



# The Investigator's Gospel

## Session 21 – Chapter 19 – Jesus Enters Jerusalem

### *Luke 19:28-44 - Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King*

*After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”*

*They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.*

*When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”*

*“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem is well known from our Palm Sunday celebrations. That Jesus enters humbly on a colt, rather than on foot or a warhorse, is significant for two reasons.

First, there is a prophecy from Zechariah 9:9: *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.* (Matthew is extra careful here: he includes both the donkey and the colt).

Secondly, Jesus is clearly entering as King. Why does riding down the Mount of Olives on a donkey indicate this? He is re-enacting the coronation of David's son Solomon, which we read about in 1 Kings 1:32-40:

*King David said, “Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.” He said to them: “Take your lord's servants with you and have Solomon my son mount my own mule and take him down to Gihon. There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah.”*

*So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David's mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!” And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.*

Upon Jesus' entrance, John records the crowd crying out, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" Matthew records: "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*" And Mark has, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!*"

And so, with his entry, Jesus is proclaimed as the rightful heir to King David, as was Solomon. But Jesus is about to surpass even Solomon, with what comes next (Luke 19:45-46): *When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be a house of prayer"; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'*" Here are the passages from which Jesus is quoting:

*Isaiah 56:6-7 - And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

*Jeremiah 7:9-11 "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.*

We assume Jesus is simply angry at the commerce and trading of money going on at the Temple (as in John 2:16 - *To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"*). But there is much more at play here, which is upsetting the Temple authorities.

The Isaiah passage is declaring that the Temple is to be a place of worship and prayer for all nations – yet the Temple was divided into inner and outer areas, keeping non-Jews away from the “holier” sections. The Apostle Paul was accused of starting a riot by bringing a Gentile into the Temple precincts, thereby rendering the Temple unclean (Acts 21:27-29). Once again, Jesus was expanding the Covenant of God to include all people, which enraged the Pharisees and Temple authorities.

The Jeremiah passage is saying that you cannot hide your evil deeds behind a pious exterior – using the Temple as a “front” or “hiding place” for who you really are, and expecting God to be fooled. Jesus is criticising the whole mechanism of the Temple as being a “hiding place for unrighteousness” rather than a place of worship and repentance. You can't buy righteousness and repentance. It has to come from the heart. “I have been watching! declares the Lord.”

## **Jerusalem Under David.**

After the death of Saul, the first king of the United Kingdom of the Hebrew people, David was named the new king of Israel. One of his first efforts was to unite the tribes of the north and south by capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites, making the city the political and religious capital of the Kingdom (1 Chr. 11:4–9). Because it was captured during his reign, Jerusalem also came to be known as the “City of David.” The city is often referred to by this title in the Bible.

Jerusalem had little to recommend it as a capital city, when compared to other major cities of the ancient world. It was an inland city not situated near a seaport. Moreover, it was not near the major trade routes used during that time. Why, then, did David select Jerusalem as the capital of his nation?

First, Jerusalem was centrally located between the northern and southern tribes, while not a part of either the northern or southern kingdom – much like Washington DC is not a part of any of the surrounding States. The central location of Jerusalem tended to unite the people into one kingdom.

Second, the topography of the city made it easy to defend. Jerusalem was situated on a series of hills. The eastern and western sides of the city consisted of valleys that made invasion by opposing forces difficult. The southern portion consisted of ravines that made an attack from this position unwise.

David also made Jerusalem the religious capital of the nation. He moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. One of his desires was to build a temple in the capital city, but he was prevented by God from completing this task. The prophet Nathan instructed him that God did not want him to build the temple because his hands had been involved in so much bloodshed (1 Chronicles 17). David did make preparation for the building of the temple, however, leaving the actual building task to Solomon, his son and successor.

During the reign of David, Jerusalem was firmly established politically and religiously as the capital city of the Israelite nation. The selection of this site resulted in the unification of the nation as David had hoped.

## **Jerusalem Under Solomon.**

The glory of Jerusalem, begun under David, reached its height under Solomon. Solomon proceeded to construct the Temple about which David had dreamed (2 Chronicles 3; 4). He also extended the borders of the city to new limits. Because surrounding nations were engaged in internal strife, Jerusalem was spared from invasions from opposing forces during Solomon’s administration.

After completing the temple, Solomon built the palace complex, a series of five structures (larger than the Temple!). Solomon also planted vineyards, orchards, and gardens that contained all types of trees and shrubs. These were watered by streams and pools that flowed through the complex. Unfortunately, this splendour came to an end with the death of Solomon about 931 BC. The civil war, leading to the division of the kingdom into two separate nations resulted in the gradual decline of the city.

## **Jerusalem Under Siege.**

The division that occurred in the kingdom resulted in the ten northern tribes establishing their own capital, first at Shechem and later at Samaria. The southern tribes, consisting of Judah and Benjamin, retained Jerusalem as the capital. To lessen the importance of the city, the Northern Kingdom constructed competing shrines in Bethel and Dan.

In 722 BC, the northern tribes were conquered by the Assyrians. Many of the citizens of the northern kingdom of Israel were deported to the Assyrian nation, never to return to the “promised land.” But the Southern Kingdom, Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital, continued to exist as an independent nation. This was due in part to Jerusalem mounting a spirited defense under King Hezekiah – which included the construction of a massive water tunnel, securing the source of fresh water for the city, and rendering it resistant to siege.

Although occasionally threatened and plundered by surrounding nations, Jerusalem remained intact until 586 BC. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, ravaged the city and carried the inhabitants into captivity. During the siege of the city, Jerusalem’s beautiful Temple was destroyed and the walls around the city were torn down. While a few inhabitants remained in the city, the glory of Jerusalem was gone.

## **The Restoration.**

For more than half a century the Jews remained captives in Babylonia, and their beloved Jerusalem lay in ruins. But this changed when Cyrus, king of Persia, defeated the Babylonians. He allowed the Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem to restore the city. Zerubbabel was the leader of a group that left Babylon in 538 BC to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. After a period of over 20 years, the temple was restored, although quite rudimentary - it was not as lavish as Solomon’s original Temple.

Under the leadership of Nehemiah, a second group of Jewish exiles returned to the holy city to restore the wall around the city. Through a masterful strategy of organization and determination, “*the wall was finished in fifty-two days*” (Neh. 6:15). During the succeeding years of domination by the Persian Empire, Jerusalem apparently enjoyed peace and prosperity. When Alexander the Great conquered Persia, the Jews were reluctant to pledge loyalty to the Greek ruler, preferring instead to remain under Persian rule. Only by tactful concessions of religious privileges was Alexander able to win their loyalty.

## **Jerusalem During the Period Between the Testaments**

The years that followed the death of Alexander brought many contending armies into conflict in the territory that surrounded Jerusalem. But the greatest threat to the Jews was the onslaught of Greek or Hellenistic culture, which threatened to erode the Jewish way of life. When the Jews resisted Greek cultural influence, the Greek leader Antiochus IV Epiphanes attacked the city and sacked the temple. Many of the inhabitants fled the city, taking refuge in the surrounding hills.

Led by Judas Maccabeus, these inhabitants later recaptured Jerusalem and restored the temple (an event remembered in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah). The successors to Judas Maccabeus were able to gain independence and to set up Jerusalem as the capital of a newly independent Judea. This situation prevailed until the Roman Empire conquered Judea and

reduced Jerusalem to a city-state under Roman domination. This was the situation that prevailed during New Testament times – the times of Jesus.

### **Jerusalem in the New Testament.**

Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth, Jerusalem played a significant role in His life and ministry – particularly the last week of his life, recounted in great detail by the Gospels (*Luke 21:37-38 - Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, 38 and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple*).

The record of the NT church indicates that Jerusalem continued to play a large role in the early spread of Christianity. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the early believers scattered from Jerusalem to various parts of the Mediterranean world (Acts 8:1). But Jerusalem always was the place to which they returned for significant events. For example, Acts 15 records that when the early church leaders sought to reconcile their differences about the acceptance of Gentile believers, they met in Jerusalem.

As Jesus had prophesied, the city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed in AD 70. The temple was destroyed, the high priesthood abolished and the Sanhedrin exiled. Eventually, following a second rebellion in 132 AD, a Roman city was erected on the site – Aelia Capitolina - and Jerusalem was regarded as forbidden ground for the Jews.

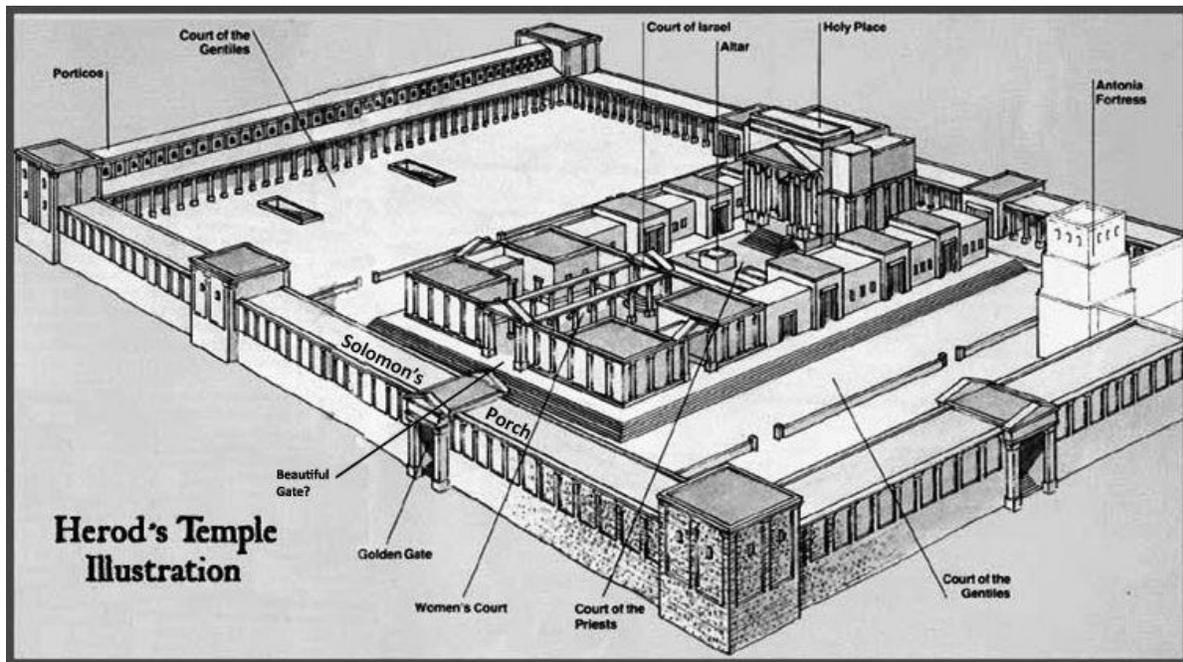
*Luke 21:5-6, 20, 24 - Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

### **The Temple in the Days of Jesus**

The Temple built by Solomon was destroyed by the Babylonians in the 580s BC. When the Persian King Cyrus (Xerxes) allowed a return to Jerusalem, the Temple was hastily rebuilt, but nowhere near its former glory. 500 years later, Herod the Great, king of Judea, conceived a grandiose Temple and surrounding complex, all constructed upon a massive platform, or Temple Mount. Construction began in about 18-20 BC. By the time of Jesus’ ministry the temple complex had been under construction for forty six years (John 2:20), and wasn't completed until around 63 AD.

It took 10,000 men ten years just to build the retaining walls around the Temple Mount (on top of which the Muslim shrine, the Dome of the Rock, stands today). The Western Wall (formerly known as the Wailing Wall) is merely part of that 500-meter-long retaining wall that was designed to hold a huge man-made platform that could accommodate 24 football fields. When it was completed, it was the world's largest functioning religious site and until today it remains the largest man-made platform in the world.

As a pilgrim coming to Jerusalem, one would probably first go to the bank to change money as the coins of the realm, engraved with the head of Caesar were unacceptable for use in the Temple. The central “bank” in Jerusalem and some of the Law courts could be found on the Temple mount platform in a building called the royal portico or stoa. To reach this building (from which there was no direct access to the rest of the plaza) one climbed the stairs to an overpass that crossed over the main road and the markets that ran by the western wall



After changing money and before entering the Temple, the people were required to immerse themselves in a ritual bath. Despite the arid climate and meager natural water sources there were many such baths in the city, filled using a series of aqueducts and pipes that stretched over 80km. After ritual immersion the Temple was then accessed via the southern or Hulda gates, which led to tunnels built under the plaza that emerged on to the plaza itself. The Temple itself was a building of shining white marble and gold, with bronze entrance doors.

On their arrival pilgrims could hear the sounds of the Levites who sang and played musical instruments at the entrance. The pilgrims would circle around the Temple seven times and then watch the various rituals, sit under the columned porticos that surrounded the plaza and listen or talk to the rabbis. The Temple area was divided into various areas for study, sacrifices, libation etc. and further divided according to a social hierarchy for gentiles, women, Israelites, Levites and Priests.

Finally, in the centre of the Temple was the holy of holies, the innermost chamber of the Temple where the ark of the Law was kept. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter this inner sanctum, and then only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. So strict was the law governing entry to the holy of holies that the High Priest had to wear a belt around his waist so that in case of his unexpected death he could be pulled out without anyone else entering.

Jesus was said to have taught on the steps leading up to the Temple, and perhaps in the courtyard area of the Temple itself. It remained a gathering place, and worship area, for the early church (*Acts 5:12 - And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade*).