

# **Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ**

## **Lecture 18**

### **Jesus' Final Entry into Jerusalem**

#### **Introduction**

- Though Jesus' disciples were apprehensive about their going to Jerusalem, they were still expecting that somehow Jesus would inaugurate God's kingdom in Jerusalem. Consequently, as they approached Jerusalem, they had a strong expectation that great things were ahead for them and for Jesus – Luke 19:11.
  - Jesus stops by for a visit to Jericho and there finds Zaccheus – Luke 19:1-10 – Jericho lies 244 meters (800 feet) below sea level, at the foot of the ascent to the Judean mountains
  - Jesus is now nearing Jerusalem – vs.11-27 tell us what Jesus was doing as He ascended towards Jerusalem = using parables He is teaching about the kingdom of God – about a nobleman who went to a far country to receive a kingdom for himself (v.12) – it is a parable about giving 10 slaves money (the equivalent to 100 days wages) and telling them to do business with this money – then follows hatred by the citizens of his kingdom towards this nobleman and their outright rebellion against his authority – then he returns and asks each of the slaves to give an accounting of how they have used the nobleman's money – two had made a profit while another had done nothing with the nobleman's money – the first two are praised while the other one is condemned – it highlights a nation who had been visited by the King's Son but had done nothing with the riches that had been given to them – the parable spells out a clear warning to God's people with a prophetic word that the Jewish nation who had received so much from God but had kept these riches for themselves, there would be great loss – and those who rebelled against the king would be severely punished (by death)
  - So the teaching is heavy and the atmosphere like before a big storm (a quiet stillness before the explosion of thunder and lightning)

- As Jesus and His party get near to Jerusalem, He once again goes on ahead – as it were, He breaks free from His disciples, striding on ahead with determined pace, knowing full well what lay ahead of Him – perhaps the disciples and others were lagging behind anticipating the worst – not so with Jesus – He was going on ahead, preparing for the great battle, ready to give Himself as a sin offering for all mankind
- But there were still some other preparatory matters that needed to be cared for before the final showdown on Golgotha – the entry into the city, the cleansing of the temple, the final days of teaching, and then the last supper before His arrest and trial – all of these have special significance in God’s plan and are linked with OT prophecy

### **Jesus enters Jerusalem**

- We must try to enter into the disciples’ experiences and feelings as they enter Jerusalem with Jesus – their fear of the impending crisis on the horizon mingled with a heightened expectation that maybe God would intervene with great power to bring about the destruction of His enemies and inaugurate His long-awaited kingdom on earth
- Their expectations were strongly dominated by both tradition and OT Scriptures, eg Zech.9:9 – the whole context of vs.1-8 is of God’s awesome power displayed in His overcoming and defeating foreign powers – then comes v.9 – with a very clear reference to the entry of Israel’s king entering *Jerusalem “righteous and having salvation”, “... gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”* – these Scriptures had been written just several hundreds of years before by Zechariah, after God’s people had returned to their holy land from their Babylonian exile – further strengthened by the apocalyptic writings among the Jews during the inter-testamental period when their land was occupied by the Greeks and then by the Romans
- Into such a background, Jesus sends His disciples off to find the colt that He would ride as He entered Jerusalem – the messianic expectations would now reach fever pitch – see Luke 19:30-31 – as the story unfolds, there is the divine touch of miracle in the details of the drama
- Then follows that most explosive scene – “explosive” because of the potential for fanatical outbursts from the people in their longing for God’s kingdom promises to be fulfilled – when Jesus’ followers spontaneously took off their cloaks and began

welcoming Him as the great Conqueror and Deliverer with their shouts of “Hosanna” – see vs.35-38 – this was turning into a huge and noisy party or celebration, almost out of control, at least that is the way that predictably the Pharisees would interpret the situation (v.39), and also the occupying Roman soldiers who were ever-present in this city known for its religious zeal and hence for its potential for frenzy and sudden eruptions of trouble and rebellion

- Yet Jesus Himself was not stirring the emotions of the people – He wasn’t out to make prophecy happen though obviously He was fully aware of all the OT prophecies that were being fulfilled – rather He was riding into the city with serenity and purpose, gently and humbly (cf. not on a large, white horse but on the most common beast of burden = a donkey, cf. His return at the end of the ages according to Rev.19:11ff)
- *“Nevertheless Jesus’ procession into the city was threatening to some. It was apparent that he had not come to Jerusalem as a simple itinerant preacher of Galilee. Rather, he came as God’s anointed, God’s final word to Jerusalem that this was the day of her visitation (Luke 19:44). Like Galilee before her, Jerusalem had now to make her decision. It was the eleventh hour (Matt.20:9). The king had prepared his marriage feast and the invitations were going out (22:1-10). If the city rejected Jesus’ summons, its holy place would be forsaken and utterly destroyed (Matt.23:28; Luke 19:43 f.).” (NT Speaks: 110-111)*

## **Jesus cleanses the temple**

- Twice Jesus cleansed the Temple: once at the very beginning of His earthly ministry (John 2), and then again in the last week of His earthly ministry
- Luke 19:45-46; cf. Mark 11:15-17 – here is God’s righteous Son entering into the Holy Place, the centre of worship and sacrifices, as God’s mighty Prophet who is led to both speak and act out the Word of the Lord – the cleansing of the temple was linked with the use of the Court of the Gentiles (the outer court) for profiteering in the trade of animals and birds for sacrifices – in effect, they had profaned God’s holy place by turning it into a market scene for business – in this way they were showing contempt for God’s desire to welcome Gentiles into His holy Presence – see Isaiah 56:6-7; Jer.7:8-11
- Jesus’ anger at this profiteering was no sudden loss outburst – rather as God’s holy One He was coming to God’s holy city and to the holy place but finding it filled with unholy practices – God’s holy wrath and zeal for His holy name was

stirred within Jesus and expressed through His action of cleansing the temple – the King had indeed come to His city – those who knew the Scriptures could not have missed the message – this was the beginning of the end, the beginning of God’s judgment upon those who had rejected God’s “Messiah” – the humble and poor may have welcomed Jesus to the city but the religious authorities in their religious pride had rejected Him – the fig tree had been cursed (see Mark 11:12-14,20-21), the chief priests and elders of the Jews were doomed by their rejection of God’s Messiah – soon their authority would wither away to the very roots

- Following this dramatic cleansing, Jesus daily came to the temple and taught in these very precincts – Luke 19:47-48; 21:37-38 – the religious leaders were at a loss to know how to respond to Jesus except to plot His death – His popularity among the people (Luke 19:48) as well as their fear of an uproar in the city with the certain outcome of a severe crackdown by the Romans should they attempt to take any forceful limited their ability to mount a resistance movement to speak out against Jesus and trap Him with questions – all of which brought them yet further humiliation and embarrassment – see Luke 19:48-20:8,19-26,29-40

### **Jesus eats the Passover with His disciples**

- The next significant event of no small prophetic meaning was Jesus’ eating the Passover meal with them – once again we need to go back and remember the historical background for this meal – the Israelites in Egypt, in bondage to their evil slave-masters, told to prepare the Passover meal with all its rich symbolism concerning the deliverance of God’s people through the slaughtering of a sacrificial lamb and the sprinkling of the blood on their doorpost (Ex.12) – cf. John the Baptist had identified and greeted Jesus with the words: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) – Jesus had already spoken clearly to His disciples that He would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10) – but at this moment, the disciples’ eyes were closed to the realities going on around them – they were unable to see and understand God’s plan in action
- In God’s plan, Jesus had entered Jerusalem at the very moment when the Jews were preparing for the annual Passover meal – one of the highest and holiest moments in the annual Jewish calendar – there would have been a great flurry of activity and planning with the arrival of many people from outside Jerusalem arriving to eat this special meal with their family in Jerusalem – a meal of remembrance when they would recall how God sent His angel of death and how

he had “passed over” all the homes where the blood had been placed on the doorpost in obedience to God’s command

- The Lord therefore took the initiative to share this special meal with His beloved disciples – Luke 22:7-13 – more significant events would transpire during this Passover meal with His disciples:
  - Jesus eating the meal with them, telling them that this was His final meal with them before He would eat with them in God’s kingdom – Luke 22:14-16,18
  - His instituting a new celebration meal (the Last Supper, the Lord’s Table, Holy Communion) for God’s new people, i.e. the believing remnant including those from the nations who would later believe on Jesus through their apostolic ministries – later on the Day of Pentecost following the outpouring of the Spirit, these disciples began to share this Love Feast as a part of their regular meetings (Acts 2:42) – Luke 22:14-20
  - His pointing out the betrayer – Luke 22:21-23, cf. vs.3-6
  - His washing His disciples’ feet and then His final hours of fellowship with His beloved Eleven in the Upper Room (John 13-17) – filled with words of comfort and reassurance for them concerning God’s sending another Counsellor, the Spirit, to be with them

These notes were written and prepared by Rev. Graham M. Roberts, M.Th. for the B.Min. “Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ” course at the Asian College of Cultural Studies – February 2004.