

## **Introduction**

Several years ago, myfilms.com conducted a survey to find out which movie lines people use the most in everyday conversation. Those in the top ten include **"Life is like a box of chocolates"** (*Forrest Gump*), **"Beam me up, Scotty"** (*Star Trek*), and **"May the force be with you"** (*Star Wars*). Can you guess what line is number 1? It's **"I'll be back,"** spoken by Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator* movie.

I don't mean to be sacrilegious, but those are the very words we need to focus on today, Palm Sunday, and every day of our lives, **"I'll be back."** I'm not referencing the terminator and his coming back of course, but Jesus and His. And that's what I'm going to preach about today, the **"coming back"** or **"Triumphal Reentry"** of Jesus.

## **The Triumphal Entry**

The event recorded in our text, Matthew 21:1-9, kicks off the last week of Jesus' life.

According to verses 1-3, He instructed His disciples to procure a particular donkey for Him, a colt that had never been ridden. That explains why He had them procure its mother as well. The mother would be a comfort to her colt and keep it calm as Jesus rode it.

Jesus instructed that, according to verses 4-5, in order to fulfill the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, given 500 years earlier. Zechariah predicted that Messiah would come as King to Jerusalem in order to achieve salvation, and that He would do so humbly, mounted on a colt. Normal Jewish people knew that prophecy, which explains why Jesus instructed what He did. He had tried to hide His identity as Messiah during His three years of earthly ministry, but now, it was time to reveal it. There was no better way to do so than acting out Zechariah 9:9.

So that's what He did in verses 6-7. The crowd in turn, in verses 8-9, spread olive and palm branches on the road before Him. They also cried out **"Hosanna,"** which means **"save us."** It's clear from their

actions and words that they recognized what Jesus was claiming. He was Messiah who was coming to save them. But when they realized it wasn't save them from the Romans, the same people who cried out "**Hosanna**" at the beginning of the week, cried out "**Crucify Him**" at the end of it.

### **The Triumphal Reentry**

But that isn't how His Triumphal Reentry will turn out. In Acts 1:9, Jesus, in His resurrection body, ascended from earth to space. In verses 10-11, two angels appeared to His disciples as He did and declared, "**This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven will come in *just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.***" Through His angels, in other words, Jesus was telling the disciples and us, "**I'll be back.**" We call this "**coming back**" of His the Second Coming or as I call it, the Triumphal Reentry, to earth.

That term "**the Triumphal Reentry**" debunks the horribly flawed theology of many scholars, preachers, teachers, and professing Christians today. A radio pastor, for instance, said Jesus coming back is fulfilled in the ministry of the church. The church is doing the work on earth He would do if He were here. That is the coming back to which the angels were referring. Then there's the renowned scholar C.H. Dodd who believed and taught this. When Jesus said He was coming back, He was talking about a purely spiritual return. He was saying that He would be in and among us – nurturing, empowering, and directing us.

Both men were flat out wrong. The coming back of Jesus isn't a figurative or spiritual return. It's a literal reentry instead. He'll descend from space in His resurrection body and, according to Zechariah 14:4, "**land,**" as we say it, on the Mount of Olives adjacent to Jerusalem. We've all seen videos of the space shuttle descend from space and land on earth. The coming back of Jesus will be as literal and physical, but far more observable, than that. It will be in fact, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the noisiest and most dramatic event in human history. It will make all other events look like child's play in comparison.

## The Nature of the Triumphal Reentry

Now, John describes this reentry or return of Jesus apocalyptically in Revelation 19:11-16. Let's examine the details he reveals about it.

**Verse 11:** Jesus sits on a white horse. That is an apocalyptic term that represents divine victory. He is Faithful and True, which means utterly reliable. He will most certainly, as a result, justly wage war against and judge all evil and evildoers.

**Verse 12:** His eyes are a flame of fire, which symbolizes vigor of action. He has many diadems on His head, that is, His dominion is all-encompassing. He also has a name that no one knows but Himself. His nature is infinite and perfect, in other words, so that no created being can even come close to slightly understanding Him.

**Verse 13:** He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, which likely refers to His death on the cross. He is designated "**the Word of God,**" a name that suggests the dominant or superior of all realities.

**Verse 14:** The armies of heaven follow Him on white horses. Those armies are all His followers of all generations. They will, in their resurrection bodies, accompany Him when He comes back.

**Verse 15:** He Himself, in the wrath of God Almighty, will "**strike down**" and "**rule**" all evildoers.

**Verse 16:** He does all He does in verses 11-15 as "**King of Kings, and LORD of LORDS,**" that is, as the supreme Ruler and Lord of all.

Those are the details of our text and their implication is profound. In history, the ethic of love governs. You and I partner with God in overcoming evil with good, that is, with kindness and grace (Romans 12:9,21). But when Jesus comes back, history ends and so does the ethic of love, with the ethic of judgment governing in its place. Father God, through Jesus and us, overcomes evil not with kindness and grace but with vengeance and wrath instead. That explains why Isaiah 2:10 says what it does. When Jesus and we come back, those who rejected Him will "**enter the rocks and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord.**"

I say that to say this. The Triumphal Entry stands in sharp contrast

to the Triumphal Reentry. Jesus entered Jerusalem humbly to save evildoers. He will reenter earth victoriously to judge and punish them.

### **The Time of the Triumphal Reentry**

But when will He? That's what people want to know don't they? Just two weeks ago, someone asked me, "**Are we in the last days?**" That is probably the one question I've been asked most over the years. Are we in the last days or end times?

Many preachers, teachers, and Christians think we are. In 1980, Hal Lindsay wrote that Jesus was coming back before the end of that decade. Then there's Harold Camping who promised He was coming back on May 21, 2011. Most recently, John Hagee asserts that we are the "**terminal generation.**" But it isn't just preachers and teachers. I've had more Christians than I can remember tell me we're in the end times.

That reminds me of a joke I heard. An angel asked Jesus when He was going to go back to earth. "**I don't know,**" He replied, "**You'll have to ask one of those American preachers.**"

But as well intentioned as all of those preachers, teachers, and Christians may be, the truth is, at this point, no one knows or can know.

Almost every Christian who says Jesus is coming back soon cites how bad things are in the world as the reason. I'm no scholar but I am a student of history and know this. Things in the world today aren't any worse than they were in the past. They're better, in fact, in many ways.

Almost every preacher and teacher who says Jesus is coming back soon cites current events as the reason. John Hagee, for instance, cites 10 signs, including the nationhood of Israel. But they don't take into account that history is phasic and subject to change. Israel's nationhood, for instance, might be lost and then regained in the future.

My point is that, now, no one knows or can know, even roughly, when Jesus is coming back. He Himself makes that clear, I believe, in Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:7. I like Tony Campolo's approach, which I've shared before. When people ask him if Jesus is coming back soon, he

always answers: **“I don’t know. I’m on the welcoming committee not the program committee.”** Date or even generation setting, as Lindsay and Camping know, isn’t something we should do. We should focus on what do know, Jesus will come back, and leave the date setting to God.

### **The Challenge of the Triumphal Reentry**

So, let’s focus on what we do know by way of a question, **“What would I do if I knew Jesus is coming back tomorrow?”** That question implies what the challenge of the Triumphal Reentry is. Live in light of it. Live our everyday lives as if He is coming back tomorrow. We meet that challenge by doing three things.

First, we become followers of Jesus. Alluding to Revelation 19:14-15, as I explained it, His coming back will one of two things to every human being who has lived and will live. If we follow Jesus, it will be an event of unimaginable glory. If we reject following Him, it will be an event of unimaginable terror. So, let’s follow Him. Make and carry out the decision to be with Him in order to be like Him and to do all He says.

We do a second thing to meet the challenge of the Triumphal Reentry. We witness. Let’s consider two people in our spheres of influence who reject following Jesus. Let’s picture their faces in our minds. As we’ve learned, knowledge confers on its possessor the responsibility to share what is known. Well, we know something about those two people that they likely don’t know – what their ultimate fate is. It’s unimaginable terror. So, we speak to them individually about following Jesus and avoiding that. We’re responsible if we do.

We meet the challenge of the Triumphal Reentry by doing a third thing and I’m not using bad English. We do good. That means we act to benefit people. We give our money, goods, and services to meet their needs or add value to their lives. At His Triumphal Reentry, Jesus will usher in His eternal kingdom of perfect love, peace, and joy. By doing good, we bring something of that kingdom into our present world.

Now, listen to Paul’s charge in that regard, in Galatians 6:9, **“Let us**

**not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”** That is one of God’s most powerful promises.

I’d explain it in terms of an analogy – the French underground during World War II. The courageous men and women who comprised it grasped how limited they were as they fought their Nazi conquerors – that they alone would never defeat them. But they had hope because they knew that a huge invasion force was being gathered across the English Channel, and that one day that force would sweep on to the shores of France and carry their ragtag army to victory. They knew that everything they had worked and suffered to achieve would then be brought to fruition.

You and I are the underground army of God in Satan’s domain – the material world. We grasp how limited we are and that our ministry and work won’t make him or evil disappear. But we have hope because we know that a huge heavenly invasion is being planned, and that one day Jesus will sweep into the world and carry us to victory. He will take the good we did and explode it into the fulfillment of His will. He will bring to realization what we’ve been working so hard to achieve. That means that the good we do, no matter how small it may seem, is never lost. Let’s understand and believe that. We’ll not grow weary in doing good if we do.

That then is how we live in light of the Triumphal Reentry. Follow Jesus, witness, and do good to people.

## **Conclusion**

I close with an observation. The Triumphal Reentry completes the Triumphal Entry. The Triumphal Entry (the death and resurrection of Jesus) won the victory over the powers of evil. The Triumphal Reentry executes that victory. It utterly destroys all evil and fully establishes perfect love, peace, and joy in its place. Do you realize what that means? The most affecting words ever spoken in all of human history are and forever will be, **“I’ll be back.”**