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## WHY YOU SHOULD FOLLOW JESUS

Luke 19:28-44

By

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Luke Lesson 89

## Why You Should Follow Jesus Luke 19:28-44

You are witnessing to a college student who asks, "Why should I follow Jesus?" You tell him, "Because Jesus said, 'I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly.' Jesus will give you an abundant life. Not only that, He will give you peace with God. He will give you new purpose and meaning. He will help you overcome the temptations that would destroy your life. Being a Christian is the greatest life in this world!"

You encourage him to come with you to a Christian concert. He enjoys the music, even if he can't catch all the words. He sees others who look similar to him and figures, "Maybe not all Christians look weird." When the invitation is given, he sees others going forward and he feels good about the whole evening. When the speaker gives another emotional appeal to come forward and know Jesus, the young man decides to try it. He goes down front and a counselor goes over the basics of the gospel and leads him in the sinner's prayer. He assures him that he is now one of God's children and encourages him to read the Bible and go to church.

In subsequent weeks, he's out late on Saturday nights, so he struggles with getting out of bed early enough to get to church on Sunday mornings. But he hears about the college group and starts attending it. He likes the feeling of the worship time and meets a lot of nice people, including some cute girls. Life seems to be going well for him. He likes being a Christian.

Then, bad news hits. He hears that his mom is dying of cancer. He asks everyone to pray, but she doesn't get better. He watches as she slowly, painfully sinks lower and lower until she dies. He doesn't understand why God didn't answer his prayers. About this time, he runs into an old friend who offers him a joint. He smokes it and feels mellow all over. Soon after, he meets a beautiful girl and she willingly gives herself to him. Being with her is a lot of fun and she makes him forget the pain of his mother's death. His Christian experience fades into the background as she moves into the center of his life. When you talk to him about his

faith, he says, "I tried Jesus and it helped me for a while. If it works for you, that's great. But right now, it's just not where I'm at."

Why did that young man fall away from the faith? What was behind his spiritual defection? At least two faulty assumptions: First, he saw spiritual truth as personal and subjective, not as absolute and objective. If it makes you feel better, if it works for you, then it must be true. But if something else works better, then try it. The test for spiritual truth is how it makes you feel and whether it works. If your thing is "trusting in Jesus," that's cool. That seems to work for many people. But if it doesn't work for me, and if smoking dope and having sex with my girlfriend makes me feel good, then I'll try that. Spiritual truth is defined in personal and subjective terms.

The second faulty assumption is that personal happiness is the most important thing in life. God, if He is there, exists to make me happy. If Jesus can make me feel good, I'll give Him a try. If following Jesus doesn't make me feel good or if it seems too hard, then I'll try something else. Man and his happiness, not God and His glory, are what matter the most.

Maybe you're wondering, "What does this have to do with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday?" A lot! When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a foal of a donkey that day, it meant different things to different people. For Jesus, it signified His official presentation to the nation as King and Messiah, although He knew that He would be rejected and crucified. The twelve and other followers of Jesus saw Him as Messiah and King, but they mistakenly thought that He would set up His rule on the throne of David immediately.

Others in the crowd saw the event in strictly political terms. They were enamored by Jesus' miracles, especially the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-18). They hoped that Jesus would lead the revolt against Rome and restore independence to Israel. The Jewish leaders were frustrated by the acclaim Jesus was receiving, because He threatened their power base (John 11:48).

But less than a week later, one of the disciples had betrayed Jesus, another had denied knowing Him, and His followers were scattered and confused. The fickle crowd had changed from

shouts of "Hosanna!" to "Crucify Him!" Why? What happened? Why the defection? Why the failure? Why the change?

In part, I believe, it was because these various people had a wrong conception of who Jesus is and they were following Him for what they thought He would do for them. Because they had a faulty notion of spiritual truth regarding the person of Jesus Christ and a man-centered theology, they fell away in a time of difficulty when things didn't go as they had hoped. If we want a faith that endures hardship and trials, we need to understand that . . .

We should follow Jesus because He is Lord,  
not just because of what He can do for us.

I am not denying that Jesus can and will do much for us when we follow Him. But I am affirming that the main reason we must follow Jesus is because of *who He is*, not because of what He can do for us. We may get tortured and killed for our faith, but we still must follow Jesus if He is the Sovereign Lord of all. Luke's narrative of the "Triumphal Entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem shows us five aspects of the Lordship of Jesus Christ which give us solid reasons to follow Him, even unto death.

1. Because Jesus is the Lord of authority, we must follow Him.

This story that inaugurates the week leading to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, conveys the picture that He was in absolute control of the circumstances. He was not deluded by the cheering crowd. He was not intimidated by the threats of the Pharisees. He lived under the precise timetable of the Heavenly Father, and now Jesus knew that His hour was approaching.

On Palm Sunday Jesus staged a public demonstration to show the people and the rulers that He is the Messiah, but not the kind of Messiah they were expecting. The chief priests and the Sanhedrin were looking for Jesus and had given the command that if anyone knew where He was, they should inform them so that He could be arrested (John 11:57). Jesus' bold action infuriated them and led to His arrest and crucifixion at the very moment that the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in Jerusalem, as a fulfillment of His offering Himself as the Lamb of God for sinners. Even the day of the triumphal entry was in fulfillment of God's

prophetic timetable. Jesus was in control of every event. Whether He had pre-arranged the details about securing the colt or whether they reflect His supernatural knowledge, we do not know. But the clear point is, Jesus was in command of the whole situation. He is the Lord who had need of the colt.

To have a faith that perseveres, you need to understand that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord of authority. He is sovereign even over all of the evil things happening in the world. He will work all these things together for His glory and for the ultimate good of His saints. Jesus was not a well-meaning reformer who was tragically murdered because He made a mistake in picking a disloyal disciple who betrayed Him. He laid down His life for His sheep on His own initiative (John 10:17-18).

While the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God, was the most horrible crime imaginable, and those who did it are responsible for their terrible sin, that sin did not thwart the sovereign plan of God, but rather, fulfilled it. As the apostles prayed (Acts 4:27-28), "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." Nothing can thwart God's purpose (Psalms 103:19; 115:3). Either you can submit to Him willingly now and be blessed, or on the day of judgment you will be forced to submit to Him and be condemned. Because He is the Lord of authority, we must follow Him.

2. Because Jesus is the Lord of creation, we must follow Him.

That Jesus is Lord over creation is evident in the fact that He rode on an unbroken colt. I'm no horseman, but I know that you don't climb on an unbroken colt and expect a nice, gentle ride! Jesus' riding on this colt shows His miraculous power over the creation that He spoke into existence by His word of power. There also was a spiritual significance in the fact that the colt was unbroken. In the Old Testament, when an animal was put to sacred use, it had to be one which had not already been used for common purposes (Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3). Since this animal was now to be used for the Messiah to ride into the city of David, it

had to be an animal which had never been ridden by man. Only the Lord of creation could do what Jesus did.

If Jesus is the Almighty Creator, then certainly we should follow Him. The colt received Jesus on its back without bucking, but He came unto His own people, and they did not receive Him, but cast Him off. As with Balaam's donkey, this donkey was smarter than people. If you want a faith that perseveres, bow before Jesus as the Lord of creation. Of Jesus, John wrote, "All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3). We are not here as the result of random chance plus billions of years of evolution. The personal God created us and has a purpose for our lives, both in time and in eternity. We realize that purpose when we follow Him. Jesus is the Lord of authority and the Lord of creation. Also,

3. Because Jesus is the Lord of prophecy, we must follow Him.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies, which I can only touch on here.

(1) *Psalm 118:22-27*. This psalm, sung by pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the feasts, refers to Jesus, the cornerstone rejected by the Jewish leaders, and to the day of Messiah which God has made. In Hebrew, "do save" (118:25) is "Hosanna," which the crowds called out to Jesus (Matt. 21:9). Luke omits that word, but he reports that they quote Psalm 118:26 as Jesus passes by (Luke 19:38).

(2) *Zechariah 9:9* (see Matt. 21:5; John 12:14-15). Zechariah proclaims, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This prophecy refers especially to Messiah in His humiliation. The word "humble" (Zech. 9:9) points to one who is not only humble, but also oppressed or afflicted by evil men. After the time of Solomon, a donkey was considered a lowly animal ridden only by persons of no rank or position. Kings, warriors, and people of importance after Solomon's time rode on horses. The donkey was considered a burden-bearer, an animal of peace, not an animal of war. By riding a donkey, Jesus was showing Himself to be Messiah, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, but not the exalted po-

litical Messiah of war that the people expected. In His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Messiah offering peace and salvation.

(3) *Daniel 9:24-27*. I do not have time to demonstrate the calculations, but the 19th century British scholar, Sir Robert Anderson, showed that Jesus' triumphal entry fulfilled to the very day Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks concerning the appearance of Messiah the prince (see Alva McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* [Zondervan], p. 20). Note Jesus' words in Luke 19:42, "If you had known in *this day ....*" What day? The precise day that God had fixed in Daniel's prophecy. Before this time, Jesus would not allow His followers to proclaim Him as Messiah. But now (Luke 19:40) He accepts their acclaim because the day had come for Messiah the prince to be proclaimed.

Realizing that Jesus is the Lord of prophecy will enable us to persevere when we may wonder if history is running amok. The nations may rage and the kings of the earth may take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed, but He who sits in the heavens laughs at their puny attempts to cast off His rule (Psalm 2). Our God is sovereign over history, bringing it along right on schedule according to His prophetic timetable. We can submit to Him and trust Him even when circumstances seem overwhelming.

4. Because Jesus is the Lord of judgment, we must follow Him.

In Luke 19:41-44, Jesus predicts the terrible judgment that would come on Jerusalem. Note His attitude: He wept. The word is a stronger one than the word in John 11:35, where Jesus quietly wept at the tomb of Lazarus. The word here means loud sobbing or a cry of agony. God does not delight in judgment, but in mercy. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. He is slow to anger and abounding in love toward every sinner (Exod. 34:6-7). Yet He is also the righteous judge. There is a mystery here, which Wordsworth expressed nicely when he said, "Christ here proves His twofold nature by shedding tears as man, for what He foretold as God" (cited by J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* [Baker], note on Luke 19:41, p. 318).

God is not only a God of love and grace. He also is a righteous God who is settled in His wrath against all sin. His day of

grace is not forever. Jerusalem's day of grace was rapidly ending and a time of terrible judgment was approaching, because they did not recognize the time of their visitation (19:44). In A.D. 70, the armies of the Roman general, Titus, fulfilled the frightening prediction of Luke 19:43-44. Someday soon, the same Messiah who came the first time riding on a humble donkey, proclaiming peace, will come again in power and glory, riding on a white charger of war, to tread the winepress of the fierce wrath of God (Rev. 19:15). Then the day of grace will be over.

What was true of the nation Israel in Jesus' day can be true of individuals in our day: You can miss the time of God's gracious visitation. Right now He is calling you to Himself with the promise of grace. But if you refuse to come and bow before His rightful Lordship, you will face the awful day of His judgment on your sins. J. C. Ryle observed that Christ's perfect knowledge of all these things should "alarm sinners and awaken them to repentance" (*ibid.*, p. 308). The Lord Jesus knows everything about you! Why try to avoid Him when He offers a full pardon if you will trust in Him? Godet, warns, "Jesus does not knock indefinitely at the door of a heart or of a people" (*A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* [I.K. Funk & Co.], p. 427). The day of judgment is coming! We should follow Jesus because He is the Lord of authority, the Lord of creation, the Lord of prophecy, and the Lord of judgment.

5. Because Jesus is the Lord of salvation, we must follow Him.

Jesus came the first time offering peace, and the offer stands until He comes again for judgment. He offered Himself as the Passover Lamb. If His blood is applied to your sins, God will pass over you in the day of judgment, and you will be safe. His offer to you is peace with God through the forgiveness of your sins. On the cross Jesus satisfied the wrath of God for every sinner who will trust in Him. The cross of Christ is offensive to our proud, sinful hearts, because we must lay aside any notion that we can save ourselves or that we're good enough to get into heaven. We must admit that we are sinners who desperately need a Savior.

There are two wrong notions that will keep many people out of heaven, and they usually go together. First, people wrongly believe that God is too loving to send decent, moral people to hell.

Most people can accept the fact that God will judge people like Hitler—really evil people. But they view God as being tolerant of the normal sins that good, law-abiding folks like us commit. But the Bible makes it clear that God is absolutely holy, and no sin will be tolerated in the day of judgment. A single sin in thought, word, or deed is enough to condemn a person to hell!

The second wrong notion is that most of us are good enough to qualify for heaven. Sure, we're only human, we have our faults, but we're not really bad, like murderers, terrorists, and child molesters. So we figure that the scales will tip our way when we stand before God because we were sincere and we meant well, even though we're not perfect. But pretty good people do not qualify for God's perfect heaven. It requires perfect righteousness to get into heaven.

That's where Christ and the cross come in. On the cross, the perfect Son of God offered Himself as the substitute for sinners. He came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Some day you will stand before God either clothed in your own goodness, which will be inadequate, or clothed in the perfect righteousness of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. That righteousness is credited to your account the instant you renounce all trust in your own righteousness and put your trust in Jesus as your sin-bearer.

### Conclusion

I'd like you to ask yourself, "Why do I follow Jesus?" Some of you may have to say, honestly, "I follow Jesus because I am hoping that He can heal my broken marriage and give me a happy home life." I assure you that He can do that, but that is *not* a good enough reason to follow Jesus. Others may say, "I follow Jesus because I struggle with many emotional problems, and I'm hoping that He can give me inner peace and joy." He certainly can give you inner peace and joy, but that is *not* an adequate reason to follow Jesus. Following Jesus can also give you increased trials and persecutions!

The main reason to follow Jesus is because He is the Lord! He is the Sovereign *Lord of authority*, who works all things after the counsel of His will. He is the *Lord of creation*, who spoke the universe into existence, who created you for His purpose. He is the

*Lord of prophecy*, who has revealed in His Word in advance the course of history. He is the fearful *Lord of judgment*, before whom every knee shall bow. He is the gracious *Lord of salvation*, who gave His life so that all who believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

When the apostle Paul faced hardship and suffering, he wrote to Timothy, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). His faith was based on the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want a faith that perseveres in the trials of this life, trust in Jesus because of who He is, not just because of what He can do for you.

### Discussion Questions

1. How would you answer a person who says, "God is unfair to condemn basically decent people to hell"?
2. Is it wrong to appeal to people to come to Christ so that He can solve their personal problems? Cite biblical support.
3. Why is it essential to view spiritual truth as objective, not subjective?
4. How do you harmonize Jesus' joy over God's sovereignty in salvation (Luke 10:21-22) and His sorrow over Israel's unbelief (19:41-44)?

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