

# **Two Prepared Entries into Jerusalem**

*Luke 19 and 22*

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## Two Prepared Entries into Jerusalem

I would like to take us back for a few brief moments to the original occasion on which our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper that has brought us together here this morning. We shall base our remarks on two passages from the Gospel by Luke.

When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" you shall say this: "The Lord has need of it."' So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.' And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. 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, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' (19:29–38)

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.' They said to him, 'Where would you have us prepare it?' He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, "The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.' And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. (22:7–13)

According to Luke, in the last week of our Lord's life here on earth before he was crucified, he made not one but two very carefully prepared entries into the city. Of course, each night he went from the temple to the Mount of Olives and came back in the morning. That was necessary because, during daylight in the temple, the people hung on his every word and the chief priests were afraid to arrest him while the crowd was present. At nightfall, when the crowd went away, our Lord went to the shadows of the Mount of Olives in order to prevent premature arrest.

These two entries into the city were very carefully prepared.

## **The King enters his capital city**

In the first one, our Lord would be finally approaching the city, coming down the Mount of Olives. He sent two of his disciples to the nearby village with instructions that they would find a colt there. They were to untie it and bring it to him,

So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of it.' (vv. 32–34)

In Greek the word for 'owner' and the word for 'lord' are the same here. When the owners—the lords of the donkey—asked, 'Why are you untying it?' they replied, 'The Lord has need of him.' Humble though his guise, he was the Lord of heaven and earth, owner of everything, and at this point the owner had need of a donkey because this was to be his final and official entry into the city. At his baptism at the beginning of his ministry, John had announced him officially. Since then the Lord had been many times to Jerusalem in humble guise, but not on this occasion. The Prophet Zechariah had prophesied of a public coming of Zion's King to his capital city.

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. (Zech 9:9)

He would come humbly, riding on a donkey, but he was to be King. You see, in the ancient world, Jewish kings didn't ride spectacular horses like the Gentiles did; they showed their character as monarchs by the humble steeds upon which they rode. But don't mistake the mount which he chose. As he sat on the donkey and entered Jerusalem, he was deliberately fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy.

What moments they were for Jerusalem. Can you picture someone standing at the Golden Gate, looking over the Kidron valley and up the other side of the Mount of Olives? Suddenly, after centuries when the prophets had been silent and no further prophet had appeared, what tingling of the ears and pulsating of the heart, when they saw the King of Zion himself coming in that great cavalcade down the Mount of Olives, the crowd and his disciples saying, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' (Luke 13:35). The King was coming to his capital city.

I can't resist turning aside for a moment to envisage another spectacle. One day we shall see him descending the clouds. He shall not come on a donkey then; he shall come in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26). And his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.

## **The Lord institutes his supper**

The first of these two entries was very carefully prepared by sending two disciples to arrange the necessary transport. We know that at the end of that week, in the persons of its high priest and the leaders of the Sanhedrin, Jerusalem officially rejected their King, eventually 'threw

him out of the vineyard' (20:15), and murdered him. But you don't get rid of the King of Jerusalem just as easily as that.

Although Jerusalem was now officially hostile to him, at the end of the week he staged another entry, just as carefully prepared as the first one. Again he sent two disciples with instructions and, like the first two that had gone after the donkey, they found it exactly as he had told them (22:13). It would seem that our Lord had earlier made a secret arrangement with a certain householder. His name is not mentioned, for when Luke was writing his Gospel it might still have been dangerous for that name to have been published in Jerusalem City. This was a secret coming, but it was going to be in Jerusalem.

Let us remind ourselves that when our blessed Lord instituted the remembrance feast, he didn't do it out on the Mount of Olives, nor even in Martha's home in Bethany. He did it in his capital city. The authorities there may have been planning his murder and crucifixion, but they wouldn't keep him out of his city.

So he sent two disciples with a sign, 'You'll meet a man carrying a jar of water.' It was unusual for a man to do that; it was normally the women. They were to follow him to the house that he went into. They were not to ask him, but they were to ask the master of that house, 'Where is the guest room?' He would then show them a large upper room that he had prepared for our Lord to use with his disciples. Here they would celebrate the Passover, and then the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Can you visualize it? A dark Jerusalem night, the city hostile; you didn't know what guard was around the next corner ready to arrest any of his followers, and Jesus himself if they could lay hands on him. He comes to the Upper Room by arrangement with this householder and there he institutes the Lord's Supper.

### **What was the significance of the symbols?**

You say, 'He gave them the bread—a symbol of the body that he was about to give for them at Calvary.'

That's true.

'Then he gave them a cup—a symbol of the blood that he was about to shed for them at Calvary.'

How gracious of our blessed Lord, choosing how we should remember him. The symbols were very carefully chosen, of course. It is to be noticed that when our Lord chose means by which we might remember him, he did not ask that someone should stand up and read the Sermon on the Mount. It is a good sermon and very necessary for our admonition. Had he requested that we should read the Sermon on the Mount at this memorial session, we should have remembered him as a moral teacher. He didn't choose that.

He could have ordained that somebody should recite or read stories of his great miracles. How profitable it would have been, but if he had chosen that method we should have remembered him as a miracle worker. He didn't choose that.

The ceremony that he chose for us to remember him by were the symbols of his body given and his blood outpoured. John the Baptist had announced him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This was the prime purpose of his coming, and it is the

primary hold that he has on the heart and affection and loyalty of all who claim to have been forgiven by his blood and the sacrifice of his body.

### **The new covenant**

But there was more than that. He had come to Jerusalem as King, and the authorities were to throw him out of his capital city. But before they did that he would establish his kingdom in that house in Jerusalem. As he took the cup, he said, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood' (v. 20). It requires us, of course, to remember what the terms of the new covenant are, for we cannot dispute our Lord's words, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.' The terms of the new covenant begin like this: 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts' (Heb 8:10). This is the King talking and he has laws.

You will perceive at once the superiority of the new covenant over the old. The laws of the old covenant, given by God to Israel, were written on tables of stone. I am no mason, but I suppose you can inscribe laws on bits of stone if you've got a chisel sharp enough and you know your stuff. It's a very different thing trying to inscribe laws on hearts of flesh, those moving, unstable bits of us. Yet that is the miracle of God's salvation, as ministered through Christ. Paul explains to the Corinthians what was involved in their conversion.

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor 3:2-3)

Says Paul, 'At your conversion the Lord Jesus took me as a pen; the equivalent of the ink would be the Holy Spirit; and Christ wrote his laws on your hearts.'

That is what it means to be born again, regenerated; not merely with a life that will last forever and get us to heaven, but life of a certain quality. Engendered within us by the Holy Spirit, that life carries all the potential necessary for keeping the holy laws of God.

### **The King is in Jerusalem**

The world at large is going to throw him out and the authorities of Jerusalem City will have him crucified. But you don't get rid of the King just like that, for it was in that city, breathing with hostility, that the blessed Lord announced the formation of his kingly rule.

Wouldn't you have liked to have been that unnamed householder? You could have told all the other visitors to Jerusalem, if they were believers, 'It was a risky thing that I did. I gave him the best room in my house. If the authorities had discovered me I could have been crucified along with him, but I couldn't have him rejected and thrown out. I gave him a room in Jerusalem City where he could set up his kingdom.'

The world is still hostile, more or less. What a magnificent opportunity has been ours, by the grace of Christ, in this little part of the world to invite the Lord Jesus in again. We may celebrate the memorial feast as he commanded, and remember how he gave his body and his blood for us, so that we might be forgiven. Even as we keep it, we remember what our response should be. We know the final terms of the new covenant very well, and have rejoiced

in them thousands of times: 'For I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more' (Heb 8:12). Thank God for the marvel of forgiveness; and not only forgiveness, but forgiveness of this kind. So absolute, that no other offering is necessary for us to offer in order to get forgiveness of sins. We have forgiveness through his blood. That's the last term.

The initial term is, 'I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts' (v. 10). All who take the bread and the wine ought first of all to have known Christ as Saviour and been born again, otherwise the ceremony is of no significance. But all who have been born again by the Holy Spirit know that God has begun to work in their hearts, changing their lives, and they have a different nature. His laws have begun to be written on their hearts. Isn't that so?

We realize the work is not yet complete. Even as I take the cup, I should be saying to the Lord, 'Lord, I'm a long way from what I should be, and sometimes I don't think straight as a Christian, but Lord, you have died for me and given me the very life of God—eternal life. Continue Lord, please, to write your laws on my heart.'

We ought not to come to the Lord's Supper carelessly, having strayed and sinned during the week, not confessing it, our hearts unprepared, and just take the symbols. Yes, Christ died for us a long time ago, but we're not too concerned about the writing of his laws on our hearts. If we do that without examining ourselves, says Paul, then the blessed Lord, because he has covenanted to make us holy, will take steps to make us holy, even if those steps have to be painful under his gracious discipline.

If we come with all our faults and failings, not only aware that we have done a lot of things wrong, but some of our attitudes are still wrong, what a lovely thing it is to celebrate the Lord's Supper. We examine ourselves and confess it to the Lord, and he says 'I will remember their sins no more.'

So, in that room in Jerusalem, the rejected King set up his kingdom in the hearts of his disciples.

There is a walled city in England called Chester, originally built by the Romans. The guide might well show you a part of the wall where in ancient times the soldiers had their room. He will show you a flat board with a confused array of colours on it, meaning nothing in particular. Then the guide would take a tankard with bright shiny sides, like glass, and put it on the board. When you looked at the side of the tankard the colours would come together and form the face of the king. That particular king was in exile. The authorities at the time were against him, but these soldiers were on his side. As far as they were concerned, he was their king and they drank to his majesty's health. When they put the tankard back down, no one could see the face.

We have taken the cup today in this godless, hostile world. A bit of the kingdom of our risen Lord Jesus Christ is in this room. What is his kingdom like? What kind of a king is he? A sort of almighty dictator?

To the shame of the apostles on that sacred occasion, Luke tells us that there arose a dispute as to who was the greatest. Oh, dear, dear, how the old poison works. Our Lord was aware of it and gently rebuked them.

And he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.' (Luke 22:25–27)

In the world outside, monarchs and emperors exercise lordship over people. Some of the Greeks made big monarchs and emperors and tyrants and they called themselves by the title 'Euergetes', which means benefactor. In my youth we used to get Income Tax demands from Her Majesty's Income Tax inspectors, and they would sign their letters 'Your obedient servant'. Wow!

When rebuking their desire to be first, our Lord said, 'It's not like that in my kingdom. The one who is first is the one who serves the most.' My brother, my sister, I have to tell you that you're not going to be first in heaven, because the one who is first is the one who serves the most people, and you know who that is, don't you? 'I am among you,' says he, 'as one that serves. You sit at the table, I'm among you to serve you. Look at that cup and that bread on the table.' How he served them. The one that serves the most people is the highest in the accounting system of this new kingdom.

### **The King commissions his servants**

And then he tells them how they must go and preach for him.

When I sent you out with no money bag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, 'Nothing.' He said to them, 'But now let the one who has a money bag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.' (vv. 35–36)

As Messiah he had sent them out, and he had a right to expect that the Jews would maintain the Messiah's servants. Now they would have to make their own way. He didn't mean they would use literal violence—though some of them misunderstood him, and have misunderstood him ever since. They weren't to fight with literal swords, of course.

As we rise from the Lord's Supper once more and go out into the world for his sake, there's no hiding the fact that believers will have to fight. Why the change? Our Lord explained, 'For that which is written must be fulfilled in me' (v. 37 own trans.). He was reckoned among the outlaws, and the authorities crucified him as an outlaw and put him to a tree. You can't expect the world to maintain your Christian missions. We have to pay our own way and fight the good fight of the faith. Anticipating the persecution and the pressure that would be upon them, he warned them, 'All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered' (Mark 14:27 KJV).



Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Peter said to him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.' Jesus said, 'I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.' (Luke 22:31-34)

Sifting the genuine from the false, of course, the wheat from the chaff. 'I have prayed for you,' he said. Then, turning to Peter individually, he said, 'Peter, before this night is out, you shall deny me three times, but I have prayed for you that your faith shouldn't fail.' Notice the accuracy with which he prayed. He didn't pray that Peter's *courage* shouldn't fail—that failed terribly. He didn't pray that his *testimony* shouldn't fail—it was blown sky-high. He prayed that his *faith* should not fail, and Peter's faith didn't fail.

You say, 'Surely it did? He said he wasn't a believer.'

Yes, he did.

'You'll deny me,' said our Lord.

'Not I, Lord. I'll never deny you.'

But our Lord had to tell him straight, 'the cock will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.'

In a sudden attack of panic Peter denied the Lord. When he had denied the third time, the cock crew, and our Lord turned and looked at Peter. In that moment, Peter believed Christ more than he'd ever done before. He had no choice, had he?

The Lord said, 'You'll deny me.'

Peter said, 'No, Lord. You've got it wrong.'

Our Lord said, 'You're going to deny me three times, and then the cock will crow.'

What Peter wouldn't believe before it happened, he now believed. Oh, how merciful is Christ. He intercedes for us, so that, whatever else goes wrong, our faith shall not fail. Then in those moments there would come flooding into Peter's mind what our Lord had said: 'And *when* you have turned again, strengthen your brothers' (v. 32). 'When', not 'if'. Christ prayed for Peter. He has no favourites; he prays for us.

As we rise from his Supper to go out into the world to witness for him, to fight for him, and face all the temptation and the barrages that come against us, thank God for a King who is now exalted in heaven and intercedes there for us.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7:25)

Praise God for such a King, and may God grant that we shall be ever more loyal to him, for his name's sake.

## About the Author

**DAVID W. GOODING** is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.