

An Earthquake in Jerusalem

by Warren Wiersbe

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a declaration of his victory and a call to humanity to turn to God and find peace in their hearts.

Duration: 36:27

Scripture: Psalm 8:2, Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:1-17, Colossians 2:14-15

Topics: "Earthquake"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a colt, with the crowd laying down their garments and palm branches in his path. The Roman soldiers present are skeptical and view it as a mere demonstration. The crowd, however, sees hope in Jesus, as they were living in a hopeless situation under Roman rule and with a corrupt temple. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus has already won the battle for us on the cross, and this triumph should be recognized and celebrated.

Transcript

God from Matthew chapter 21, verses 1 through 17. Matthew 21, verses 1 through 17. And when they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus to disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village opposite you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her.

Loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say anything unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them. And all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the fold of an ass.

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches from the trees, and spread them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the

seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were very displeased, and said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea. Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany, and he lodged there. May our praise of Jesus Christ not just be from our lips, may it be from our hearts.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved. That word move that Matthew wrote is an interesting word. We get one of our English words from that word moved, it's the word seismograph.

A seismograph is an instrument that measures the intensity of an earthquake. And so you could translate Matthew chapter 21 verse 10, and when he was come into the city, all the city was stirred like an earthquake. There was an earthquake in Jerusalem, a spiritual earthquake, and Jesus was the one who caused it.

At this point somebody says, well why worry about it, it happened centuries ago. Well we have to concern ourselves with anything that deals with Jesus. If Jesus caused a spiritual earthquake in Jerusalem, maybe he wants to cause a spiritual earthquake in Chicago, or in your home, or possibly in somebody's life today.

An earthquake has a way of shaking up the foundations, and perhaps somebody here is building his life on the wrong foundation. An earthquake has a way of showing up weaknesses and revealing faults, and perhaps someone of us here today needs that kind of work. When he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved by a spiritual earthquake, and the people were saying, who is this? Who is this? I'd like to do that today.

I'd like to go back to Jerusalem with our little tape recorder in our hand, and talk to some of the people who were there, and find out what kind of responses there were in that city, because Jesus Christ rode on in majesty. And so with our tape recorder in hand, let's start where we ought to start. Let's start with a Roman soldier.

When this crowd was gathering to magnify the Lord Jesus, the Roman soldiers began to signal to each other, and they picked up their spears, and they watched, because you never knew when a Jew was going to start some kind of a demonstration. And the great rule of thumb for the Roman soldier was peace and safety. The crowd that was with the Lord Jesus came from three different sources.

There was a mass of humanity that came down to Passover from Galilee. These were people that Jesus had ministered to in Galilee. And then John tells us there were a group of people who had been present when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

They were quite excited. They'd seen a man come back to life. And then there was a crowd that came out from Jerusalem, some of the resident persons who were there.

There was kind of a mingling of these three groups into one group, and the Roman soldiers were looking and watching, saying, is this a premeditated riot? But it wasn't. The Roman soldiers must have, well, the only response I can think of for a Roman soldier watching the so-called triumphal entry is scorn. Can't you just see him standing there in his lovely armor, holding on to his spear, and watching, and smirking? So

this is a Jewish parade.

Look at it. Here is an unemployed carpenter sitting on a colt, and the mother of the colt is there, and they have put their garments, a bunch of old clothes, in the road. And now some of them are chopping down branches from the palm tree to a Jew.

A palm was a sign of victory. Victory? Victory over what? We're still standing here. We still have our swords and our spears.

Rome is still in control. The Roman eagle is flying over Jerusalem. And look at this parade.

A bunch of peasants, a bunch of nobodies, putting their old garments on the road, singing an old Jewish song from Psalm 118, Hosanna, save now! And that Roman soldier just folded his arms and looked with scorn. You know why? They would never do that in Rome. When they had a parade in Rome, they had a parade.

In fact, they had an official parade written down in the Roman law books called the Roman Triumph. The Roman Triumph was Caesar's equivalent to our ticker tape parade, except they didn't have ticker tape. And that was a joyful thing to the people who swept up the streets.

If a commander-in-chief of a Roman army on foreign soil won a complete victory and killed at least 5,000 people and brought home great spoils of battle as well as illustrious prisoners, he was given a Roman Triumph. He was put into a very special chariot. In some cases, it was a chariot that was gilded with gold.

And they would start outside the city, and the parade route was worked out just like for the president's inauguration. And in this parade would be the soldiers of the triumphant general. In this parade would be some of the prisoners.

In this parade would be the Roman priests waving their censers with incense burning in them. In this parade would be some of the spoil that he had brought home. It was a triumphal procession.

It always ended up down at the Colosseum or the circus. And the prisoners were thrown to the lions. And the citizens were entertained in this triumph.

So I can just see this Roman soldier nudging his buddy and saying, parade, this is a Jewish parade. These people don't know what a parade is. They should come to Rome and see a Roman triumph.

But there's something that that soldier did not know. This was a triumph. Oh, I know when you look at it the way a newspaper reporter would look at it, it doesn't look like much.

A motley group of peasants, a bunch of garments, some torn down branches, a couple of animals. Doesn't look like much, but it was. It was the beginning, as our hymn said this morning, the beginning of his triumph.

You're going to keep a marker in Matthew 21 and you're going to turn to Colossians chapter 2 and verses 14 and 15. This is what our Lord Jesus did for us on the cross. Colossians chapter 2, 14 and 15, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

It should have been my cross. I had broken God's law and I should have been on the cross. But he went to the cross and on that cross he nailed down once and for all victory over the law, verse 15, and having spoiled, that's a good word, having spoiled principalities and powers, that means the devil and his crowd, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, in the cross.

And when our Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was riding to Calvary, and that Roman soldier scornfully says, look at that parade. They should see a Roman triumph. And the angels from heaven say, Mr. Roman soldier, this is a triumph.

That's Colossians 2, 14 and 15. Now we will turn to 2 Corinthians 2, 14 and 15, where the Apostle Paul says the very same thing and applies it to our lives today. 2 Corinthians 2, 14, Now thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph.

Allow me to retranslate that, will you? Now thanks be unto God who always leads us in a triumphal procession in Christ and makes manifest the fragrance of His knowledge by us in every place. Here he's talking about the triumphal procession. Not only was Jesus riding in triumph, not only did Jesus win triumphal victory on the cross, but He says to me, come on, join the parade.

Editors tell me when I send the manuscripts, beware of using the word always. Only God knows what is always. Paul doesn't hesitate to use the word always.

He dares to tell me that in Jesus Christ, there can always be a parade of triumph. I don't have to be the victim of sin. I don't have to give in to my desires.

I don't have to be defeated by the world and by the flesh and by the devil. Thanks be unto God who always leads us in the triumphal procession in Jesus Christ. In other words, we Christians are not fighting for victory.

We are fighting from victory. He's already won the battle. Well, we've talked to the Roman soldier and his response to this is scorn.

He doesn't realize the triumph that we have in Christ. Now, let's take our little tape recorder and go down and talk to some of the people in the crowd. This multitude that was milling around the Lord Jesus.

What was their response to the Lord Jesus? Hope. If ever a group of people were in a hopeless situation, it was the Jewish people during the time of Jesus. It's no wonder that Matthew, when he talks about the ministry of Jesus, says this.

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And they who were in the shadow of death, the sun has risen on them. When Jesus came to his people and his nation, he found the most hopeless people you could ever want to find.

First of all, they were under Roman rule. The proud Jewish nation, the nation of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, was under the heel of Rome. That's the first thing.

Second thing is their temple was corrupt. The glory of God was not in the temple. Out in the court of the Gentiles, where the Jews should have been winning the Gentiles into the true faith, the Jews were peddling their religious objects.

The money changers were there. The dove sellers were there. The sacrifice sellers were there.

The temple was empty. Until Jesus came into that temple, the glory of God had not been there. Until Jesus began to heal and minister, the power of God had not been there.

Until that children's choir moved into that temple and began to sing his praises, no true praise of God had been there. And so the people politically were in a mess. Spiritually, they were in a mess.

Economically, people today are worrying about inflation and prices. Back in those days, a man worked hard 16 hours a day to earn enough money just for the next day. They lived a day at a time.

Jesus said, you pray, give us day by day our daily bread. They knew nothing about bank accounts or dividends. They just lived from day to day.

And so economically, there was no hope. Prices were getting higher. Jobs were getting scarcer.

Taxes were increasing. And all of this without political conventions. No hope.

Now, you can imagine the economic... Well, you can live with the economic. You can even live with the political. But you can't live with that spiritual hopelessness.

A man says, I have to know where I'm going. A man says, I want to know what goes on after death. A man says, I have to do something about my sin.

I go down to the temple, but all they have are the blood of beasts. And that blood can never take away my sin. Then Jesus came.

But there's a sad note here, a very sad note. This crowd who had heard him teach and watched him perform miracles, this crowd did not want him as their spiritual leader. You know what they want him to do? Deliver them from Rome.

I'm afraid that when this crowd sings, Hosanna to the Son of David, they are thinking politically. The word hosanna means save now. Save now, O Son of David.

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. What they were saying is, Oh, Jesus, You're the only One who can change our situation.

Can You deliver us from Rome? Can You deliver us from economic instability? Can You deliver us from taxes? Oh, You are the One we've been waiting for. They tried this once before. Sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, John tells us that when Jesus fed the 5,000, the 5,000 appointed a committee and the committee said, Here's the man to make king.

If he can take a few loaves and fishes and multiply them and feed all these people, he's the man who ought to be king. We will never have to worry about food. And if he can do that, we don't have to worry about our enemies.

He is the one to make king. People are this way today. They want Jesus to do everything but save them.

I've visited people in hospitals and they say, Oh, Pastor, if Jesus will just heal me. Well, let me talk to you about your sin. No, no, I need to be healed.

What good is it to be healed and go back and live in sin and die and go to hell? People are forever telling Jesus what they want him to do. They're not saying, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And the crowds

had a response of hope, but it was an ignorant hope. They didn't even know who he was.

Did you notice that? Who is this? Verse 10, And the multitude said, This is Jesus. Now, there were hundreds of men named Jesus in that day. Jesus means Joshua.

Joshua is a great name among the Jews. This is Jesus the prophet. The prophet? Yeah, the prophet.

Haven't you heard him speak? Haven't you seen him do miracles? This is Jesus the prophet. The multitudes in verse 9 said he's the son of David. David had many descendants.

It's Zechariah who tells us who he is. Verse 4, All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, saying, and here's a quotation from Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh. Thy king cometh unto thee meek.

He ought to come conquering. Thy king cometh unto thee meek and sitting upon an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Behold thy king.

Within a few days, Pilate would be saying, Behold the man, behold your king. And this multitude, not the same multitude, but some of them, not the same people, but some of them, would be crying out, we have no king but Caesar. Jesus himself tells us who he is in verse 3. The Lord.

If anybody says, why are you taking these animals? You shall say, the Lord has need of him. And when Jesus said the Lord, he's saying Jehovah God. Who is he? He's Jehovah God.

Who is he? He's Jesus, the Savior. Who is he? He is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, who is he to you? How many times have we sung, King of my life, I cry.

Crown thee now, thine shall the glory be. And then go right around and do anything we want to do and never ask him if it's right or wrong. To the Romans, the response, scorn.

To the multitudes, hope. But ignorant hope. Let's take a minute to go and investigate the Jewish leaders.

We'll take our little tape recorder and go down to the temple and there up in one of the high places of the temple is the official council. Here are the members of the council that run the religion. They run the temple.

They run the supermarket that was going on down there. And they're watching this demonstration. And they've been watching Jesus for some time.

In fact, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, this crowd got together and said, kill him. Kill him. And so here's this demonstration.

And the common people are praising. And people are being healed. And one priest turns to the other priest.

John tells us this in John chapter 12 and verse 19. Behold, you can do nothing. The whole world has gone after him.

And John doesn't record this, but I'm sure it happens. Someone said, no, we can do something. We can do something.

Did you ever stop to realize that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he did something he'd never done before? He precipitated a popular demonstration. All during his earthly ministry, he'd never done that. He would heal somebody and say, keep your mouth shut.

He would slip off by himself and try to be hidden, but he could not be hidden. He would say to someone, don't tell them who I am. He said to his disciples, don't tell anybody what you've seen and heard.

Until after my resurrection. And now for the first time, our Lord Jesus permits people to be involved in a public demonstration. Why did he do that? Do you know why? He was precipitating his own death.

The rulers of the nation had said, we'll take care of him, but not during the feast. We'll do it after the feast. But the prophet said, no, it has to be during the feast.

The Lamb of God has to be slain on Passover. And so my Lord, when he came into Jerusalem, precipitated his own execution. Would you go into a parade if you knew it was going to end on a cross? He did.

What was the response of the Jewish leaders? Fear. Fear. He had exposed their sin.

He had dealt with their treachery. In the days to follow this event, he would do so even more. He deliberately challenged his enemies and he knew it would end in death.

Now, this may come to you as a surprise. Did you know that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was not declaring war? He was declaring peace. There's a law back in the book of Deuteronomy that the Jewish people were supposed to follow.

Let me read it to you. Deuteronomy chapter 20, verse 10. Moses gave this law.

When thou comest near unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee an answer of peace and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people who are found therein shall be bond servants unto thee and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shall besiege it.

In other words, the armies of Israel first declared peace. And if peace was not accepted, then they declared war. God still does that.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, God declared peace, peace, honor. Men declared war. Herod said, who is this down there? And he tried to kill him.

When my Lord Jesus came into Jerusalem, He declared peace. Luke tells us in Luke chapter 19 that my Lord wept. He said, if in this day, this thy day, if only you would have known those things that make for peace.

But now they're hid from your eyes. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you together as a hen doth gather her brood and you would not. This was their day of opportunity.

God was offering peace on earth. But Luke 19 tells me that they were not saying peace on earth. You know what they were saying? Peace in heaven.

There's no peace on earth, but there is peace in heaven. And there can be peace in hearts for those who will turn to heaven. Peace in heaven, hosanna to him who comes in the name of the Lord.

To the Jewish rulers, this demonstration brought fear. When it could have brought peace and Jesus wept over them. Religion still sends people to hell.

Traditional man-made religion still sends people to hell. Legalism. Here was the Savior with the offer of peace.

And here were these Jewish rulers saying we will not have this man to reign over us. And the result was 40 years later, their city was ruined. The Roman armies came and wrecked the city and burned the temple and slaughtered the people.

Well, God declared peace and they declared war. And when you declare war, that's what you get. And some of you are declaring war.

I will not have this man to be my Savior. We have one more interview. To the Romans, a scorn.

To the multitudes, ignorant hope. The Jewish rulers, fear. Fear that turned into violence.

What was our Lord's attitude in all of this? How did our Lord respond to all of this? There's only one word I can think of. I don't know of any other word that will describe my Lord in the midst of all of this. And that word, you'll excuse me.

It's a word that's used so often that we forget sometimes what it means. Love. Love.

In love, he obeyed the word of God and came into the city. Sealing his own death. As you read the Gospel of Matthew, you find this marvelous writer, this Jewish writer using one phrase about a dozen times.

As it is written. As it is written. Because it is written.

Everything Jesus did, he did because it was written. Call his name Jesus, it is written. He went to live in Nazareth because it's written.

He did this because it is written. He went to Galilee because it is written. He got on this colt and rode into Jerusalem because it's written.

But Lord, if you do this, you will die. That's why I'm doing it. Is his reply.

In love, he obeyed the word. In love, he forced the leaders to act. That he might be crucified on Passover.

In love, he looked down upon the city and he wept. Can you imagine that? The children are singing. The disciples are praising.

The pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem are rejoicing. Hosanna! And he's weeping. You know why? He could see what they couldn't see.

Judgment. He could feel what they couldn't feel. The burden of the sins of a blind people.

And thank God he could do what nobody else could do. Die. As you today think about the triumphal entry, what do you see? What's your response? Is yours the response of scorn? Then you will never know the

triumph of Christ.

Is your response the response of ignorant hope? I want Jesus to get me a job. I don't want him to save me. I want Jesus to heal my body.

I don't want him to save me. Then you'll never know what it means to have him as the king of your life. Is your response one of fear? The earthquake has hit your heart and turned over the foundations of your life.

There's nothing there. Nothing there. I trust that your response today will be one of faith.

I trust that we will come to him and lay before him our lives. And say to him, as we have said many times, but this time really mean it, King of my life, I crown thee now. Thine shall the glory be.

Because you and I have only one thing we can give him. Our lives. And you have only one life.

May it be that today we will give that to him. For after all, he gave his life for us. Heavenly Father, we marvel at the love of the Lord Jesus.

When we were sinners, he died for us. When we were without strength, he died for us. When we were enemies, he died for us.

And today we would, by faith, give ourselves afresh to him for whatever it is he wants us to do. Strip from us, O God, all pretense and hypocrisy. All business as usual ministry.

And may we today find ourselves prostrate at his feet, available for his ministry. Rejoicing in his will. Glorifying his name.

Call that one, O God, who needs to be saved. Speak to that rebellious, disobedient believer who needs to come back. Encourage that Christian who is dedicated and obedient to keep on.

And as we worship in this closing hymn, may it come from our hearts. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

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