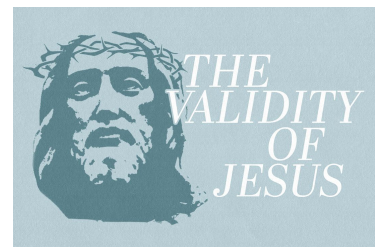


## Palm Sunday – Someone to save us.

### Luke 19:28-48

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



The seventeen miles from Jericho up to Jerusalem is a rugged walk, ascending thirty-five hundred feet. It was a trip they had made so many times before. Beginning as children, they would have made this exact trip with their families. The route became so familiar and so known that they could have made it with their eyes closed. For the last three years, they had made this trip with their rabbi, Jesus. This trip would become something so different than any they had made before.

Bethany was on the southeastern side of the Mount of Olives, just a couple of miles from Jerusalem. It was there that Jesus had raised Lazarus back to life, and coming back there, they started to notice things were different. Mary and Martha would host a dinner for Jesus. Well, Martha did the majority of the work. And Mary anointed Jesus' feet with expensive ointment. It was shocking, and Judas spoke up, but Jesus quieted him and praised Mary. For the rest of the disciples, it was clear something was shifting in Jesus, and something was buzzing in the people in Bethany and the surrounding areas. The next day, the disciples will hear the crowds proclaim Jesus as the rightful king and Messiah.

The Mount of Olives consists of three peaks, with the highest at three thousand feet. As the events unfold, they show messianic fulfillment, centering on three passages: Zechariah 14:4, which prophesies that Yahweh will stand on the Mount of Olives on the day of Yahweh; Genesis 49:10–11, stating that the lion of the tribe of Judah will tether his donkey and colt to a branch; and 2 Samuel 15:30–31, when David returned to Jerusalem (after Absalom had forced him to flee) on a donkey. **Jesus' purpose here is to show that he will not be the conquering Messiah they are expecting who will bring the armies of heaven to destroy Israel's enemies. Rather, he is the Suffering Servant, who is coming to defeat a different enemy, the sinfulness of humankind, and bring messianic peace, as symbolized by the donkey.**<sup>1</sup>

The sad reality is that the crowds were half-right. Jesus is the long-promised Messiah and the rightful King. They just didn't understand that his kingdom was not of this earth. And, what he offered them and offers us today is far greater than anything this age could offer. However, we're not altogether unlike the crowds; what they hoped for is what we hope for. What they needed is what we need. And, what they missed, we can miss as well. So what is it? **We all need a savior.**

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<sup>1</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 453.

# 1. The Triumphal Entry

## a. What happened? → What is the triumphant entry of Jesus?

- i. Jesus' purpose here is to show that he will not be the conquering Messiah they are expecting who will bring the armies of heaven to destroy Israel's enemies.
  1. Rather, he is the Suffering Servant, who is coming to defeat a different enemy, the sinfulness of humankind, and bring messianic peace, as symbolized by the donkey.<sup>2</sup>
- ii. The story comes to its climax, not in Jesus' entering Jerusalem, but in his lamenting over the city (vv. 41–44). Therefore, while Jesus deserves a triumphal entry as "king" (v. 38), Luke emphasizes that he is moving instead to the place of his rejection. This continues the movement Jesus spoke of in 13:33. It does not contradict Matthew or Mark, for v. 45 shows that Jesus did eventually enter the city. Luke simply omits the statement that he entered (cf. Matt 21:10; Mark 11:11) to make his theological point.<sup>3</sup>
  1. Famously, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and does nothing to overthrow the Romans or to demonstrate his "earthly power" as the people expected him to. What does the text tell us? → Mark 11:11
    - a. <sup>11</sup> **And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.**
- iii. Here is the complete outline of the passage in Luke's account:
  1. From Jericho to Jerusalem. (vv.28-40)
    - a. At Bethany (east of Jerusalem) on the mount of olives, he sends two disciples to get a colt (donkey).
    - b. v.34 – They see it and identify to the owner, "The Lord has need."
      - i. What an interesting exchange. → The air must have been pregnant with Messianic anticipation. (cf. 19:11)
    - c. Jesus then rides the colt into Jerusalem down the mount of olives. (v.36ff)
      - i. The people proclaim, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"
      - ii. The Pharisees confront Jesus to settle the disciples down. Yet, Jesus reminds them that his disciples are not doing anything wrong.
  2. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. (vv. 41-44)
    - a. The thrust of his mourning is over the blindness of the people. (vv.41,44)
      - i. Some proclaim what they do not fully understand, and others are blinded altogether.
      - ii. Jesus also makes prophetic proclamations about Jerusalem's physical future. (v. 43)
  3. Jesus clears the Temple (Solomon's Portico) (vv.45-48)
    - a. Dramatically, Jesus points to the contrast in values of the religious leaders versus the intention of the Temple. (v.45-46)
    - b. Jesus' popularity prevents them from attacking him. (v. 47-48)
- iv. **The symbols of his entrance:**

<sup>2</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 453.

<sup>3</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 1011.

1. **Donkey** – Jesus is going to enter Jerusalem in abject humility on the colt of a donkey rather than a white warhorse. As the crowds cheer his messianic entry, they have no idea they are acclaiming the Suffering Servant who is the king of peace rather than war and will defeat not the Romans but the powers of darkness and bring spiritual salvation rather than political liberation.<sup>4</sup>
2. **Palms** – The people spreading their cloaks on the road (the palm branches are found in John 12:13) recalls Jehu’s acclamation as king in 2 Kings 9:13. All the Gospels depict this as a “red carpet ride” into the city. The royal Messiah is in procession into the city of God, but not for the purpose the people think.<sup>5</sup>
  - a. Luke says nothing about the spreading of branches as well, though all the other Evangelists mention this (John says they were palm branches).<sup>6</sup>
3. **Hosanna / The King!** - God has brought peace in his salvation, and all who receive that peace must praise and glorify him. The pilgrims who shouted this praise were thinking of earthly peace and praise, but Luke wants us to catch the heavenly origin of it all.<sup>7</sup>

**b. Is this a historically reliable event?**

- i. This event happened some two thousand years ago. We are a long ways removed both in time, physical proximity, and culturally. Is there any reason we should not only consider the claim that Jesus is making about himself, but of the validity of this account?
  1. We consider the validity of a historical event through several means, two of which are the explanation and the details of the account.

**ii. Is there a more plausible scenario?**

1. Cabin example – What is most plausible?
  - a. I have given the example before. If you were walking in the middle of the most remote woods and saw a cabin, you would not conclude that it just happened by random chance and a sequence of peculiar weather events. Instead, the most plausible explanation would be someone built it.
2. When we look at the triumphal entry, and examine its validity, we need to ask, is the biblical account the most plausible scenario?
  - a. We do that by examining context, additional sources, and construction of the account.

**iii. Are there details that are inconsistent with what we know from other sources?**

1. **Does it fit the political landscape?** → Yes → “In order to appreciate what happens next, you need to understand something of the Jewish feelings towards Rome. In 63 BC Roman legions under Pompey had put an end to an independent Jewish state, conquering Jerusalem and deposing the king. Although Israel had returned from its exile in Babylon hundreds of years earlier, the golden age predicted by the prophets had not yet materialized. Instead Israel labored under the oppressive military dictatorship of a Pagan nation. The Jews chafed under the yoke of Roman rule. Within 35 years after Jesus’s death, Jews would be in a full-scale rebellion against Rome, finally resulting in the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. In the meantime Israel was a cauldron of unrest period

<sup>4</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 454.

<sup>5</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 454–455.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 295.

<sup>7</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 456.

jews yearned for a messianic deliverer who would establish God's kingdom in the land."<sup>8</sup>

2. **Do the details line up with the known infrastructure of the time?** → Yes. → Archaeological evidence supports the historical accuracy of the Triumphal Entry.
  - a. For example, in the 1970s, excavations in Jerusalem uncovered the remains of a first-century road that led from the Mount of Olives into the city. This road is believed to be the same one that Jesus would have traveled on during his Triumphal Entry.<sup>9</sup>
3. **Are there any exaggerations or overstatements in the text?** → No
  - a. This question helps us examine the reliability of the authorship of the text. If the Gospel writers are merely making up a story, are there details that make no sense to include if it is fiction? If so, the text and the account is reliable. → This account includes a particular detail that would make no sense if it was a fiction... Jesus leaves Jerusalem soon after he arrives!
    - i. **<sup>11</sup> And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.**
    - ii. He tells others to pay Caesar his taxes → Mark 12:17 – **<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him."**
  - b. **If the Gospel writers are attempting to create a Messianic story, this is the wrong way to go about it!**
    - i. The hero (Jesus) arrives only to leave and not assert power.
    - ii. Later that week, the hero (Jesus) tells Jewish people to still submit to Caesar.
      1. These are embarrassing details if Jesus is really the Messiah and there would be no reason to include them if they weren't true.
    - iii. Simply stated, there are no exaggerations, convenient fabrications, or embarrassing details omitted that make it more believable.
    - iv. **Instead, what we find are details and descriptions that fit both the physical landscape and the political / cultural landscape that establish the validity of the account.**
  - c. **There are other details of the passion week and the resurrection that would be embarrassing and not help a self-serving fictional account:**
    - i. Peter's denial – Matthew 26:33-35, 69-75; Mark 14:29-31, 66-72; Luke 22:31-34, 54-62; John 13:36-38, 18:25-27, 21:15-19.
    - ii. The women first at the resurrection – Matt. 28:5-8; Mark 16:2-8; Lk. 24:1-8; Jn. 20:1
    - iii. The men hiding – Jn. 20:19-25
    - iv. Thomas' doubt – Jn. 20:24-31
- c. **If there is not a better explanation for the Triumphal Entry and no reason to doubt it, what do you do with it and ultimately, with Jesus?**

<sup>8</sup> William Lane Craig via: <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/jesus-of-nazareth/the-triumphal-entry>

<sup>9</sup> Pitts, Andrew W. "The Historical Evidence for the Triumphal Entry." Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 59, no. 4 (2016): 703-22. [https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/59/59-4/JETS\\_59-4\\_703-722\\_Pitts.pdf](https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/59/59-4/JETS_59-4_703-722_Pitts.pdf).

- i. This was Luke's aim in writing his Gospel... "that you may have confidence." (cf. 1:1-4)
  - 1. **"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, <sup>2</sup> just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, <sup>3</sup> it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."**
  - 2. Luke compiled the evidence for Theophilus to weigh, consider, and ultimately to give him confidence not only in the account but ultimately in the validity of Jesus and his messianic claims.
- ii. Jesus doesn't miscommunicate during the triumphal entry, he is claiming to be God and Messiah. The people then, and us today have to decide how to answer the question from Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?"

## 2. "Who do you say that I am?"

- a. This is a question that Jesus poses all throughout his earthly life and ministry. His actions, his teachings, and his claims all demand an answer to this question.
  - i. C.S. Lewis might be the name we think of when we think of the "Liar, lunatic, or Lord" quote. Yes, Lewis employed that argument in *Mere Christianity* but it was not his original idea.<sup>10</sup>
  - ii. **John Duncan (1796-1870) formulated what he called a "trilemma." → Christ either [1] deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or [2] He was Himself deluded and self-deceived, or [3] He was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable.**<sup>11</sup>
  - iii. In 1936, Watchman Nee made a similar argument in his book, *Normal Christian Faith*. A person who claims to be God must belong to one of three categories: Liar, Lunatic, or God.<sup>12</sup>
- b. Those in the Gospels answering this question:
  - i. Peter → **Luke 9:20**
    - 1. This is the only time Jesus so overtly posed this question.
    - 2. Peter answered, "<sup>18</sup> **Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' <sup>19</sup> And they answered, 'John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.' <sup>20</sup> Then he said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Peter answered, 'The Christ of God.'**
  - ii. **Mark 2:8-11** → The healing of the paralytic in Capernaum.
    - 1. **"Why do you question these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."**

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. (London: Collins, 1952.) 55-56.

<sup>11</sup> John Duncan - In *Colloquia Peripatetica* (p. 109) 1859-1860

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/is-c-s-lewiss-liar-lord-or-lunatic-argument-unsound/>

2. Jesus forces the religious leaders to answer the question of his identity through the title, "Son of Man." A title that was pregnant with messianic implications from Daniel 7.
- iii. **John 4:25** → The Samaritan woman at the well.
  1. **<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."**
  2. They get done having a conversation about water and worship and Jesus makes the claim that he is the Messiah. She has to make a decision if he really is who he claims to be.
- c. **The simple reality is that we have been answering this question for the last 2000 years. → Who is Jesus?**
  - i. If the Gospel's account of the triumphal entry is a historically valid account, then it forces us to acknowledge:
    1. Jesus of Nazareth was a real person and not a historical invention like William Tell.
    2. Jesus of Nazareth thought of himself as more than just a religious teacher.
    3. **The response of the people illuminates something that is still true for us today. We need a savior.**

### 3. The need for a savior.

- a. When we talk about the need for a Savior, we are really asking the question, "What leads to our greatest flourishing?"
  - i. The drive and desire to realize a contented or complete state or experience of flourishing is a native drive for humanity. This is why we hear the rhetoric of "follow your heart" and "be true to yourself" in popular media, music, and movies.
  - ii. This pursuit of flourishing runs deep not just in the psyche of religious people, but even in those who do not ascribe to religion. Christopher Watkin notes in his comparative work on French post-theological thinkers:
    1. **"The dichotomy of theism and atheism are two routes to the same destination."**<sup>13</sup> → That is they are both trying to answer the question of transcendence and the pursuit of something more.
    2. Watkin continues, **"Religion posits a transcendence that alone can satisfy human desire, and the runt of immanence that remains once transcendence has taken this lion's share is limited, finite and incapable of sustaining happiness. Condemned to asceticism, atheism simply accepts the scraps of immanence that fall from religions table."**<sup>14</sup>
      - a. Watkin quoting a post-theological thinker, that is someone who does not believe in God, notes the significant gap between religious experience and atheistic experience. That is to say, that a post-theological world leaves much to be desired and a gap that is impossible to span.

<sup>13</sup> Watkin, Christopher. *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 133.

<sup>14</sup> Watkin, Christopher. *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 133

iii. The church father, Gregory of Nyssa described man's drive for the transcendent and ultimately a savior is rooted in his creation, that is, "**Man is made in the image of the incomprehensible.**"<sup>15</sup>

1. This is why we are driven to find a flourishing state or have the persistent need for fulfillment. What we long for is ultimately fulfilled by the source of our creation, God.

**b. There are only three options when it comes to a savior.**

i. **Myself** – I am the one who will save me.

1. This is ultimately the entire premise of Nietzsche's philosophy. Man will overcome his limitations by defining his own existence. Nietzsche expressed it this way, "**What is the ape to a human? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. And that is precisely what the human shall be to the overman: a laughingstock for a painful embarrassment.**"<sup>16</sup>

ii. **Someone else** - Friend, Family, Government, Etc.

1. This is a position of dependency. I am longing for something that I realize I, on my own, cannot achieve or experience. So we look to our relationships with other humans and with social structures to be our saviors.

iii. **God** – a maximally good divine being

1. This is the ultimate dependency. I long for something that I cannot realize on my own, nor can any other human or human institution fully realize. The only way to experience this transcendence is through a connection with the divine.

2. **Ontological argument – This is an argument first posed by Anselm of Canterbury and recently by Alvin Plantinga. It states (condensed):**<sup>17</sup>

- a. **It is possible that a maximally good being exists.**
- b. **If that is possible, then an MGB exists in some / every possible world.**
- c. **If an MGB exists in every possible world it exists in the known world.**
- d. **Therefore, an MGB exists.**

iv. The quest to find a savior is not an abnormal pursuit, nor is it one that simply fades with logic, reason, or in the age of science. We all are forced to answer the questions, "What will save you? What will make you whole?"

1. There are only three options for answers, myself, others, or God.
2. Again, if the triumphal entry is a valid historical event, it forces us to consider Jesus as a valid answer to our search for a Savior.
  - a. With his death and resurrection, it forces us to consider him as this maximally good being that exists in our known world.
3. This, ultimately, is the point of communion.
  - a. We remember that God loved us enough that he would make himself known through his Son and make a way for us to be restored into his family. → That he would do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
  - b. We need a savior. → Is Jesus a valid answer in that search?

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<sup>15</sup> Watkin, Christopher. Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 89.

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in - Watkin, Christopher. Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 94-95.

<sup>17</sup> Craig, William Lane. Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008) 185-185.