

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."' So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They said, 'The Lord needs it.' Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

'Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'



13.1

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

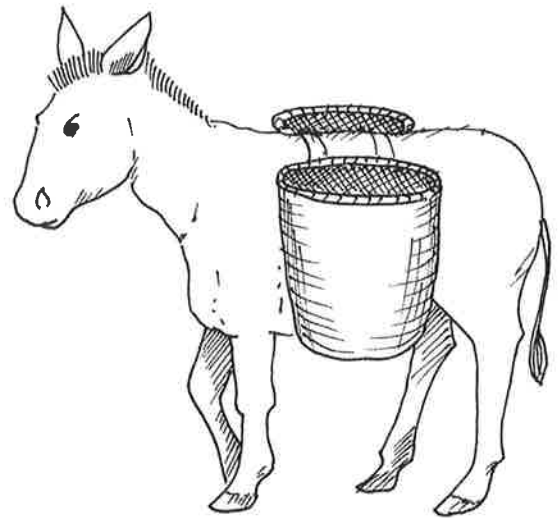
Lk 19:28-40

Related
Scripture
Passage:
John 12:12-19

cultural context

SYMBOLISM OF THE DONKEY:

- The symbolism of Jesus riding a young donkey or 'colt' ('you will find there a colt that has never been ridden') was very significant. For someone to approach a village or town riding on a donkey indicated that they were coming in peace. In symbolic terms it was also notable that Mary rode a donkey into Bethlehem.
- The bringing of peace was one of the distinguishing marks of the time of the Messiah.
- This contrasted to soldiers who would ride in on horses to invade a town or to assert their authority over the community.



HONOURING VISITING DIGNITARIES:

- Upon hearing of the imminent arrival of a person of significant status, the local inhabitants would leave their town or village and form a processional guard of honour to welcome the special dignitary. In an honour and shame culture, the further the townsfolk travelled outside the village gates, the greater the honour that was conveyed to the visitor (also see Zacchaeus: Lk 19:1-10).
- The procession commenced on the far side of the Mount of Olives, close to Bethany, where Jesus was probably staying with his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary. The branches that were waved in honour of Jesus were more likely to have been olive branches from the extensive olive groves in the area, although some palm trees would have also been in the vicinity. Olive branches were also a sign of peace and symbolic of the olive leaf found by the dove in the narrative of Noah and the Flood (Gen 8:11).
- It was customary to further honour a highly esteemed person by acknowledging and calling out their qualities and achievements ('the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds and power that they had seen'). The greater the flattery the greater the honour that was conferred.
- Once the dignitary had travelled past a section of the crowd, the onlookers would run ahead of the procession and regather closer to the gates to continue to celebrate the arrival and affirm the honour and status of their visitor.

PERCEPTIONS OF KINGSHIP:

- It was customary for the subjects of a ruler or king to pay homage to him by spreading clothing on the road and waving branches from nearby trees.
- It was the Jewish custom to approach the Temple precincts in Jerusalem on foot, as a mark of respect.
- The fact that Jesus rode a colt into Jerusalem through the Lion's Gate, that was adjacent to the Temple, and allowed his disciples to honour him as a king, would have conveyed a significant message to the local religious authorities.
- The protests of the Pharisees ('Teacher, order your disciples to stop') would have been especially related to the procession occurring in the vicinity of the Temple. The prophetic statement of Jesus ('the stones would shout out') further suggests that even the bricks and mortar of the city would welcome the Messiah.

Related Cultural Sources: *Promotion of Honour (1.2)* and *The Temple (5.7)*

Luke 22: 7-34

The Preparation of the Passover

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.' They asked him, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for it?' 'Listen,' he said to them, 'when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher asks you, 'Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' "He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.' So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!' Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this.

The Dispute about Greatness

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

'You are those who have stood by me in my trials;and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom,so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

'Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat,but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.'And he said to him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!'Jesus said, 'I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.'

cultural context

PASSOVER MEAL:

- Jews celebrated a ritual Passover meal (seder) that recalled the exodus of the Hebrew people from Egyptian slavery (Lev 23:5-8). This was seen as first great act of redemption by God for his people (Ex 12:1-28) and a preparatory step for the creation of a covenant between God and the Hebrews on Mt Sinai.
- The Passover was celebrated on the '14th day of the month of Nisan', which translated meant 'at the first full moon following the Spring equinox'. This is why the date for Holy Thursday and the subsequent events of Holy Week varies each year.
- The seder meal followed a strictly formulated ritual that retold the Passover story. Participants would eat special foods including bitter herbs, unleavened bread (matzo), a green vegetable dipped in salt water, and a mixture of fruits and wine. The meal expressed an eager hope and longing for the definitive coming of the kingdom of God.
- The Last Supper was assumed to be a seder meal. As it took place in Jerusalem it would probably have included a portion of the Passover lamb that had been earlier sacrificed in the Temple on the Day of Preparation.
- At the Last Supper, in a clear reference to Moses sprinkling the blood of the Covenant on the people (Ex 24:8), Jesus established a new covenant by transforming the wine into his own blood.



UNLEAVENED BREAD (MATZO):

- Matzo was baked in the form of round, flat cakes of bread made from flour and water (or oil) without yeast. It was usually baked on hot coals or on a grill over an open fire.
- Unleavened bread was favoured by nomadic people (such as the Israelites escaping Egypt) because it could be quickly prepared as there was no delay in waiting for the dough to rise. This was significant in the Exodus experience as the people had to leave their homes quickly and had little time to prepare bread for the journey (Ex 12:14).
- In the Hebrew Testament unleavened bread was accompanied by a 'bloody sacrifice' (cf Lv 7:12; Nm 6:15), generally a lamb. Hence the parallels to the Christian celebrations of the Eucharist and the references to the 'Lamb of God'.
- During the original Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Ex 23:15) which lasted for seven days in the springtime, all leaven (or yeast) was banished from the households of first-century Jews and only unleavened bread was eaten. Over time, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread merged into the Passover celebrations.
- In some Scripture references, yeast was used as a metaphor for moral corruption (cf the reference to the yeast of the Pharisees - Mk 8:15) whilst unleavened bread symbolised newness of life in the Risen Christ.

Related Cultural Sources: *Religious Feasts (5.2) and Religious Observances (5.3)*

Luke 22: 39-70

Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' [[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]] When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?' When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!'

Peter Denies Jesus

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, 'This man also was with him.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.' A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!' Then about an hour later yet another kept insisting, 'Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about!' At that moment, while he was still speaking, the

cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, 'Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

The Mocking and Beating of Jesus

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?' They kept heaping many other insults on him.

Jesus before the Council

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, 'If you are the Messiah, tell us.' He replied, 'If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' All of them asked, 'Are you, then, the Son of God?' He said to them, 'You say that I am.' Then they said, 'What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!'

OVERVIEW OF ROMAN GOVERNANCE:

- Having conquered a territory, the Romans generally favoured the establishment of local governing bodies to administer the day-to-day life of the community. In exchange for its 'protection' and internal security that promoted economic prosperity, Rome received money, land, grain and other goods, slaves and the added military security of buffer states between itself and potential enemies ('Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor or not?' - Lk 20:22).
- The Romans established a system of governance and tax collection that left local members of the elite classes, who had pledged their loyalty to Rome, in charge wherever possible. This spared the Romans the responsibility of direct supervision of a country (Galilee) unless absolutely necessary (Judea).
- Communities which opposed Roman rule and taxation were dealt with harshly, so as to send a clear message to other territories and warn them not to rebel against Roman authority ('If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy our holy place and our nation - Jn 11:48).
- At a local level, order was maintained by army officials such as Centurions - officers placed in charge of one hundred men. Centurions represented Rome and provided security across the local area. Centurions were well placed to grant favours and concessions to a small village or town with respect to the application of Roman Law and resources (building community facilities such as a synagogue - Lk 7:1-10).
- The Romans conducted regular censuses (Lk 2:1), usually for the purposes of taxation but also at times for other purposes, such as conscription and forced labour.

ROMAN PROCURATOR: PILATE:

- In first century Palestine the permanent residence of Roman officials, such as Pilate the Roman Procurator, and the Roman army was the city of Caesarea (built by Herod the Great) on the Mediterranean Sea. However, during major Jewish feasts many troops and the Procurator came up to Jerusalem to reduce the likelihood of riots and disturbances that could become a challenge to Roman authority in the region.
- In addition to financial and administrative responsibilities, the Roman Procurator had supreme judicial power. It was the Procurator's responsibility to discern if any individual or group was a threat to the Roman Empire and thus an enemy of Rome (Jn 18:33-36).
- It was the responsibility of the Roman Procurator of Judea to select the high priest. The Sadducees who came from the aristocratic priestly tribe (Levites) had gained favour with Rome and hence provided the most suitable candidates.

THE ROMANS AND JESUS:

- To the Romans, Caesar was the only legitimate king. People who claimed to be kings themselves were a threat to 'Pax Romana', the peace of Rome, and were eliminated.
- The crime for which Jesus was tried and condemned was sedition (a claim that he was the King of the Jews - Jn 19:12) - hence a direct threat to the Emperor. Only the Roman governor could pass judgement in such a case. Crucifixion was a particular Roman punishment.
- The reference to Jesus as 'the Cornerstone' came from the Roman building practice of ceremonially placing a perfectly crafted stone at the corner of a major building that served as the reference point to which all other stones were aligned and subsequently locked in place (The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone - Mt 21:42).

Luke 23:26-56

The Crucifixion of Jesus

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

The Death of Jesus

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his

last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Burial of Jesus

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

cultural context

CRUCIFIXION:

- The Romans viewed crucifixion as the most shameful and degrading of penalties and deterrents. This punishment could not be inflicted upon a Roman citizen. Typically victims were stripped and scourged at the place of judgement prior to being forced to walk naked (to compound their shame) and carry the crossbeam of their cross to the place of their execution. During their final journey criminals were subjected to the abuse and ridicule of the crowd.
- Victims were crucified by hanging or nailing their arms to the crossbeam. The full weight of a body, hung by the arms, would prevent the functioning of the lung muscles, thereby causing death by asphyxiation. The victim's feet were partially supported by a small block of wood, requiring the person to continually push up against their body weight in order to continue breathing.
- If a criminal survived for an extended period of time, death could be hastened by breaking the victim's legs (to prevent them pushing upwards to breathe) or by piercing their heart with a spear.
- In the Roman tradition, the body was left on the cross after death as an additional sign of disgrace and as a warning to the general community.
- It was customary for a placard to be placed on the top of the cross with the name of the victim and the nature of the crime.

CRUCIFIXION IN AN HONOUR AND SHAME SOCIETY:

- As the Palestinian culture placed great importance on public decency, the Jews objected to a man going naked in public, so the Romans allowed condemned criminals to be covered as they were driven along the public streets.
- In an honour and shame society, the ability of a male to absorb extreme pain in a dignified manner added to his sense of honour. The depiction of Jesus suffering in relative silence without abusing his executioners was indicative of an honourable death.
- In Palestine, as another concession to the Jews, victims were offered a drink of spiced wine (mixed with myrrh or gall) to numb the pain. Christ's refusal to drink it was another sign of his intention to die in an honourable manner.

PREPARATION OF THE BODY:

- Jewish law required that the body of a criminal should not remain on the cross overnight to rot (Deut 21:23) and had to be buried the same day. Hence the order to break the legs of the victims and allow the burial to take place immediately.
- The body was anointed with perfumes, such as nard as myrrh (cf The gift of the wise men - Mt 2:1-12) and aloes were also used.
- The body was wrapped in a shroud, the face veiled and the feet tied with linen strips.

ROLE OF WOMEN:

- Women played a significant role in the Passion narratives. An honour and shame society offered protection for women and allowed them to accompany Christ to Calvary and stand at the foot of the cross. The disciple 'whom Jesus loved' (Jn 19:26) must have still been a young boy, under the protection of Mary, to have also been present.
- Similarly on the Saturday evening (at the end of the Sabbath) it was the women who ventured out to buy spices for the anointing of the body.

Related Cultural Sources: *Burial Rites* (5.11) and *Role of Women* (2.9)

Luke 24:1-12

The Resurrection of Jesus

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.



cultural context

VIEWS ON RESURRECTION:

- The first strong indication of a belief in the afterlife among the Jewish community was recorded in the Book of Daniel. The death of the Maccabean martyrs in defence of their faith stirred a belief in immortality and resurrection as a reward for their sacrifice ('Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt' – Dan 12:2).
- The Jewish people believed the Messiah would inaugurate the messianic age. Whilst expectations varied, there was a strong underlying belief that with the coming of the Messiah there would be a manifest difference in the manner in which people interacted together ('nation shall not lift up sword against nation...' Mic 4:3).
- The majority of Jews believed in the concept of resurrection. Some thought that all people would rise to face a final judgement, whilst others believed only the righteous would rise while the wicked would stay dead (cf Martha's response to Jesus after the death of Lazarus: 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day' – Jn 11:23-24).
- The Sadducees, who were associated with the upper echelons of the priesthood and the elite of Jewish society, did not accept the idea of resurrection. They saw the reintegration of body and soul after death as unnecessary, particularly as this teaching was not contained in the Torah.

BURIAL SITE:

- Generally a Roman procurator would refuse the request of anyone but a family member to bury an executed criminal. By acceding to the request of Joseph of Arimathea (a member of the council, the Sanhedrin, a prominent wealthy citizen) Pilate showed that he was aware of Joseph's honourable status and of Jewish religious sensitivities with respect to burial occurring after the commencement of the Sabbath.
- The burial chambers of wealthier citizens comprised two distinct compartments: a preparation chamber for the washing and anointing of the body, and an internment chamber which might also contain the remains of previously deceased family members.
- The placing of guards on the tomb (cf Mt 27:62) was done in response to the fear of the Jewish authorities that a 'resurrection event' would be staged by the apostles of Jesus.

VISIT TO THE TOMB:

- Once again the honourable status of women would have allowed them to travel to a guarded tomb with impunity. The soldiers guarding the tomb would not have seen them as a threat and would have expected the body to be treated with the utmost respect, as dictated by Jewish tradition.
- The presence of an angel is a constant theme in Jewish literature. An angel was usually the messenger when there was a profound interaction between humanity and the divine.
- In first-century Palestine, the testimony of a woman was generally not trusted in the courts or in wider civil society, hence the disbelief of the apostles ('these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them') and the necessity for a man (Peter) to validate their story.

Related Cultural Sources: *Burial Rites* (5.11) and *Jewish Law* (5.6)