

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Luke 19:28-40

Verses 28-31

After he said these things he was going on ahead to go up to Jerusalem. It happened as he was drawing near Bethphage and Bethany and the mountain called Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying, "Go to the village opposite. When you are entering it you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. When you have untied it, bring it. And if anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" you will reply thus: 'Because its master has need of it.'

After he said these things provides an atmosphere of tension. His parable of the ten minas indicates that Jesus expects to receive back the righteousness of the people of Jerusalem after what his Father had given them in the gifts of the covenant (11-27). He was **going on ahead**, taking the lead though it would mean death to him (18:31-33). As he strode ahead the disciples were afraid (Mk 10:32).

It is not clear which of the two **villages** he meant but as Bethany came first, Bethphage is the likely settlement. A **colt**, πῶλον, was the common Greek word for the Hebrew donkey. The instructions indicate either a prior arrangement or a miraculous exercise of prophecy. Aware that strangers untying the colt would appear to bystanders as thieves, Jesus supplies them with an answer. His answer reveals his sovereign authority over people and creation. The owner must release the colt to him because he its true master and Lord: **its master has need of it**. Secondly, as its creator and Lord, Jesus has the right to have the first use of it. **On which no one has ever sat** is much stronger than **ridden**. It has not yet support any human burden and has been reserved for Jesus.

Verses 32-36

Those he sent, when they entered, found [it] just as he had told them. When they untied it its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they replied, "Because its master has need of it." They brought it to Jesus. When they threw their cloaks on the colt, they mounted Jesus [on it]. As they were travelling they spread their robes on the road.

The two disciples **found the donkey just as he had told them**, indicating that there was a miraculous feel to the way details perfectly matched Jesus' instructions and descriptions. Once the owners, there was more than one, heard their reply, they immediately capitulated, clearly aware of who Jesus is.

The disciples knew that a change to the ordinary pilgrimage to Jerusalem was taking place. He had spoken to them often about the kingdom of God and its coming, that it was in their midst (17:21). Passover was approaching but the focus was on Jesus. Their homage consisted in **throwing their cloaks on the colt** and **spreading them** on the road.

Verses 37,38

When he approached the descent of the Mount of Olives the whole crowd of the disciples began to rejoice, praising God with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen, saying: "Blessed is he who comes, the king, in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

The crest of **the Mount of Olives**, just before **the descent**, is a signal for **the whole crowd of the disciples**, which must have included many of dubious affiliation, **to rejoice, praising God**. This mountain ridge was opposite Jerusalem, with only the Kidron Valley separating the two high points. You have to ascend to enter Jerusalem because it is situated on a mountain ridge, too. A good view of Jerusalem lay before them (41). Jesus would return to it within a few days, on a Thursday, when he went to pray (22:39). He was near the mountain at his ascension, which took place near Bethany, on the eastern slopes (24:50). Zechariah declares that the mountain would be split in two when he

the Lord places his feet on it on the day of the Lord (14:4). So the scene is set: with an ancient prophecy in mind, Jesus' own preaching and **miracles**, the crowd of disciples is ready for the appearance of the Kingdom.

Psalm 118:26 are the words of their hymn of praise. Jesus himself mentions this as the verse that highlights his universal appearance as Lord of heaven and earth (13:35): **Blessed is he who comes, the king, in the name of the Lord**. But the disciples add their own verses: **peace in heaven and glory in the highest**, which remind us of the angels in 2:14. Why should there now be peace in heaven? God dwells in peace and glory. We must not think of a cessation of war. Peace is the state that occurs when all is in harmony, prosperous and complete. However, its major attribute is of a reconciled relationship between humanity and the Lord (42). Peace begins in heaven because it is the Lord's gift to humanity. The disciples reveal that human beings ought to worship God because of it.

The disciples also add the word, **the king**. The messiah would come from David's line so this addition is not out of place. The king comes with his kingdom and as I said, Jesus gave the disciples reason to believe that the kingdom had come in his person, through miraculous acts of power and through his teaching.

John the Baptist asked Jesus if he were the one who is to come (7:20). Moses prophesied that God would send a prophet like him and the inspired prophets also said that the Messiah would come. He who is the centre of the Old Testament was coming down to rescue his people rather than human beings trying to find God. So the Saviour must **come**.