

# The King Enters his City

Luke 19:28–48

St George's, Magill

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## Introduction

Picture this scene with me. The Jewish Passover festival is approaching. Pilgrims from all over Judea, Galilee and further abroad are making their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. Those who have come down from the North have come through the city of Jericho, perhaps staying in this city down in the Jordan Valley. There are crowds travelling the last leg of their journey uphill through the rugged terrain of the Judean Wilderness to Jerusalem. The mood is good; there's rejoicing; singing; talking among families and friends as they travel together and Jesus is travelling the same road along with many of his disciples from Galilee.

We're at the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life, which we'll be looking at over the coming weeks in the lead up to Easter.

Today we are going to see Jesus publicly declare his identity as Messiah and king. Sadly, although Jesus' entry as king into Jerusalem should be a cause for rejoicing, celebration, and hope, the reality for the city as a whole is that their worship is corrupt and they have failed to recognise Jesus, leading to their judgement of absolute destruction.

For those of you who are taking notes, we'll look at today's reading from Luke in three parts: the King's *preparation* to enter his city; the King's *procession* into his city; and the King's *pain* over his city. I'll be referring to the reading from Luke, so open your Bibles up to page 853.

## The King's Preparation to Enter his City

Let's begin with Jesus' preparations to enter his city as king. As Jesus and his party nears the villages of Bethany and Bethphage just outside Jerusalem, he's no doubt keenly aware of what the coming few days will hold. But Jesus isn't a

helpless victim being helplessly carried towards the cross. No, Jesus has known his destination from the beginning and he is very much in control of when and how he gets there. In fact we find that Jesus has been deliberately heading to Jerusalem since Luke 9:51.

And this point of public revelation of his identity as Messiah and King is no different. Jesus sends two of his disciples ahead with instructions to procure a colt. Have a look at the detail and precision in Jesus' instructions in verse 30:

<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?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'

*Luke 19:30–31*

Jesus even anticipates and provides for an objection. And when the disciples come into the village, they find the colt just as Jesus had said. And Jesus' words apparently satisfy the owners who are naturally concerned at the prospect of someone taking their colt.

Now, possibly Jesus had some prior arrangement with the owners of the colt, but this is not a necessity, and does not take away from the fact that Jesus is carefully orchestrating his entry into Jerusalem for maximum impact.

Anyway, the disciples successfully return with the colt and place Jesus on it. The stage is set for Jesus' procession into his city as king. How will his city receive it's king? With joy, anger, indifference? Well, you know the end of the story of course, but let's see what's highlighted in today's reading.

## The King's Procession into his City

With Jesus mounted on the colt, a procession begins from the Mount of Olives down through a valley then up again to Jerusalem. Excitement among Jesus' disciples is rising. They've recognised Jesus is King and Messiah and now after months of keeping a low profile away in Galilee, it seems that Jesus is finally showing his cards.

When everyone else is walking, here's Jesus who has procured a colt in what's at least slightly unusual circumstances, and now intends to ride this colt into Jerusalem.

Now this is not just some random act on the part of Jesus. We've already seen that Jesus' control over events surrounding getting hold of the colt. No, Jesus intends to make a strong statement about his identity. And this statement isn't lost on his disciples. Snippets of the Scriptures would be running through their heads from places like Zechariah 9:9 where we read:

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
See, your *king* comes to you,  
righteous and victorious,  
lowly and riding on a donkey,  
on a *colt*, the foal of a donkey.

*Zechariah 9:9*

Or perhaps they think of the way Israel's greatest king David announced that Solomon was to succeed him on the throne. In first Kings chapter 1, David gives these instructions:

<sup>33</sup>Take your lord's servants with you and have Solomon my son mount my own *mule* and take him down to Gihon. <sup>34</sup>There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him *king* over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!' <sup>35</sup>Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah.

*1 Kings 1:33-35*

Now the disciples seem to pick up on these hints and they start to roll out the celebrity red carpet for Jesus. As Jesus rides along, they take off their outer garments and cast them on the ground before Jesus.

To cap this off, they shout out from Psalm 118 which was read earlier. Except if you were listening carefully, you will have noticed that the quote here in Luke is different from the Psalm. Instead of "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD," the quote in Luke reads "Blessed is the *king* who comes in the name of the Lord!"

So here we have Jesus making deliberate statements to reveal his identity as Messiah and king of Jerusalem.

But it's important to note that Jesus has a particular idea of kingship in mind. The context of Zechariah shows that Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom of peace as does the second cry of his disciples: "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Jesus kingship is one that will bring peace with God and from that peace with others.

You see, Jesus is not entering into Jerusalem on a warhorse to bring about an earthly kingdom. We're told in Luke 19:11 that Jesus told the parable immediately preceding today's reading specifically to speak against those who thought that because Jesus was nearing Jerusalem, God's kingdom was going to appear all at once. No, Jesus enters his city as king, but he is the servant king who will lay down his life for his subjects.

Now the significance of what Jesus is doing here is not only obvious to the disciples, it's also obvious to the Pharisees who urge Jesus to rebuke his disciples. They too can see the messianic overtones of what is happening here and refusing to accept this themselves, they take offence. Although their ire is directed through Jesus to his disciples, this is really a thinly veiled attack on Jesus. They make it very clear that what Jesus is doing is unacceptable, and he has no right to make these claims.

But Jesus defends himself and his disciples with the comment that if the disciples keep quiet, then the stones will cry out. What a sad condemnation of the Pharisees and by extension the bulk of Jerusalem who miss who Jesus is! In the midst of the joy, hope, and celebration of Jesus' announcement as king, these religious leaders are so hardened and unresponsive to God's word that even stones are more capable of ascribing the praise that is due to him. A donkey bears Jesus as king and Messiah, entering his city. But in a week he will carry his own cross outside the city to die as a messianic pretender.

How true are these words from Psalm 118:

- 22 The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
23 The LORD has done this,  
and it is marvellous in our eyes.

*Psalm 118:22–23*

You see God has made Jesus king, and it really is marvellous. It's worth rejoicing over and it is right to praise God for this. Is this reflected in your life and my life? Do our lives declare God's praises to God and to one another? Or are the stones in your garden more excited about being part of God's kingdom?

Think of foods or activities you really love. Do you find yourself lighting up and overflowing with enthusiasm when you talk about them? This is the right kind of response to being under Jesus' kingship.

Or maybe you're weighed down by the troubles of life or the declining state of Australian society. Jesus' actions bring us back from being over focussed on the temporary struggles of this world and the hard times when governments and kingdoms which are against God seem so often to succeed. Jesus' actions give us hope. We might not see Jesus' rule universally acknowledged by all at the moment. We might not see our world at peace at the moment. But the promise of God is that one day, we will. One day all will recognise Jesus as king and his reign of peace with his servants will stretch for eternity. So be encouraged. Keep praying, as Jesus taught us, for God's kingdom to come.

## The King's Pain Over his City

We're told once again that Jesus draws near to Jerusalem. And as he does, he weeps over the city. Now this isn't just Jesus shedding a few sentimental tears over Jerusalem. No, Jesus is deeply saddened. He sobs over Jerusalem.

If you, even you, had only known on this day way would bring you peace—

*Luke 19:42*

The sentence trails off unfinished. If *only* Jerusalem knew what would bring peace. If only they knew they could have peace with God. If only they knew they

could have peace with each other. If only they knew they could have rest from their enemies.

But they don't know. And in what must be some of the hardest words on Jesus' lips, we read in verse 42 "but now it is hidden from your eyes." It's too late! It's too late. Jerusalem has missed the opportunity to accept Jesus for who he is and the leaders are on an unstoppable path towards executing the very source of life and peace.

But Jesus continues. There are consequences for not knowing this peace. Read with me from verse 43:

<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. . .

*Luke 19:23-44a*

Now these are not insignificant consequences. The picture painted by Jesus here is one of total devastation. Jerusalem's enemies will surround and attack it, killing adults and children, and completely flattening the city.

Jesus is referring the events of A.D. 70 when Rome's armies brutally put down a Jewish uprising and destroyed the city.

And what is the reason for this terrible judgement? Verse 44 tells us. It's because they did not recognise the time of God's coming to them. You see Jerusalem is not judged because they were especially immoral, or more unjust than any other city. They were judged because they failed to recognise when their God came to them as king and saviour in the person of the Lord Jesus. In fact in just a few days time, they'll kill Jesus. How serious it is to fail to recognise Jesus!

And yet what is Jesus response at this point? He *weeps* for Jerusalem! Isn't that extraordinary! Here is a city who rejects and hates him even though he is their rightful king. Here is a city whose temple worship is corrupt. When he enters the temple, Jesus says, "It is written 'My house will be a house a prayer;' but you have made it a den of robbers." And yet Jesus weeps over it! Here indeed is the God who does not delight over the death of sinners, but desires that all should

turn and be forgiven!

So what can we take from Jesus words and actions here? I've got two things I want us to take home from this little section.

Firstly, see how important it is to recognise Jesus. Jesus is the true and rightful king not only of Jerusalem, but of the whole world. And there is nothing more important for any person than to recognise him as such. To recognise Jesus as king, trust in him, and submit to him means forgiveness, peace with God, and peace with others. But to reject Jesus means certain judgement and destruction. And as terrible as the destruction of Jerusalem is as described by Jesus here, this is actually meant to be a warning or reminder, that one day Jesus who is entering Jerusalem as king, will return to this world as judge of the living and the dead. He will separate the sheep from the goats—those who recognise him from those who refused. Those who submit to Jesus as king will share peace with God for eternity, but those who reject Jesus as king will be separated from God for eternity in hell. One day it will be too late. Don't miss the seriousness of this warning. If God did not spare Jerusalem, he will not spare the rest of the world either. So let me ask you, where do you stand with Jesus? Have you submitted your life to the king and received forgiveness and peace with God from him? Or are you walking in your own ways rejecting Jesus as your king? If you know that Jesus is not your king and not every part of your life is under his authority, then don't leave today without doing something about it. Come and talk to me or to Paul or Mike or indeed any other Christian here. We'd love to help you know how to submit Jesus before it's too late and the way to peace is hidden.

Secondly, I want us to compare our attitude with Jesus here. Jesus is incredibly cut up over the unbelief of his city, Jerusalem. What about you and me? How do we think about our non-Christian friends and relatives? How do we think about our city of Adelaide which largely rejects Jesus as king? How do we think about the millions and millions around our world who do not know peace with God? Stephanie, whom many of you know, works to see Jesus made known in a

country of over 30 million people where less than 0.1% of the population knows Jesus! Tamra and I work at Adelaide University seeking to share the gospel with the nearly seven thousand international students who are studying there, most of whom do not know Jesus.

Does the knowledge that so many close and far are under God's wrath and will face judgement fill you with grief? How will you respond?

One of the international students Tamra and I work with returned home to China on Friday. At his farewell during the week, he spoke about his hopes and how we could pray for him. I was struck by the ordering of his priorities. He hopes to get work in Shanghai and successfully apply for Australian permanent residency, but actually these were down the bottom of his concerns. The most important thing for him was that he wanted to *honour* his parents by telling them the good news about Jesus! In a culture where honouring and obeying parents is really more important than any thing else, the gospel has so shaped this student, that he now sees passing on the gospel to his parents as honouring them. Here is someone who shares Jesus' pain for those who reject him as king.

What might it look like to share Jesus' grief? In God's providence, we are included in his plans to share the gospel so let me encourage you to be praying for your non-Christian friends and relatives; be praying for the millions around our city, country and world who reject Jesus as king. Speak about what God has done in your life. Invite people to church or the Christianity Explored course St George's will run later this year. Partner with others like Stephanie, who are taking the gospel to the nationals by becoming involved with CMS. Or any other of the countless ways that God advances his kingdom through his church.

## Conclusion

Well let me finish up. We've seen Jesus publicly declare himself to be king and Messiah. His disciples rightly recognise this and are filled with joy and praise for all that God has done through Jesus. By contrast the king's own city, Jerusalem,

largely fails to recognise their king. And such is the seriousness of this that the city will be completely destroyed in judgement. Yet in all this, we see Jesus' own heart for his people. We see him weep over their hardness of heart.

So let me leave you with an encouragement to take joy in being part of God's kingdom and a challenge to share Jesus' sorrow for those who are lost. Amen.