

82. The King enters and cleanses

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Jerusalem at Passover season was the delight of the Jews, but the anxiety of the Romans. Thousands of devout Jews from all over the world arrived in the Holy City, their hearts filled with excitement and nationalistic fervor. The population of Jerusalem swelled up more than three times, somewhere around 2.6 million people during the feast into a city of which size was less than one square miles, making it necessary for the Roman military units to be on special alert. They lived with the possibility that some Jewish Zealots might try to kill a Roman official, or start a riot, and there was always potential for disputes among the various Jewish religious groups.

Jesus has entered Jerusalem before – as a Boy, as a Worshiper, and as a Teacher. But never as a King... until now. So far Jesus kept His disciples quiet about His true identity even though they really didn't understand it. But here, Jesus goes out of His way to invite public praise and adoration to Him as Messiah.

In this morning's study, we get to see our Lord Jesus' Triumphal Entry on the Palm Sunday road from the Mount Olives to Jerusalem. The King enters into Jerusalem and cleanses the temple, AGAIN. I believe that the Holy Spirit will make this lesson very practical for our lives.

A. THE KING'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Luke 19:28-40 When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, 30 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. 31 And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'" 32 So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. 33 But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, "Why are you loosing the colt?" 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of him." 35 Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. 36 And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road. 37 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, 38 saying: "'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!' Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." 40 But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

Bethphage and Bethany are two villages along the Jericho road, located about two miles southeast from Jerusalem. The mount called "Olivet," more often called the Mount of Olives, is a mile-long ridge that overlooks Jerusalem from the east.

The welcoming crowd had no idea what this trip of Jesus to Jerusalem signified. Oh, they had their own conclusion from their earthly and fleshly perspectives by taking a single OT prophecy out of context from the rest of the Messianic prophecies:

Zechariah 9:9 "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."

In their mind, this coming Messiah King Jesus should destroy the Roman empire and free them. Hosanna means "Save now!" In reality, their chant of Hosanna that came from Psalm 118 which is a Messianic victory psalm, was not a praise, rather it was more of a prayer and desire. Palm branches were a symbol of Jewish nationalism since the time of the Maccabees. This was a patriotic rally.

At this point, they would have embraced just about anyone who could free them from Rome, just like the modern day Jews will embrace the antichrist who will bring a short temporary peace in that region and allow them to build a temple on the temple mount during the first half of the seven year Great Tribulation period. They will go for it hook, line, and sinker!

The majority of these people at the time of Jesus didn't understand God's way or the purpose of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. That's why they screamed at the top of their lungs to crucify Jesus less than a week later. They clearly were moved by a mob mentality.

Whenever an ancient king rode on a donkey in a parade fashion, it was during times of peace; but whenever it was time of war they would ride a horse. The first time Jesus came, He came as the suffering Servant. But when He comes back, it will be as the conquering King to judge every unbeliever. The Israel people were expecting Him to wear a crown after He conquered the Romans, but He wore the crown of thorns to save mankind from the eternal flames of hell.

Let's turn our attention to our heart for a few moments. Is Jesus your King who reigns in your heart or is He an emergency personnel who gets called in whenever you are in a tight corner to bail you out? You cannot shove Jesus in some corner of your heart and let Him out only when you need Him and shoo Him back when you don't need Him. Either He reigns over your life all the time or you reign over you. If you've been running your own show, it is no wonder that your life is a mess. It will stay that way until you yield your heart to Jesus completely.

This Triumphal Entry is recorded in all four Gospels. What is so special about this? It is special because the Lord our God used the prophet Daniel to speak to us around 530 B.C. about what Jesus was doing here.

Daniel 9:25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

According to Daniel 9, we can add 173,380 days or 483 Jewish lunar years (360 days per year) to the date when the Persian king Artaxerxes made a decree to rebuild Jerusalem, we come to the exact date, when Jesus entered Jerusalem through the Palm Sunday road from Mount Olives and was welcomed by the people of Jerusalem.

But the people and the Jewish religious rulers chose not to recognize Him because He didn't do what they wanted Him to do – liberating them from the Roman Empire.

B. THE KING'S LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM

Luke 19:41-44 Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 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. 43 For

days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 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."

While the crowd was rejoicing, Jesus was weeping! This is the second occasion on which our Lord wept openly, the first being at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11. There He wept quietly, but here He uttered a loud wailing like one mourning over the dead.

In His foreknowledge, Jesus knew that because of the rejection of the Messiah by the people of Jerusalem, the city was invaded by the Romans after 143 days of siege in A.D. 70. 600,000 people were killed, thousands more were taken as captives and the city was completely leveled.

C. THE KING'S SECOND ROUND TEMPLE CLEANSING

Matthew 21:12-13 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

The temple was defiled by the "religious business" of the leaders. They had turned the court of the Gentiles into a place where foreign Jews could exchange money and purchase sacrifices. What had begun as a service and convenience for visitors from other lands soon turned into a lucrative business. The money exchangers charged exorbitant rates, but no one could compete with them or oppose them, because they were protected by the high priests. Historians tell us that Annas, the former high priest, was the manager of this enterprise, assisted by his sons.

The hurricane of Jesus was going through the outer court of the temple and cleansed it with His righteous indignation. The court of the Gentiles was used for mercenary business, not missionary business.

While Jesus was overturning the tables and throwing out the merchants, His disciples were asking one another, "What is the matter with the Master? Is He having a bad halo day?"

Keep in mind that Jesus had already cleansed the temple at the beginning of His public ministry three years ago. Before the public realized, the temple merchants were starting to creep back into the temple with permissions of the corrupted priests.

Isn't that just like us? Jesus came to our hearts as the Lord and Savior when we became Christians. He overturned the tables of our lives; He kicked the filth out of our hearts; He whipped ungodly thoughts out of our minds. As time goes by, we became comfortable with the worldly surroundings and influences and we started to allow those filthy and ungodly thoughts to creep back, once again, into our hearts which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Lord faithfully deals with it radically. And we need it regularly – actually everyday.

Do you know what makes God angry? When we hinder those who seek Him, that makes Him angry. You might say, "We are not Pharisees. We don't do that." Oh yeah? How about this? Some might want to come to church to seek God, but they don't dress like we do or they don't smell like we do. So we may look down on them. How do I know? I know, because I had that attitude and God dealt with me severely.

In early 1990s, one Wednesday night at Calvary Chapel Tucson, my wife Karen and I were sitting on our usual seats. There was a young man coming into the sanctuary and looking for a seat. He was not well kept, he didn't smell good, because he was suffering from a little mental illness. In my heart, I was thinking, "I don't want him to sit next to me. He smells bad." Right away, the Lord started to rebuke me for my rotten and snobbish attitude and raked me over the coal which I totally deserved. By the time, He finished with me, I was the one who stunk so bad spiritually. I've learned my lesson. The Lord willing, I would never do that again.

When our visitors come, they may not dress properly or modestly. They don't know the Christian lingo, they don't know how to act like Christians, because they probably are not. Let's not shoo them away. They come to the church to seek God, not to join a snobbish social club. This church should be the place where sinners come and get saved by God's grace, and are warmly welcomed by His people. God forbids that we may do anything to drive them away with our own hypocritical stupidity.

Some unbelievers would say, "I need to clean up my life before I come to Jesus." No, you come to Him first. He will start to clean up your life a whole lot better than you can ever think. The most important part of cleaning your life is letting the Savior Jesus come into your heart.

D. THE KING'S JUDGMENT AGAINST A FIG TREE

Mark 11:12-14 Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. 13 And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it.

Jesus performed two acts of judgment in today's lesson. He cleansed the temple and He pronounced a judgment to a fruitless fig tree. Both acts were contrary to His usual manner of ministry, because He did not come to earth to judge, but to save at this time.

In spite of its many privileges and opportunities, Israel was outwardly fruitless which was symbolized as the fig tree and inwardly corrupt also symbolized as the temple.

Listen carefully, please. Jesus is warning us about the outward appearance of spirituality, yet inward emptiness. God wants to produce fruit in the lives of His people. Once you come to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord, in an effort to please God, you should turn away from your old ungodly life to follow Jesus. That is the start of the fruits we are supposed to produce. After your salvation, if the people around you cannot see the difference in your life, where is the evidence that you are truly saved? The experience of your salvation could have been nothing more than an emotional hype. You are the only one who can answer that.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) If you are playing the game of religion in your heart and your heart is filled with pride, it will cause you spiritual blindness in your hearts.

Jesus is not impressed with what we do in the church, nor is He stoked by what we say in prayers in the presence of others. He is not telling us, "Admire Me," but He cried out to us, "Follow Me."

2) We must keep our heart which is the temple of the Holy Spirit pure by keeping short accounts with God.

What are we allowing to creep into our hearts? We must guard our hearts and eyes carefully. Because all of our thoughts and behaviors start from there.

3) God wants to produce fruit in the lives of His people.

Are we producing godly fruit in our lives so that unbelievers can see it? Is the fruit of our lives any different than theirs?