

"THE ROYAL WELCOME THAT BOMBED"**Luke 19:28-44****THEME: Palm Sunday. Expectations concerning Jesus.****DATE: 04/01/07**

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A lot of what you see depends on what you're looking for.

If you keep looking for something that isn't there, you may eventually see something that isn't there.

- Practically the whole time Jesus was with his disciples—and even after his ascension—his followers saw only what they were looking for, and it wasn't real.

Most of Jesus' followers saw in him the fulfillment of their nationalistic longings.

When Jesus set out from Galilee for Jerusalem, he warned his disciples that suffering and death awaited him there.

But they didn't understand or accept what he was talking about (Luke 18:31-34).

Even after the resurrection, when Jesus met with his disciples they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) They still could not get out of their minds the image of Jesus as the longed-for hero who would expel the Romans from their land.

They knew that Jesus had been executed and buried and that he had arisen from the dead, but they still didn't understand why.

- On Palm Sunday Christians observe the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem for the beginning of what is called "holy week." Jesus' arrival began with hope and hype. But that day ended in disappointment for Jesus' followers, for the religious establishment, and for Jesus himself.

Some of Christ's followers claim that Jesus is the answer to people's hopes and dreams. But many are quickly disappointed when Jesus doesn't get them what they longed for.

In the Bible God has explained Christ's mission so that we can understand what he wants us to know.

- In Luke 19:28-44 we meet Jesus on his way to Jerusalem to culminate his earthly mission. Many of the pilgrims who were coming to the Passover at the same time—especially those from Galilee—expected Jesus to do something huge, his greatest miracle.

By studying three **perspectives** on Jesus' entrance in Luke 19:28-44 we can come to a true understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do.

I. EAGER ANTICIPATION (19:28-38)

Jesus had just left the house of a crooked tax collector named Zacchaeus in Jericho. It had been a life-changing experience for Zacchaeus. Jesus had become his Savior! That's where Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:9)

Now Jesus was moving on to Jerusalem.

²⁸ *After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.*

²⁹ *As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,*

³⁰ *"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.*

- Bethany was just two miles to the east of Jerusalem.

Jesus dispatched two of the disciples to go ahead and bring a colt to him.

Matthew's and John's Gospels tell us this was a young male donkey.

³¹ *If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"*

³² *Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.*

³³ *As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"*

³⁴ *They replied, "The Lord needs it."*

³⁵ *They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.*

- There's a bit of a mystery here. We don't know how Jesus set this up. So let's speculate.

Perhaps Jesus had met the owners of the colt on an earlier visit. Jesus had been to Bethany before; that's where his friends Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus lived.

Maybe Jesus had asked them: "If I need to borrow your donkey sometime, would that be okay?" And they said, "Of course, anytime. You know where we keep it. Just go ahead and borrow it. If your disciples see us they can just tell us that you need it."

Maybe there's a perfectly natural explanation like that, or maybe it was a miracle that Jesus knew there was a donkey there. The Bible doesn't tell us.

- I can have a little fun trying to set this in a modern motif.

It's not a donkey. It's a Harley. Not the big Road King or Fat Boy or Softail. It's the colt of a Harley—a Sportster.

It's parked right next to the front door of a little house in Bethany.

One of the disciples gets on it and starts it up. Somebody comes to the door and shouts, "Hey, you, what are you doing with our Harley?" "Oh, the Lord said to tell you he needs it." So off they roar to find Jesus.

I'd have Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a "hog," a Harley.

³⁶ *As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*

³⁷ *When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:*

³⁸ *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"*

This crowd probably came from Galilee. They all knew someone who knew someone who had been healed miraculously by Jesus.

They were in a festive mood.

- Pilgrims to the feast who arrived first would turn out at the main entrances to Jerusalem to welcome other pilgrims. They were watching for friends and relatives.

It seems that even those who had already found their Galilean relatives went out because they heard that Jesus, the miracle-worker was coming. Could he be the Conquering Messiah who would liberate them from oppression?

The prophet Zechariah said it would happen this way: *'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.'* (Zechariah 9:9)

The crowd with Jesus saw in him the Messiah who would inaugurate a new era and evict the hated Roman occupation forces.

- John's Gospel tells us, *"They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!"* (John 12:13)

Palms were an emblem of victory. They welcomed Jesus as the Conqueror they had been expecting.

The word "*Hosanna*" means "*save now*," or "*O save!*"

"*Hosanna*" had become a sacred greeting and an exclamation of praise used by pilgrims coming into Jerusalem for the religious festivals.

"*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*" is a quotation from one of the Psalms (Psalms 118:26) used during the feasts of Tabernacles and Passover. The people looked forward to the coming of the Messianic Savior.

The crowd was downright giddy—the Messiah had come to them!

But they were in for a huge letdown. Instead of being enthroned as a King, Jesus would be crucified as a criminal.

- Jesus was a king, but his kingdom was not like anything they imagined. When Jesus was brought before the Roman Governor Pilate later that week, Pilate asked, *"Are you the king of the Jews?" . . . Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth."* (John 18:33, 36-37)

The people expected a miracle that would establish Jesus as the great deliverer of the people.

But that's not what happened. Instead, people witnessed his death on the cross. They saw his physical body laid in a tomb. Only his disciples saw and touched his resurrected body.

- Where did Christ's great work of redemption take place?

Christ's work of salvation took place in the spiritual realm. It was not part of this physical creation (cf. Hebrews 9:11-12). It happened between his physical death on the cross and his resurrection from the tomb.

- Some people today see Jesus primarily as the answer to their personal dreams and ambitions.

There are a lot of silly notions about Jesus Christ that have nothing to do with his real purpose in coming into the world.

But Jesus came to do exactly what he had just told Zacchaeus in Jericho—to seek and save the lost. He came to change people's lives—to rescue them from the power of evil and to give them eternal life. The crowd that cheered as Jesus entered Jerusalem was bitterly disappointed a few days later when this same Jesus was nailed to a cross and executed just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

- How did the day end? Mark's Gospel tells us. *'Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.'* (Mark 11:11)

What an anti-climax! The trip back up the Mount of Olives was nothing at all like the trip down earlier that day.

After all that rejoicing at Jesus entrance, he and his disciples left the city just like other pilgrims returning to a place where they had arranged to stay during Passover.

After all their eager anticipation earlier in the day, can you imagine the confusion and disappointment in the minds of Jesus' followers?

[2nd perspective on Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem]

II. BITTER INDIGNATION (19:39-40)

The Pharisees were the religious and political conservatives. They were incensed by what they saw.

³⁹ *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"*

⁴⁰ *"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

The Roman forces were on high alert for any disruptions the influx of pilgrims for the feast might cause.

The Pharisees wanted Jesus to tell his followers to cool it. If things got out of hand they would spoil the Passover for everyone.

Jesus said it was too late to stop what was going to happen. "If you shut the people up, the very rocks will cry out."

All heaven was watching with rapt attention for the culmination of God's plan of redemption.

The crowd was cheering for Jesus as the Messiah. He was the Messiah, but they didn't realize that the Messiah came to suffer and die first. He would come later to rule as king.

- The Passover celebration was sacred. It commemorated God's great rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and his punishment of those who oppressed his people

The Pharisees were annoyed that a crowd of Galilean peasants had the nerve to shout "Hosanna!" in welcoming a nobody from Nazareth as the hoped for deliverer of the people.

The religious leaders of Jerusalem were the people who engineered Christ's crucifixion. The Romans merely carried it out, at the insistence of the religionists.

- I think this group of judgmental Pharisees typifies some upright and up-tight Christian people today. They place a high value on their respectability as good religious people. They don't want anyone messing with their nice, comfortable, safe way of practicing their faith.

People like that can get very nasty if someone seems to be a threat to their religious practices.

Wherever you find religion that makes respectability and orderliness the top priority, people's lives won't be changed.

But Jesus came to seek and to save lost people whose lives are messy and they're not too proud to admit it. He could do nothing for the proud religious folk.

[3rd perspective on Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem]

III. SOBER REALIZATION (19:41-44)

The prophet Isaiah said the coming Messiah would be a "man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering." (Isaiah 53:3)

You can't erase the sober, painful parts from Christ's earthly mission.

The image you probably have of Jesus in your imagination right now is of him coming down the Mount of Olives on the approach to Jerusalem with the crowd dancing and shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord."

- That's what the people did. What did Jesus do?

⁴¹ *As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it*

⁴² *and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-- but now it is hidden from your eyes.*

⁴³ *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.*

⁴⁴ *They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. It's a very strong word. It means to weep bitterly, to sob. Jesus was heartbroken.

Why was Jesus overwhelmed with sorrow? Was it because he knew he would die in a few days and he was afraid?

No. He wept over the city, shrouded in ignorance of what lay ahead for its people. "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace" (v.42)

- In John's Gospel we read that during these days of the Passover celebration Jesus declared, '*Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*' (John 12:31)

Jesus would go to the cross to win a victory, to assert the claims of God's dominion. By faith in Christ, people would henceforth be set free from the power of Satan and enter into the kingdom of God's Son.

But at the very climax of God's provision of salvation, the people continued to be spiritually blind. They didn't grasp what Jesus had come into the world to do. They were blind to the truth of what would bring them peace—peace with God. (42).

They had the wrong expectations—all of them, Jesus' followers and Jesus' enemies.

When Jesus Christ returns as Lord, then the words spoken in heaven with loud voices will come true, '*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.*' (Revelation 11:15)

- So, there was Jesus, God the Savior, surrounded by a cheering crowd. And he knew that in a matter of days he would disappoint them because he did not come into Jerusalem to give them what they had in mind.

They wanted him to get rid of the Romans. That wasn't going to happen. Soon the city would be destroyed—and it happened in AD 70.

Jesus wept because of their spiritual blindness. They could not see what really mattered. They didn't care about their relationship with God.

- Have you ever looked out on a huge crowd of people and felt very sad? I don't claim to be a super-saint, but that's happened to me on a number of occasions. Sometimes at football games. I get into the excitement of it with the best of them, but there were times when, unexpectedly, the sobering realization struck me that most of those 40 or 50 thousand people are totally oblivious to what really matters in their lives.
- Jesus looked out over Jerusalem and he wept because the people didn't realize what lay ahead for them.

It's a sober realization.

The crowd gave Jesus a royal welcome into Jerusalem, but Jesus was heartbroken because they didn't see who he really was and what that meant for mankind.

They looked at Jesus and saw something that he was not. He was not their national emancipator. Jesus was disappointed by their spiritual blindness—to say the least! And in a few days the people were bitterly disappointed with Jesus.

The royal welcome bombed!

- We should not be surprised that the people didn't see the truth. Even the apostles didn't get it until the Day of Pentecost.

But we have no excuse. The gospel of Christ—the truth that the apostles later preached and which we have in the Bible—opens people's eyes to see why Jesus came.

He came to suffer God's judgment on sin in our place so that we might be forgiven. He arose from the dead to prove his victory over sin and the devil and to set us free from their power and to give us new life—if we confess our sin to God and put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

That's why he came. Do you see it?

- Have you been enthused about Jesus for all the wrong reasons? You expected Jesus to make your dreams come true. It didn't happen and you've been left disappointed.
- Have you been more like the religious leaders who resisted Jesus? Do you like the respectable life you've arranged for yourself, and you don't want Christ upsetting things?

I hope that what you really need—what will bring you peace with God—will no longer be hidden from your eyes.