

Introduction: We continue in our Bible notes to reflect on Christ's entry and ascent into the holy city Jerusalem. How we should admire Jesus as He so resolutely goes forward to meet His accusers to endure mocking, scorning and death for our sakes. Let us cheer Him throughout these Bible notes with the words of hymn # 237 from our Trinity Hymnal:

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die!
O Christ! Thy triumph now begin
Over captive death and conquered sin.*

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
The wingèd squadrons of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes
To see the approaching sacrifice.*

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
The Father, on His sapphire throne,
Expects His own anointed Son.*

*Ride on, ride on, in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, Thy power, and reign.*

Monday: Luke 9:51, 12:49-50 and Luke 18:31-34. Throughout most of Luke's Gospel, since Luke 9:51, our Savior has "set His face" to go up to Jerusalem in order to offer Himself up to God the Father as the Lamb of the Passover. Though no one else understands what He is doing, He sets His face determined to face this climax of His suffering work. Even the disciples in Luke 18:34 – so close to the beginning of the events of the Passion Week! – do not understand despite Jesus' efforts to teach them. My, how deep the valley of dark, dull understanding through which even believers can labor! Truly Jesus was right when He said, "The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Luke 16:8). In just this way, behold the disciples when dealing with the Light of the World, whose presence could fill a room with light - they just could not understand! The good which they wanted to do, in terms of standing with Jesus as He went to the Cross, they could not do because of the blinding effect of evil which lived right alongside their newborn faith (Rom. 7:21).

Meditate and Pray: How appropriate in Holy Week to utter a prayer of confession which has to do with how dull our spiritual sensitivities can be. Use this prayer from *Valley of Vision* to help you express this: Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine; let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.

Tues/Weds: Exodus 23:14-18, Psalm 121 and Luke 19:28. All through the Old Testament, the calendar focused on "going up" to worship at Jerusalem, as Luke 19:28 says. In fact, one view of this phrase, "to go up to Jerusalem," focuses on the Psalms of Ascent (#'s 120-134 in the Psalter) which many think were written for pilgrims to sing on their pilgrimage to God's House, where they were required to assemble three times a year for the pilgrim feasts in Exodus 23:14-18. For example, Psalm 121:1 introduces us to one such Song of Ascent in which the pilgrim "looked to the hills" (i.e., the hills of Mt. Zion) from whence help came from the Lord enthroned in His temple. In this way, the pilgrim crowds which welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday looked to their time in the Holy City as a time of joyful sacrificial worship in which they were to experience new forgiveness and Divine favor through the sacrifices they offered. For them, "going up to Jerusalem" was a

joy! But what a difference for Jesus! Feasting with God's people would have to wait as He alone understood the cost of the sacrifice which He would offer in the Holy City! How lonely was His ride into Zion on a donkey!

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus for His willingness to be a perfectly obedient pilgrim who went up to Jerusalem (Luke 19:28) in obedience to God's Law – even though He would have to offer Himself on the Altar in the very city over which He wept on Palm Sunday.

Thursday/Friday: Luke 19:28; 19:45-48 & Heb. 1:1-3. “Going up” to Jerusalem was not the only ascent celebrated by God's people at their religious festivals. In Luke 19:28, for example, Jesus is not simply “going up” to Jerusalem as one among many pilgrims to the Holy City. He is “going up” as the real High Priest to the place of His sacrifice – laying claim to God's temple as His rightful place of service. No wonder, therefore, that Christ exercises such authority in cleansing the temple in Luke 19:45-48. He alone has both the authority and the sacrificial purity to offer true sacrifices in place of the robbery and false worship offered by the greedy priests of His day. Therefore, the emphasis as Christ draws near the temple is on the power of His Priesthood, in contrast with the corruption of sinful, earthly priests – especially Christ's power to make atonement for sin.

Think about the power of His atoning work for a moment: Every year, at the Day of Atonement, all Israel would observe the High Priest as he ascended the steps up to the Temple and into the Holy Place with sacrificial blood in hand. In fact, tradition has it that there were approximately 15 particular steps on which Levite choirs would stand and sing as the High Priest “ascended” up to the Holy of Holies, passing by each Levite choir in turn. This picture finds its real fulfillment in Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who 40 days after His resurrection, ascended to God's right hand, there to offer up His blood in our place – not in a temple made with hands, but in the true, Heavenly temple where God actually dwells! Having provided this Heavenly purification for sins, “He sat down,” His work complete! (See Hebrews 1:1-3.)

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank God that His Son's “ascent” was not merely up to the earthly Jerusalem, but to Heaven itself. Sing about His “once-for-all” completed, Priestly work with the help of hymn # 242:

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.*

*But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While, like a penitent, I stand,
And there confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.*

*Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.*