

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 27 December 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Call to Jerusalem

Two thousand years ago, Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, miraculously took on human flesh in the womb of a virgin named Mary. Nine months later, the One who is both God and Man finally entered our world! He was not placed in a royal bed that night; instead, He was placed in an animal's feeding trough. Nevertheless, His birth did get a royal announcement! That night, a mighty host of angels appeared to some shepherds on the hills outside Bethlehem to announce Christ's birth; and they shouted, ***"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."***

This was the beginning of what would be the greatest journey every made. It all began in Bethlehem, the city of Christ's great ancestor, King David; and it continued for thirty-three years. In every place where Jesus went in those thirty-three years, He went there in express obedience to His Father; and He went there to fulfil purposes that had been ordained before the foundation of the world.

Over this past month, we have learned about several of the places where Jesus went during His earthly journey. First, there was **Bethlehem**, where He was born. Then, there was **Egypt**, where He spent several years as a young child. Then, there was **Nazareth**, where He grew up like a tender plant, and like a root out of a dry ground. Last week, we learned about a city of Samaria named **Sychar**, where Jesus sought out a sinner by Jacob's well, and gave her the "water" of everlasting life. In each of these places, Jesus went there to fulfil prophecies, and to carry out the mission that His Father had given Him. Over the three and a half years of His ministry, He travelled to scores, if not hundreds, of towns and villages in Galilee, Samaria, and Judaea, and even outside the borders of Israel. He healed the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the lepers, and the paralytics. He cast out devils, restored lunatics to their right minds, and raised the dead. He preached the good news of the Kingdom day in and day out. Most importantly, He saved people from their sins, and gave them eternal life, joy, and peace.

All the while, Jesus was heading toward the ultimate destination in His journey--the city of **Jerusalem**. Of course, Jesus was in Jerusalem many times during His life, and accomplished many things there; but His most *important* and *final* mission had to be accomplished in Jerusalem. It is here that Jesus would purchase our redemption, and buy mankind back from sin and death!

That is what we will be talking about in this message, which is entitled ***The Call to Jerusalem***.

Read Matthew 16:13-21.

Can you imagine how shocked the disciples must have been when Jesus told them that He would soon be arrested and killed? Only moments earlier, they had all shared in that wonderful moment when Peter and the other disciples confessed their belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Yet, no sooner had they confessed that Jesus is the Son of the ***"living God,"*** than Jesus informed them that He must soon *die*. This was Christ's mission. This was why He came to earth. He came to die for our sins.

Yet, Jesus couldn't die for our sins in just any place. Jesus said that He ***"must go unto Jerusalem"*** to be killed. It was absolutely necessary that Christ suffer and die in Jerusalem. But why Jerusalem? Why did the Father call Him there? There are several reasons. First, the Father called Jesus to Jerusalem...

I. Because it was *prophesied* that Christ would suffer and die in Jerusalem.

Six days after Jesus had informed His disciples that He “*must*” go to Jerusalem to die and rise again, Peter, James, and John were given the privilege of witnessing a spectacular event. While they were still in the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up onto a nearby mountain; and on that mountain, they saw an amazing vision. In the vision, they saw Elijah and Moses in their glorified, resurrected bodies, speaking with the Lord Jesus, in the future Kingdom Age. Jesus, Moses, and Elijah were all wearing white garments, which shone with exceeding brilliance, like the light of the sun; and they were all speaking with each other as though they were old friends. But the most amazing thing of all was their topic of conversation. The Bible tells us that as they talked with each other, they spoke of Jesus’ “*decease* [His death] *which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*”

What was so special about Jerusalem? Why did Jesus *have* to die there? Why did God give Peter, James, and John this amazing vision, just to drive home the point that Jesus must go to *Jerusalem* to die? Well, as always, the most important reason is that *God had prophesied it!*

Now, there is no verse in the Old Testament that explicitly says, “The Messiah will be killed in Jerusalem.” However, there *is* an important *type* prophecy which points to Jerusalem as the place where God’s Son would die. Let’s take a look at that prophecy.

Read Genesis 22:1-18.

For thousands of years, people have read this passage of Scripture, and scratched their heads. Why would God command Abraham to do this awful thing? Why would the God who says “*Thou shalt not kill*” command His friend, Abraham, to take his beloved son Isaac, for whose birth he had waited for 25 long years, and offer him up as a burnt sacrifice to Him?

Well, there are several answers to that question. First, this is the *only* time in history when God commanded any of His servants to do such a thing. (And, being God, He had the right to command it.) Never before, nor since, that day on Mount Moriah, has God commanded any believer to perform a human sacrifice. Secondly, we need to remember that God did not actually allow Abraham to go through with this sacrifice! It was never God’s intention to allow this to happen. He stopped Abraham right when he was ready to slay his son.

Yet, *Abraham* didn’t know that God would stop him from slaying his son. When Abraham left his tent that morning and started off toward Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, he wasn’t thinking, “You know, I think God is testing me. He isn’t going to make me go through with this: so, I can relax.” As far as Abraham knew, this sacrifice was *really* going to “go down”!

Why, then, did God allow Abraham to experience this anguish? There are two reasons.

First, **God was trying Abraham**, to reveal whether he loved his God even more than he loved his son. As it turned out, Abraham *did* love and trust his God supremely. Abraham *was* willing to offer up his son! When the trial was over, God repeated the promise that He had made to Abraham years earlier—except that this time, he gave him a little more information. Let’s look at that promise again. (**Read verses 16-18 again.**)

God promised not only that a great *nation* would come from Abraham, but also that a “*seed*” would arise from his family. This “*seed*” was not merely a *nation*, but *one particular* person. The Apostle Paul pointed out this very thing. In **Galatians 3:16** Paul wrote, “*He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*”

Jesus Christ is that “Seed” of Abraham! Jesus Christ is that Descendant of Abraham who, God said, would bring the blessing of salvation to all the families of the earth. Yet, *how, exactly*, would Christ bring the blessing of salvation? Well, God didn’t *explicitly* reveal this to Abraham; but He did give Abraham a really *big hint* as to how it would all happen.

This brings me to the *second* reason why God allowed Abraham to go through this trial. You see, right there on Mount Moriah, **Abraham was acting out, in picture, God’s plan of salvation** for mankind. This whole “sacrifice of Isaac” scenario was a *prophecy in picture*.

There are several parts to this prophetic picture. First, **Abraham** was a picture of God the Father. Just as Abraham was willing to offer up his only begotten son Isaac, so God the Father would one day offer up His only begotten Son, Jesus, as the sacrifice for our sins.

Secondly, **Isaac** was a picture of God’s Son, who would willingly go to the “altar” of the cross one day, and die for our sins. Just as Isaac offered no resistance to his father, but willingly got up on the altar to be slain, so Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, willingly went to the cross to be slain.

Now, there is another aspect to this picture. You’ll notice that God commanded Abraham to offer a *ram* as a sacrifice, instead of Isaac. The sacrifice of the ram in Isaac’s place was a picture of how Christ would become the Substitute for *sinners*. In this part of the picture, Isaac is a picture of *all of us*; and the ram is a picture of *Christ*. Christ died in our place, so that we might receive eternal life, and be reconciled to God! By the way, do you remember when Isaac asked, “*Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*” Abraham’s answer to Isaac was, “*My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.*” Little did Abraham realise how prophetic his words were. God *did*, indeed, provide a true Lamb for a sacrifice—2,000 years later! Jesus is “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*”

Now, there is one more part to this prophetic picture. You’ll notice that Isaac didn’t stay on the altar: he *got up off* the altar again! Does that mean anything? It certainly does! Let’s go to the book of **Hebrews**, and see what the Apostle Paul had to say about this little detail.

Read Hebrews 11:17-19.

My friends, this is the most important part of the picture! Paul is making a profound point, here. He says that Abraham believed that “*God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.*” Think of that! Abraham *fully* believed that Isaac would come back down off the mountain with him. That is why Abraham told his servants, “*Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*” Abraham was absolutely confident that as soon as his son was slain, God would raise him back to life again.

Do you see the picture here? In this part of the story, Isaac is, once again, a picture of Christ. Isaac’s getting up *on* the altar is a picture of Christ’s going to the cross; and his getting *up off* the altar is a picture of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. That is why Paul says that

Abraham received his son *“in a figure.”* That word *“figure”* means “parable,” or “picture.” Abraham’s receiving his son Isaac after he got down from the altar is a picture of the Father receiving His Son to the glories in heaven after He had died for our sins, and risen again.

So, there you have it. God’s plan of salvation was acted out on Mount Moriah, nineteen hundred years before Christ was born. Now, what does this have to do with Jerusalem? Actually, it has *everything* to do with it! You see, this mountain called “Moriah” was the mountain on which the Canaanites later built a city called “Jerusalem.” Centuries later, after the children of Israel had conquered Canaan, King David conquered this Canaanite city, and made it the capital city of Israel. Then, David’s son, King Solomon, built the Temple there. The Bible says in **2 Chronicles 3:1**, *“Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father.”*

Think of that! Moriah and Zion are the same mountain! The place where Abraham offered up his son Isaac is the very place where Jerusalem later sat, and where the lambs were offered as sacrifices in the Temple. Christ, also, was offered up as the *true* sacrifice for our sins in this very mountain where Isaac was offered 1,900 years earlier!

Do you see now why Jesus had to go to Jerusalem? The event that happened on Mount Moriah was a prophecy. It was a prophecy not only of *how* Christ would purchase our salvation, but of *where* it would happen! God had ordained this mountain as the place where His only begotten Son would die for the sins of mankind!

Now, why else did the Father call His Son to Jerusalem? Were there any other reasons? Yes, there were. The Father also called His son to Jerusalem....

II. Because Jerusalem is the city of the King.

In **2 Samuel 5:9**, the Bible tells us that after King David conquered the city of Jerusalem, and took it from the Jebusites, He *“dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David.”* Bethlehem is called the “City of David” because it was the place of David’s birth; but Jerusalem is *also* called the “City of David,” because it is the city that David chose to be the *royal* city--the city of the kings of Israel.

By the way, this wasn’t David’s decision. It was *God’s* decision. Time and time again, we are told that *God* has chosen Jerusalem. Just as God chose David to be king of Israel, so God chose Jerusalem to be the city of the King! Mighty empires have arisen and fallen, and have been replaced by succeeding empires; and Jerusalem has repeatedly been in the crosshairs of these wars. Over the centuries, Jerusalem been destroyed, and rebuilt, and destroyed, and rebuilt, time and again. Yet, God’s purpose for Jerusalem has not changed. It is the city of the King, because it is the City of God! It is the place that God has chosen as His habitation.

Read Psalm 78:67-70.

Read Zechariah 1:16-17.

In **Psalm 46**, God says of Jerusalem, *“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her.”* Jerusalem is God’s city; and He will

defend it from His enemies. By the way, in **Psalm 129**, God has some choice words for the enemies of Jerusalem. He says, ***“The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.”***

Jerusalem is the place in which God has chosen to rule and reign over the nations. One day, the Messiah will reign over the entire earth, from Jerusalem. This has been prophesied again and again. For example, in **Isaiah 2**, Isaiah said:

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Jerusalem is the City of David. It is the City of God, and the City of the King. Jerusalem is the city from which Jesus Christ will one day rule the nations with a rod of iron. It was only appropriate, then, that Jesus, the King of Kings, should go up to Jerusalem.

Now, Jesus knew, when He went up to Jerusalem, that the people would reject Him, and would put Him to death. Nevertheless, He presented Himself as the King of Israel. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass, He was giving the people of Israel one last opportunity to receive Him as their King. It had been prophesied that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem in this very manner. Five hundred years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Zechariah wrote, ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”*** Let's examine how, exactly, this prophecy played out.

Read John 12:12-15.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, it *seemed* that the people were receiving Him as their King. Yet, their seeming reception of Jesus was, for the most part, disingenuous. Though they cried out, ***“Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,”*** most of these same people would, in only a few days, cry out, ***“Crucify him!”*** Why? In a few moments, we will find the answer to that question.

First, though, let's look at the last reason why Jesus went to Jerusalem. Jesus had to go to Jerusalem not only because it was prophesied that He would pay for our redemption there, and not only because Jerusalem is the city of the King, but also...

III. Because Jerusalem is the city of peace.

One of the most beautiful prophecies of the Messiah was penned by Isaiah, 700 years before Christ was born. In **Isaiah 9:6** Isaiah wrote, ***“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”***

Every single one of those five names for the Messiah is packed with profound meaning. I wish that I had time to talk about each one of them this morning! Obviously, we don't have time to do so; but I do wish to focus in on that last name-- "***The Prince of Peace.***" That is who Jesus is, my friends! When the angels announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds, they shouted, "***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.***" Jesus came to bring peace on earth.

Yet, what kind of peace did Jesus come to bring? In our present age, "peace on earth" seems like an impossible dream--and for good reason! Jesus Himself guaranteed that He had not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword of division (**Matthew 10:34-36**)! The truth of God's Word divides men, and excites hatred in those who refuse to submit to Christ, and persecution against Christ's followers. Sadly, God's Word is often perverted by wicked men, who twist God's words to justify evil in the very name of Christ! For this reason, the lost world does not understand the angels' promise of "peace on earth." Many people look around them and see continual wars on earth (many of which have *supposedly* been waged in the name of Christ); and therefore, they view the promise of "***peace on earth, good will toward men***" as a lie. However, they fail to understand the Scripture. Peace on earth will not come until Christ returns to earth for the second time. When Christ returns to earth, and destroys the kingdoms of this world, and sets up His Kingdom, there *will* be peace all over the earth.

However, the meaning of "peace" goes far deeper than societal peace, or peace between nations. *Real* peace is peace between the soul and God. When Christ saves a sinner, the enmity between God and that sinner is removed, and that person is now at peace with God. That is why Jesus is called "***the Prince of peace.***" He is also called "***the King of peace.***" In **Hebrews 7**, the Apostle Paul calls Jesus the "***King of Salem,***" which means "***King of peace.***" Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and the King of Peace. He brings true, lasting peace to our hearts.

Now, what does all this have to do with Jerusalem? I said earlier that Jesus went to Jerusalem because Jerusalem is the "city of peace." Why do I say that? Because the name "Jerusalem" literally means "***founded in peace.***" How appropriate that the Prince of Peace and King of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, should go to the City of Peace to accomplish our redemption!

Tragically, though, most of the people in the "city of peace" were not ready to receive the Prince of peace. Jesus knew this too well; and that is why He cried and mourned over Jerusalem. As Jesus looked out over the city a few days before his crucifixion, He cried, "***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.***" What sad words! The people "***would not***" be gathered under the wings of their Saviour. They refused His love. Why? Jesus answered that question very simply. Let's look at another passage which records what Jesus said on this occasion, and see what Jesus said about "peace."

Read Luke 19:41-44.

About forty years after Jesus made this dire prophecy, Jerusalem was, indeed, laid even with the ground by the Roman armies. Why did this happen? Why would God allow Jerusalem's walls to be beaten to the ground, and her Temple to be destroyed, and her children to be slaughtered? Jesus said that it was because they did not know "***the things which belong unto***" their "***peace.***" In other words, they didn't understand (in fact, they *refused* to

understand) what things were necessary for them to be at peace with God. They *thought* that peace with God could be obtained through keeping the Law, and doing good works to earn their salvation. They refused to believe that their sin was so bad, that it separated them from God: and they refused to believe that in order to have peace with God, they needed a *Saviour* to *save* them from their sins. Jesus was that Saviour, and He had freely offered Himself to them. Yet, they rejected Him. In pride and self-righteousness, they hardened their hearts against Him. When the time was right, and it was no longer popular to be a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, the leaders of Israel condemned Him to death. The Roman soldiers stripped Him, and mocked Him, and beat His head with a rod, and punched His face, and spat in His face, and beat His back with a cat-o'-nine tails 39 times. They tore the flesh from His body, and rammed a crown of thorns on His head, and ripped His beard out. They then placed a heavy cross on His back, and led Him away to a small hill called Calvary, just outside the walls of Jerusalem. There they drove nails through His hands and feet, and crucified Him. They did all this because they didn't know the things that belonged to their peace.

Yet, the irony of it all is that the very people who scorned Jesus, and refused His love, played their very part in making our salvation possible! Because the Son of God was crucified, our sin was paid for. Let's look at one more Scripture this morning.

Read Isaiah 53:1-6.

Did you catch what Isaiah said about the Messiah there in **verse 5**? He said, "*the chastisement of our peace was upon him.*" What does this mean? It means that Jesus took the "*chastisement,*" or "punishment," for our sin; and because He took our punishment for our sin, we can now be made at peace with God. As Isaiah said in **verse 6**, "*the LORD hath laid on him* (on His son, Jesus) *the iniquity of us all.*" All our sin was laid upon Jesus as He hung on that cross. In order for us to be reconciled to God, and to have peace with Him, Jesus *had* to take our sins upon Himself. He paid our sin debt in full, one time forever on the cross; and because He paid our sin debt in full, we can now be saved, and justified before a holy God.

The Bible says, "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" The Bible says that Christ has "*made peace through the blood of his cross.*" The Bible also says that Christ Himself "*is our Peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us....so making peace.*"

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would ask this question: "Do *you* know the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ?" He isn't a cute, cuddly Babe in the manger anymore. He entered our world as a Baby, in Bethlehem; but He didn't remain a Baby. He grew into manhood, and made His journey to the cross; and on that cross, He willingly laid down His life, and paid for our sins, so that we might be saved from our sin, and be made at peace with God.

However, God doesn't force His free gift of salvation on anyone. Christ paid for your salvation on the cross; but you must receive it. *You* must own Christ as King of your heart. *You* must personally believe on Him. The Bible says, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*" Have *you* received Him? Have *you* truly believed on His name? I'm not asking if you know *about* Jesus. I'm not asking if you can answer all the "Bible Trivia" questions about Him. I'm asking, "Has there been a time in your life when you admitted to God that you are a sinner deserving of hell, and believed in your heart that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is all you need to be saved?" Has there been a time when you truly became sorrowful for your sin, and mourned over

your sin, because you realised that you had offended a holy God? Has there been a time when, in simple faith, you asked Him to *save* you from your sin, and to be the Lord of your life? If not, I urge you to do so today! We would love to show you how you can be at peace with God.

I would also ask those who are saved: “Are you living for Him?” Is your service to God weak and half-hearted? Christ gave His life for you: what have you given Him? Do you serve Him merely out of a sense of duty, or out of love? Should your love for God be lacking, let Him have your whole heart today!