

THE REASONS FOR THE DEATH OF JESUS

1. Jesus aroused opposition because of the manner of his entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the final week of his ministry.

He enters Jerusalem mounted on a donkey, amid shouts of “*Hosanna! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!*” Modified (Mark 11:1-10). This mimicked Solomon (David’s son) 1Kings 1:32-40. See also (Zech. 9:9) Humble king. Recalled hopes of a coming son of David & people reflected the popular interpretation of it. Hosanna is allusion to (Psalm 118: 19-27) one who “comes in the name of the Lord. Such an event suggested in unmistakable terms that Israel’s king was Jesus, not Caesar. From first moment Jesus was set on a collision course with Roman authority.

2. Jesus aroused opposition because of his actions in the Temple precincts.

His actions here disrupted sacrificial trade and traffic and challenged the ruling priest with very troubling words. SEE (Mark 11:15-18). Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer FOR ALL the NATIONS? You have made it a ‘cave of robbers’” He quotes Isaiah 56:7 which is part of an oracle when all peoples, Gentiles and Jews will come to Jerusalem and will be welcome. All peoples will worship the God of Israel, their gifts will be received, their prayers heard. This was not something NEW, but the fact that he said it, questioned the temple authorities and said basically they had failed to live up to their calling. THE TEMPLE WAS NOT A PLACE OF PRAYER FOR THE NATIONS...RATHER A ‘CAVE OF ROBBERS.’ (SEE: Jeremiah 7:11) Jeremiah says God will destroy the Temple of robbers. Jesus would have deeply offended priests, scribes, elders by these offensive words.

When Jeremiah said this they stoned him and threw him into a pit. LATER AD 62 Josephus tells story of a Jesus ben Ananias who prophesied the doom of Jerusalem. He was not killed by leadership, but in AD 66, when city was under siege by Romans, he was killed by a catapult stone that came hurtling over the wall. People felt he got what he deserved.???

3. Jesus aroused opposition by his telling of the parable of the Vineyard.

Turn to (Mark 12:1-12). Jesus parable is based on (Isaiah’s 5:17) in which Isaiah warned Israel of impending judgment because of its failure to pursue justice. What makes it particularly annoying to the ruling priests is that Isaiah’s parable had come to be directed against the temple establishment. The fact that Jesus would quote this text and Jeremiah 7 in the Temple was hard to miss; because of their rebellion against God, plotting to murder his own Son, the ruling priests face judgment.

4. Jesus aroused opposition when anointed by the unnamed woman (Mark 14:3-9).

For years commentators didn’t want to call this a Messianic anointing but rather a Passover holiday anointing, akin to Christmas mistletoe. This has been seriously challenged with the discovery of Dead Sea Scroll (4Q521). That speaks of the works of healing that will take place when the Messiah makes his appearance, works that parallel closely Jesus’ response to John the Baptist. (SEE Matthew 11:2-6). “*When the Messiah comes the blind will be able to see, the lame shall walk, Leprosy is healed, and the poor are hearing the good news.*” It seems that Jesus understood himself to be the Messiah.

The important point in this event is that immediately after the woman's anointing of Jesus, Judas Iscariot departs to betray his master (Mark 14:10-11). The contrast between the named disciple (Judas) who commits an act of treachery, and the unnamed woman, who commits an act of devotion is very interesting. It is a piece of literary artistry, but very likely such an act would have been reported to the ruling priests, with whom Judas struck his bargain.

Not only would Judas earn his pay by directing the officers and thugs to where Jesus was at prayer, he would have offered testimony as to what Jesus taught, how his followers regarded him. The woman's anointing of Jesus would have been too important to miss. It would have provided all the more reason to destroy Jesus.

In the end, the Jewish authorities sought to kill Jesus not because he was a good man but because He was perceived as a very serious political threat. His message that God's rule threatened the status quo, which the ruling priests did not want overturned. Jesus entered Jerusalem as the anointed son of David, assumed authority in the temple precincts, he appealed to the purpose of the temple in a way that recalled Solomon's dedication, that implied him to be king. At least one of his followers anointed his head with oil which has messianic significance. It is then hardly surprising that the angry high priest would ask Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" And that the Roman governor would place near the cross a placard that read, "This is Jesus, king of the Jews."

Next week: Did Jesus anticipate his death? & The Trial of Jesus