes it quite clear to those seeking “position” that the Kingdom is not about “position” – its about servanthood

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- The Cup

But Jesus is referring to an even deeper issue when he asks this question because he is referring to the cup of the Lord's wrath. This cup is found in Isaiah 51: 17 and 22. And Jeremiah 25 15 -19.

It's the anger of a grieving God poured out on sin. The effects of this anger on those who experience it – is like being forced to drink dark wine, sour wine. And it makes those who drink it drunk and cause them to stagger. They will be forced to drain the cup, to drain to the dregs of the wrath of God - who loves and vindicates the weak and helpless

In verse 17 of Isaiah it speaks of Jerusalem having drunk from this cup – with all its effects, but in verse 22b a promise is made “ ...See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup , the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again.” (NIV)

And Jesus tells them and us he is going to drink that cup. And that is what he does upon the cross. The weight of the world's evil did converge on Jesus. It blotted out the sunlight.

But can you see how those few words in Isaiah, “from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you(and now the many) will never drink again?” now apply to you?

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- The temple and its service
- The conflict between the leaders groups, the temple authorities and Jesus reaches a climax in these chapters. Jesus tells them of its coming destruction, which occurred about 3 years after its completion in AD 70.
- This structure, which the Jews saw as the meeting place of heaven and earth is now being destroyed and being replaced by Jesus himself. The nations will flock now to a different hill – Calvary.
- And this is the root of the conflict between himself as Messiah and the Temple authorities and leaders. They do not recognise him and reject him. And the destruction of their world is the result.

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- The resurrection spells out THE new beginning.
- In Matthew 24 :29-35 we read of Jesus telling his disciples not to fear or be led astray – he, Jesus, will be vindicated.
- He says to them “ And then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven ;...They will see “the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven” with power and great glory.”
- He is quoting Daniel Chap7 :13(verse 30 in Matthew 24)
- “..and there before me was one like the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. **He** approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **He** was given authority , glory and sovereign power ; all peoples , nations and men of every language worshipped **him**. **His** dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and **His** kingdom is one that will never be destroyed”

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- The resurrection spells out THE new beginning.
- The ascension spells out the vindication of Jesus. God's verdict reverses the verdicts of the Jewish court and the Roman executioners , Jesus is the true spokesman for God .
- The temple destruction confirms that he was speaking the truth, it is written on Earth - and acknowledged with celebration in Heaven
- He is exalted over the World and over the temple. The one true God is announcing to his whole creation through these events that Jesus is Lord over this World.
- And Lord over you and me.