

## How to Enter Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-22

January 23, 2005

Peter Hiett

Matthew 21:1: *And when they drew near to Jerusalem . . .*

Traditionally, Jerusalem has been understood to mean “city of peace,” derived from the ancient Sumerian words “uru” and “salim.” Salim is like the Hebrew word “shalom,” meaning peace or completeness. So some have argued that Jerusalem is a Hebrew derivative, in which case it may mean “teach peace” or “foundation of peace”: city of peace, teaching peace, cornerstone of peace.

I understand that many orthodox Jews believe Jerusalem to be the site of the original Eden. It was there that the bride of the first Adam chose to take fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She did it because she didn’t trust God to make her in His image, and she decided to take matters into her own hands. As you know, the results were catastrophic as the entire world fell under a curse... yet received a promise.

Well, the book of Revelation pictures Jerusalem as Eden, and in the middle of it is a tree that gives life to the nations.

In Genesis 14, we encounter Melchizedek, king of Salem. Some think that’s Jeru-salem. Well, Melchizedek comes out with bread and wine to bless Abraham. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is a “priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,” king of Salem.

The first really solid biblical reference to the sight of Jerusalem comes from the life of Abraham. 2 Chronicles 3:1 tells us that Solomon built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. Mount Moriah is where God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

In Genesis 12, God promised to bless Abraham and make a great nation of him and that by his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. He also said, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” That’s why some Christians say we should bless the modern nation state of Israel, “because they’re the children of Abraham.”

Interestingly enough, Muslims also claim to be “the children of Abraham.” Even more interestingly enough, in Galatians 3 and Romans 9, the Apostle Paul argues that the true children of Abraham are somebody else and the true seed of Abraham is *someone* else.

Well, as you know, God made this promise to Abraham, but as an old man, he still had no offspring by his bride Sarah. So instead of trusting God, he takes matters into his own hands and sleeps with Hagar, his wife’s slave, bearing Ishmael. God promises to make a great nation of Ishmael, who will be “a wild ass of a man,” but the blessing will come through Abraham’s son by Sarah. So in her old age, Sarah gets pregnant and bears Isaac. “The hopes and fears of all the years” are met in Isaac somehow both for Abraham and all the nations of the earth.

Then in Genesis 22:2,3, God says, “Abraham, take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his ass.” He took Isaac and the ass and traveled in humility to Moriah. Scripture says that on the third day he saw the place far off. He gathered wood, prepared the fire, lifted the knife, and surrendered control of the promise.

In other words, he did not trust his own knowledge, his own strength, his own wisdom to bring about the promise. He trusted that even though he sacrifice Isaac, God could raise Isaac and all things with him (Hebrew 11:17-19). He had come to believe the promise came strictly through grace as a gift.

So *he was obedient before he was responsible*. What I mean by that is, he had faith—faith in God rather than in the works of his own hands and the designs of his own mind.

Well, as he prepared to plunge the knife into the body of his only begotten son, the Angel of Yahweh stopped his hand and provided a substitute for sacrifice.

The rock on which Isaac lay is visited by millions of pilgrims every year. You can find it in the Dome of the Rock Mosque built on the temple mount in old Jerusalem.

Well, Abraham and Isaac lived about 4,000 years ago. A thousand years later, the descendents of Isaac's son Israel were dwelling in the land of Canaan but had not occupied Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 5 tells the story of how King David and his men captured the fortress of Jerusalem (which was also called Mount Zion). It also relates how the Jebusites mocked David saying that the blind and the lame could repel David. David calls on his captains to smite the Jebusites and slay the blind and the lame “whom his soul hates.” 2 Samuel 5:8: “Therefore it is said, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’”

In Leviticus 21, God had stipulated that no one with a blemish like blindness or lameness could approach the altar in the temple. You see, God had given Israel the old covenant law, and by keeping it they attempted to make themselves holy and complete in their own strength. The tabernacle and then the temple were to be like a quarantine of perfection and thus a doorway to the presence of God, whose glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies.

The temple mount—Mount Zion—was a fortress not just against human invaders but a fortress of law against demonic powers and the corruption of this world. Of course, no one could fulfill the law on their own, so the temple was a sign. It revealed: We need a better fortress than physical stones or the work of human hands, for our hands are the source of the corruption.

Well, it was the son of David—seed of David—that actually built the temple. Solomon built the temple on Moriah. God had revealed the spot to his father David. By then it had become a Jebusite threshing floor. I've read that threshing floors often contained winepresses. It was a place for making bread and possibly wine.

God revealed the spot to David through David's own failure—his sin. His sin was that he numbered his troops (2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21). He must have been relying on human strength and his own calculations rather than on the promise of God in order to build his house and guard his city.

Because of that, a plague falls on Israel. Seventy thousand of David's men die. As the angel prepares to destroy Jerusalem, God stops the angel's hand, and David sees the angel standing at the threshing floor on Moriah . . . standing between heaven and earth with his sword stretched out over the city. David's heart breaks. He drops to his knees and on his face. In humility he confesses his sin and calls for God's judgment to fall on himself and his lineage rather than on Jerusalem.

Jesus is the seed of Abraham and the son of David:  
“of the house and lineage of David.”

Well, as you know, David's descendants and the kings of Israel rule Jerusalem for the next 550 years. However, the kingdom divides and Jerusalem begins to suffer great violence as the Israelites war among themselves. But prophets begin to foretell the most amazing things about Jerusalem: that it will be destroyed, yet one day a king will come to Jerusalem and command peace to all nations. "The government will be on his shoulders . . . and of the increase of his peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7). He will swallow up death forever and wipe the tears away from all faces on His holy mountain.

Well, in 720 B.C., the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians. One hundred and twenty-five years later Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah was besieged three times by the Babylonians. The Jews had broken the covenant by trusting in the works of their own hands and by trusting in foreign alliances rather than God. They tried to save their city and lost it. The siege was so violent and the resultant famine so intense that in three places the prophets speak of mothers cannibalizing their own children.

The Babylonians destroyed the temple and took the Jews into exile. About forty years later, they started to return and rebuild the temple.

In 312 B.C., General Ptolemy (under Alexander the Great) attacked and captured the city on the Sabbath. For the next 140 years, Jerusalem was ruled by Greeks and was subject to their wars.

In 169 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanies attacked the city, slaughtered and enslaved tens of thousands of Jews, plundered the temple, and desecrated the holy place.

In 167 B.C., the Maccabean (Jewish) revolt began. But when the Jews ruled Jerusalem once again in 144 B.C., they were as ruthless as any foreign power. Eighty years before the birth of Christ, the high priest who was a Sadducee killed 6,000 Pharisees and barricaded the temple. Six years later when the last Pharisee surrendered, in the sight of the whole city he ordered about 800 Pharisees to be crucified. While they were living, he ordered the throats of their children and wives to be cut before their eyes as they hung on their crosses.

Herod the Great was a companion of one of this man's sons (John Hyccaeus). It was these two who appealed to the Roman general Pompey asking him to lay siege to the city in 63 B.C. in order to end civil war in their favor.

Well, the Romans came and conquered but didn't leave. Yet, the Romans found Jerusalem impossible to rule. After one hundred years of riots and rebellions, and exactly forty years (precisely one generation) after Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, Titus besieged and utterly destroyed the city. Titus came against Jerusalem with 65,000 soldiers. Tacitus estimates that 600,000 Jews were trapped in the city. Josephus estimates 1.1 million because the city was packed with pilgrims for Passover.

The city was already in civil war when Titus arrived. The siege lasted for five months. As the famine set in, the people would creep out at night to find food. The Romans would catch about 500 each night, torture them, and crucify them outside the city walls for all to see.

The Jewish historian Josephus also records stories from that time which sound just like Jeremiah and Ezekiel 500 years before.

- He tells of a woman roasting and cannibalizing her suckling baby.
- He tells of 600,000 corpses dumped outside the city gates.
- He tells of the final siege where the Romans slew all they found, and the blood ran so thick it quenched the fires that consumed the houses.

The Romans destroyed the temple, and in response to more rebellion in 135 A.D., they literally ran a plow over the temple mount so that “not one stone was left on top of another.” (The Wailing Wall is part of a retaining wall. It’s not the temple.) The emperor banned all Jews from ever stepping foot in Jerusalem (the city of peace) ever again.

Remember: The Greeks and the Romans came from the sea. But something happened to the sea, for over the next 300 years the Greek and Roman empires surrendered to a Jew and the children of Abraham by faith.

Well, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Jerusalem was ruled by people who called themselves “Christians.” In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem fell twice to the Persians, and then in 745 A.D. to Moslems, and then various Moslem nations at war with each other.

Three hundred and fifty years later in 1095, thousands of miles away, a man who called himself the “vicar of Christ” summoned the Christian nations of Europe to a crusade, promising a remission of sins for all who undertook the journey to capture the city of Jerusalem, to conquer the city of peace.

After three years and almost constant fighting, killing countless Christians on the way, on June 7, 1099, the first crusaders arrived at Jerusalem. On July 15, the crusaders breached the city wall. For three days in an orgy of blood lust, they killed virtually every inhabitant—not only Moslems but also Jews (who were burned alive in their synagogue) and undoubtedly Christians—Arabian Christians.

Some of the crusaders record their “glorious conquest.” William of Tyre writes, “No mercy was shown to anyone, and the whole place was flooded with the blood of the victims.” Raymond of Aguilers writes:

What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.

Fulcher of Chartre writes:

Nowhere was there a place where the Saracens could escape the swordsmen. On the top of Solomon’s Temple [which was really the Dome of the Rock Mosque], to which they had climbed in fleeing, many were shot to death with arrows and cast headlong from the roof. Within this Temple about ten thousand were beheaded. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with the blood of the slain. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women and children . . . . Our squires and poorer people split the bellies of those dead Saracens, so that they might pick out besants [gold coins] from their intestines, which they had swallowed down their horrible gullets while alive. After several days, they made a great heap of their bodies and burned them to ashes, and in these ashes they found the gold more easily.

Crusader is Latin meaning “one who bears the cross.”

Just after 9-11, President Bush declared, “This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while . . . . We will rid the world of evildoers.”

The Moslem Saladin retook the city on October 2, 1187, the precise anniversary of Mohamed's night journey, when he was said to have ascended to Heaven from the Rock on the temple mount. But when Saladin conquered the crusaders, he was relatively merciful, allowing crusaders to ransom their freedom and even providing safe escort for many back to the sea.

From 1244 to 1917, 673 years, Jerusalem was ruled by various Islamic empires at war with each other. Yet during that time, Jerusalem contained Moslems, Christians, and some Jews. Often the Christians and Jews were persecuted; sometimes they all lived in peace.

On December 9, 1917, the British captured Jerusalem from the Turks. It was the end of World War I. December 9 was also the first day of Hanukkah that year.

And now, of course, I'm walking into an incredibly controversial bit of history involving the creation of the state of Israel. Many would hate the term invasion, but no matter how you slice it, there was a tremendous influx of western Jews from over the sea into Palestine after 1917. In 1917, there were approximately 54,000 Jews settled in Palestine. Today there are 4,847,000.

In 1922 after immigration began, according to

*The Jewish Virtual Library,*

([www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourchistory/demographics.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourchistory/demographics.html)). Muslims were 78% of the population in Palestine. Christians were about 10%, and Jews were about 11%.

In 1996 in that same region including the West Bank and Gaza, Jews (as a race) made up 55.8% of the population. In Israel, excluding the occupied territories, Jews were 80.9% of the population. That means an incredibly large number of Palestinians have been displaced either financially with American and European money or militarily with American and European guns.

Well, in the 1920's, Arabs learned of British plans to possibly create a Jewish homeland. When they protested and the British began to limit immigration in response, some Jews formed paramilitary groups like the Haganah and Irgun. Between 1937 and 1939, they planted terrorist bombs throughout Jerusalem and surrounding cities. One hundred fifty British soldiers died, 500 Jews died, and three thousand Arabs died (Cline, p. 256).

After World War II, Jewish terrorist groups assassinated the British Minister of Middle Eastern Affairs and blew up a wing of the King David Hotel and set off 500 bombs throughout Palestine (Cline, p. 257-259). That history surprised me since Israel claims such moral outrage over the suicide bombings of Palestinians today.

Well, in 1948, the United Nations partitioned Palestine, creating Jewish and Arab states and making Jerusalem a protectorate of the United Nations for all nations. The United States was first to recognize the new state of Israel. But the surrounding Arab countries did not, immediately declaring war. Yet Israel prevailed and captured more land than was originally partitioned.

In 1967, the Arab countries threatened again, but Israel wiped out the Egyptian air force in a preemptive attack. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq declared war, but in six days it was over and Israel controlled the West Bank, Gaza, and all Jerusalem, which it declared to be "the eternal, indivisible capital" of the Jewish state (Sennott, p. 66).

At present, the number of dispersed Palestinians (living in exile), both Muslim and Christian, is estimated at 4 million (Cline, p. 298). The state of Israel captured Arab Jerusalem 868 years (to the day) after the crusaders first appeared at the city walls. It's no wonder that Arab leaders and Osama Bin Laden refer to Americans and Zionists as crusaders . . . crusaders who take their land with money and with guns, seduce their people with pornography and licentiousness, and control their leaders with money for oil.

Since 1987 until at least 2002 (the latest statistic I found), the U. S. has been giving \$3 billion of direct foreign aid to the state of Israel each year: \$1.2 billion in economic aid and \$1.8 billion in military aid. That doesn't include billions in federal loan guarantees and other types of aid. All in all, it's the largest amount of aid given from one country to another and 30% of our total foreign aid budget ([www.MIFTAH.org](http://www.MIFTAH.org) and various other websites).

We pledged \$350 million to help Tsunami victims. That's 1/10 to 1/20 of what we normally give Israel in a year, even though they're consistently named as human rights violators and per capita are one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

People say it's a miracle that the state of Israel exists. I think probably it is. It's a sign, but a sign of what? Arabs might say, "\$90 billion in U. S. aid since 1949 kind of takes Israel out of that divine miracle category . . . and plants it firmly in the works of human hands category. That is, an F-16 blowing up camels is not a miracle."

And now, please understand I am absolutely not anti-Semitic. My Lord is Jewish by race. I am Jewish by faith. I'm not anti-Semitic, and I'm not anti-Arab, because my Lord has "broken down the dividing wall of hostility, making one man not two." I'm not anti-Arab, but Arab Moslems struggle to believe my word—my word, which is the Word "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." They think crusader means crucifier when it means crucified. They think the Word Jesus only enters the city in F-16s.

On September 11, 2001, we asked, "Why do they hate us?" Well, for one, they claim we've been laying siege to their city Jerusalem to the tune of \$3 to \$5 billion a year for decades. And I do have to ask myself, "Why would we so uncritically support such an effectively racist and apartheid endeavor? Well . . ."

- I hope our motives are Christian love somehow.
- I imagine much has to do with profound guilt over the absolute atrocities committed against the Jews in the Holocaust (yet we should make reparations with our own land, not another's).
- I also imagine our involvement has to do with strategic interests. That is, we're using them (in many ways).
- And I imagine it's because deep in the American psyche we want to capture Jerusalem, the city of peace, the kingdom of God. And Americans usually get what they want with money.

You've even heard Christians say it: "If we bless Israel, we'll be blessed." So we use them to get a blessing. Is that love? Maybe we should ask,

- Who is Israel?
- And who is a Jew really?
- And who are the children of Abraham?
- And what is Jerusalem?
- And what is "the land"?
- What is "Israel"?

Thousands of orthodox Jews say it's definitely not the secular state of Israel, because the prophets foretold that the Messiah would rebuild Israel.

Well, whatever the case, how do we bless people?  
With tanks and guns?  
Or with words (perhaps One Word)?  
And how does that Word enter?

Well, to sum up the introduction to my sermon, I want to show you a chart. It's a list of all the times Jerusalem has been conquered.





Jerusalem, the city of peace, has been totally destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, attacked an additional 52 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, seen 20 revolts and innumerable riots, and has witnessed at least five separate periods of violent terrorist attacks in the last century.

Perhaps Jerusalem is a sign—a sign of what happens when we try to take the city of God—the city of peace—with human energy; when we try to capture the blessing with our own strength.

Well, this is a list of all the conquerors who entered Jerusalem . . . except one. Yet He not only conquered Jerusalem; He entered Jerusalem and conquered all things. “And of the increase of His government there is no end.” Yet He’s not on the list. For this is how He entered and conquered:

[A clip from the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* is shown. Jesus is carrying His cross through the crowd to Golgatha. He has flashbacks of the crowd on Palm Sunday, 5 days earlier, as He enters Jerusalem.]

Matthew 21:1-7:

*And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth-phage [house of unripe figs], to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and he will send them immediately.” This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.”*

*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon.*

He began a journey with His Father, like Isaac with Abraham to Mount Moriah. Perhaps that’s why there were two donkeys.

Luke records that as Jesus approached the city he was weeping and saying, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.” He then prophesies the destruction of the city Jerusalem and not one stone left standing on another. As Jesus is riding and weeping:

Matthew 21:8-11:

*Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred [shaken; “seismos” in Greek] saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

Do you see that at that point, not because of divine power but simply with human power and strength, Jesus could have taken the city, mobilized the crowd, and cast out the Romans, delivering the Jews from unspeakable suffering? But He didn’t. And it hurt Him.

- It hurt Him because He wept for His kinsmen and city.

- And it hurt Him because seeing that He would not seize power and conquer Jerusalem and establish a Jewish geopolitical state like the modern state of Israel, the crowd turned against Him and delivered Him to the Romans to be crucified.

Can you see the incredible obedience in faith,  
of our Lord Jesus?

He sacrificed Jerusalem and all the religious work of His people for the last thousand years.

He sacrificed all that and indeed His own life, not seizing control in His own strength but surrendering control in the obedience of faith.

He laid it all down in faith as He hung from that cross.

He received it all back in glory, for God raised Him and all things with Him.

In Revelation 21, John sees a new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband. Jerusalem's husband is Jesus.

Matthew 21:12-17:

*And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers." And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise'?" And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.*

He casts out the merchants and traders who try to buy the blessing with money and sacrifices of human energy, and He receives the blind and lame (whom David despised). He receives the blind, the lame, and the children who must receive the blessing by grace. They are His temple.

Matthew 21:18-22:

*In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.*

Commentators say the tree was a sign and symbol of Israel or Jerusalem and the temple—a symbol of the unfruitful works of human energy. (The Bible calls it the flesh.)

*When the disciples saw it they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."*

What was "this mountain"? It must have been Mount Zion, Jeru-salem.  
What was "the sea"? The realm of the nations, the Gentiles... even us.

So Jesus entered Jerusalem and conquered all things.

- He's the seed of the woman—last Adam—who crushes the head of the serpent monster.
- He's the seed of Abraham that blesses all nations.
- He's the king of Salem, Prince of Peace, who blesses with bread and wine from His threshing floor, the winepress of the wrath of God.
- He's the lamb sacrificed in Isaac's place.
- He's the descendent of David who bears the plague for Jerusalem.
- He's the Son of David who builds the temple.
- He's the first and last crusader who bears His cross all the way to Hell for His beloved Jerusalem.

And what is the true Jerusalem?  
She's the creation of God.

So you have to sacrifice the city you're building  
to receive the city God is building.

If you don't surrender the city,  
you'll destroy the city  
and crucify your king.

Likewise, you have to sacrifice your bride, your children, your city, your church to God in order to receive them back in completeness and peace—shalom. For they are something you cannot build or create but must serve in the obedience of faith. If you don't surrender them but try to control, create, or capture them, you'll go to war with them and destroy them, and in the process crucify your king.

You are not responsible for creating or saving them,  
But you're called to be obedient to the One who does.  
You are not responsible for creating and saving your self,  
But you're called to be obedient to the one who does.

So at some point you must lay down your self, your bride, your church, your city, your control at the foot of the cross where God makes all things new in Christ Jesus. For “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stay awake in vain” (Psalm 127:1,2)

So what is the city? Jerusalem? Scriptures tells us:

The city is a bride;  
 The bride is people;  
 The people are God’s temple;  
 The temple is the new creation—the kingdom of Heaven.

It’s everything old made new, including you.  
 Jerusalem old and new is you.

How does Christ enter you?

How does the eternal seed enter His temporal bride and impregnate her with eternal life?  
 How does “the Word” enter and conquer?

Well, on the night He was betrayed He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Take and eat.” And in the same manner after supper, He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.” Take and eat; take and drink.

[The Worship band plays “Love and Peace or Else,” by U2. As they play and Peter prepares the bread and wine, a slide show advances on the screens of numerous pictures of Jerusalem and violence. It ends with a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross.]

“Love And Peace Or Else”  
 written by U2

Lay down  
 Lay down  
 Lay your sweet lovely on the ground  
 Lay your love on the track

We’re gonna break the monster’s back  
 Lay down your treasure  
 Lay it down now brother  
 You don’t have time  
 For a jealous lover  
 As you enter this life  
 I pray you depart  
 With a wrinkled face  
 And a brand new heart

I don’t know if I can take it  
 I’m not easy on my knees  
 Here’s my heart let you break it

I need some release, release, release

We need  
Love and peace  
Love and peace

Lay down  
Lay down your guns  
All your daughters of Zion  
All your Abraham sons

I don't know if I can make it  
I'm not easy on my knees  
Here's my heart let you break it  
I need some release, release, release

We need  
Love and peace  
Love and peace

Baby don't fight  
We can talk this thing through  
It's just me and you  
You can call or I'll phone  
The TV is still on  
But the sound is turned down  
And the troops on the ground  
Are about to dig in

And I wonder where is the love?  
Where is the love?  
Where is the love?  
Love and Peace

\*\*\*\*\*

So, Lord Jesus, we surrender the city to you. Send your Spirit into our hearts to blow the gates of the city wide open so that you, the King of glory, might come in. .

\*\*\*\*\*

In Matthew 26:64, Jesus stands on Zion's hill. He's covered in blood, He's been beaten by the High Priest's soldiers, and He says this to the High Priest, "You have said so, but I tell you: Hereafter [from this point forward] you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

In Revelation 19, John sees the heavens open and a rider on a white horse with a brilliant sword. His name is the Word of God. It is a picture of what was happening even in John's day as the Word was conquering the Roman Empire—a picture of what truly happens in the heavenly realm when you share your faith.

But how is that Word to enter? How is that Word to conquer? How does that Word enter a city like Baghdad? How does that word enter a city like Cairo or Jerusalem? Well, the prophet Isaiah tells us when you speak that word, "comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended and her iniquity is pardoned" (Isaiah 40:2).

How does the Word enter? (I don't mean the U. S. military—you can argue day and night about the role of government.) I mean you. How does the Word enter? What does the Word ride on? Humble jackasses like you. Asses in this world of space and time, but white warhorses in reality.

You say, "Sure, but if I entered Baghdad like that, I'd get killed!" Yes. And then you'd see Him riding on the clouds of Heaven, in fact, He was riding on you, conquering for His eternal kingdom. And maybe you'd be like a seed planted in broken, fertile soil, the soil of a city whose gates were suddenly blown wide open as they said, "That's who He is?" You see, that's the Christian version of a suicide bomber.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel and live the Gospel. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

Genesis 22:1-4

And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. And David said on that day, "Whoever would smite the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built the city round about from the Millo inward... So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented of the evil, and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was smiting the people, and said, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house." And Gad came that day to David, and said to him, "Go up, rear an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." So David went up at Gad's word, as the LORD commanded. And when Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him; and Araunah went forth, and did obeisance to the king with his face to the ground. And Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor of you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be averted from the people."

2 Samuel 5:6-9, 24:15-21

"Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the LORD.

*Malachi 3:1-3*

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on an ass,  
on a colt the foal of an ass.  
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall command peace to the nations;  
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

*Zechariah 9:9-10*

And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."

*Matthew 21:1-11*

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken... Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God... Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed... "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."

*Isaiah 25:6-8, 40:1-3, 53:4-5, 56:6-8*

And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to

them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers." And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise'?" And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside he went to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. When the disciples saw it they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."

*Matthew 21:12-22*

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

*Hebrews 12:18-24*

Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;  
break forth and shout, you who are not in travail;  
for the children of the desolate one are many more  
than the children of her that is married."

Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now.

*Galatians 4:25-29*

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords... Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."



*Revelation 19:11-16, 21:1-5*

And I was still awake, and then our Lord opened my spiritual eyes and showed me my soul in the middle of my heart. I saw my soul as large as if it were a kingdom; and from the properties that I saw in it, it seemed to me to be a glorious city. In the centre of that city sits our Lord Jesu, true God and true man, glorious, highest Lord; and I saw him dressed imposingly in glory. He sits in the soul, in the very centre, in peace and rest, and he rules and protects heaven and earth and all that is.

*Julian of Norwich*

Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

*Matthew 26:52-53*

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of the resources I used in preparing this sermon were:

- Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel, by Eric H. Cline.  
(Eric Cline is Associate Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology at George Washington University.)
- The Body and the Blood: The Middle East's Vanishing Christians and the Possibility for Peace, by Charles Sennott.  
(Charles Sennott was the Middle East Bureau Chief of the Boston Globe from 1997 to 2001.)
- Light Force: A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire, by Brother Andrew.  
(Brother Andrew wrote God's Smuggler and founded Open Doors, which ministers to the persecuted church around the globe.)
- The article on "Palestine" from the 1957 edition of The Encyclopedia Britannica.
- The Jewish Virtual Library, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)