

## 52. The King Comes to His Temple

Luke 19:28-48

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

We now come to Christ's entrance into Jerusalem where Jesus knows He is to fulfill His mission. His time has now come to finish the work His Father sent Him to do. The walk from Jericho to Jerusalem is an ascent of around 3,300 feet, a journey of about seventeen miles. We are told in John 12:1 that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover. Bethany was situated two miles east of Jerusalem, on the other side of the Mount of Olives from the city. The Lord would present Himself to the Jewish people as the Passover lamb on the tenth day of Nisan for four days of inspection before He would be crucified as the Passover Lamb slain for the sins of His people and on the very day and while the Passover lambs were starting to be sacrificed for the Passover on the fourteenth day of Nisan.

Everything stopped for Passover. It was one of those times when families got together as Jerusalem swelled in size anywhere from one to two and a half million people with pilgrims arriving from all over the world. From a child's perspective, the annual meticulous clean up in preparation for the Passover was not so much fun. Jewish people clean their houses from top to bottom, moving items of furniture to find any speck of dust or crumbs of bread. Passover occurred at the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when every speck of yeast/leaven was entirely removed from the house.

Today, children are brought in only at the end of the big clean-up to find one last piece of leavened bread, usually planted in a secret spot that the child is told about by mom or dad before the Passover celebration starts. It's an event that one must experience to fully appreciate it. The Passover celebration includes a full course meal, songs, Scripture, prayer, a hide-and-seek game for the children, family interaction, and a time for the children to ask prepared questions relating to the holiday, which can all take three to six hours. Everyone is involved in the learning or re-telling of the amazing story of redemption from the slavery of Egypt, which is part of Israel's history. It was a special time of the year, and it still is for Jewish families today.

<sup>3</sup>Tell the whole community of Israel that on the **tenth day of this month** each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. <sup>4</sup>If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. <sup>5</sup>The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. <sup>6</sup>Take care of them until the **fourteenth day of the month**, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight (Exodus 12:3-6).

They were instructed to take the lamb during the tenth day of the month and to keep it until the fourteenth day of the month. During the four days, the lamb could be inspected and observed as to its worthiness to be a substitute for the family. The first Passover had included a similar sacrificial rite. In the days when Israel was enslaved to Egypt, God had spoken that He would judge the Egyptians for not releasing God's people to return to the land that God had given them. The Lord told the Israelites that a destroying angel would go through the whole land of Egypt

and that judgment would not fall on the Israelite house if the blood of a substitute lamb was seen on the doorposts and lintel (Exodus 12:12-14). The blood was a sign that a sacrificial lamb had been slain for the occupants of the house.

The death of the first born of every family in Egypt occurred where no sacrificial lamb's blood was seen. It was a very visual reminder for the family to see this innocent lamb give up its life as a substitute for each household. As the Israelite families followed this ritual every year, they remembered how the destroying angel of the Lord had "passed over" their home and how they were protected by the blood of the slain lamb (Hebrews 11:28).

The blood of an innocent lamb had to be shed for the Israelites to leave Egypt, which is what the Passover celebration was all about. The writer to the book of Hebrews writes, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). It is likely that the four days allowed for a time of inspection as to the purity and worthiness of the lamb to be the sacrifice for the family, for the lamb was to be pure with no spot or defect.

Slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), the Lamb of God, Who was innocent, pure, and with no fault or defect, entered Jerusalem four days before the Passover to fulfill the plan of God.

### **The Triumphal Entry**

<sup>28</sup>After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup>As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, <sup>30</sup>"Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.' <sup>32</sup>"Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" <sup>34</sup>They replied, "The Lord needs it." <sup>35</sup>They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: <sup>38</sup>"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" <sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" <sup>40</sup>"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:28-40).

As Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem, it is very likely that the city was abuzz with Messianic fervor and excitement because the fulfillment of Daniel's timeline prophecy that the Messiah would come was to be that very day. Daniel the prophet had a visit from an angel that revealed to him the exact date that the Messiah would come to Jerusalem:

<sup>25</sup>Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven "sevens," and

sixty-two “sevens.” It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble (Daniel 9:25).

Seven and sixty-two makes sixty-nine weeks of years. Several people have taken this prophecy and calculated that, from the decree of Artaxerxes the Persian king to Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1-8) in 444 B.C., to the day when Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey’s foal, the sixty-nine weeks of years was completed. The sixty-nine weeks of years amounts to 483 years with 360 days to a year. (Jews reckoned time according to a lunar calendar, i.e. thirty days to a month and twelve months to a year.) In his excellent work, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell has gone into detail on this.<sup>1</sup> We don’t know how many people were aware that Daniel’s timeline for the appearing of the Messiah was at hand. There was an expectation among the Jews that this was the time when the Messiah would destroy the Romans and deliver the Jewish people from the occupation of the Romans. Of course, as Christians we believe that He will come as a conquering warrior, but that is for a time to come. First, He was to come as a suffering servant and a sacrificial lamb to pay for our sins.

Isaiah had prophesied:

<sup>15</sup>See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; <sup>16</sup>For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD (Isaiah 66:15-16).

The arrival of Jesus on this fulfillment day of Daniel’s prophecy was planned to the last detail. Jesus would not come into the city riding a white horse, a symbol of war, but on a humble donkey. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3), yet he had to borrow someone else’s donkey. It seems that the password to borrow it was “The Lord needs it.” Notice that there is no further explanation required once the owners knew that the Lord needed it. That settled it. They were happy to see their resources used by the Lord. What a lesson that is for us. Is everything we have available for the Lord to use?

The donkey had never been ridden before (Luke 19:30), yet it carries our Lord without protest. It’s interesting that the son of David, Solomon, was anointed to be king at the Gihon Spring and then came riding to the temple on a mule, i.e. a cross between a horse and a donkey (1 Kings 1:32-35). Both Jesus and Solomon before Him were sons of David. The colt of the donkey that Jesus was riding was completely at peace as Christ sat on its back for the first time.

The Lord now had a price on His head, a price that Judas cashed in on, but we don’t find Him stealing into the city secretly. How bravely He approaches the city on the very day about which Daniel the prophet had written. There was rapturous applause by the crowds as Jesus began the descent from the Mount of Olives with the beautiful city of Jerusalem before and below Him. What glorious defiance of the religious rulers who had tried to intimidate Him again and again. He came to Jerusalem as the promised King spoken of by Zechariah the prophet, fulfilling exactly the prophetic Scripture that He would come having salvation and riding on a donkey:

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<sup>1</sup> Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Published by Nelson, Page 200

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

The disciples did not understand the significance of riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. It was only after the Lord had been glorified that they understood the prophecy about His entry into Jerusalem (John 12:16). The crowds were laying down their robes as a gesture of reverence, calling Him the King who comes in the name of the Lord (Verse 38-39). Spreading clothing to carpet one's pathway was a way to honor the person. Instead of prostrating themselves in obeisance to the King and with the fear of tripping the donkey, they laid their cloaks down.

The Pharisees and religious people of the day were incensed at the praise and worship that was being lavished on the Lord Jesus. They commanded Him to instruct His disciples to stop their praise and adoration of Him. They could not accept Him as Lord and King, the One who was to come and will come again. However, there was something about this day which drew many of God's people to welcome and praise Him as He rode into the city. In the cosmic scheme of things, if no one praised God at the coming of the King of Israel, the very stones would cry out! (Verse 40).

Question 1) Why do you think the Pharisees were so upset? What do you think changed the attitudes of many in just four days to the point where they would cry out to Pilate, "Crucify Him" and "We have no king but Caesar?" (John 19:15).

It is a possibility that once the Jewish people realized that Jesus would take no action against the Roman rulers, they felt deceived. Was this not the Savior that they were expecting to bring justice for them and free them from Roman rule? Now, their hopes were being dashed, and they doubted that Jesus was the One Whose coming had been prophesied. They questioned the supernatural element to His coming, and their disappointment drove them to cry out to Pilate, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

It is possible that the Pharisees were afraid that the Romans would react strongly to a crowd of people calling out to their King. I'm sure the garrison of Romans were nervous that the crowd could get out of hand as Jesus rode down the Mount of Olives. Caesar was the only king that would be tolerated. Any other king in Judea would bring down the wrath of the Roman army, with the loss of position for the ruling elders and priests. It could also be that the Pharisees were reacting to someone that, in their mind, was not the promised Messiah but an imposter. They thought that He had come from Nazareth when, in fact, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the town where the promised Messiah would be born (John 7:41-43; 52). In their minds the common people were ignorant of the Scriptures and cursed because of it. They felt that the people had been deceived into believing Jesus to be the Messiah.

"No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them" (John 7:49).

### **Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem**

<sup>41</sup>As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it <sup>42</sup>and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup>They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (Luke 19:41-44).

Question 2) Why would Jesus weep and lament while the people are praising God? (Verse 41).

As He rounded the bend on the top of the Mount of Olives, the view of the city of Jerusalem is one of the most spectacular in this world. One literally looks down on the Temple Mount from the top of the Mount of Olives. At the sight of the city below Him, the Messiah of Israel looked upon the city and wept uncontrollably. To cry in a normal way, the Greek word *dakruo* would have been used, but here the Greek word translated into English as “wept” is *klaio*, the strongest word in Greek. His body was heaving with intense sobbing and grief. Instead of the Mount of Olives splitting in two (Zechariah 14:3) and all the angels appearing to execute judgment on Israel’s enemies, Christ sobbed while all the people cheered ecstatically.

The reason Jesus was loudly wailing, we are told, is found in verse 44; Israel did not recognize the time of God’s coming. As a nation, they did not see their need of a healer for their sin problem. Spiritual blindness concerning our need for a Savior from sin will keep us from receiving salvation. They wanted a king that would lead them into battle against the Romans. Jesus was peering into the future and saw the result of their resistance to the loving arms of the Savior. He saw the coming judgment of the nation with a Roman embankment being set up and the stones of the Temple being torn down one by one.

In A.D. 66, the Jews revolted against Roman control. Three years later, Titus, son of the Roman emperor Vespasian, was sent to crush the rebellion. Rome laid siege to Jerusalem and in A.D. 70. They entered the weakened city and set fire to it. History records that Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. The Romans set up a barricade around the city and starved the city into submission. When they entered the city after killing most of the occupants (over six hundred thousand Jews were slaughtered), they set fire to the Temple and much of the city before pulling down every stone of the Temple area to get at the gold that had melted from the temple structure.

This happened as Jesus prophesied. In speaking of Jerusalem, He foretold, “They will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.” The Romans made an example of Jerusalem as a witness to other cities of what could happen to those that rebelled against Rome.

### **Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

<sup>45</sup>Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. <sup>46</sup>"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be a house of prayer"; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" <sup>47</sup>Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. <sup>48</sup>Yet they

could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words (Luke 19:45-48).

It was confrontation time! One person, Jesus, stood against the High priest who was overseeing a corrupt system. The Court of the Gentiles in the Temple had been taken over by money changers and merchants hired by Annas, Caiaphas' father in law, who had also been High Priest. When birds or animals were brought to the Temple to be sacrificed, they would often be refused for no apparent reason other than the fact that Annas wanted more money. A worshipper that bought an animal inside the Temple precincts would be charged fifteen times more than one bought outside the Temple, but if a person bought it outside the temple, although it was much cheaper, the priests who inspected the animals, would often refuse it, thus forcing the worshipper to buy another animal inside the temple.

Annas presided over everything that was going on and was responsible for this system of purchase and trade, which exploited the poor. The Temple tax also had to be paid in Israelite Shekels. Visitors from different nations would be short changed and robbed, but there was nothing they could do against it, such were the corrupt practices that went on in the temple courts. Instead of a place where the Gentiles could pray and seek God, they smelled animal dung and the clink of coins. It would have saddened any true worshipper who understood how people were being treated in the Name of God. Mark records how Jesus responded to such behavior in the House of God:

<sup>15</sup>On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup>and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts (Mark 11:15-16).

The Lord's passion for His Father's Name and glory burst forth in controlled anger. Later, the Apostle John writes: **His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (John 2:17).** His courage and zeal captured their hearts. How they adored Him for what He did that day. He was outraged at the religious leader's insolence and greed. Just picture the scene: the money rolling everywhere, people scrambling for all they can grab as tables are overturned, doves flying in all directions, getting their freedom instead of being used for dishonest profit. The picture is one of bedlam inside the Court of the Gentiles. God had spoken that His house would be a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7), but instead they were selling animals and birds.

Can you imagine the leading Jews being challenged by someone whom they believed was an illegitimate son from Nazareth? Their thoughts may have turned towards violence as they considered the One who challenged their practices. Where did He get the authority to do and say such things? They may have thought: "How can He assume to tell us we cannot sell our goods in the Temple precincts?" Surely, Jesus must have known that this behavior would not earn Him any friends or favors in the Temple Courts. His brave actions exemplified His passion and fervor for His Father's house.

**Question 3) As followers of Christ, what things are we zealously to protect and defend?**

Christ demonstrated a love and concern for the poor, the helpless, and those ostracized from society. Do we, as Christ's representatives, give the same consideration to these people? Sadly, we are often influenced more by the culture around us than the Christ within us. We do not always see the injustice being done or the opportunities that we should meet right in front of our eyes. Those in Jesus' day may not have noticed the injustice being done in the Temple. We can become desensitized to sin when we live amid it.

When God arrives in a situation, however, He brings to light those things which have been done in secret. Some of those things about which we have read may have become accepted and tolerated for so long, but there will come a day when **“the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire—see, He is coming,”** says **the LORD of Hosts (Malachi 3:1)**. He is a defender of those who are vulnerable. When the Day of the Lord comes, He will come with justice.

Because Christ is perfect, He could judge the sin in the Temple. He not only judged but also went on to demonstrate in the most powerful way imaginable what true love is. He sacrificed His own life as a ransom for ours. God's justice was equally mirrored by His mercy and His great love for us. The reason some people are not receptive to the message, which attempts to set forth the justice and righteousness of God, is often because the mercy of God is not present in a demonstrative way. People instinctively know when something is true and genuine. When Jesus spoke the truth, He did so in love, and people responded. He could say difficult things and reach people's hearts because He loved them. Knowing that our own righteousness is nothing and that we all need His grace, we need to have right heart motives if we are to stand for the righteousness of God.

**Question 4) Can you think of instances in the news and in our church culture today where people have tried to set forth God's laws and righteousness but have not done so in the Spirit of Christ?**

At the core of our lives, each of us in turn have an inner court of the temple of our spirit:

**Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? (1 Corinthians 3:16).**

Jesus would come and upturn the tables in our hearts, where the love of food, money, or other things are set up as idols in our hearts. For some, it is a matter of idolizing people or a certain individual, giving them first place in your life rather than worshiping the God who made us. What things is the Lord of Love speaking to you as you read these words? What cleansing needs to come?

In cleansing the Temple, Jesus was not only zealous of His Father's house but also for the people who were being affected as the Temple became nothing more than a den of Thieves. It was not just the dishonest gain and lack of respect that angered Him, but the fact that people were not experiencing anything that would draw them to the Father. His Father's House was to be a house of prayer! He is zealous today, not for stone and mortar, i.e. not for a building made of hands, but for you.

Prayer: Father God, give us eyes to see the things which You would challenge and overturn. Help us to stand for You, and in the power of Your love, transform the world around us as we ourselves are transformed. Show us those that need Your help and mercy. Our righteousness is nothing, but Your righteousness is sufficient. Your love covers everything. Thank You for being our defender and our sacrificial Lamb. Amen.

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