

# If Stones Could Sing

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>28</sup> And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup> And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” <sup>35</sup> And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” <sup>39</sup> And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” <sup>40</sup> He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:28–40)

### The Last Week of Jesus’ Life

- A. It’s an amazing scene that’s painted for us here in our text for this morning. Some of you may well be familiar with it as it’s often discussed annually on the Sunday before Easter, commonly referred to as Palm Sunday, celebrating this event known really as the Triumphal Entry.
1. Jesus is entering into Jerusalem here and, with this, He is also entering into the last week of His earthly ministry and life.
- B. I should say before I dive in here, that, if you were with us last week, you’ll recall we already dealt in great detail with [vv. 28-35](#). I mainly read those again this morning simply for context’s sake. We shall really pick up our exposition there in [v. 36](#).
1. I’ve got four items on the agenda for this morning: (1) The Royal Treatment; (2) Fair-Weather Fans; (3) Peace in Heaven; and (4) Singing Stones.

## (1) The Royal Treatment

- A. Christ is clearly being presented and treated as King here in our text. Let me bring out a few details that make this plain . . .

### Detail #1: The Spreading of Cloaks

- A. As Jesus comes slowly descending from the Mount of Olives drawing ever closer to the city of Jerusalem, riding on the colt of a donkey, we read of the multitude of His disciples there “spread[ing] their cloaks on the road” (v. 36) before Him.
  - 1. The picture we get in our heads—perhaps especially so with the Oscars having just taken place last week—is that of a red carpet being laid out for the likes of a celebrity. It’s a way of setting apart the one who is strolling down the lane. This is no average citizen. This is someone noteworthy and deserving of much esteem.
- B. To be sure, this is a fine image to have in our minds, but, biblically speaking, it is incomplete. There is more implied in this action of His disciples. There is more here than just testimony to His celebrity. Such actions actually speak to something of His royalty.
  - 1. So in [2 Kings 9](#), when Jehu is first anointed king over Israel, we’re told that the every person in the crowd round about him quickly “took his garment and put it under him on the bare steps, and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, ‘Jehu is king’” (v. 13).
    - a. There is something in this that communicates recognition of and submission to the man as king.

## Detail #2: The Colt of Donkey

- A. There is more, of course, that could be said about Jesus and how He is being presented as King and Christ here. One of the more prominent details is that which on the surface, at least, would seem to be merely incidental. I’m thinking of the fact that Jesus is presented as riding into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey.
  - 1. Now, certainly we don’t have time to do justice to all the streams of OT imagery and prophecy that are converging in this single detail. But I’ll quickly give you a couple texts to consider.
- B. The first and most prominent, of course, is [Zech 9:9](#). Matthew and John, in their accounts of this scene, go out of their way to explicitly quote it. It reads as follows: “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.”
  - 1. Since especially David—and God’s covenant promises to him—Israel has been looking for this king who would follow in his line, sit on his throne, and bring restoration and blessing to Israel and through Israel to the world.
    - a. Well, that King, in Jesus, is here!
- C. But second, we can trace this idea much further back, actually, all the way to [Gen 49](#), where Jacob, near death, is blessing his twelve sons—the twelve sons who later become the twelve tribes of Israel. And there he singles out Judah in particular and says this: “<sup>10</sup>The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (v. 10). In this we see that from the line of Judah will come the kings of Israel—kings like David and Solomon.

1. But, if you read carefully, you see that Jacob is singling out one coming king in particular. And he goes on to speak of him, saying: “<sup>11</sup> Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes” (vv. 11).
  - a. It’s a picture of the abundance and prosperity this king is going to bring in. And front and center in the image, wouldn’t you know it, is the description of this king’s colt—the colt of a donkey.
    - i. And now here in [Luke 19](#), Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. The King from Judah, through David, who shall claim the obedience of all the peoples and bring blessing to all the nations, is here!

### Detail #3: The Pilgrim’s Blessing

- A. There is one final thing we should say with regard to this royal treatment here that kind of brings everything together. As these disciples are spreading their cloaks out on the ground before Him, they are also rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice, and what are they saying? “[Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!](#)” (v. 38).
- B. Now, these words are taken from [Psa 118:26](#), which, in their original form, were commonly used as a way of greeting those pilgrims who were coming into Jerusalem for some of the great feasts and things.
  1. But these disciples add a not-so-subtle twist to the original benediction. The original blessing from the Psalm reads: “[Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!](#)” ([Psa 118:26](#)). But here these disciples, in their joy, proclaim: “[Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!](#)” (v. 38).
    - a. And with that they radically transform the meaning and significance of all of this. This is not just another pilgrim entering Jerusalem here. This is the Pilgrim—the coming One we’ve all been waiting for . . . the coming King . . . He’s finally here!

## (2) Fair-Weather Fans

### Of Warriors and Kings

- A. But now we’ve got to talk for a moment about “fair-weather fans.” You know what I mean by this term, don’t you?
  1. When the weather is looking good and everything’s sunny, sure I’ll get on board with this team or that candidate or whatever.
  2. But when there are storm clouds forming on the horizon, when things start to get a little rocky, I’m out. I’m going to follow the good weather with those guys over there.
    - a. That’s a fair-weather fan.

- B. I'm sure, as far as sports are concerned, the bay area is now discovering it has its fair share of these. Considering the Warriors in particular, In the history of the NBA I don't know if there's ever been a team that has gone from being first in their conference to last in the course of just one year. It's crazy. And one of the things that sort of reversal does is expose and smoke out the fair-weather fans, right?
1. I mean, last year, when they were a serious contender for the championship, and everything was exciting, you had the game on every night, you were wearing jerseys to work, you even got "Steph" tattooed on your arm there.
  2. But now, after all the injuries and moving pieces have left them at the bottom of the league, you haven't watched a game in months, you keep your jersey in the drawer, you went back into that parlor and had them add a few letters to your tattoo so it says "Steph . . . anie" and you told your niece that you did it for her. And you wouldn't want to tell anybody this, you wouldn't dare say it out loud, but you've actually been watching and secretly rooting for the Lakers. You know it's wrong. But it's fun to back a winner.
    - a. Listen, that's a fair-weather fan. The real Warriors fans, even this season, are still watching the games, every night, even though sometimes they'd rather gouge their eyes out, they're there on the couch, or in the arena, cheering, holding their ground: "Let the black clouds gather overhead, let the thunder clap, let the lightning strike. I'm not going anywhere—gold and blue until I die!"
- C. Now, why do I bring this up? Well, to cut straight to it:
1. In [Luke 19](#), Jesus really seems like a great guy to get behind, right? He's healing the blind, raising the dead, outsmarting those smug religious leaders, and so forth. We love it. "Of course I'll cast my vote for Jesus. Jesus for King!"
  2. But, in [Luke 22](#), when they've got Him tied up in chains and He's looking all pathetic, who gets your vote then?!
- D. We've already discussed this, but you remember that what these Israelites have in mind when they're calling Him King and getting all excited, and what truly will go down with Jesus as King, are two totally different things. They want Him to kick Rome out of the city. He's going to let Rome kick Him out of the city.
1. And they're not going to get it. They're not going to like it. They're going to start taking off their jerseys. They're going to start booing along with the rest of the crowd.
- E. John's account of this scene indicates that such a large crowd was gathering around Jesus at this point that the Pharisees, seeing it, just turn to one another and say with disdain: "[Look, the world has gone after him](#)" ([John 12:19](#)). The world has gone after Him. That's how many are following and praising and celebrating.
1. And I just want to ask: If there is this many people praising Him on Sunday, where in the world are all these people on Friday? When Jesus is in custody and Pilate is asking the crowd: "[What shall I do with Jesus?](#)" ([Matt 27:22](#))—where are all these people then? Well, I'll tell you what I think:

- a. At best, they are quietly confused and troubled.
- b. At worst, they're crying out with the rest of the crowd: "Crucify Him!" (Luke 23:21) "He's not my King! Oh I know what I said on Sunday. But look at Him now. No thank you! Crucify Him!"
  - i. It's a fickle faith, and a petty praise.

## Fair-Weather or Diehard?

- A. And we need to pause on this and consider ourselves for a moment. It's so easy to spread our cloak out on the ground before Jesus when we're thinking He's going to deliver on what we want for our life. We have our ideas and He's going to make it happen.
  - 1. But then He doesn't. You don't get the job. You don't get the girl, or the boy . . . or the baby. You don't get the healing. You get the hardship and the trial.
    - a. And you want to pick back up your cloak, dust it off, put it on, and go find some other king—a king who will actually deliver.
- B. Oh brothers and sisters, the issue is not altogether unlike the matter we took up last week. When the truth of Scripture, when the circumstances round about us, don't feel good or nice to us, as they sometimes won't, what do we do?
  - 1. Do we jettison the Messiah just because He doesn't immediately match our expectations and fit our little categories?
  - 2. Or do we resolve to trust Him through the confusion and open ourselves to the possibility that He could be doing something more, something bigger than we can yet conceive?
- C. I don't want to be a fair-weather saint. I want to be a diehard saint.
  - 1. A diehard saint learns how to praise God while lying in the dirt: "Though he slay me, I will hope in him" (Job 13:15). Or perhaps the more famous Job 1:21: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
    - a. He's still my King—in sunshine and in storm!

## (3) Peace in Heaven

### Building a Bridgeway

- A. Now, we get a window into one of the things our King has come to accomplish when we consider the words these disciples use to praise Him, perhaps unwittingly so, back in v. 38: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"
- B. At first glance this statement seems to be a revisiting and recycling of that acclamation given by the angels back on the night of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:14. I wonder if you remember? They appear to the

shepherds there praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

1. But, upon closer investigation, no doubt, we come to discern a slight difference between the two:
  - a. In [Luke 2](#), it is peace on earth that is being highlighted.
  - b. But, in [Luke 19](#), now it is peace in heaven.
- C. The subtle change in wording here I think is actually exploding with significance.
  1. In the first, it is the hosts of heaven speaking of peace on earth. In the second, it is the hosts of earth speaking of peace in heaven. But, in both places, it is Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who is the center of it all.
- D. It’s a picture, I think, of His mediatorial and conciliatory role.
  1. Since as far back as Adam, heaven and earth have been at odds. Sin has fractured the relationship and put God and man at loggerheads. But Jesus, fully God and fully man, steps in to mediate, to reconcile.
    - a. He will offer from sinful man’s side what justice and holiness demands from God’s side. He will Himself become the sacrifice due God for our sin and in so doing He will build a bridgeway of peace between God and man, a way of merger between heaven and earth.
- E. I reference this text last week but let me now read it to you in full, [Col 1:15-20](#), speaking of Jesus, Paul writes: “<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”
  1. He is God, He is man . . . He is reconciling God to man; He is from heaven, He is on earth . . . He is reconciling heaven to earth—and He is making this peace “[by the blood of His cross](#)”!
- F. Now, I read this here not only because it describes how the cross brings peace to both heaven and earth, but also because it presents, in not so many words, the cosmic scope of this redemption Jesus has wrought.
  1. And with this we are brought to our last item on the agenda for this morning: Singing Stones.

## (4) Singing Stones

- A. The Pharisees hear the praise Jesus is receiving from His disciples back in our text and they demand that He rebuke them and put an end to it (v. 39). To them all this commotion is an offense.
  - 1. But He won't do it. Indeed, I suppose we could even say, He can't. That is the essence of His answer, isn't it? "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (v. 40).
    - a. There's so much more going on here than just that which concerns these disciples. Heaven and earth are at stake in the Savior's mission. If these people stop their praise, the stones will start to sing!

## What Is Meant by "Stones"?

- A. Now, what does He mean by this?
  - 1. Certainly, it seems to be speaking to the inescapable, unavoidable, inevitable praise that will come to the Son of God for His work at Calvary. That much is clear.
  - 2. But what is meant by these "stones"?
- B. Well, I see two possible meanings here. I wanted to reflect on them for a moment with you and then we'll draw all of this to a close.

### Meaning #1: Stones in the Created World

- A. The first meaning is that to which I've been alluding already: Stones in the Created World. In this case, Jesus may be referring to the stones that lay strewn about the path He was coming down en route to Jerusalem.
  - 1. With this we are inclined to think of texts like [Psa 19:1-2](#), where David writes: "<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."
  - 2. Or, even more pertinent, [Psa 96:11-13](#): "<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; <sup>12</sup> let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy <sup>13</sup> before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness."
- B. Creation sees what God is doing and praises Him for it. And Paul reminds us in [Rom 8](#), it's not just because creation delights in seeing God on the move. It's because creation has skin in the game, so to speak. Paul says creation too is groaning, longing for release and redemption as we are—and its fate is tied to ours.
  - 1. When Adam and Eve sinned, you recall, it was not just humanity that was put under the curse but the whole of the created order as well. So this is why Jesus is saying: "Listen, if I don't permit my disciples to praise, the creation will erupt with song in their place. The created order is just as happy, if not more so, that I'm here to overturn the curse."
- C. It is interesting that when man's praise does go quiet there while Jesus is being delivered over to death on the cross, creation is still bearing witness.

1. We read that even at the noon hour, when the sun should be at its brightest, “<sup>44</sup> there was darkness over the whole land . . . <sup>45</sup> while the sun’s light failed” (Luke 23:44–45).
2. And when Jesus rises from the dead on the third day, it’s no coincidence, I think, that it happens at dawn (Luke 24:1), when the sun was rising as well.

a. Creation is bearing witness to Christ’s redemptive work. The stones are singing!

## Meaning #2: Stones in the Temple Structure

- A. But there is a second possible meaning that is quite intriguing to consider. And that is that these “stones” could, in fact, be a reference to the stones that lay stacked one upon the other in the temple structure. Here we should picture Jesus signaling with His hand towards the temple that stood prominently off in the distance.
- B. In support of this meaning is the fact that, even in the immediate context, Jesus does actually speak of the “stones” of the temple (Luke 19:44; 21:6). So this is not a stretch. But, if this is part of the meaning, what would it imply?
  1. Well, here we would come to see that it is not just the structures of creation and general revelation that will bear witness to Christ and celebrate His crucifixion victory, but the structures of redemption and special revelation will do the same.
    - a. It is not just the heavens that are declaring the glory of Jesus but all the types and shadows of the OT are as well.
- C. I just finished reading through Exodus in my devotions. And in that book, of course you know there are many chapters given over to the establishing of the Tabernacle which later was made more permanent in the Temple structure.
  1. But it’s an astounding thing when once you realize that it’s all about Jesus.
    - a. He is ark that embodies the Law and stands as God’s presence with His people.
    - b. He is the mercy seat, the place where God meets in mercy with sinful men.
    - c. He is bread of the presence, the bread of life.
    - d. He is light of the lampstand there—the light of world.
    - e. He is the incense, the sweet aroma so pleasing to His Father.
    - f. He is the priest who has been set apart by God to minister before Him with His people on His heart.
    - g. He is the sacrifice, spotless, unblemished, perfect, and pure, slain for sinners as an offering to God.
    - h. His Spirit is the oil for our anointing.
    - i. His blood is the water for our washing.
    - j. His righteousness is the garment we are clothed in.
    - k. And on we could go.



- D. The bottom line in all of this: Even if the disciples were to be silenced here, the stones of the temple would sing out in celebration. Here is the One to whom everything has been pointing! As Jesus Himself says: “[S]omething greater than the temple is here” (Matt 12:6).
- E. And, again, as with creation, it is interesting that when man’s praise does go quiet there while Jesus is being delivered over to death on the cross, the temple is still bearing witness.
  - 1. For we’re told that, as Jesus breathed His last and yielded up His spirit, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two” (Luke 23:45)—as if to say: “Let it be known—the way into the holy presence of God has at last been opened to sinful men and women by the cross of Jesus the Christ!”
- F. The stones are singing! But are you?!

## The Stone in My Chest

- A. There’s actually one last stone I want to consider, though I know it’s outside the boundaries of what Jesus is referring to here.
  - 1. We’ve talked about how the stones of creation will sing.
  - 2. We’ve talked about how the stones of the temple will sing.
  - 3. Now I want to talk about the stones that we find inside our own chest.
    - a. Here, of course, I am thinking of the fact that we ourselves are by nature hardened to God, to such an extent that He throughout Scripture, likens our hearts to stone.
- B. So what do we do? I want to praise. I want to sing out with the structures of creation and redemption. I want to see and be stunned by the mercy of God for me in Jesus. So what do I do?
  - 1. Well, hear me, it’s not so much about what you can do as much as it is about what He has already done.
- C. In [Luke 22](#), Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper and He starts talking about how His blood is going to establish and secure for His people a New Covenant.
  - 1. And this New Covenant is something the prophet Ezekiel anticipated and spoke of in [Ezek 36](#). There, God, speaking through Him, says this: “<sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.<sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.<sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.<sup>28</sup> You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God” (vv. 25–28).
- D. This is what Christ has come to do! To establish that. To bless us with that.
  - 1. It is true, the Son will get His due praise from stones of creation and the stones of the temple.

2. But that is not enough for Him. He wants you. He wants your heart to come alive in love for Him. He wants the stone inside your chest to soften and be set to singing.
    - a. And He gave His own life to make such a thing possible.
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Oh Jesus, pour out your Spirit in this place. Do your New Covenant work. We don't want to be hard. We don't want to be cold. We don't want to be calloused. We want to come alive for You!