

The Arrival of the King

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 24th of March 2002 the preacher is Paul Barker his sermon is entitled The Arrival of the King and is based on Luke chapter 19 verses 28 to 48 The King of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ has come and we look for his coming again and we pray that as we read and think about these words of his first coming into Jerusalem on a donkey that we may respond with faith and repentance and welcome him into our lives Amen Please be seated You may like to have open from Luke 19 the second reading that was read for us page 854 in the Pew Bibles

Luke 19, 28 onwards Well tonight is Oscar night in the United States tomorrow our time an annual festival an annual pilgrimage festival in effect as people from all around the world will flock to wherever it is and celebrate whatever it is they're celebrating The paparazzi will be there in force There'll be crowds clamouring to catch sight of the stars The gossip columnists will be oohing and ogling to identify the partners even on the ABC News this morning I heard that there's speculation about who Nicole Kidman will have on her arm at this whatever it is tonight tomorrow The fashion commentators will be oohing about the latest outfits The fans and the locals will be straining to be the first to see the stars and of course the red carpet will be rolled out There'll be surprises and shocks speeches will make us speechless but the applause the shouts and the screams will be the order of the night along with of course abundant buckets of tears from people like Gwyneth Paltrow no doubt

Well in some respects and not wishing to really bring Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem down to the level of the Oscars there was some similarities It was an annual festival that Jesus was arriving for an annual pilgrimage festival that he was arriving for There were crowds clamouring as well as the city leaders it seems that not only were the crowds coming for the festival along with Jesus there but also crowds had come out from Jerusalem to see Jesus coming The cloaks strewn on the road as he was on the donkey were a bit like an ancient red carpet I guess as he came down the Mount of Olives There was applause and adulation There were songs and shouts A high level of anticipation and expectation different from the Oscars but there were still tears as well and surprises and shocks For some time Jesus has had his sights set on arriving in Jerusalem It's the geographical goal for his life and as early as chapter 9 in Luke here we are in chapter 19 so for 10 full chapters of this gospel but just under a half of the gospel

Jesus has set his face to Jerusalem and for those 10 chapters he is en route from the north of the country in Galilee around where he spent most of his adult ministry and growing up time as well now he's headed south from Galilee down the Jordan Valley to Jericho where he was at the beginning of chapter 19 and now from Jericho the final 25 kilometres thereabouts from well beneath sea level to well above sea level the steep climb up to Jerusalem it's his destiny but more than that of course it's the destiny of his people and in many respects the destiny of the world for this arrival in Jerusalem by Jesus is not just the personal accolades he is coming there for the sake of the world why is there such feverish expectation as he approaches Jerusalem and its outskirts seems as back in chapter 9 earlier in chapter 19 verse 11 the people because he was near Jerusalem they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately so there is a high level of anticipation a feverish excitement about Jesus arriving in Jerusalem and the expectation that the kingdom of God was about to arrive immediately

I love detective stories and detective TV programs I'm still grieving the death of John Thor Inspector Morse a couple of weeks ago and I love watching Inspector Morse or A Touch of Frost or reading Agatha Christie or something like that and seeing this abundant array of clues that seem totally disconnected how does that clue relate to that clue and this blood sample here relate to this event here and all those sorts of connections in some sense what we see here is all sorts of clues that look a little bit disconnected all suddenly fitting into place it's as though in some ways the crowds following Jesus coming out of Jerusalem seeing the events that happen some odd little events suddenly are like detectives pouring over clues and they think bingo now I see how that fits and that fits and that fits and it's all coming together in Jesus Christ arriving in Jerusalem see if you pour over the Old Testament which is like a book of clues in a sense to how God's going to save the world and who his Messiah will be we find a few things that are relevant here for example the Passover festival it's Passover time as Jesus is coming that's why there are lots of crowds on the road with him they're all making the pilgrimage for the Passover festival which will be in a few days time at the point that he arrives in Jerusalem the Passover festival was a key annual pilgrimage feast for the Jews still is today although not necessarily a pilgrimage feast it commemorates the events of God rescuing Israel from Egypt under the time of Moses 15 or 1400 years before Jesus lived there was a general expectation in the Old Testament that the Messiah would come a rescuer would come to save God's people and there was also this expectation that he would probably come at a significant time that is he wouldn't just sort of come you know on any old sort of Wednesday afternoon or something he would probably come at a high point of the Jewish calendar and the Passover was one of those times they expected that at a time of Passover it was highly likely that the Messiah would come to redeem

[7 : 21] God's people from the rule of the Romans just as God had redeemed the people of God from the rule of the Egyptians back in the time of Moses and so there was a heightened expectation at Passover time that maybe now is the time for the Messiah to come a second thing Jesus as I'm sure we or most of us well know came down the side of the Mount of Olives on a donkey and in the reading that was read for us he sends two of his disciples to the village ahead of him tells them there that you'll find they're a cult untired it's never been written bring it back if somebody asks you about this say to them the Lord has need of it and that's exactly what happened they went someone asked they said they took the cult Jesus got on it and he rode down the side of the Mount of Olives on a donkey cult now you'd expect a king to arrive on a horse or in a chariot a sort of royal chair or something to be carried on or maybe you'd just expect Jesus to walk down but this donkey cult was predicted in the Old Testament it's one of those little clues embedded in one of the last prophets of the Old Testament the prophet Zechariah said 500 years before

Jesus rejoice greatly O daughter Zion shout aloud O daughter Jerusalem lo your king comes to you triumphant and victorious is he humble and riding on a donkey on a cult the fall of a donkey and for those crowds watching Jesus as this donkey cult was brought to him and he was placed upon it with some cloaks underneath him and then cloaks on the road in front of him as he began the descent down the Mount of Olives there is another clue in place bingo and the same prophet Zechariah at the very end of his book prophesied that when the Messiah comes he will stand to the east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives and Jesus here is atop the Mount of Olives it's about two and a half kilometers from Jerusalem to twin towns Bethany and Bethphage and there

Jesus is where the donkey cult comes and that's just beyond the summit of the Mount of Olives he comes over the top on the donkey and there he sees Jerusalem beneath him and though Jerusalem is on a hill the Mount of Olives is higher about 2,550 feet above sea level and so from there you can look down over the city of Jerusalem you go down the Mount of Olives to the Kidron River and then back up a little way into the city of Jerusalem that's where Jesus is coming from from the east from the Mount of Olives and another clue falls into place as people seeing these events this person who's taught who's performed miracles on the way and back in Galilee all sorts of clues are slotting into place this surely is the Messiah King the one promised in so many different ways in the Old Testament now at last the clues are all coming together in this person

Jesus Christ they recognise this that's why they sing and shout in verse 38 blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord they're quoting sort of from Psalm 118 a psalm that would have been used at the Passover festival a psalm that anticipated the Messiah to come they've slightly changed it because the psalm says blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord but they're shouting here in Luke blessed is the King they're making it absolutely clear that it's not just anyone who comes in the name of the Lord it's the King who's coming the King that's promised in the Old Testament because another thread is being put into place and drawn together here because one of the common streams of expectation in the Old Testament is that the Messiah who comes will be descended from King David to David was promised a thousand years before Jesus that his dynasty would last forever and now comes one who may be people in the crowds there did not realise was descended from David maybe they're saying more than they actually knew but they recognise that this is indeed the King and of course we know all too well that he was descended from

David hence his birth in Bethlehem the shout continues at the end of verse 38 for they also say peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven that's not from the psalm but they're their words they're slightly odd words when Jesus was born the angels said peace on earth now the crowds are shouting peace in heaven we might think it a bit surprising because we may well have thought that the people's expectations and hopes were for peace on earth get rid of the Romans basically why say peace in heaven well again maybe these people are saying a little bit more than they actually realized and knew that is the full extent of their praise perhaps they hadn't grasped the peace in heaven partly because heaven is the source of peace but also because these words peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens recognize just to what degree

[13 : 00] Jesus is going to bring peace you see he's not actually coming to just bring peace on earth and rid Jerusalem of the Roman rule but he's coming to conquer all the evil heavenly forces of Satan when he dies on the cross and rises from the dead so the peace that Jesus will bring is not just a military peace a political peace but rather a spiritual peace a peace that conquers heavenly realms that are evil a peace that brings peace from God to humanity as I say probably the crowds are saying more than they actually knew because this peace from heaven is won through the death of Jesus not through brandishing a sword as he arrives in this city but through the death that will be conspired in the days ahead and wrought on the Friday after these events ironically peace will come through a bloody death a painful and unjust death not through overthrowing the Romans but peace from God that is a greater peace one of the striking things about Jesus entry into

Jerusalem is that he does not shy away from public adulation in the earlier parts of Jesus ministry he would often try and dampen down the excitement and enthusiasm that his miracles and teaching brought about don't tell other people about this he'd go away and hide and escape from the crowds but now here very clearly and very deliberately not only does he not shy away from public adulation but he accepts it and in some senses creates it he doesn't reject the ascriptions of being a king he doesn't refuse the cloaks strewn on the ground before him not in Luke but in Mark and Matthew the palm branches are waved he doesn't refuse those either in fact he is at pains to arrive in full pomp and in public sight he doesn't arrive shy of this praise under cover of darkness or in disguise he doesn't arrive like a criminal that you see on television when they hold up a jumper or newspapers to shield their face from the camera so nobody can recognise them but he arrives for everybody to see the crowds that have been with him along the route and the crowds that have come out from

Jerusalem because they've heard word of his impending arrival he accepts the red carpet treatment he wants people to see him he wants all of Jerusalem to know that he has come and he accepts the claims that others are making about him he is the king deliberately by getting the foal of a donkey by accepting the praises and so on he is saying I am the Messiah expected in the Old Testament I am the one to whom all of those clues and threads come together and I'm coming for everybody to see and when the Pharisees who are very religious and very devout not necessarily the bad of the bad Jewish leaders they in verse 39 ask him teacher order your disciples to stop they're obviously feeling some discomfort about this he refuses their request Jesus answers them I tell you if these were silent the stones would shout out Jerusalem stone is striking it is soft in colour in the early morning light in the late evening light it glows with a golden sort of colour stone is still the main building material in Jerusalem there's lots of it and for most people who go there for the first time to Israel or

Jerusalem stone is one of the things that sits in the memory it is a stony place there are stones everywhere you wouldn't want to be a gardener in Jerusalem but dominant of all the stones in Jerusalem were the stones of the very impressive mount of the temple and the temple itself in Jesus day coming down the Mount of Olives where these words the stones would shout out these stones would have been clearly visible to Jesus as he comes down the mountain with the crowds the temple of course that he's coming towards and can see very clearly was not the original one the original one's a thousand or 950 BC nearly a thousand years before Jesus built by King Solomon very grand very impressive the biggest ancient building in the world for one single God higher than the current dome of the rock that's on the same site in Jerusalem today the temple of Solomon stood for just under 400 years but in 587 BC the wrath of the Babylonians came it was destroyed its treasures taken away to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and the whole city of

Jerusalem destroyed and laid waste uninhabitable more or less for the years that followed about 70 years later after the Babylonians had been conquered by the Persians the Jews came back and under provocation from the prophets Zechariah whom we've already heard and Haggai they rebuilt the temple nowhere near as grand nowhere near as ornate or vast as temple of Solomon but still nonetheless an impressive structure rebuilt in 515 BC and in essence that's the temple that stands in Jesus day but in the years immediately before his birth and during his early life it was being completely refurbished much like buildings are today in Melbourne sort of gutted and refurbished and it was done by Herod the Great took many years wasn't in some senses wasn't quite complete even at this point Herod the Great had made it more ornate more elaborate and he'd extended the vast mount the temple mount on which the temple stood some of the stones of that temple mount still are there today and they are so well cut that you still cannot put a knife between some of them some of those stones weigh up to 120 tons people are impressed by Stonehenge in

[19 : 41] England these stones are 10 times as heavy they are the stones that Jesus sees they are the stones that will cry out the stones of the temple the stones of the temple mount and maybe Jesus is just using picture language to say you know if you're going to be if you're going to shut these people up these stones will cry that is you can't stop the praise but maybe there's something a little bit more in what Jesus words about these stones shouting out is about because the temple is the place where God meets with humanity it is there that God would set up his dwelling in the holy of holies in the heart of the temple and what Jesus is in effect saying is that that he is the living one where God meets with humanity he is the living temple if you like and so that even if other people shut up about who he is the stone the bricks the the inanimate stones of the temple they cannot fail to recognize the one to whom they point the living temple Jesus himself and so they themselves will cry out because they recognize the real temple the real place where God meets with humanity he's coming and it is Jesus himself one of the shocks and surprises of this entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is that as he descends the Mount of

Olives and sees the city and the temple standing clearly over the valley in front of him he cries these are not Oscar cries of joy these are not an actor or actresses cries for show these are deep heartfelt cries of grief the word for Jesus weeping over the city in verse 41 suggests a chest that he leaves with grief from the inner parts why does Jesus cry he says in verse 42 if you even you had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace but now they are hidden from your eyes there's great irony in those words because Jerusalem the name of the city is to do with the city of peace Salem at the end of Jerusalem like the Arab word salam greeting when Arabic people greet each other and say salam peace or Jews today still say shalom peace same word in effect this is the city of peace but Jesus saying you haven't recognized the things of peace that is in effect you haven't recognized me and he cries and weeps tears of grief because in punishment for not recognizing the one who brings peace the prince of peace the city will be destroyed and punished notice that

Jesus does not weep for his own fate he knows he's about to die that's why he's come here he knows that he'll be put to death unjustly and hang on a cross in five days time he's not weeping for himself the more serious fate in Jesus eyes is the fate of the city that does not recognize him and he knows that even now while the crowds extol their praise of him in five days time they'll be shouting crucify like an Old Testament prophet Jesus pronounces words of warning and doom on this city his words echo Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel and the Psalms and all of those referred referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC because what Jesus is in effect saying here is that just as Jerusalem was destroyed 600 years earlier so will it be again as God's punishment on the city for not knowing real peace because at the time that Jerusalem was destroyed the first time Jeremiah had said whoa whoa to you who say peace peace but there is no peace they thought there was peace and security because the temple stood Jesus is saying as

Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel had said there is no peace because you do not know God and you don't recognize the things of peace and as Jerusalem was then destroyed by Babylon so will it be destroyed again five things he says in the next two verses will happen there'll be your enemies will set up ramparts around you that is the the basic way to destroy a city in the ancient world was to besiege it so you'd set up a rampart up to its wall try and get a battering ram to batter down the wall that's the first thing that the enemies will do the second thing is to surround you so that you can't escape can't get out to get food or water then they'll hem you in on every side that is begin to turn the screws and exert the pressure and come closer and then fourthly in verse 44 they'll crush you to the ground you and your children within you that is in the end everyone will be destroyed and killed and finally they will not leave within you one stone upon another they're not just going to leave the city still standing but depopulated they'll destroy it temple stones buildings houses whatever as Babylon destroyed Jerusalem so will it be destroyed again and it did because 40 years later the Romans came and after continued uprisings of Jews they decided enough was enough and under the Roman general Titus soon to become emperor

Jerusalem was destroyed totally temple gone treasures taken off people killed leading citizens captured and taken back to Rome for a victory parade and the city stood empty desolate depopulated for another 60 years before the emperor Hadrian began to rebuild it in Rome today just near the Colosseum there still stands Titus's arch commemorating the victory of Rome over Jerusalem in 70 AD but Jesus warnings here are not totally confined just to the destruction of Jerusalem but they have a longer term prospect as well the last words of verse 44 say you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God and so Jerusalem would be destroyed but God will visit again when Jesus returns at the end of history and often the destruction of Jerusalem becomes a foreshadowing of what will happen when

[26 : 20] Jesus returns finally in history for then those who do not recognize the visitation of God then will suffer the same sort of fate see these are words of warning that still stand to us even after 70 AD when Jesus returns one day and we all face his judgment throne will we recognize in him the visitation of God to us or not well as Jesus comes into Jerusalem to the temple he goes straight away as the prophet Malachi predicted the last of the prophets of the Old Testament and there as we all know very well he drove out those who are selling things there in the temple precincts these were people who were sellers of unblemished animals you could only sacrifice an unblemished animal and the law of the Old Testament provided for the fact that if you lived a fair distance from the temple it would be unfair to expect an unblemished animal say from the north in Galilee to be brought several weeks journey down to Jerusalem and remain unblemished I mean what if you got there and just as you were entering into Jerusalem it broke its leg or something oh no I've got to go all the way home again and find another one I'll be late for

Passover so you could come with your money and buy an unblemished animal the trouble was in Jesus day they sold the animals in the courts of the temple itself and made profits out of it as well and the others of course were the money changers because under Roman rule the coins had Caesar on them that would be offensive to use such coinage in the temple courts to buy your animals and so there was specially minted money from Tyre in what's Lebanon today the trouble with these practices was that it was scandalous profiteering animals sold for a huge profit the exchange rate on this coinage very exorbitant fleecing basically those who were trying to offer their sacrifices so to speak Jesus condemns such service of mammon rather than God when he expels all these people from the courts of the temple itself my house shall be a house of prayer he says quoting Isaiah and then quoting Jeremiah you've made it a den of robbers again in his mind he's referring to Old

Testament passages that foreshadow the end of Jerusalem 587 BC and again he's hinting that the same will happen again every day for the rest of the week Jesus was teaching in the temple verse 47 says and the crowds were spelled down by it the end of verse 48 but in the midst of it all a coalition of chief priests of leaders of the people and the scribes started hatching plans to put him to death for the first time in Luke they are wanting to get rid of him although the opposition actually starts earlier because Mark and Matthew and John's Gospels all show us people trying to get rid of Jesus much earlier in his life or they succeed within a week he's dead hanged on a cross the way this arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem is told with all these echoes from the Old Testament especially focused on the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC show us that Israel has not learned the lessons of history they still despise the temple they still make profits they're still corrupt their corruption compromises their religious rituals and sacrifices and for them the temple was a mere safety blanket not a point of meeting God they often say that the one great lesson you learn from history is that no one ever learns the lessons of history and Israel is a case in point for as they were in 587 and before so they are here in Jesus day and as it happened in 587 with the end of

Jerusalem so will it happen in 70 AD and as it happened in 70 AD so will it happen when Jesus returns again and revisits this world when the king comes in all his glory to judge the living and the dead will we recognize the time of his visitation from God then in recent years Palm Sunday has become a day of peace marches in cities throughout this country at least and our world certainly stands in dire need of peace and Jerusalem not least amongst the cities of this world torn apart by warfare and hatred but this entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is not about earthly peace and political peace as so many of the crowds then thought it is about heavenly peace it is about peace with God it is about a peace that comes peace through Jesus dying on a cross for he comes to Jerusalem to die his mind is set to the cross and he dies to bring us peace with God that lasts forever to death with two sides though for those who recognize in him a dying Savior there is true peace with God but for those who do not recognize in him a dying Savior there will be judgment of peace with God judgment and destruction woe to those who say peace and peace when there is no peace but for those with faith and who recognize him well may we say with the crowds blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven totter to teach you