

**Sunday, March 27, 2022 | The Road to Easter**

**Luke 19:28-40 | “The Triumphal Entry”**

The story of Jesus's path to the cross is vital for all people to consider—especially followers of Christ. This series is framed around roads Jesus took en route to Calvary. Each road points to the essential purpose of Jesus's journey and what we must learn from it to fully appreciate the significance of the cross and the resurrection.

Today, we'll begin our series with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, often referred to as “The Triumphal Entry.”

**<INSERT PICTURE>** This phrase comes from a Roman practice where conquering emperors returning from war would be heralded into the city with all the trappings of victory. Banners, marching soldiers, music in the streets, and games would all be used to herald a king's triumphal entry. And these celebrations would be better understood as a festival as they had a tendency to last days. There would be trophies of war on display by way of captives (often the defeated king), riches, and slaves. Music would be played, clouds of incense would waft through the air, the road would be covered by the flowers thrown by onlookers. And seated toward the front of the procession would be the victorious general or king riding atop a chariot pulled by four grand stallions.

Jesus' triumphal entry, on the other hand, is entirely different, as we're about to see. But, before we get there, let's set the context. Authorities had already issued an order that should anyone know where Jesus was, they were to inform the Sanhedrin so that they might arrest him. Far from timidly entering the city, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was triumphant.

**READ:** Luke 19:28-44 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup> And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” <sup>35</sup> And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

<sup>36</sup> And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” <sup>39</sup> And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” <sup>40</sup> He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

<sup>41</sup> And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup> and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

I want you to notice three things:

**I. A minor prophecy was fulfilled.**

Though the Greek term translated as “colt” could refer to a horse or a donkey, we know from the other Gospels that it was, in fact, a donkey that Jesus was on. And, not just any donkey, but one that had never been ridden before. This indicates an animal unspoiled in any way and suitable for royalty to use. The King of Kings needed to enter his city; he would not ride on a secondhand steed. Interestingly, the donkey was not a steed used for battle, such as a warhorse, but a mount of peace.<sup>1</sup> Merchants and priests were known to use this sort of animal to show they were non-combative.

Some commentators think it best to understand in this passage that Jesus had prearranged the use of the colt with the owners beforehand.<sup>2</sup> And while it is certainly possible that Jesus made arrangements without the disciples knowing, this cheapens the scene to mere theater and weakens Luke’s narrative.<sup>3</sup> Why would the Lord speak so enigmatically if he had already made arrangements? A similar scene has the disciple preparing the Passover (cf. Mat. 26:17-19). And in both cases, a title for Jesus was used, indicating the people that the disciples spoke with knew him already. In this case, the title used was “the Lord” and, in the other case, “the

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, Leon, *Luke*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Garland, David E., *Luke*, The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Edited by Clinton E. Arnold, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), p. 770.

Teacher." This is the only time that Jesus ever referred to himself in this way. But it was a favorite title for his followers. Additionally, since it is possible that the owners of the colt knew Jesus, were not the disciples themselves also recognizable as Jesus' followers (cf. Jhn. 18:15-18, 25-27)? Thus, it is more likely that there was familiarity between the two parties but not so much that we should assume there were some prearrangements off-screen. This also explains why after the owners asked why the disciples were taking the colt, they put up no protest when the disciples told them it was for the "Lord." They knew who Jesus was and would willingly give up their donkey for his use.

Thus, what we have here is a prophecy fulfilled. A minor one, to be sure, but still prophetic.

## **II. A major prophecy was fulfilled.**

Why the sudden shouts of praise? Aside from Luke telling us that they were rejoicing ("for all the mighty works that they had seen"), Luke makes no attempt to explain what appears to be a spontaneous celebration. As disciples, they had seen Jesus do marvelous things, though. Why this sudden makeshift parade at this time and not before?

We may get a clue if we look at the parallel accounts of the Triumphal Entry in Matthew 21:1-5 and John 12:12-15. There, they mentioned a prophecy from Zechariah over 500 years earlier. Interestingly, the passage is speaking about the Messiah who would enter the gates of Zion seated on a donkey.

### **READ: Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Thus, while not immediately apparent to a western audience, the group of followers who were undoubtedly Jewish connected Jesus' riding on the colt here with Zechariah's prophecy. Jesus' disciples correctly assumed that the Lord was owning this particular prophecy. Their response might appear spontaneous (it probably was), but it is well within the bounds of reason when you connect the dots. In praising Jesus as he was riding into Jerusalem on a colt, they glorified him as that King who, Zechariah prophesied, would be seen riding into Zion on a donkey. They would play the part of those who would welcome their true King.

But not everyone there was happy with the celebration. Luke tells us that some Pharisees wanted Jesus to quiet the shouting. They probably would've been opposed to the joy regardless, given their sourpuss demeanor. But they were especially offended that the crowd

was proclaiming, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” The public was saying that Jesus was not only the Messiah but also King. And, worst of all for the Pharisees, Jesus wasn’t denying it!

In response to their demand that Jesus quiet his followers, the Lord says, “if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” Sadly, what the Lord meant by this is unknown. Was Jesus insinuating that the stone would literally lift up their voices and take up the praise (cf. Ps. 148)? Was he echoing some Old Testament passage (cf. Isa. 55:12)? Was he referring to the Gentiles (cf. Mat. 3:9)? Or, was “cry out” a symbolic way of referring to witnesses, as in, the stones would be called to testify against them if they held their peace (cf. Gen. 4:10; Hab. 2:11)? We have no way of knowing. What is clear is that whether by the voice of his disciples or by the voices of stone, Jesus would be praised this day.

### III. A mournful prophecy was foretold.

Jesus’ weeping provides a striking contrast to the joy expressed by the crowd of his disciples. And while the English term “wept” can be interpreted several ways, one commentator believes a better word would be “wept,”<sup>4</sup> and another translates that same word as “burst into tears.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, a noticeable show of great sorrow contrasts an overabundance of joy. On the one side, the Disciples were overjoyed. On the other, the Pharisees were enraged. But, stuck in the middle, we find our Messiah was distressed.

And why, despite the joy of his entrance, was Jesus crying? Jesus explains, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” His disciples proclaimed him the King of Jerusalem. They saw and understood the implication of the donkey. They thought he had come for their peace. But their idea of “peace” was not the same as the sort of peace he came to bring. Messiah, to them, was a term of revolution. The Jews wanted a messiah that would help them throw off the shackles of Roman oppression. But Jesus was not that sort of Messiah. He was not a revolutionary. He was the redeemer. He wanted to set them free from the shackles of sin and death rather than that of some foreign oppressor. He wanted to make peace between them and God. He would not be used for political gains.

In tears, Jesus then says,

**READ:** Luke 19:43-44 (ESV)

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<sup>4</sup> Morris (1988), p. 297.

<sup>5</sup> Garland (2011), p. 773.

<sup>43</sup> “For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup> and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Roughly 30 years before it would occur, Jesus perfectly described the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. Over 4 months, Roman soldiers besieged Jerusalem. According to Josephus, who was a historian at the time,

“As the legions charged in, neither persuasion nor threat could check their impetuosity: passion alone was in command. Crowded together around the entrances many were trampled by their friends, many fell among the still hot and smoking ruins of the colonnades and died as miserably as the defeated. As they neared the Sanctuary, they pretended not even to hear Caesar's commands and urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The partisans were no longer in a position to help; everywhere was slaughter and flight. Most of the victims were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, butchered wherever they were caught. Round the Altar the heaps of corpses grew higher and higher, while down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood and the bodies of those killed at the top slithered to the bottom.”

While Josephus puts the death toll at over a million, conservatives estimate no more than 350,000. The population had been inflated due to pilgrims making their way to the city for the Passover. At some point, the Jews destroyed their own food stocks in a drastic measure to either garner favor from God or to insight more defenders to fight. Reports of cannibalism were numerous, with one even reaching the ears of Titus Caesar, where a mother devoured her own child.<sup>6</sup>

All but one wall remains of the great city of Jerusalem today as the Romans leveled and burned the rest, scattering Jews far and wide. The elderly who were left alive after the battle was unceremoniously executed. And anyone under the age of 17 was sold into slavery, taken to Rome, and forced to build the famed Colosseum.

And what was the reason for Jerusalem's destruction? Jesus says, “because [they] did not know the time of your visitation.” They could've avoided their destruction if only they had known who was visiting them that day. Rather than a fraction of the city coming to welcome him with open arms, the entire city should've cried "Hosanna." Had they done so, Jerusalem would've been spared the coming destruction.

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<sup>6</sup> Garland (2011), p. 773.

This is what brought Jesus to openly weep even though surrounded by cries of joy. The city had every opportunity and every proof that Jesus was their Messiah. Yet they refused to believe it. And, so, they would suffer for their willful ignorance. And this made Jesus weep.

So, what's the takeaway?

Joy is assured for those who hail Christ as King. But sorrow is guaranteed for those who dismiss the Lord altogether.

Jesus defeated death, hell, and sin. Quite a remarkable achievement. But amazingly, the Lord offers his own victory to us. No Roman general had ever done that before. The accolades of their triumphal entry made them kings for the day. They shared their fame with no one. But after Jesus defeated the most powerful enemy in history, securing the most significant victory in history, he proceeded to offer us the spoils of war freely. This is why we joyfully hail Christ as King.

But Christ's victory also spelled doom for many, particularly those who refused to hail him as King. God will not stand by and allow anyone to ignore his Son's coming. Sorrow and misery everlasting are guaranteed for those who dismiss the Lord altogether.

This is not to say the Lord enjoys defeating his enemies. He is not like other conquerors throughout history who relish crushing others. No. Remember, the first to shed tears over Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD was Jesus in 33AD (cf. Lu. 19:41). Contrary to popular belief, God takes no pleasure in our demise. He has gone to great lengths to help us avoid our tragic ends. Thus, should anyone end up in that great abyss, it is only because they have trudged past the tear-soaked hills of Calvary, ignoring the Messiah's forlorn pleas, just so that they might bang on Hell's doors begging for a chance to be let in.

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## Video Description

The Road to Easter | Week 1 | “The Triumphal Entry”

TEXT: Luke 19:28-44

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: