

The Reception of the King

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Date: 06 October 2019

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 19 verses 28 to 44. And when he had said these things, he went on ahead going up to Jerusalem. When he drew near to Bethphagia and Bethany at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples saying, Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tie on which no one has ever yet sat.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you untying it? You shall say this, the Lord has need of it.

So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owner said to them, Why are you untying the colt?

And they said, the Lord has need of it. And they brought it to Jesus. And throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.

As he was drawing near, already on the way down the mount of all this, 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.

[1 : 2 6] 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.

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. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

At the site of the, Boston being the site of the many crucial events of the American Revolution, fittingly boasts a splendid July 4th celebration each year.

[2 : 4 0] I don't know if any of you have been. This year, an estimated half million people, many of them clad in red, white, and blue, gathered along the Charles River Esplanade to celebrate Independence Day.

If you've ever gone down to see Boston Pops concert and the fireworks, you understand the sheer scale of what I'm talking about. Half a million people. The energy is electric.

Large crowds. They're shouting, clapping. It's thunderous. They're swarming from place to place. And these kinds of large crowds can make governing authorities and police forces very nervous because things can get out of hand.

And given the right set of circumstances, a peaceful gathering of people can all of a sudden be ignited and become a violent mob. As we see later in Luke chapter 22, verse 7, Jesus is here entering Jerusalem on the week of Passover.

Passover. That means, it's the biggest Jewish celebration. That means hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims from all over the Middle East and the Mediterranean region are gathering this week in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

[3 : 58] Much like the hundreds of thousands of American patriots from all over New England gathering in Boston to celebrate Independence Day. And the similarity doesn't end there.

Remember that the Passover, which the Jews had been celebrating for over 1400 years by this time, was a celebration of God's deliverance of Israel from their captivity in Egypt.

It's pretty much the Jewish equivalent of Independence Day. Except, they weren't independent anymore. Now they were occupied by the Romans.

And they had been waiting for God to send another deliverer like Moses or King David to free them from this Roman occupation.

So now imagine celebrating Independence Day right under the noses of your occupiers. Can you see why this might make the Roman authorities nervous?

[4 : 57] You can just picture it. A Jewish family gathers around that night, around the hearth, and they're eating the Passover meal in solemnity. And then they begin to tell the story of the Exodus to their children.

Our forefathers were enslaved by the Egyptians for nearly 300 years. They put slave drivers over them and worked them hard ruthlessly. And not only this, Pharaoh ordered that every newborn male Jewish boy be killed.

But one survived. His name was Moses. He grew up, and as a man, he was called by God to rescue our people from Egypt.

He split the Red Sea by God's power and delivered us from the Egyptians. And then they mutter under their breath, God can do it again. He will rescue us from the Romans.

Because the Lord himself had prophesied, he promised in Deuteronomy 18:18, I will raise up for you a prophet like Moses from among your brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to you all that I command him.

[6 : 16] A prophet like Moses will come and deliver. That's the promise. So you can imagine the kind of nationalistic fervor that would have spread throughout the Passover celebrations.

And that's why Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, is in Jerusalem, as we learn later in Luke chapter 23. He normally resided in Caesarea, which is kind of the modern equivalent of where Tel Aviv would be in relation to Jerusalem.

But he traveled to Jerusalem during the celebration of Passover to maintain order, because he knew what kind of gathering this was, how significant it was, how dangerous potentially it was.

And by this time, Roman Empire has ruled, really, it's kind of their territorial peak, peak of their conquest.

They know how to control the crowds. They know what's necessary. And it's in this mood that Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. And you have to understand that context to fully appreciate what's going on here.

[7 : 19] And we see the glory of the king. Look at verses 28 and 29. And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples. The names mentioned here are significant. First, Jesus is drawing near to Bethphage, which in Aramaic means house of unripe figs.

Fresh figs, unripe figs. It recalls the parable of the barren fig tree that Jesus told in Luke chapter 13, verses 6 to 9. In that parable, Jesus compared the nation of Israel to a fig tree that's about to be cut down because it's not bearing any fruit.

And the name Bethphage is ironic. It's supposed to be. You're supposed to be the city of fresh, unripe fruit. Fruit figs. But the people of Israel are not fertile.

They're not producing any fruit. It's barren. It's the house of no figs. And Luke also specifically mentions that Jesus stopped at the mount that is called Olivet.

[8 : 36] It's noted again later in verse 37 that Jesus was at the mount of olives. And this is because it was prophesied in Zechariah 14 that the Messiah, the promised King of God who will redeem God's people, would come to Jerusalem and stand on the mount of olives.

So this passage through many signals and clues is making it abundantly clear to us that Jesus is the messianic king that has come to rescue God's people.

And that pair of ideas, the stubborn refusal of the people of God to recognize, their refusal to recognize God's king, Jesus' kingship, and Jesus' glorious reign, his messianic identity, they create this tension that kind of runs through the rest of the Gospel of Luke.

And that tension continues to build as Jesus is drawing near to Jerusalem. That verb, as you saw here in verse 29, is a key word that's repeated throughout Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

And already in 1835 and 1911, the word was used to indicate that Jesus was drawing near to Jerusalem. And it will be used two more times in this passage in 1937 and 1941.

[9 : 49] At every point, the geographical marker is that Jesus is drawing near. That's where the confrontation is going to take place. That's where the climax of this salvation history narrative is going to be.

And it will be resolved soon in Jerusalem. And so sending two of his disciples out, Jesus now instructs them this way in verses 30 to 31. 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. If anyone asks you, why are you untying it? You shall say this, the Lord has need of it. The supernatural knowledge that Jesus is displaying here shows that he is in full control of what is going on.

He's not just, it's not an accident that he is going to Jerusalem. What's going to happen to him there, he's not, he's not happening to him unbeknownst to him. He knows fully what is going on. And Jesus is aware that his two disciples will find a colt tied there in the village.

That in and of itself is not all that remarkable. I mean, there could have been a number of colts in that village. But what's remarkable is that Jesus knows that this is a colt on which no one has ever yet sat.

[11 : 03] It suggests purity. Several Old Testament passages speak of bringing an animal for sacrifice that has never been worked and that has never worn a yoke.

This is a brand new, unused, unadulterated, unbroken animal fit to be ridden by a king. Not only this, but Jesus also anticipates that someone might ask, why are you untying it?

Of course, that's a natural question to ask a pair of strangers. On time, you're colt. But Jesus tells them to simply respond by saying, the Lord has need of it.

Imagine that. It's hard to imagine how that would be an adequate answer to anybody. The Lord has need of it? Who's this Lord you're talking about? Do I know this Lord?

But Jesus seems to think that this short reply will suffice. And that speaks to his kingship and authority. We've already seen multiple times throughout the Gospel of Luke that the term Lord, especially when used of Jesus, it has rich theological meaning.

[12 : 18] God was described as Lord early in chapter 1. In Luke 2.11, at Jesus' birth, he was described as a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

He's referring to his kingship, his messianic identity. And in the ancient world, it was understood among the subjects of a kingdom that the king had the right to impress into his own service the properties of his subjects.

they had a name for that. If a king comes by to your house and he sees a nice colt and he says, I have need of this, he had the right to take that, to claim that in precedence into his service.

The subjects of the kingdom understood this. So Jesus is here acting like royalty. This is my prerogative as the king. And so, lo and behold, the disciples' journey to this village and it unfolds just as Jesus predicted.

It says in verses 32 to 34, so those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owner said to them, why are you untying the colt?

[13 : 29] And they said, the Lord has need of it. There's a really powerful wordplay here that's not obvious in the English translation. In the Greek original, the word owners is literally masters.

Or lords. It's the same word that is used of Jesus as the Lord. So then, there's a clash of lords in this scene.

The lords of the donkey, the owners, the masters of the donkey, sorry, that sounds kind of funny. The lords of the donkey ask, why are you untying the colt? And Jesus' disciples simply answer them, the Lord has need of it.

The Lord of creation has greater authority and takes priority over the lords of the colt. Christ the Lord is lord over all the other lords.

And this wordplay reveals Jesus' sovereignty and authority in whatever it is in our own lives that we imagine ourselves to be lords over. Our families, our careers, our money, our time, our lives, the lordship of Christ takes precedence.

[14 : 46] The king has the right to impress into his service anything that belongs to us because they all ultimately belong to him. This encounter with the donkey's owners and the fact that everything happens exactly as Jesus predicted shows just how in control Jesus is as he is approaching Jerusalem where he will die.

And when the disciples bring back the donkey to Jesus it's finally clear now what the donkey is for. It's Passover you sacrifice a lamb not a donkey.

What's a donkey for? It says in verse 35 and they brought it to Jesus and throwing their cloaks on the colt they set Jesus on it. It's a glorious scene.

Jesus rise on the donkey as he approaches Jerusalem. This is significant also because of another prophecy in Zechariah 9.9 It described the messianic king in this way 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 again Jesus is the messianic king that is coming now there's a widespread misunderstanding that riding on a donkey is kind of this lowly and humble thing something that's reserved for common village folk but that's not true Jesus was a humble king he's described as humble in Zechariah 9.9 but his humility does not stem from the lowliness of the donkey the fact that his vehicle is not that glorious rather it stems from his posture of submission and dependence on his father he's going ahead to

Jerusalem with fully knowing that his crucifixion awaits him like a lamb being led to the slaughter Jesus is obediently submitting to his father and going to Jerusalem and that's where his humility lies the fact that he's riding on a donkey is not what makes him humble his humility lies in the fact that Jesus does not come to conquer by military force but he comes to bring peace between God and man through his death on the cross in fact riding on a donkey is not a sign of lowliness it's a sign of royalty to give you some examples judges 10 3-4 it describes Jer of Gilead a judge of Israel for 22 years ruler of Israel he says he had 30 sons who rode 30 donkeys and controlled 30 cities in Gilead riding a donkey is a symbol of rulership similarly in 1st Kings 1 32-35 King David commands

[17 : 44] Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet to have Solomon his son ride on his own mule in order to declare him king to prove to the people that he is in fact his chosen successor because he's riding on David's own mule finally there's a letter that archaeologists discovered from Mari it's an ancient Sumerian city same area as where this is taking place and it says verily you are the king of the Heneans but secondly you are the king of the Akkadians my lord should not ride a horse let my lord ride in a chariot or on a mule and he will thereby honor his royal head donkey riding is a sign of royalty it's of kingship it's not a sign of lowly common villagers a military general seeking to conquer a city would ride in galloping in on a stallion but a king who already owns the city would trot gently on a mule with dignity

Jesus knows this full well and he commandeers a donkey on his way into Jerusalem this is intended to be an awe inspiring and breathtaking sight remember there are hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in and around Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover every single one of them would have been arriving on foot and yet amidst a sea of people there is one man in the horizon rising above the rest one man who dares to ride a donkey in legal fashion while all others are walking Jesus is not being demure about his kingship he is putting the city on notice the king has come it's an amazing scene this is confirmed by verse 36 which says that as he rode along the disciples spread their cloaks on the road spreading garments on the ground so that a person does not have to walk on the bare earth is a gesture of honor and respect to a king similar to the practice of rolling out the red carpet for presidents and other heads of state on formal occasions you can see an example of this in 2nd Kings 9.13 where people lay their garments on the steps for the newly declared king

Jehu to walk on this reminds me of the disciples doing this reminds me of Aladdin you guys have all seen the movie I haven't seen the live action one but there's a scene where Genie what does he turn him into he turns Aladdin into a real prince and he's coming in to introduce himself to Jasmine and he's saying telling everybody to make way he's to genuflect and show some respect right that's exactly what these disciples are doing they're rolling out the red carpet putting their clothes so that everybody sees around them you see what we're doing here you see what kind of person this is we're attending to the king make way show some respect and the rest of Jesus' disciples not just his immediate circle of twelve apostles but the larger multitude of disciples that knew about him and followed him they catch on to what is going on and then join in on the festivities in Jerusalem approaching Jerusalem it says in verses 37 to 38 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 they're worshipping they're praising God on account of the mighty works that Jesus has done up to this point in the gospel of Luke

Jesus has made lepers clean he has made the deaf speak the blind see the lame walk he has made demoniacs free and he has proclaimed all along the good news of the kingdom of God and it says he brings peace in heaven and glory in the highest this is an echo of what the angels announced at the birth of Jesus in chapter 2 verses 10 to 14 there at the beginning of Jesus' life a multitude of the heavenly host he said praised God saying glory glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased and now at the end of Jesus' life the whole multitude of his disciples same one began to rejoice and praise God saying peace in heaven and glory in the highest do you guys see the kind of the juxtaposition they're supposed to be paired together you're supposed to see them because on the one it's angels saying there's now peace on earth and now it's the disciples saying there's peace in heaven multitude

Jesus is bringing together in his person and in his work heaven and the earth he's serving as the mediator between God and man as it says in 1 Timothy 2 5 all of humanity has sinned against God that includes all of us instead of submitting to his rule we rebelled against him and became his enemies we have all done that we were alienated from God by our sins and God was alienated from us by his wrath towards sinners Jesus came to bridge this gap and reconcile us to God as the one mediator by dying on the cross as our substitute to pay the penalty for our sins and in doing that Jesus atones for our sins therefore taking away what alienated us from God and he also appeases God's wrath thereby taking away what alienated God from us he brings peace in heaven peace on earth so that there's angels praising him and disciples on earth praising him some of you have not yet been reconciled to God you remain

[24 : 32] God's enemy because you have not repented of your sins because you have not submitted to him you feel this restlessness of life apart from God the lingering sense that things are not the way they are supposed to be that you're missing something you have no peace you don't feel whole what you need more than anything else is peace with God the forgiveness of sins reconciliation with God that's what Jesus has come to offer us the son of God the messianic king has come to broker the peace between God and man if you only turn to him and believe in him and pledge your allegiance to him you will be saved you will have peace this picture of Jesus reception in Jerusalem is an invitation to us to receive

Jesus as our king and to cry out like the disciples here blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord that line is actually a quotation from the Old Testament it's from Psalm 118 verse 26 it speaks of the welcome that the messianic king would receive from his people interestingly Jesus quoted this Psalm earlier in Luke chapter 13 as well and there he was pronouncing prophetic judgment over the nation of Israel which had rejected him he said at that point in Luke 13 behold your house is forsaken and I tell you you will not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord now that moment in the gospel of Luke was a pivot point in Jesus ministry up to that point Jesus had been ministering generally to all people of Israel and calling them to repentance and salvation however from that point on after he says you have rejected me your house has been forsaken and you will not see me until you say blessed is the one who comes in name of the

Lord after that point Jesus focuses on instructing his disciples and it's these disciples that are right now proclaiming blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord and that begs the question will the people will the nation of Israel will they receive Jesus as their king as the disciples have done as the disciples are proclaiming will they finally recognize Jesus as their long awaited Messiah or will they reject him finally as they did in chapter 13 and we see a decisive clue to that question verse 39 and some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him teacher rebuke your disciples notice the contrast between what Jesus his disciples call him and what the Pharisees call him the disciples call him king the

Pharisees call him teacher that reveals the reason for the Pharisees objection the Pharisees see Jesus only as another rabbi another Jewish teacher so to them it's not only inappropriate but it's near blasphemous for Jesus disciples to declare blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord so they're flustered and they're trying to regain control of the situation and they ask Jesus hey Jesus teacher rebuke your disciples but instead of rebuking his disciples Jesus rebukes the Pharisees in verse 40 he answered I tell you if these were silent the very stones would cry out praising Jesus as God's anointed king is so appropriate it's so necessary if Jesus his disciples don't praise him the very stones would cry out stones you use intention the stones are unthinking unfeeling inanimate objects yet not praising

Jesus would be such an egregious oversight in this scene it would be such a flagrant violation of the creational order of even societal order that these very stones that you are standing on would be compelled to praise him this is a stinging rebuke even the rocks know who I am and yet do you Pharisees who claim to be the teachers of God's people not know who I am do you feel compelled to worship Christ the king if you really saw his unparalleled worth his glory his righteousness his mercy his grace his love then you would concur with Jesus' assessment if these were silent the very stones would cry out what an injustice that he's not being praised that is the greatest injustice in all of creation that

[30 : 20] Jesus the king the son of God our benefactor our savior is not worshipped by every tongue in this world that is the greatest injustice in this world if you really saw who he really is praise to him would roll off your tongue would not be like pulling teeth are you more full of grumbling against God than praise to him are you more self absorbed than captivated by God are you more impressed with yourself your abilities your accomplishments than with who God is and what he has done are you eager to worship God do you look forward to gathering with the people of

God to worship to render the praise that is due to his name it's tragic that we as human beings who rule the earth with our intelligence and technological advancements we claim so much superiority over the rest of creation while missing our fundamental purpose in life that we were created to worship God which even the inanimate objects of creation recognize we live without acknowledging what even the rocks know that Jesus is king that Jesus is the son of God and he is worthy of our worship if you are silent the very stones would cry out are you crying out in praise or do you hear the stones crying out all around Jesus knew that his hearts were hardened Jesus knew that he would be rejected by his own people in Jerusalem and so it says in verses 41 to 42 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 this is the only place in the gospel of Luke where Jesus is described as weeping and that word it's the same word that was used earlier in Luke chapter 7 to describe the sinful woman who was so overcome with emotion so grateful to God it says that she wept at Jesus feet and she shed enough tears that she was able to wash

Jesus feet with her tears it's the same word weeping that was used to describe in that same chapter in Luke 7 to describe a widow who had no one no one surviving her no one to take care of her a widow who had just lost her only son weeping during the funeral procession that's the word that describes Jesus here it's not describing a silent shedding of a tear or two it's describing the kind of heart-wrenching audible sob that you hear that just heaves and comes from the chest and convulses your entire body that's the kind of weeping that Jesus is doing here because of Jerusalem that rejects him you could hear his longing in his lament would that you even you had known on this day the things that make for peace oh how I wish that you could have known this peace this is what I came to do

I came to give you this peace but instead of receiving me as your king you've rejected me the king of peace is right before their eyes yet his peace is hidden from them because of their hardness of heart 2nd Peter chapter 3 verse 9 teaches us that God does not wish that any should perish but that all should reach repentance notwithstanding the fact that God freely and sovereignly chooses his people for salvation the Bible also teaches that he wants all to be saved this is not a contradiction it's a paradox that finds its resolution in God's infinite mind the two propositions are only seemingly contradictory in reality they express a profound truth and what we see in Jesus' reaction here is one side of that and it is real there is grief in our king to see people lost and perishing without him there is grief in our king for to see people his own subjects refuse peace that he is extending to them he mourns over our stubborn refusal to follow him are you spurning the peace that he is offering to you as a result of this

Jesus prophesies of the impending judgment of Jerusalem in verses 43 to 44 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 these images of besiegement death of children and destruction of the city are all taken from various Old Testament prophecies about God's judgment and the punishment of his people punishment of his rebellious people and these prophecies were fulfilled around 37 years later in 70 AD by what came to be known in history as the siege of Jerusalem the Jews had rebelled against the Roman Empire in 66 AD and in 70 AD Emperor Vespasian besieged Jerusalem and eventually destroyed both the Jewish temple and the city the people of Jerusalem refused to accept Jesus as their king when he visited them and as a result 37 years later they're visited by another king the Roman king and destroyed by him but that's only temporal judgment for the people of

[37 : 19] Jerusalem those who refuse to submit to Christ will face eternal judgment in the afterlife as well Jesus spoke of this briefly in the preceding parable of Luke chapter 19 verses 11 to 27 which we talked about last week there he compared himself to a noble man who must travel to a far country to receive a kingdom and then return and during his travels a group of the nobleman's candidacy for kingship and then sent a delegation after him to protest to the king the controlling king that's appointing him as a vice regent that he's not fit for kingship and then after he did receive the kingship and returned Jesus he said in verse 27 but ask for these enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them bring them here and slaughter them before me citizens who rebel against their king are no longer worthy to be called citizens they have committed treason now they are enemies of the king a time of reckoning is coming to all of us and all of us who refuse to submit to

Christ as our Lord will be treated as treasonous enemies when Christ returns from heaven to fully establish the kingdom of God and this is necessary you cannot rule there cannot be peace in a kingdom when there are rebels and treason it's necessary because if Christ is to rule rebels must be eliminated but Christ has not yet returned with the fullness of his kingdom he is still in the far country so to speak and he is biding his time with patient endurance because in his first visitation which is what we're seeing here in Luke Jesus came in grace to save sinners he he he he was in full control of the series of events that led to his crucifixion in Jerusalem he went nonetheless so that he might die for the sins of those who will trust him and so that he might be raised from the dead by his heavenly father so that he could grant eternal life and victory to his followers and it's the subjects normally the subjects and the citizens of the kingdom but in this case our king gave his life to redeem our insignificant lives by comparison he was the perfect righteous son of

God but he was punished for our rebellion and sinfulness that we can be now reconciled to God through Jesus and adopted into his family that's the good news of Jesus his first visitation Jesus comes in grace to save after his resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven to reign at his father's right hand and he promised to return to bring about the fullness of the kingdom of God and in that second visitation Jesus comes in glory to judge the time to accept Jesus offer of peace will be over we are now a people who are living between Christ's two visitations and the same question that's faced the people of Jerusalem face us today will you receive Jesus as king and be restored to

God's peace As him toitz to He--" lo faith he we a