

Tears From Heaven

Luke 19:28–31 (ESV) 28 And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here."

After carefully correcting His followers as to the true nature of His kingdom and His mission, Jesus heads steadfastly into Jerusalem. Jesus is in Jericho...The city of Palms...**PHOTO 1** He has just visited a tax collector...Zaccheaus...He face is set to Jerusalem and it is time to go...Time to make the climb at Passover from Jericho to Jerusalem one last time. He is one week away from walking out of His tomb.

Knowing full well what awaited Him, knowing that He must endure the cross before receiving the kingdom, Jesus went. In His suffering, we should admire, not pity Jesus. He knew exactly what He was getting into.

John 11:57 (ESV) 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

John makes it clear that there was a price on Jesus' head, an "all-points-bulletin" was put out for His arrest. Yet, He came into Jerusalem in the most public way possible.

They begin their journey to the Temple...**PHOTO 2** the road is crowded...but this is not like every other Passover. You see the prophets had foretold that this would be the very day that the Messiah would arrive at the temple.

Many in Jerusalem that day were waiting for the Messiah just like the Wise Men were studying the stars the night of His birth. The prophets had revealed that this would be the day. So there was a buzz in the crowd that day.

In fact, unlike other Passovers...people began lining the road to Jerusalem like crowds at a parade. Many carried palm leaves...from Jericho...the city of Palms...Palms were considered a Messianic symbol. Waving palms was a sign of welcoming the King.

As you begin to make the crest of the climb from the East...you reach two very small cities....suburbs if you will...Bethpage and Bethany...Bethany the home of his now living friend Lazarus....He is only about 3 miles from the city gates. He is coming up on the backside of the Mount of Olives just East of Jerusalem.

He sends two of His disciples into the village....likely Bethany....for a colt...a colt that has never been ridden...Go get it Jesus says and bring it to me.

Jesus once again doing the miraculous...so common now that they don't even really notice it anymore.

There was a donkey...right where He said it would be...

Luke 19:30–34 (ESV) 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.' " 32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of it."

Not only was the colt there, but the man asked them exactly what Jesus said he would ask them....and they gave the answer Jesus told them to give...."The Lord has need of it"

Without even a hint of objection the owners let them take it...they were used to this too. Today he needs a colt...but in the past he had other needs.

Before this it was a boat. Before that a boy's lunch. The boat was a platform for preaching...the lunch was food for a miracle. In a week he will borrow a grave...just for a little while...

The Lord has need of it...such an interesting irony. The God who created everything....spoke everything into existence...himself has nothing.

He is a king without even a donkey to His name. Not even enough money to rent one.

Luke 19:35–36 (ESV) 35 And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.

Imagine this sight. The long awaited parade of the Messiah. Going to be incredible right?

This King rides into Jerusalem...not perched up high on an Arabian Horse but on a borrowed little donkey. His leg dangling on each side almost touching the ground.

He looks nothing like a King. In fact, He is almost comical. No pomp, no ceremony, in fact...no concern of appearances at all.

The symbolism though is critical here. Donkeys were ridden by priests and men of peace. If you arrived somewhere on a peace mission, you rode a donkey. Kings and Warriors rode horses. Jesus would ride this donkey into Jerusalem. It was important that it wasn't a horse, because that would send the message that Jesus was a man of war. He is letting everyone know that their king is the Prince of Peace.

Yet someone rushes up to Jesus...pulls off his cloak and spreads it on the ground in front of him. As he jumps back into the crowd others do the same. Each person, one after the next...laying down their garments for the King.

They honored him with their garments. This meant a lot in time, when most people had only one set of clothes. To lay aside part of their small wardrobe to let a man riding a donkey to go over them was really laying something down. In a few days, they would be throwing dice for his cloak while they mock Him.

Yet on this day...a wave of excitement builds in the crowd like a reverse wave.. Men bending down to lay their cloaks...women to lay their shawls.. Young men climbing trees and pulling down palm fronds and olive branches. They are near the city of Palms and on the Mount of Olives. Children likely running and jumping...perhaps throwing flowers in His path....Children always love Jesus.

Picture the colt...awkward at best when alone...now plodding ahead one step at a time....but now under the weight of Jesus. This sight while comical perhaps....brings incredible excitement to the crowd...they see the prophecy unfold before them.

Someone in the crowd remembers the words of the prophet Zechariah...

Zechariah 9:9 (ESV) 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Now the crowd is going crazy. This is the day when the Lamb is to be presented in the Temple....inspected for the Passover....and today...the Lamb of God arrives...His face set like flint to Jerusalem....just a mile or so away and He too is about to be inspected and declared perfect. Three times Pilate will tell the crowd that I find no fault in Him.

John 19:6 (ESV) 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

But tomorrow has enough trouble of its own...today...the King...the Messiah arrives as the perfect lamb of God to the place of Sacrifice on Passover.

But it is not just the colt who is bearing a heavy weight this day. And the closer Jesus comes to the gates of Jerusalem the heavier that weight gets.

He is so near to Jerusalem but they are so far from Him. The weight of that truth begins to weigh on Jesus.

But for now the crowd lifts His spirits a bit. They are raising their hands...and extension off their hearts. They have seen His miracles...They have encountered the supernatural. They have experienced just a taste of all that He offers.

Some reach out to Him in their spiritual hunger satisfied with no bread but the one He offers. That is why they line the path today and put down cloaks and palm leaves. Their Messiah comes..in a royal procession...and they are welcoming their king.

They have tried to welcome their king before but He would not let them. After feeding 5000 He had to retreat to prevent them from crowning Him their King. At a previous Passover, his family tried to pressure him into revealing Himself and He would not.

But this Passover is different. This is the day. The day the prophets foretold. He has picked a colt instead of a chariot to make sure Jerusalem understands that He is the King Zechariah foretold.

Jesus was forcing everyone out into the public. He forces the hands of the Religious leaders. After His public arrival and declaration as Messiah they would have to cast their vote publicly.

No more secret meetings..no more scheming...He was calling them out into the open. They would have to confess Him or curse Him.....Crown Him or Kill Him.

Luke 19:37–38 (ESV) 37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

As he rounds the corner of the road near Jerusalem the crowd sees him **PHOTO 3** and they go crazy. They recognize what is happening...God is bringing His Messiah home.

They began to shout out Messianic Scriptures...Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord....Peace in Heaven and glory in the Highest.

There is no worship leader here...it is spontaneous..a moment of worship from the hearts of people who can no longer contain themselves. Their love is enough to lead them....their joy enough of a guide.

But the praises of Jesus always offend others.

Luke 19:39–40 (ESV) 39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Using an urgent Greek aorist imperative (epitimēson), the leaders ask that the eschatological demonstration be stopped by Jesus' rebuke. In other words, don't just silence them. Publicly correct them for being wrong.

Irony drips from Jesus' response. He cannot silence his disciples, for if he did, then creation itself would take up the song: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Even inanimate creation understands events better than the leaders do—Jesus tells them...you are so blind...even a rock knows more about what is happening today than you do.

The idea of creation itself praising God may seem strange, but the Bible speaks about it in a few places—trees, hills, oceans, rivers, mountains, valleys, cattle and creeping things, birds and fields all give praise to God. We also hear of Abel's blood crying out to God.

The Pharisees are like roaches that have been surprised by the light...a light that fully exposes them. They worry about what would happen to them if this wave of excitement was carried into the city of Jerusalem.

Do you remember the foreshadowing here. When King David came up this road bringing the presence of God to the Temple of God with the Ark of the Covenant. He was celebrating and dancing...ok perhaps in his underwear...but nonetheless He was celebrating the arrival God to Jerusalem and his wife chastised him for his foolishness.

Their praise made Jesus' enemies uncomfortable; it made them object to the praise being offered. There is something about the true worship of God that often makes people feel uncomfortable, especially people who aren't Christians yet.

This man would disrupt the solemn ritual of Passover. He might sweep away impressionable people who were not founded in their religious roots as they were.

At least that is what they tell people, but the reality is that they are concerned...concerned for themselves. They are experiencing what everyone experiences when the light of Jesus busts through your darkness. Jesus always forces a decision

The Pharisees are really concerned that Jesus will call into question their motives and their integrity. He might make them look bad, undermine their authority and threaten their job security.

Like hitting the wall in a Marathon...the wave of enthusiasm does not wash over the Pharisees. Their hearts are not filled with joy...rather with judgment. From their hearts their mouths speak...not praises but a rebuke.

It made them know they were being defeated. John 12:19 says that on this day,

John 12:19 (ESV) 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Nothing tells Satan and his followers "you've lost" like the praises of God ringing in their ears. Satan has lost because when God's people are really worshipping, their hearts and minds are on Him.

For them the crowd is misinformed, their emotion misguided...their praise a huge mistake.

A mistake that they demand Jesus correct. But it is they that Jesus corrects.

They stood silent while the crowds and everyone it seems shouted praise. It is tragic when you think about it.

So much education and so little understanding. So much learning and so little life.

So much mind....so little heart.

The donkey doesn't care about any of this...likely just glad that the road turns downhill. The weight seems lessened. To the right behind the walls is one of Jesus' favorite places...the Garden of Gethsemane. He can likely smell the aroma...Olive branches....He would return to this garden soon.

As He looks up at the Temple..**PHOTO 4** Herod's Palace....the Fort of Antonio....To almost everyone this is a breath taking site...and to Jesus they will literally take his breath away.

All of the emotion of this moment erupts out of Jesus...

We are not told how long He wept or how hard, but the word Luke uses is a strong one that means convulsive uncontrollable sobbing. Luke doesn't make much of these tears but there is much there.

It is the eleventh hour for the Jewish nation—their leaders have rejected Jesus, and most of the masses have followed their leaders. But there is still time, if they will only take advantage of the opportunity in front of them.

Jesus shows us the heart of God, how even when judgment must be pronounced, it is never done with glee. There is weeping in the heart of God even when His judgment is perfectly just and righteous.

What is behind these tears? An eternity full of grief. There is no way we can know the depths of God's pain in this moment. Jesus is convulsively sobbing....He is going to His death...A horrible, shameful, humiliating death. He knows the pain will be unbearable. The cloaks of honor will soon turn to cloaks of dishonor. The blessings of the people will soon turn to shouts of curses. Hands raised in praise today will soon be raised to vote for His crucifixion. Those shouting Hosannah will soon be shouting Crucify Him.

But knowing all of this...Jesus does not weep for Himself. It is Jerusalem that is breaking His heart this day.

Luke 19:41–44 (ESV) 41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side 44 and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

If only you had known this day....THIS DAY....Jesus is telling them...The Prophets said He would arrive to the Temple...to Jerusalem today.

Why was this your day so important? Because this was the day prophesied by Daniel that Messiah the Prince would come unto Jerusalem. Daniel said that it would be 483 years on the Jewish calendar from the day of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the day the Messiah would come to Jerusalem—and it was 483 years, by the Jewish reckoning of 360 day years, exactly to the day (Daniel 9:25).

This is the day mentioned in Psalm 118:24: This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Jesus looks ahead....to a day...40 years in the future...a day when according to the historical Josephus.....again on Passover when the town is full of pilgrims..the Romans will surround it....and keep anyone from leaving.

"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side"

Jesus sees that day...He sees the bloodshed...He hears the tortured cries...He feels their pain. Many will eat the leather of their shoes....many will starve....By August the Romans would finally storm what is left of the city and destroy the Temple. Over a million Jews died.

From Josephus: "All hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devour the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms of women and infants that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also, and the young men wandered about the market places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them. For a time the dead were buried; but afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the wall into the valleys beneath. When Titus, on going his rounds along these valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefication running about them, he gave a groan, and spreading out his hands to heave, called God to witness this was not his doing."

How much into the future was Jesus looking as He sat lowly on that donkey...was it just forty years....or perhaps longer.

Jesus knew the consequences of the world rejecting Him. I wonder how much destruction He saw beyond the temple? How many nations did He see at war? How many Stalin's and Hitlers did He see emerge? How many genocides because there would be no peace for nations...how many homicides because there would be no peace for people...and how many suicides because there would be no peace for the human heart?

How much racial hatred? Fighting under the banner of religion..in His name? How much injustice? We too often get lost in patriotism and miss the fact that Jesus came for the entire world...every person...every friend..every enemy.

Jesus' tears were not just for Jerusalem...they were for Rome...and Babylon...and Berlin...Not just for Gettysburg but also for Hiroshima...

The tears of Jesus are rarely mentioned in Scripture. He wept over a friend that had died on this very mount...and now He weeps over a nation that, in its own day, had died.

He called them both out of their tombs....Lazarus came out....Jerusalem did not.

The World Rejected its Savior and Jesus knew what meant. He knew about our world today.

A world that is on the brink of falling apart. A world that knows so little of the peace that Jesus offers.

That is where Jesus is on this Palm Sunday. He is to show us that there is a dark secret to love. A secret that is only suffering can reveal....

That If we live long enough and if we love hard enough our heart will be broken.

Isaiah foretold that Jesus would live among us as a broken-hearted man... a man of sorrows...acquainted with grief.

Jesus came to show us that some things can only be developed within us through suffering.....things like character and compassion.

And there is a communion that can only occur with Jesus in the midst of suffering....when we join Him in the tears...and He draws us close....hold us tight...and give us His peace.

Through His tears, I believe Jesus looked to see you and to see me. He came to call us out of our tombs....

Jesus called and Lazarus came out...Jesus called and Jerusalem did notJesus is calling you and me right now....Are you praising Jesus or Rejecting Him? Crowning Him or Killing Him? Are your hands open in worship or clenched in a fist? Every time Jesus arrives...He forces a decision.

The entire Easter Story is about God calling us out of our tomb....that death we deserve...and inviting us to a life that we don't. I believe that Jesus, on that road to Jerusalem, looked into the future and saw you and me....He gazed upon us with eyes full of tears....Are His tears for you....tears of sorrow or tears of joy? Let's pray.