Lesson 3: The Triumphal Entry

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: That Jesus' entry to Jerusalem was intentionally symbolic, allowing His followers the chance to worship Him as the coming Messiah.

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO WITH WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED: To examine their own worshipful response to Jesus as Messiah and King.

SCRIPTURE FOCUS: Luke 19:28-40; 1 Kings 1:32-35; Psalm 98

KEY TAKEAWAY: Jesus is the Savior of the World (Messiah) and the King of peace.

OVERVIEW:

Throughout His ministry, Jesus patiently moved toward the day that would complete His atoning work. He knew this day would come and that it would include His brutal death on the Cross. So Jesus moved closer and closer to Jerusalem in anticipation. His movement toward the famed city is a stirring example of His commitment to carry out His Father's will. It began the string of events we know today as the Passion Week. This event represents an important dividing point in Jesus' ministry.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *This Is Jesus* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. *The Details* give you background info for each book. *The Setting* informs you of what's happening in and around the passage. *The Main Point* gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible Study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context," we mean, at the very least, helping students know *who* wrote the book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

Luke

- *Author*: Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 A.D.
- *Purpose:* Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

1 and 2 Kings

- *Author*: Ancient Jewish history has Jeremiah as the author of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. However, this view has never been widely supported by scholars. It's best to view the books as a collection of writings with no known author.
- *Time frame:* 1 Kings and 2 Kings are extremely difficult to date because it's a collection of writings that could have been written and edited in stages.
- *Purpose:* 1 Kings and 2 Kings tell the stories of the kings of Israel. These books speak of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of kings and the impact that a godly leader can have on God's people.

Psalms

- *Author*: God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms in their era, including seventy-three by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other Psalms remain unknown.
- *Time frame:* The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel's history, spanning from 1100 B.C. (i.e. Psalm 29, 68) to 400 B.C. (i.e. Psalm 119).
- *Purpose:* The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity's journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e. Psalm 51).

THE SETTING

The event occurred on the Roman road to Jerusalem from the city of Jericho. This 17-mile road climbs three thousand feet (explaining why Jesus went up to Jerusalem). Near Jerusalem, the road passes through Bethany and Bethpage, which lie on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Leaving these small villages, the road passes through the Kidron Valley and then enters Jerusalem.

THE MAIN POINT

In preparation for His entrance, Jesus sent two of His disciples to get a colt. Jesus' dramatic act of riding a donkey's colt was filled with symbolism. In Israel's earlier days, the king had a donkey that he would ride. When the king traveled throughout the land to visit the people during times of peace, he would ride his donkey or mule. It was appropriate for the Jerusalem crowd to worship Jesus in public recognition of His identity as Messiah. It is still important for us to worship Him for the same reason.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *The Lead In;* the Bible Study section called *The Main Event;* and an application-focused segment called *The Last Word.*

THE LEAD IN

- *Goal:* To introduce the idea of celebrating people.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure you have two large poster boards, pieces of paper, or two separate dry-erase boards. Plus, you'll need something for students to write with.

FIRST, welcome students and divide them into two groups. Make sure each group has a large poster board, a piece of paper, or its own dry-erase board. On one, write the name of a celebrity that students would know, but not one they would know super well (avoid picking their favorite musician, athlete, etc.). On the second, write the name of one of the senior pastors at your church.

THEN, **say:**

- **Each group will plan a celebration for the person on their board. Be as elaborate and creative as you can be. Remember, the object is to honor this person, so plan an event you know they'd love. But be quick, I'm only going to give you five minutes!**

Direct the groups to write their plans on the paper, poster, or board. After about five minutes, direct them to their seats. Each group will present their celebration for the person they were assigned.

Ask something like:

- **Who was it easier to plan for? Why do you think that is?**
  - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, **say something like:**

- **Today, we will be studying a passage that is often called the Triumphal Entry. It won't look anything like the parties we planned, but you might be able to see how people celebrated Jesus' journey to the Cross in their own way that honored Him. Let's get to it!**

Make sure there are no questions, and then transition to The Main Event.

THE MAIN EVENT

- *Goal:* To examine the rich symbolism in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in the days before His crucifixion.
- *Set-Up:* Make sure students have a Bible or Bible App.

FIRST, **says something like:**

- **The event that occurred in this passage that we are reading today took place on the Roman road to Jerusalem from the city of Jericho on the week before the crucifixion. This 17-mile road climbs three thousand feet along the way (explaining why it says Jesus went up to Jerusalem) and passes through Bethany and Bethpage. Leaving these small villages and approaching Jerusalem, Jesus began to make preparations to enter the city to complete His work on earth. The two villages mentioned in this passage were less than two miles from Jerusalem across the winding Kidron Valley. They sat on a hill known as the Mount of Olives**

that overlooked the city. No doubt Jesus used this vantage point to look at the city where the world would be forever changed through His death.

Read or have a student read Luke 19:28-35.

THEN, **ask students:**

- **Describe the animal that Jesus asked His disciples to acquire for His ride into Jerusalem.**
  - *Answer:* A colt or mule that was tied up and hadn't been ridden.

Say something like:

- **You might be wondering why Jesus wouldn't just walk on into Jerusalem, or why He was so specific about the colt. It is actually a very symbolic act. In the Old Testament, there is a passage that will help us better understand what Jesus wanted to communicate with this seemingly odd request.**

NEXT, read or have a student read 1 Kings 1:32-35.

Explain to students that in Israel's earlier days, the king had a colt that only he would ride. When the king traveled throughout the land to visit the people during times of peace, he would ride his colt or mule. (Kings only rode horses during war.) The animal Jesus rode was a humble animal, not a horse. His act was considered kingly even though we might not think of it that way. **Say something like:**

- **In the passage we just read, David was essentially passing the throne to his son Solomon. As Solomon rode the mule or the colt, he was celebrated and wished a long life by those around. Not only would Solomon be anointed as king of Israel during this ceremony, but he would be acting as a king acts. In the same way, Jesus was taking the actions of a king on His way to bring peace. Many people expected the Messiah to ride in on a horse, which would have meant that a time of conquering would follow. However, Jesus' triumphal entry was not about restoring power, but about restoring peace.**

THEN, read or have a student read Luke 19:36-40. **Say something like:**

- **What an incredible moment! Because of what the people had experienced in Jesus for the past three years, many probably believed Him to be their long-awaited Messiah. They gave Him a welcome fit for a king. As Jesus road along, the people spread out their cloaks along His path as an act of honor. Other accounts tell us they took palm branches and went out to meet Him (John 12:13). This was an all-out celebration, including some worship ballots from the disciples! The words the crowds shouted are significant because they are misquoting Psalm 118:26. Notice that the crowd referred to the "king who comes" but the psalm says "he who comes." Clearly, the people were acknowledging Jesus as King. From Mark 11:9 we know the crowd also shouted "Hosanna," which means "Save now!" They saw Jesus as their Savior, yet their understanding of what that meant was flawed.**

Explain that because so many Jews were in the city during the Passover, Jesus' entry caused quite a stir (also referenced in Matthew 21:10). When a city is saturated with visitors like Jerusalem was at the Passover, only a very large crowd could draw attention. The actions of many people in the crowd were in response to the miracles they had seen, but also a genuine celebration of Jesus as the Messiah. This was a 'cards on the table' kind of moment, where people were actively declaring Jesus as their King and Savior. However, not everyone joined in the festivities.

NEXT, **ask students:**

- **At this point in Jesus' ministry, it shouldn't be a surprise that there was a group of people who would find a**

way to condemn the actions of the people worshipping Jesus as the Messiah. How did the Pharisees respond to this display?

- *Answer:* They told Jesus to rebuke those who were worshipping Him.

Say something like:

- **The Pharisees and chief priests had been plotting to kill Jesus since He raised Lazarus from the dead. When they saw the scene and heard the words of the crowd, they called on Jesus to rebuke or scold His followers for the implications of their actions; the crowd believed Jesus to be the Messiah, which was blasphemy in the Pharisees' eyes. To be fair, if Jesus hadn't been who He said, it would have been blasphemy. But Jesus responds to their complaints in a very interesting way.**

THEN, have students turn to Psalm 98. Explain that in this psalm, God is being praised by the entire Earth. Read or have a student read Psalm 98. (It may also be helpful to have different students read four or five verses at a time.) **Ask:**

- **What are some of the ways that the Earth itself praises the Lord?**
  - *Answer:* The sea and sea creatures roar, the rivers clap, the hills sing for joy.

- **Why does this happen?**
  - *Answer:* Because the Lord has "made known His salvation." In other words, He has announced how the world will be saved.

NEXT, **say something like:**

- **Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was an incredible revelation of what God was about to do. Jesus wasn't just being sassy with the Pharisees; His identity as God in the flesh could not be hidden any longer, so praise was the appropriate response from those around Him. He was genuinely telling them that even the rocks on the ground would literally praise Him as the bringer of salvation. And the question that we can wrestle with today is, why could a rock or a river be quicker to declare Jesus the Savior of the world than a Pharisee, who spent their life studying God's Word? To followers of Jesus, His entry into Jerusalem was triumphant. It was a holy moment when God brought forth the true King of kings and Savior. But to others, it was just a traffic jam on their way to celebrate Passover. An meaningless inconvenience.**

Challenge students to consider what Jesus' entry into Jerusalem means to them. Would they have let God's many symbolic gestures pass them by? Do they do that when God displays His salvation to them today? Take a moment for some quiet reflection before moving on.

FINALLY, after giving students time to reflect, **say something like:**

- **Jesus was on the way to be crucified for our sin, and He knew it. While the crowds expected otherwise, during His entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus was fully aware of the violent and painful death that was awaiting Him. He rode the young colt through the crowds as they passionately praised and worshiped Him. At the same time, Jesus knew many of the same people would show nothing but hatred toward Him in only a matter of days. Jesus came to be the Suffering Savior- God who came to take our punishment on the Cross and set us free from sin. But many in the crowd worshiped a Savior they didn't really know.**

Allow for questions, and then transition into The Last Word.

THE LAST WORD

- *Goal:* To help students personalize what Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem as the Messiah and King means to them personally.
- *Set-Up:* Prepare stamped envelopes for each student, along with blank sheets of paper and writing utensils.

FIRST, prepare enough stamped envelopes for each student, and distribute them with blank paper and writing utensils. (You may want to have an example prepared on how to address an envelope. Students may not know how to do this. They can't know what they have never been taught.) Explain that you want them to address the envelope to themselves.

THEN, point out that you have given them a blank piece of paper. **Say something like:**

- **We have talked a lot about how Jesus was celebrated publicly in our passage today. In this letter, you are going to have the opportunity to celebrate Him in a more private sense. Imagine that you were down with the flu the day He entered Jerusalem, and you couldn't quite make it to the celebration. However, you still want to let Him know how much you love and admire Him for what He is about to do. Write this letter as though you are sending it to Him. Tell Him how much you love Him. Tell him why you love Him. Thank Him for His blessings. Be honest with Him.**

NEXT, give students several minutes to write the letter. Offer help to any who seem uncertain about what they might say to God. Emphasize that this is the student's letter, no one else's, and that they won't be evaluated on the writing or spelling.

FINALLY, when most have finished, direct students to put the letters in the envelopes, seal them, write the word "prayer" on the back, and hand them back to you. **Say something like:**

- **I'm going to mail your letters back to you. When you get them in the middle of the week, open them and talk to God about what you said to Him today.**

(A note to the leader: Don't forget to mail the letters to your students! Double-check their address to make sure they have written it legibly and correctly before sending them off.)

Allow Time For Any Closing Thoughts Or Questions From Your Students. Before Leaving, Close With A Prayer.

- Don't forget to remind students about their devotions this week. If you're posting them on Social Media or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.