

# Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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## Easter Message (2019): Blessed be the King

Today we're going to consider the events traditionally remembered on Palm Sunday, when the Lord Jesus rode in triumph on a donkey into Jerusalem, and the crowds rejoiced, praising God and crying out, "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*" (Matthew 21:9, Mark 11:9, Luke 19:38, John 12:13). As we consider this event, I want to bring out a key underlying point, that I hope will encourage us in our faith in the Lord Jesus, and give us confidence in the future. The key point is this - the Lord Jesus knew what He was doing when He deliberately fulfilled an ancient prophecy recorded in the prophet Zechariah. He knew who He was: the promised Messiah and the Saviour of the world, and He knew what His mission would be, and how events would unfold. We can therefore have confidence in Him, and in His promises for the future. Just as the prophecies about the events of Easter were literally fulfilled by the Lord Jesus, in full consciousness of who He was, so we can have a sure and certain hope about His full salvation, about His coming again for us, and about His taking us to be with Him. I hope that these thoughts will encourage us all today!

We need to think about the triumphal entry in its context, so that we can get a full picture in order to understand the significance of this event. Therefore we are going to consider three things

1. The prophecy in Zechariah;
2. The events leading up to the Lord Jesus' triumphal entry; and finally
3. The triumphal entry itself.

### 1. The prophecy in Zechariah

Let's start, then, with the prophecy in Zechariah. I'm going to read from Zechariah 9:8-10, in the New King James Version: "*I will camp around My house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.*"

The context in this prophecy is one of war and oppression. Jerusalem is being attacked, but there is the promise of a righteous, powerful yet lowly King, a King who will bring salvation and peace, and who will have worldwide dominion. The arrival of this King was supposed to bring joy and gladness to Jerusalem. We will see how this is very relevant to the events of Palm Sunday. Indeed, the triumphal entry that we read about in the gospels involved the Lord Jesus fulfilling part of this prophecy, and yet we know how the rest of the events of Easter unfolded. Jesus did not end up having dominion from sea to sea, but instead He was arrested, tried and crucified, and He rose again the third day. How do we fit these things together with Zechariah's prophecy?

### 2. The events leading up to the Lord Jesus' triumphal entry

Let's look at the events leading up to Palm Sunday, and see how and what the Lord Jesus thought about them. Luke 19 is quite a long chapter, with 48 verses, and there are a number of important incidents in that chapter. As Luke records the events for his gospel, we first have the call and conversion of Zacchaeus, (Luke 19:1-10) the chief tax collector of Jericho, who had climbed up into a sycamore tree so that he could see Jesus (Luke 19:4). As we know, Jesus called to Zacchaeus to come down from the tree and to receive Him in his house (Luke 19:5). We read in Luke 19:7 that this action by Jesus was not universally popular: "*But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.'*" How did the Lord Jesus respond to this? We can read His reply in Luke 19:9-10: "*And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'*"

This response of the Lord Jesus is important because here we see Him clearly summarising and stating His mission on earth, "*The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). That is the reason why He came. The story of Zacchaeus was a real-life incident that actually happened, but it is also an illustration of Jesus'

ways with us. Zacchaeus had wanted to see Jesus, as we can read in Luke 19:3: *“And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature”*, which is the reason why he had climbed up the tree. But the point is that the Lord Jesus was also looking for Zacchaeus, which is why He looked up and saw Zacchaeus in the tree, and called to him to come down and to receive Him in his house (Luke 19:5). The Lord Jesus is also seeking us in one way or another. He wants to call us to receive Him, so that we can receive His eternal blessing. *“The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). We need to respond to His call, like Zacchaeus did, so that we can be not only found, but saved - saved from our sins, saved from judgment, saved from hell and separation from God, saved **for** heaven, and saved for eternity.

It is most interesting to read what comes immediately after the story of Zacchaeus in Luke's account. Luke 19:11 reads as follows: *“Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.”* This shows us that there was a general anticipation among some that Jesus would take up His Kingdom in Jerusalem, but that Jesus Himself knew that events would unfold otherwise. He was, and is, indeed the King, but the full manifestation of His Kingdom was not for now. That is why He spoke another parable to His disciples to explain this to them. You can read that parable in Luke 19:12-27. It is often referred to as the parable of the minas, and it is similar to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. The parable in Luke 19 starts as follows: *“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’”*

It would seem that this parable may have been an illustration taken from an event in recent Jewish history that the hearers would have known about. Herod Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, had gone to Rome to receive Herod's kingdom, but a delegation had also gone up to try and oppose this. The implication of the parable is clear. The nobleman was to receive a kingdom, but his citizens did not want him to reign over them. While he was absent, he gave his servants a job to do with his own resources. In the same way, Jesus knew that He would not be accepted. Just like the nobleman in the parable, He too would be going away - He would be returning to His Father. His followers would have the responsibility of furthering His business during His absence from this earth. But just like at the end of the parable, He would come again and set up His Kingdom.

Why was this so? It was so that the Lord Jesus could fulfil His mission of seeking and saving those who were lost. His rejection, His crucifixion, His death and His resurrection were all necessary if we were to be saved. He would not set up His Kingdom in power until this was accomplished. The cross had to come first.

Thus so far we can see already that the Lord Jesus was fully conscious of His mission, and that He knew full well that He would not be accepted as King. Yet He would still present Himself as such, because that is who He is. All of this strengthens our faith in Him as we see Him in full control of His situation, in full consciousness of what needed to be done, and certain of what the future held. We can trust Him to carry out His promises that have yet to be fulfilled. The events of Easter might have seemed like a tremendous defeat at the time, but they were in reality the vital part of the Lord Jesus' magnificent mission to seek and to save that which was lost.

We come then to the events of Palm Sunday. Let's read the account in Luke 19:28-31: *“When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’”*

Here is one of many examples in the gospels where we see the Lord Jesus' divinity. Firstly, He knows exactly what there is in the nearby village, and He can instruct His disciples accurately as to directions, what they will find, and what they have to do. Secondly, He claims His right over the things that He has created. Perhaps if we know this story well, we might be inclined to pass over the details because of our familiarity with them, but when you stop to think about it, it would be pretty strange for two people, very likely strangers to the inhabitants of the village, to just walk up and untie and take away a young donkey! We would be quite perturbed if someone we didn't know just turned up and decided to borrow our car or bicycle! But Jesus asserts His rights as the Creator and Lord of all things: He says, *“the Lord has need of it”* (Luke 19:31). And the events unfolded just as Jesus has predicted. We can see that if we read on in Luke 19:32-34: *“So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’”*

It's interesting to stop and think about this a bit more. On the one hand, we can see how Jesus is in full control of the situation, which gives us confidence in Him. If something needs to happen, He will ensure that it does happen. On the other hand, we can be encouraged that our resources, whatever they might be, can be used for Him and His purposes. The Lord needed that particular donkey. It was a privilege for the owners of that donkey to have it loaned

out to the Lord Himself. It's a bit like the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-14). The Lord miraculously multiplied the loaves and the fishes, but He started with the five barley loaves and two small fishes that the boy had. Furthermore, He doesn't forget what we do for Him. We can see that in Hebrews 6:10, which reads as follows: *"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."*

### 3. The triumphal entry itself

Now we come to the main event of Palm Sunday, which is the text for our talk today. We'll read on in Luke 19:35-38, *"Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'"*

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, many spread their clothes on the road, I suppose rather like we would roll out the red carpet for royalty and for important dignitaries today. There was joy and praise as He rode down into Jerusalem, and the crowd of disciples were quoting part of Psalm 118:26, saying, *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!"* Here was the King, as had been described in Zechariah 9:9, *"just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."* The disciples rejoiced and gave Him honour. But would He be accepted by everyone? Or would it be like in the parable of the minas, where the citizens hated the nobleman, and said, *"We will not have this man to reign over us"?*

We know, of course, the rest of the Easter story, but we get an immediate clue to whether He would be accepted by all from the response of the Pharisees. In contrast to the disciples, they were not happy. They were not rejoicing and praising God, but instead we read in Luke 19:39-40, *"And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' But He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.'"*

It is very heart warming and encouraging to see how Jesus always sprang to the defence of His disciples when they were being criticised or accused. It would make a worthwhile Bible study to go through the gospels and check out the instances where this happened. I will point out a few examples.

- We have one such example in Matthew 12:1-8, where the Pharisees said that Jesus disciples were breaking the Sabbath by plucking heads of grain and eating them. Jesus defended His disciples by showing that what they were doing was no different to what King David had done many centuries ago.
- Another example is in Mark 7:1-23, where the Pharisees found fault with the disciples because they were eating bread with unwashed hands.
- John 12:1-7 is a further very interesting instance - here we see how the Lord Jesus defended Mary against the criticism of Judas Iscariot.

As we read through the gospels, we see how the Lord Jesus often suffered criticism and insult aimed at Him, but He always took care of His own when they were being attacked. In the same way, He takes up our case when the Devil accuses us. The Lord Jesus knows that we often sin and fail, but He has suffered for our sins, and He is our righteousness. He defends our cause. On the other hand, a practical application that we can take away with us is that we must be careful before we criticise and speak evil of each other. We can tell from these instances in the gospels that I have mentioned that such actions do not please the Lord Jesus!

We have read, then, the sour response of the Pharisees to the Lord Jesus' triumphal entry (Luke 19:39-40). Did it matter to Him that He was not accepted, since He knew what the future held and how events would unfold? Yes, it did matter! We can see His feelings described to us in Luke 19:41-44. *"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'"*

We have seen a glimpse of the divinity of the Lord Jesus when we read about how He knew that the donkey colt would be in the village, and that He knew that there would be no resistance to His disciples taking it when they said, *"The Lord has need of it"* (Luke 19:31, 34). In the verses that we have just read now, Luke 19:41-44, we also see a glimpse of the Lord's Jesus' perfect humanity. It was certainly not a matter of no concern to Him that He would be rejected. He grieved for the sadness and trouble that would come upon Jerusalem. They had not recognised Him for

who He was, even though He had fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah. In His own words, they had not known *“the time of their visitation.”*

Zacchaeus had known the time of His visitation. When Jesus called to him to come down from the tree, we read, *“So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully”* (Luke 19:6). It was a good thing that Zacchaeus had responded as he did, for the Lord Jesus would not have passed that way through Jericho again. He was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. Jerusalem did not know the time of her visitation. A good question to ask ourselves is whether we have known the time of our visitation. 2 Corinthians 6:2 states, *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”*

### **Conclusion**

Well, we have covered a good deal of ground today as we have considered the triumphal entry. As I said at the start of this talk, the key point I wanted to bring out was that the Lord Jesus knew what He was doing when He deliberately fulfilled an ancient prophecy recorded in the prophet Zechariah. He knew who He was, He knew what His mission would be, and He knew how events would unfold. So as I said at the start, we can therefore have confidence in Him, and in His promises for the future.

There's a great book called *“The Suffering Saviour”* by a German pastor of the 19th century, FW Krummacher, that you can get hold of freely online. He takes up the events of Easter and wonderfully brings out the character of our Lord, and it was his thoughts on the triumphal entry that gave me the ideas for this talk.

The more we consider our Lord, the more we see His perfection and His love for us. I hope you will have been encouraged by considering the Lord Jesus today!

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