

# Will the Real Easter Bunny Stand Up?

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Date: 28 March 1999

Preacher: Gavin Ward

[ 0 : 00 ] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 28th of March 1999. The preacher is Gavin Ward and his subject is Will the real Easter Bunny stand up?

And is from Luke chapter 19 verses 28 to 40. Okay, I'd like you all to stand up please.

Could you all stand up? Now, I'd like you to think carefully about this. I'd like you to sit down if you realised you made a mistake about something this afternoon.

Sit down if you think you made a mistake this afternoon. Some people sitting down. Some looking sideways saying maybe I should sit down. What about today? Sometime today you made a mistake.

Sometime today. Made a mistake sometime in the last week. How about sometime in the last week you've made a mistake? During March?

[ 1 : 19 ] Say during the month? Would anyone like... Would anyone like to help Phil out?

Do you think he's made a mistake somewhere on the line? You can sit down Phil. You're not going to. We all make mistakes, don't we?

We all get things wrong from time to time. And getting something wrong is to think one thing is right and then realise that something else is actually right. It's a bit like meeting someone, say, for the first time and you think, oh gee, they're a bit of a dork, a bit of a dag.

Gee, I don't know whether I'd really like to make friends with them. You don't think much of them but then you start to realise that the person is actually better than you thought and they're a really nice person.

And then you make good friends with the person and the person who at one stage you didn't want to have anything to do with is now a very close friend of yours. They really matter.

[ 2 : 24 ] They went from not mattering to someone who really matters. Have you had that experience? Have you met people like that that you've changed your mind about and realised they're someone special? People do the same thing about Jesus.

They think one thing and then realise another about him. They think he doesn't matter and then they come round to the conclusion that he does matter.

The passage Cheryl read out very well for us today is on page 844, 854 of the Bibles and it actually talks about this in a little more detail.

In that passage that Cheryl read out we see a basic scene, a group of people travelling to Jerusalem, a bit like a pilgrimage to a city of destination and Jesus is walking along with them and he goes and asks his friends to get him a colt and he gets on the colt and he begins to ride along and people throw their clothes on the ground and then there's a lot of noise and people singing praises to God.

Well what on earth is going on here? What's happening? I saw in the news a week or so ago and I wonder whether you might have seen it too where a girl had had a mock wedding towards one of the guys from Human Nature, the band Human Nature.

[ 3 : 45 ] Did anyone see that on the television? And they'd had a mock wedding and she'd done that with her family at home and the guys from Human Nature actually heard about that and decided they were going to go along to her school.

They wanted to meet this girl who would do such a bizarre sort of thing. So they set out to go to this school and the cameras were there waiting for them as they arrived. Can you imagine the excitement that was building up as the students met on the oval and as they were waiting for this band to arrive?

There was a real buzz, a real buzz of excitement taking place. The car pulls up, the expectation that's being raised out of that. The door opens and one by one, each of the four guys get out of the

car and then they walk around the path towards the oval where all the students are waiting. What a buzz, what absolute excitement meeting someone that famous, that popular, that close up. Here they are in the flesh.

I can hardly believe it. It's that exciting. The heart goes faster and faster. That's the sort of excitement that was on that great day when Jesus drove into Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 57 ] See this guy Jesus had been travelling around the countryside for about three years teaching people and doing some pretty miraculous sort of things. He's drawn quite a band of followers and he's built up quite a reputation.

And now he's riding on a colt. Well what's the story with the colt? The colt is a young donkey. And those people at that time who knew their Bible would have known that there was a guy in the Old Testament in the first part of the Bible called Zechariah and he had actually told about a king who would ride on a colt into Jerusalem and this king would bring peace and would save his people. Okay, but save them from what or from who? Well in those days the people in Jesus' day would have said well probably save us from the Romans. We saw an exhibition of what the Romans were like.

The Romans had actually taken over the country of Israel and they'd actually, yeah, they were running things, they were tampering with everything that was going on. They were calling all the shots. People couldn't do anything without the Romans sort of agreeing to it.

And we're very lucky here in Australia. We don't have that sort of imposition from outside our country. But other countries around the world do having a foreign country rule them and the battle that's going on at the moment in Kosovo is a very good example of that.

[ 6 : 17 ] Well these people were waiting for a king that was going to jettison the Romans, get rid of the Romans, kick them out. So Jesus, on a colt, put two and two together, maybe he's the man.

So what do they do? Well they lay clothes on the ground. That's a typical Jewish way of honouring a king. It's a bit like giving him the red carpet treatment. If you remember at the Academy Awards, you would have seen them on television last week.

The stars all rock up in their limousines and they get out of the cars, step onto the red carpet and head off in to get their Academy Awards. That's Hollywood's way of honouring stars.

Well these people would have been doing the same thing for Jesus, giving him the red carpet treatment as they lay their clothes on the ground. For the colt to ride over. Not only that, they sing his praises. They're saying to him, you are the man, you are the man.

They're saying to him, you've done some great stuff, keep it going. And the song that they were singing is from the Bible and it's a song that's sung on great occasions of celebration. I guess it's a bit like Essendon supporters later this year, they'll be singing a great song of celebration too, won't they?

[ 7 : 24 ] Can you picture the scene though? A great, great time of celebration, great colour, clothes on the ground, lots of noise, people shouting and screaming and yelling and singing praises to God for everything, bobbing heads, trying to get a look at him.

He's here, I can't believe it. This is him in the flesh, the king who's come along to seriously kick some Roman butt. Magnificent, let's go, let's go.

And they're singing, you're the man, go, go, go. That's what's happening on Palm Sunday. That's the sort of celebration that's going on. Well, what happened then?

Were they right? Was he the man? Well, just on a week later, Jesus was arrested, he was tried, and he was executed.

Some king, eh? Couldn't even last a week. Not only that, some of the crowd who were cheering him on on Palm Sunday were now yelling and calling out for his execution to take place.

[ 8 : 26 ] Sounds like a tragedy, doesn't it? The heroes of failure, a pretender. So did those who were cheering him on get it wrong about him? Did they make a big mistake about Jesus?

When I was young, back in the dim, dark ages, we used to have milk delivered each day in milk bottles. And my job was to take the empty milk bottles out at night and put them beside the letterbox, and a guy would come along in a horse and cart, and he would replace those empty milk bottles with full milk bottles.

And that would happen in the early hours of the morning. And my parents had told me that it was dangerous to carry empty milk bottles around and certainly not to run with empty milk bottles.

Well, one evening I was charging out full of excitement and running down the pathway with these milk bottles and I tripped and fell and smashed the milk bottles on the ground and the glass cut deeply into my arm and into my wrist.

In fact, I nearly lost the use of my right hand and I've got a scar here today that you can look at afterwards if you want to, but I've got a scar here today that actually demonstrates and reminds me all the time that I should have listened to what my parents were telling me.

[ 9 : 42 ] I thought I was right and they were wrong, but in fact they were right and I should have listened. I thought their words didn't matter, but they did matter. Well, the crowd on Palm Sunday saw Jesus as a king.

They mud up their own minds about what sort of king he was, but when he died they couldn't understand what was going on and they had to reassess their opinion about him.

Maybe some felt that he didn't matter now because he died on that Good Friday. Well, there's three options that these people may have thought about Jesus.

Maybe some thought of him as just a top bloke, just a top bloke. He'd done some great things, he'd said some great things, he'd come into Jerusalem as a king and then he died.

I mean, he'd said some good stuff like love your neighbour and turn the other cheek and stuff like that. Sounds pretty good, but now that he's dead, well, I can take it or leave it really. Maybe some of you think like that about Jesus as we sit here in 1999.

[ 10 : 49 ] Lived a long time ago. I think a lot of people in Australia and in Melbourne today think like that about Jesus. He doesn't really matter because he lived a long time ago, said some pretty good stuff, but, you know, I can take it or leave it really whether I want to understand what he said and take it on board.

Well, it's not quite that easy about Jesus because as we saw in the play here, Jesus wasn't just a top bloke, but he was a troublemaker and he got himself into trouble and got himself killed.

Why did he get himself into trouble? Because as we saw in the play, he said he was God. He was a top bloke, but he said he was God. And that's a pretty huge call to call yourself God.

He said things like, I am, which was a special name that was used for God. He forgave people for the things that they had done which were wrong against God. And he said, I am the Father, I am the Father, I am the Father.

He called himself God. God, that's pretty big for someone who just is supposed to be just a good bloke. Maybe there's something else about him. Maybe we need to dig a little deeper and scratch around a bit and find out what we can about this God, Jesus.

[ 12 : 00 ] Well, a second alternative that these people might have thought is that perhaps he was a nutcase who said and thought some pretty crazy things and did some pretty crazy things, but got it all wrong in the end and that's why they executed him because he was a nutcase.

I mean, anyone who calls himself God must be a few kangaroos short of the paddock, mustn't he? A few bricks short of a load. He just hasn't quite got it, has he, if he calls himself God. Maybe some people thought he was a con man as well, that they'd been conned.

Maybe some of you think like this, that Jesus was a nutcase or a con man and he conned everyone and sucked them in to following him. Like some of those guys we hear about in America where they grab people together and create a commune and they take all their money off them and brainwash them and then, and just rip them off and leave them in that sort of state.

Well, if Jesus was a nutcase or a con man, how's the con lasted this long? I mean, he'd have to be the greatest con man of all time. We're sitting here 2,000 years later and the con's still going.

I mean, he's better than Christopher Scase, isn't he? He can only con the Spanish government.

Jesus' con has sucked in millions and millions of people over 2,000 years if he's a con man.

[ 13 : 19 ] That's a pretty awesome con. If he was a nutcase or a con man, why did most of his disciples, those who lived, those friends of his who lived day in, day out with him, why did they die in horrible circumstances?

Tortured and tortured and then killed because they persisted in saying he was God and they would not have it any other way. It doesn't add up.

It doesn't make sense if he was just a top bloke, if he was a nutcase or if he was a con man. There must be something else. I mean, we're about to enter the year 2000.

Jesus has stamped himself on history because we're recording 2,000 years since he was on earth. And as the play said, the facts are that Jesus, most historians today actually would accept that

Jesus lived and died at the same time the Bible said so.

So we need to accept that he is a fact of history. He did actually walk this planet. So we need to make a judgment about this person, Jesus. Maybe there's another option and I'll suggest another option.

[ 14 : 31 ] Could it possibly be that rather than being a person from history who doesn't matter, could it possibly be that Jesus is the man, that Jesus is the genuine article?

He's not like the \$15 Reeboks we get at the market. He's the \$150 genuine article. Could it possibly be he's exactly who he said he was, God here on earth, the greatest king?

Could it possibly be that we are making the biggest mistake of our lives if we don't accept him for who he really was? You see, three days after he died he came back to life again and as the play said there's bucket loads of evidence that indicate that he did in fact rise from the dead.

I mean, just one example is he appeared to 500 people at one time talking to them and as he talked to the people when he rose from the dead he explained to them what had actually taken place and gave them an understanding of what had actually happened.

You see, in some of the things he told them was that God had created a perfect world initially that he wanted a perfect relationship with every person including you and me but we've made a mess of it as a human race as individuals.

[ 15 : 54 ] We want to do our own things we want to be selfish we want to run our own lives we want to rebel against God we don't want to have anything to do with him but God has said he will punish all rebellion against him then he realised that no one was going to survive that everyone would be punished because we all rebel against God he gave us one way out though he gave the world one way out an escape hatch God did and that came through the life of Jesus who lived the perfect life and had the perfect relationship with God as God originally intended for us all and in doing this God allowed him to suffer the punishment we all should face for rebelling against him he was perfect and took the blame for us so we can now be free if we tell him we accept what he has done for us the people realised this they'd gone from making a mistake about who Jesus was when he rode in he wasn't a king come to beat the Romans they realised they changed their mind and they thought then he didn't matter when he died but when he rose again and explained these things to them they realised that he did matter he was the man the genuine article and that's why Luke's recorded this story for us that Cheryl read out so that we can celebrate as well that Jesus is the genuine article and I've come to realise this in my own life

Jesus is the reason that I live my life and I celebrate Palm Sunday every day because I celebrate that Jesus is the greatest king that he is the genuine article because he is the king who rode into Jerusalem 2000 years ago he is the king who rode on a cult to show that he was the king the Jews were waiting for he is the king who the disciples and the crowd gave the red carpet treatment to he is the king who they celebrated and praised and shouted out in loud voices to and verse 40 of that passage tells us that if they hadn't done it the very stones would have cried out and sung praises to God because this was one of the greatest occasions in the history of this world he is the king who had a bigger plan in mind than kicking Roman but he is the king who willingly died on a cross not executed and he suffered punishment and for our rebellion against God he is the king who didn't stay dead but defeated it and he is the king who will return again one day and everybody everybody in this room here tonight everybody who has lived will recognise him will acknowledge him and will say you are the man have you made a mistake about Jesus have you thought that he really doesn't matter that he is just maybe a top bloke or a nut case or a con man who can be ignored from history or are you starting to think that he is the genuine article who does matter and who cannot be ignored let this Easter be a time for you to correct your mistake there are many bunnies around at Easter will the real

Easter bunny please stand up the real Easter bunnies are those people who do not recognise Jesus for who he really is don't be a bunny this Easter don't be left standing don't let this Easter go past without seriously rethinking your position about this person Jesus don't make a mistake about him and maybe when you chop into a chocolate bunny next Sunday or Saturday if you can't wait next weekend when you chomp into one think about Jesus who is the greatest king of all the genuine article maybe tonight this is the first time that you've thought about something like this perhaps that you've heard these sorts of things before maybe you'd like to do something tonight about changing your attitude and the way you relate and think to about

Jesus maybe Jesus is the king that you've been waiting for I'd like to pray a prayer now and if you would like to make a change in your life tonight maybe you'd like to pray this prayer after me just quietly in your heart as I say each line of the prayer you might like just to pray quietly in your heart and then Warwick's going to come up and say a couple of other things let's pray dear God I haven't thought much about you in the past I know that I have been selfish and rebelled against you and ignored you I know that because of this I deserve your punishment I need your forgiveness thank you for sending your son

Jesus to be the man to take the punishment for my rebellion I want to trust him as the genuine article I want him to be the ruler of my life please forgive me and change my life please help me to love you and to serve you amen me love

[ 22 : 49 ] Share viendo I like Waar you can association because you can hear you can hear after you