

Introduction:

- A. I noticed someone in a bookstore yesterday carrying one of those *Magic Eye* books. You know, those strange pictures that you have to stare at just so, and then a whole new 3-D picture emerges. I thought how the stories of Jesus are like that. In the stories Jesus told and the stories about him there is more going on than meets the eye. Jesus would say, *"They have eyes, but they can't see."*
- B. The story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is like that. You've heard it read. It seems straight-forward enough. But Luke tells us a couple of things that most in the crowd probably didn't see: **vv.39-44...** Did you catch that ending: *"because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."* What a strange thing to say when he is surrounded by people cheering him as the Messiah they've long waited for.
- C. One thing the crowds didn't know was the story Jesus had told his disciples shortly before this. He was on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem, about 15 miles. It was a climactic journey and everyone knew it. Everything would come to a head when Jesus got to Jerusalem. In fact, Luke says in **19:11** that Jesus told this story *"because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once."* The story he told is this: **vv.12-27...** And then **v.28**, *"After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."* With that story in mind, let's look again at the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and let's be sure to see what the crowds missed.

I. BE SURE YOU SEE THAT WHEN GOD CAME TO US HE CAME AS JESUS CHRIST THE KING

- A. Don't miss all God's signals—all his alerts—that Jesus is the King he had long promised to send. The Old Testament is full of symbols and stories and prophecies all pointing to Jesus. Then there was his miraculous birth and the angels announcement, and magi's search for the newborn King. There was the unique authority of Jesus' teaching (*"Nobody every taught like this man,"* the people said). And there were the miracles, culminating when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead just before coming to Jerusalem. In fact, Luke says here in **v.37** that it was the miracles his disciples had seen that gave them the impetus to celebrate his entry into Jerusalem.

Then there is this little, behind-the-scenes story of the donkey. **Vv.29-34...** This story has God's fingerprints all over it. First of all, God had the idea. Jesus riding on a donkey was a signal God had prepared his people to look for. When David installed his son Solomon as king 1000 years earlier, he had Solomon ride to the place of coronation on a donkey instead of a warhorse to symbolize the peace that would come with his reign. Solomon's very name meant *peace*. And now a greater son of David rode into Jerusalem as the king of peace. God was nudging the crowd: *"Get it?!"* What's more, God had given the prophet Zechariah this word:

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!
See, your King comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* [9:9]

"Get it?!" Through all these signs and prophecies, God had rolled out the red carpet for Jesus. These signs were **God** shouting, *"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord."*

- B. Another thing the crowd missed was this: As King, Christ comes to give peace for our deepest need. Jesus mourned in **v.42**, *"If you, even you, had only known on this day **what would bring you peace...**"* They saw Jesus riding on that young donkey and probably recognized that as a symbol of peace. And they heard the disciples shouting, *"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest,"* and even took up the shout themselves. But they didn't know what they were saying.

It reminds us a little of the angels song at Jesus' birth. It was a statement more weighty than anyone realized that day because **Jesus' coming is what makes peace between heaven and earth, between God and his creation.** Remember that great anthem reserved for the end of time in **Rev. 11:15**, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."* That is why there is *"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest."*

The crowd heard these words about peace, but most had no idea the kind of peace Jesus offered. At the beginning of this chapter, Lk 19, Jesus met the Scrooge known as Zacchaeus —a pint-sized Grinch of a tax collector. Jesus went to his house for dinner, and in that time of fellowship with Jesus, Zacchaeus was changed and became a new man, full of repentance and grace. And look what Jesus said in **Lk 19:9-10**, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."* That is the peace Jesus came to give. But usually, the crowds miss that.

- C. Another thing the crowd missed was what they were saying when they shouted, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord." Most of the Jews in the crowd that day imagined God's Messiah bringing peace to them by giving everyone jobs, healing all their illnesses, and conquer all their enemies, starting with the Romans. And that's still why some people are interested in Jesus—to make life easier. **But Jesus comes to reign—to extend God's authority over all things;** over how we behave ourselves, how we spend our money and raise our kids, over what we love and hate. There are a lot of people who think Jesus is great, but most have no interest in him being the king over their lives. How was it they put it in Jesus' story, *"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.'"* [v.14]

We're surprised and frustrated sometimes that more people don't come to Christ. Who wouldn't want this peace that he has given us? Who wouldn't want this wonderful relationship with God our Father? Who wouldn't want the hope he offers and the help he gives? **But the problem is always this: people may want peace, but they are often loathe to submit to a King.**

There's another thing in this story the crowds didn't see:

II. BE SURE YOU SEE THAT WHAT WE DO WITH JESUS CHRIST IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (19:27, 39-44)

- A. To begin with, Jesus Christ the King must be worshiped! **Vv.39-40...** At the very heart of the universe is the absolute necessity that Jesus Christ be praised. The Bible tells us that sin has so crippled creation that it groans with waiting for Jesus to set things right. Worshipping Jesus is not just a religious practice, not just something Christians do in church. **Worshipping Jesus as the King who comes in the name of the Lord is a cosmic necessity!** It is more vital to the great order of the universe than gravity or energy or light. So when people say, *"We don't want this man as king,"* the universe shudders and clears its throat to sing.
- B. The opportunity to secure Christ's peace will not last indefinitely. **V.42**, *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes."* Actually, even after this, the gospel would be preached and many in Jerusalem would turn to Christ, but the nation had missed their opportunity. Make no mistake, the door to peace does not stand open forever. One of the sternest warnings in the Bible is this: *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."*
- C. This story has something else that the crowds didn't see and didn't hear: Terrible judgment awaits those who refuse Christ as King. Look at **v.43**: *"The days will come upon you,"* Jesus sobs out, like Jeremiah before him, *"when your enemies" will destroy you and your children and your city "because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."* For these people that happened explicitly less than 40 years later, in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Romans. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote about what happened. *"While the sanctuary was burning... neither pity for age nor respect for rank was shown. On the contrary, children and old people, laity and priests alike were massacred..."* [vi.271]. Except for part of the western wall (what we know today as the Wailing Wall)

and some towers, *“All the rest of the wall that surrounded the city was so completely razed to the ground as to leave future visitors to the spot no reason to believe that the city had ever been inhabited”* [VII.1-3]. Josephus also reported that the victorious Roman general *“Titus threw his arms heavenward, uttered a groan, and called God to witness that this was not his doing”* [Hughes].

Do not miss these two things: First, **Jesus sobbed at the thought of this judgment.** You’ll hear people ask, *“How could a loving God send people to hell.”* A loving God, if there is a hell, would do all in his power to provide a just way of escape, and that is what Jesus did. He left heaven itself, took on human flesh, took responsibility for our sins, and then took on death as our sacrifice so that people would not have to face such fierce judgment. Remember what he said, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* But if people will not let him be their King and bring them peace, than judgment is all that is left. And that is enough to make God weep.

Secondly, **there is a far worse judgment than the destruction of Jerusalem in store for those who reject Christ, and that is hell**—everlasting torment, an endless death. Those who steadfastly refused to have Christ as King will, in the end, have no one but themselves, left utterly alone in outer darkness with nothing of God’s goodness at all. The crowds seem to always miss that rejecting Christ is the ultimate matter of life and death. *“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”*

Conclusion:

- A. This story is a prophecy. It casts the dark shadow and shudder of hell. But it also gives us a glimpse, in a kind of spiritual miniature, of the second coming of Christ. I was thinking a few years ago how we have special days in the year to celebrate all the big events of Jesus’ life but one. We need a day to celebrate our hope of his second coming. Palm Sunday is a good time to do that. In **Lk 13:35** Jesus said, *“I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”* On that glad day when the heavens open and the trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ rise along with the living to meet the Lord in the air, we will shout, *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.”* And then we will be with the Lord forever!
- B. And what of us, his disciples, in this long interval while our King is away? In the story Jesus told, we are the servants to whom the King entrusted his treasures. We are those servants, entrusted not with mere money, but with the **treasures of Christ’s peace and grace and truth**, each in varying amounts. Our King has told us to multiply his resources, so while we wait for his return that is what we must do, in this part of his kingdom. In this dark world, with so many people who say of our Jesus, *“We do not want this man to be king over us,”* **keep sowing truth** in your conversations, lifestyle and prayers. **Keep investing grace** in the lives of people you know, for there are still people like Zacchaeus who are eager to welcome Jesus into their homes. **Keep living like “children of light” in this dark universe**, for soon—very soon—Christ will come again, and there will be no more night. One day soon it will be *us* who look up and joyfully shout, *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.”*