

## Tears of a Triumphant King

*Luke 19:28-44*

**Introduction:** If I asked where you were on June 7, 2004, not many of you could come up with an definitive answer right away. However, if I reminded you of what happened on June 5 of the same year, most of you (if you lived in this area at least) would remember this day. This was the day that Ronald Reagan passed away, and on June 7 he was buried in the golden hills of Simi Valley at his presidential library. On that day, admirers, onlookers, and those who wanted to take part in this historical event descended on our pedestrian city, nearly doubling the size of our population. Over 108,000 people visited the library to see the casket, with 2000 people per hour going through the doors, some waiting up to 10 hours in line. It didn't matter one political leaning or party affiliation, Simi Valley was crowded with people who wanted to honor a man who had made a considerable impact on the world. Those of us who were around remember the mixture of sadness, awe, suffocation (if you caught on the freeways), and excitement with so many people in town.

If you can picture this scene or remember it vividly through experience you begin to get a glimpse of Jerusalem at the time when Jesus entered for His final week before dying on the cross. Jerusalem would have been swollen with people who travelled from surrounding areas for the Passover celebration. Josephus, a Jewish general turned historian for Rome, estimated that there were over 250,000 lambs slain, with each lamb accommodating 10 people, which would put the number of worshippers over 2 million (many, like E.P Sanders have put the estimates closer to 500,000). We can safely say the city was packed beyond its normal capacity, with much celebration in the air and anticipation in the wind.

On top of the normal size and spirit, the crowd had another motivation. The crowd knew Jesus was coming, and they also wanted to see Lazarus (John 12:9), the friend of Jesus who He had raised from the dead a few weeks earlier. In fact, all of the events of Jesus life over the last months had lead to this unprecedented event. A quick review shows us that the manner and timing of Jesus entrance into Jerusalem was carefully orchestrated, lining up both prophetically and practically to get Him to His ultimate destination on the cross. Here is a quick overview of the **order of events**:

**John 10:22-42** - Jesus is in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Dedication, which was in the winter (December). His interaction with the religious leaders caused them to try to stone Him (10:31), accused Him of blasphemy, and sought to seize Him (10:39). This meant that Jesus moved to the other side of the Jordan River, to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, and out of the control the Sanhedrin or even Pilate, as He began to teach in Perea

**Luke 13:31-35** - The Pharisees try to trap Jesus and drive Him back to Jerusalem, but Jesus declares that on the "third day" He will reach His goal. Tells that He will not go back to Jerusalem until the people say "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.**"

**John 11:1-54** - Jesus heals His friend Lazarus after *waiting 2 days longer* (11:6). He came to the small town of Bethany outside of Jerusalem where Lazarus was buried in a stone tomb. After 4 days, the corpse would have begun to decompose and stink. He called Lazarus out of the tomb in front of many who had gathered to mourn. This created a stir among the people and spiritual leadership. In essence, Jesus **signed His own death warrant** as the Sanhedrin planned to **kill Him** (11:53). From here Jesus stopped walking publically among the Jews, and withdrew to a small village by Samaria called Ephraim.

**Luke 17:11** - Jesus moves North to go South. In the North He was out of the reaches of the Sanhedrin, in Galilee He joined pilgrim saints travelling to Passover, and travelled on the Trans-Jordanian (or Kings) highway, staying on the East side of the river, keeping Him secure from arrest. Luke carries the narrative of this journey, as Jesus healed the 10 lepers (17:11-21), teaching parables of the Kingdom, and predicting His resurrection (18:31-34).

**Luke 19** - This culminated on His crossing of the Jordan River for the last time, coming into Jericho, which was putting Himself squarely in harms way. The crowds provided security, as the religious leaders were not yet willing to tick off the masses. Jesus heals the blind men (18:35-43), saves Zacchaeus (19:1-10), and predicts the Kings return with a Kingdom (19:11-27).

### **A King's Preparation: Humble Arrays (28-36)**

*28 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 30 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. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" 32 So those who were sent went a way and found it just as he had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.'" 35 And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.*

### **Timing of Jesus arrival was meticulous**

We can easily take for granted the scene as we read it in the gospels. How did people have an immediate response to Jesus' appearing in Jerusalem this last time? When Reagan came to be laid to rest, there were news outlets covering it, announcements made, and plans arranged through electronic communication. How was all of this orchestrated so that the people were ready to embrace Him? The answer is both **simple and profound**: *Jesus planned each of these things out meticulously, not simply doing it miraculously from His divine capacity.*

This means that as Jesus marched with potentially thousands of people from Jericho to Jerusalem, there was already a buzz among them. These would have wanted to get into Jerusalem for ceremonial cleansing before the actual Passover, so the throng was making their way up to the city. **John 12:1** says that 6 days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany 6 days before the Passover. That meant He would have been arriving in Bethany on Friday evening. On Friday evening, Shabbat would have been starting and travel would have been ending. Jesus split off from the crowd who would have wanted to get in the city before sundown, and He came to a very familiar place, the home and area of Lazarus. This did two distinct things **1) Kept Him a Sabbath's day journey away from Jerusalem** - a distance set up by Rabbi's that was the acceptable amount of steps one could take on a Sabbath day. Bethany was a "Sabbath zone" away, which meant from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, officials from Jerusalem could not arrest Him **2) The rest of the crowd accompanying Him went into the city and answered the rest of the peoples question: "When is He coming"** - The answer: He's coming Sunday. Get ready. Saturday night He is served a meal<sup>1</sup>, Mary anoints Jesus' feet, and Judas shows his true colors (John 12:1-8).

The crowd is ready and primed for His arrival, and the anticipation is at a fever pitch.

### **Manner of Jesus arrival was modest**

<sup>1</sup> This meal possibly was a Shabbat meal served on Friday evening, putting the Passover on Thursday. We will deal with this issue of harmonization at a later time.

**Zechariah 9:9** -*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."*

Notice as the crowd went ahead into the city, Jesus sent two of His disciples to secure a donkey, a colt with its mother. This colt would have never been ridden. The disciples would not only find this colt, but find a willing owner who would release the beast of burden to them. This shows that Jesus either flexed some omniscient power, knowing ahead of time what the disciples would find, or had made arrangements earlier. Either way, there is a clear reason why Jesus was so specific about His vehicle in getting into Jerusalem:

**1) He was identifying as a Davidic King** - David rode mule's on occasion (1 Kings, 1:38, 44) and Solomon rode one at his coronation (1 Kings 1:32-40). We do not view donkey's as royal transport, but the people in Jesus day would have.

**2) He was fulfilling OT Prophecy** - Matthew's narrative tells us exactly why Jesus rode this colt: "*This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'*" This prophecy was given 500 years before this event, that Jesus fulfilled perfectly.

**3) He came to bring peace** - The humility Jesus showed was NOT that He was riding a donkey. The humility was the fact that He did not come with an entourage as a victor of war. He came meek and gentle, offering peace through the cross. His humility was the fact that He was coming as a sacrificial lamb who would give Himself over to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-11). One day He will return on a white horse to bring about a victory by force, putting all of His enemies under His feet (Rev. 19-20). But this first time He came to die so that we could have peace.

### **A General Celebration:** *False Assumptions (37-40)*

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, saying, "**Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!** And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

### **The exuberant expectation of the crowd**

**Psalm 118:24-26** - *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us (Hosanna) we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! **Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord!***

The shouts would have been deafening. As Jesus crested the Mount of Olives making His way up over the Kidron Valley, the celebration was akin to the first time the Red Sox won the world series in like 100 years. Their voices were shouting in unison, there was great unity, and the show was unprecedented. A few things we glean from this scene.

**1) They spread their cloaks on the ground** - This, as well as throwing branches, was a sign of submission to an authority over them. Instead of throwing themselves in front of the King (trampling of a donkey can leave a mark), they symbolized their submission by a form of a "red carpet".

**2) They sang out the Hallel Psalms** - Not only did they fulfill what Jesus had prophesied months earlier, they quoted from Psalm 118, a messianic Psalm. The shout of "Hosanna" is literally "save now". They were viewing this event as the fulfillment of messianic appearing, that He would bring salvation from oppression, that He'd kick out the Romans, sit on His throne, and bring them back to their place of world power and significance.

**3) Jesus did not silence them** - Over the last years of His ministry, Jesus bent over backwards at times to keep the celebration of His Deity under wraps. There was no great public shouts, but He kept to the villages or left before crowds could overwhelm Him. He allowed the praise of His name unleashed for the first time in His ministry, one that was well deserved and could only be received by God's King. In fact in the future, this is exactly what Peter and Paul would shun, the public worship of themselves, knowing that only God can receive worship.

**4) The crowd falsely assumed, and falsely worshipped** - The faith of the followers of Jesus will be shown to be as thin as water on a plate. Mike Tyson famously quipped "Everyone has a plan until they are punched in the mouth". The crowd proved to be fickle, selfish, and after self-preservation. When the tide turned and Jesus was seen as weak, tried and convicted, and set to be crucified as a criminal and seditious against Rome, their tune changed. Instead of lauding His works, they would cry for the release of a common murderer and criminal in Barabbas. Instead of following Jesus into death, they worried that they would be put out of the Synagogue, changing their social status quo. Instead of worshipping their King, they called for His death. The crowd loved Jesus as long as they met their expectation, as long as He delivered what they wanted, as long as He was strong to get rid of Rome. When they realized they had bet on the wrong horse, their tune changed to the point of denial, forsaking the King who came to save them.

This is the same case today, isn't it? Most people like Jesus, even profess to love Him, since He is identified with love, care, compassion, and help for the needy. They like what He offers them, until they realize the offer will cost them everything. This often appears when we go through tragedy, or realize that life in Christ does not mean life without pain. When life punches us in the mouth, how do we view Jesus? Do we question Him, reject Him, or turn away? Or do we continue to adore Him, to yield to Him, trusting Him even in the midst of the greatest sorrow, harsh circumstance, and sharpest pain? This is when we know that Jesus is our greatest treasure, our sure Lord, when He is more important than our health, reputation, or standing in this life.

### **The silent witness of the stones**

**Habakkuk 2:10-11** - *You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. For the **stone will cry out from the wall**, and the beam from the woodwork respond. Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city with iniquity.*

Whenever I had read or thought about this story, I loved the statement of the stones crying out. It hearkened to Romans 8 where creation groans awaiting its redemption, and creation itself recognized that redemption was taking place as Jesus marched toward the cross and resurrection, signaling the future end of death and futility. I got a picture in my mind that the stones themselves were ready to burst forth in praise if the crowd did not, a beautiful picture of the worthiness of Jesus to receive honor and glory.

Now, this is true at some level, and maybe is what was intended. However, it does not fit the context very well and I believe there is something else going on with the stones. Jesus does not laud the people

for their praise, He condemns them. He does not thank them or affirm them, but delivers a scathing prophecy of judgment. **What role then do the stones play?**

In the book of Habakkuk, God condemned the Chaldeans, a people that God raised up to judge Israel, for their use of force and gaining wealth and status by wicked tactics. The cities they built with the blood of the innocent and torturous tactics would be a witness against them. The stones who were there and saw the atrocities would cry out against them. This is what the stones would do in Jerusalem. The people cried out to the Messiah, but did not yield to Him. They missed the entire point. They would cry out now but their silence would be deafening later. In fact the next time they cried out in harmony would be to chant, "CRUCIFY HIM", and then they would be silent. In their silence, the very stones would cry out. Notice how Jesus addresses this in the next section.

### **A Specific Condemnation:** *Tearful Assertions (41-44)*

And when He drew near and saw the city, He **wept over it**, 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. 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 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.

### **The sorrow of a King**

There are different ways to cry. We saw Jesus weep at the death of His friend Lazarus' death. We can cry with a few tears (the way I do when I watch any show about a dad and his daughters - but I don't let anyone see), or we can cry audibly. In my house we have tears brought on by exhaustion, frustration, pain, or sadness. Here we have King Jesus crying again, but this was different. The word used for Jesus weeping over Jerusalem was the strongest word for crying in the Greek language. It was a **bursting of tears, an audible outflow of sorrow, a chest heaving display of sadness**. This is the type of almost-uncontrollable tears that a parent experiences at the death of a child or the realization of a child that rejects Jesus. I was thinking about this picture on Friday when my family got word that our niece Marley, who was adopted from a young woman who could not care for her, passed away from a brain infection after surviving this world for a little over a month. This is the second child my sister and brother in law have lost in the last two years, without ever reaching home. The tears that were shed were immediate and burst from deep sorrow. This is exactly what Jesus felt as He gazed on the city.

Jesus cares. Deeply. He saw a scene that should have delighted Him but realized the celebration was self focused, not for Him. He weeps for those He loves, but He was not going to force Himself on His people. He offered Himself truly to them as their Savior, Lord, and King, and **they rejected Him**. He knows our sorrow, understands our pain in the deepest recesses of our heart, and empathizes with our sadness. In His all encompassing wisdom, He allowed His people to reject Him so He could fulfill His mission on the cross, offering salvation to Jew and non-Jew alike, by faith in Him, receiving the forgiveness of sins and restoring us to the Father.

### **The rugged hope for the rejected**

The news for the crowd was not good, but the hope was real.

**1) They misunderstood the peace He was bringing** - The peace the people sought was one of political and social, but Jesus was offering peace with God. The only way peace could be made is if they recognized they were actually in conflict with God, and realize that Jesus' blood is the only way to bring about that peace (Hebrews 13:20).

**2) They would face judgment quickly** - Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would be surrounded, that the city would be torn down, and the **stones** would not be left on top of another. All of this came to be when Rome came in finality in AD 70, surrounded and cut off the city, razed it to the ground, and slaughtered or carried off its inhabitants. There was condemnation for unbelief, for rejection, for the fact that Messiah had come to offer Himself only to be dismissed and crucified.

**3) They will look on Him that they pierced** - But there is hope in the silence. The stones are still crying out because the cries of God's people have been silent, even to today. The people who God came to make His own and whom Jesus was to be king are still silent in crying out in repentance. But the day is coming when the silence will end:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn."

**Zechariah 12:10**

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."

**Zechariah 13:1**

This is the hope of the Jewish nation, and our hope as well. We celebrate Jesus today. The question for us is this: *are we worshipping Him as Lord, or in a way that would make Him weep?* Have we come to Him for what He gives us or yielding our lives to Him for who He is? Do we sing token words, utter statements of mere platitude, or deny ourselves, leaving all to follow Him? Jesus opens His arms wide to all who would believe, repenting of their sin, turning from a selfish life to a life under His Lordship. This is the message of Palm Sunday, of Jesus offer of the King. Is He your King, or merely your servant who conforms to your whims?