

Sunday 22nd March 2026 - Journey To Jerusalem: Jesus Predicts His Own Death

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Date: 22 March 2026

Preacher: Dave Moss

[0:00] Good morning. We've been considering Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and all that entailed before he arrived.

! Laura has taken us through the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.! And last week Ian showed us how Jesus faced opposition and plotting against him from the ruling authorities.

And this week we look at an even bigger problem. Ourselves. Yes, ourselves.

So let's take me for example. I am such a fool. It comes quite a shock at my age to discover that I am such a fool.

I know that I'm gullible and I tend to believe what I'm told. And I don't tend to see people as taking advantage of me.

[1:06] I think people have my best interests at heart. And I don't tend to believe things could be any different to what I've been told.

But I am such a fool. Take this for example. I used to sneer at my grandparents' generation with their meat and two veg.

And homemade apple pie and custard. In the nearby town where I grew up, I remember a supermarket called Tesco opening up.

It was just amazing. The supermarket had so many things under one roof. And they gave green shield stamps.

To stick in a book so you could collect your rewards. Extra prizes for shopping in the supermarket. And then it was not long before my mother got excited because Marks and Spencers were stocking more than just clothes.

[2:22] They'd introduced St. Michael's food range. And it took another few years for us to be introduced to things like pizzas and lasagne.

In my lifetime, I've seen the rise and rise and rise of the supermarkets over the years. Each supermarket has successfully convinced me that they stock all the best things just for me.

And I now have just about every supermarket app on my phone. Shopping in these supermarkets gives me a much more exciting, convenient and cheap lifestyle.

And what's more, I can believe behind the boring meat and tooth edge and be more sophisticated. And I believe it.

And what's more, I know that most other people believe it too. But then, I am a fool. You won't be able to see a lot of the detail of that, but I'll read it out.

[3:37] So, approximately 75% of the stock in our supermarkets is made up of ultra-processed foods. It tastes good. I enjoy it.

It's convenient. That's one of the advantages of modern life. What's not to like? In the UK, we're the biggest consumers in Europe of ultra-processed foods.

It's just over 50%, if you can see the map, of what we buy and eat. For many households, their diet is a much higher percentage than that, more like 70% to 80%.

That's a pretty startling figure when compared with the Mediterranean countries. So, if you look at France, it's 14%. Italy, 13%.

And Greece, 13%. One country outside Europe is even higher than the UK. Can you guess which one?

[4:38] United States. Yeah. So, but I am a fool. And I tell myself, this is not really a problem. This is just the way things are.

It's all just fine. But medical research is now telling us something quite different. And that all this food is making us distinctly unwell.

There are books and TV programs and research after research which tells us that we are in a health crisis. We consume high levels of food which is simply not good for us.

And what we've been led to believe is fine is really not fine for us at all. It's doing us great harm and great harm with huge consequences.

But then I am a fool. And I may tell myself that this is not really a problem. It's just the way things are. It'll all be fine.

[5:44] But is it? Again, in my lifetime, we've seen the continued rise of this long list of illnesses.

These were rare or unknown before the Industrial Revolution. Over my lifetime, they've become more a part of the daily landscape. It's because we're getting old, we're told.

But it turns out aging is not the only factor in all of this. Cancer, for example, is rising fastest among children. Autism and ADHD are now common in every school classroom.

But they're not inevitable. Once we understand things from a different perspective, then it all begins to make a bit more sense. These all have causes to do with a number of things, which includes the way we eat, but it also includes our polluted environment, the water we drink, the cosmetics we use, the pills we take, and the way we live generally.

They are preventable. But Dave, Dave, stop stressing. You exaggerate. Everything is fine.

[7:09] The supermarkets are not out to get you and give you lots of diseases. The baby food, it's fine. The ready meals, they're just fine.

The breakfast cereals, they're fine. The bottle of tomato ketchup, it's just fine. That can of diet cola, it's just fine.

And I'm sure that bottle of wine, I'm sure it's just fine. Stop stressing. Live a little. Of course the supermarkets won't put profits before your health.

Will they? Or will they? Over the past five years, supermarkets continue to post huge profits.

Prices have risen by over a third. And all this while we're experiencing the biggest cost of living crisis for generations. Food is big business.

[8:11] And good business is getting you to buy what brings in the biggest profits. It can be produced, if it can be produced cheaply and tastes good, it's a winner.

And I'm sure that you can see they don't achieve this by selling you bags of carrots. But then, of course, it does come as quite a shock at my age to discover that I'm such a fool.

Of course, it's far more complicated than this. And not in the right way, I discover. And I wish the consumption of food was the only area where I'm such a fool.

But it is not. Unfortunately, it is not. Which takes us to today's reading. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, accompanied by his followers and disciples.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say the Son of Man is?

[9:20] They replied, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But what about you?

He asked. Who do you say I am? Simon Peter answered, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

[10:42] Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Never, Lord, he said. This shall never happen to you. Jesus turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan.

You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. Let's go. Let's go. Let's go.

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

[12:16] Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

For the disciples and all of Jesus' followers, these were pretty exciting times. For the Jewish people living under Roman occupation has been very hard indeed. The prophets had promised that God would send a Messiah to save his people.

And here he is in the person of Jesus. The disciples had been with Jesus for long enough to recognize that his miracles and teachings, that he truly was the Messiah.

At last, life was going to get better. The Messiah, the Messiah, the new leader was here, and they all stood to benefit from a better life.

[13:31] Jesus would change things, and they would have a role in making it happen. The Jewish religion had always taught that this would be great and marvelous, and here it was happening before their eyes.

Peter's statement, you are Christ, the Son of the living God, voiced what they all believed. And of course, they were right. Indeed, the Messiah had come. They would have it all. Green shield stamps and all the best rewards.

Matthew, in writing this gospel account, now contrasts this with the next incident, when Jesus states that he's on the way to Jerusalem to be handed over to die.

For Peter and everyone else, this is not what is supposed to happen. Their Messiah is a military victor. Someone with power and authority, a winner, and not a loser about to die.

[14:48] Now, Peter, on hearing this and representing how everyone else was thinking, takes Jesus to one side, and he has stern words. Now, look here.

This is nonsense talk. It is not really going to get that bad. You are the Messiah. You are only 33 years old. What is this talk of dying?

This is not what we have been led to believe all our lives. The things are only going to get better and better with you as our leader. What you are saying can't be true.

Jesus, stop stressing. You exaggerate. Everything is fine. The authorities are not out to get you and make you suffer. The people in Jerusalem will love you.

Most of the priests, they're fine. Everyone will understand that you're the Messiah and it'll be just fine. And I'm sure the Roman authorities too. They'll be all right. They'll be all right.

[15:47] Stop stressing. Live a little. Of course, no one will put their own interests before what you have to say and do. Will they?

No one will put their own interests before what you have to say and do. Will they? Will they? Will they? Will they? in the most dramatic turn of events, Jesus turns on Peter.

Peter has the desire that we all have, that we want to have everything in control, that life is about me and what I want.

This is the Peter he has just recently called a rock and whom he recognises as being the right person on which to establish his church.

And yet Jesus calls Peter Satan. Can you think of a worse condemnation? And this is to his friend and companion, Peter.

[16:56] Now please don't get too bogged down in the term Satan, but Satan or evil is essentially everything that God is not.

Everything that God is not. Jesus says Peter is a stumbling block who is only concerned about human things and not the things that God is concerned about.

In other words, look here Peter, the concept you and deed all people have, who the Messiah is, is utterly and completely wrong.

What Jewish society has told you and everyone else about the Messiah is completely wrong. Yes, I am the Messiah, but not at all in the way you expected.

It's utterly crushing for Peter and he feels like a fool. But he does not yet understand what this means and how it will play out.

[18:07] Later in the Garden of Gethsemane, he picks up a sword. He's ready to fight for his own ideals. Interestingly, Jesus now takes time to explain to his followers yet again, as this is not the first time, what it means to be his follower.

What good is it to forfeit your soul and yet gain the whole world? Jesus has not come to set up a new political system to replace an old one.

He's not come to set out a new set of rules or to promote people to powerful positions. No, to be a follower, you need to lose your own life or you'll have nothing.

In other words, whatever preconceived ideas you have about power, position, authority, and your own self-importance will have to go. They'll simply have to go.

You will need to be deconstructed and reconstructed anew. Jesus wants us to face the truth that what we want and expect needs to die.

[19:29] The journey continues to Jerusalem, but the disciples are truly perplexed as to what all this means. They thought they had it sorted and they knew where everything was headed.

But all has suddenly been turned upside down. Everything they believed and trusted in has been turned upside down. And it would have consequences as they would slowly all melt away and give up on Jesus as the events to come in Jerusalem unfolded.

Peter must go to Jerusalem too. He has to learn that God's ways are not his. Like Peter, we have to learn to abandon our ways, society's ways, to what we think of as being good.

Peter has a dream of being Jesus' right-hand man and refuses to hear Jesus speaking of a vocation to suffer and die. Despite all this, and most importantly, Jesus sees the good in Peter and knows that he has a lot to understand and work out before he discovers who God intends him to be.

It's on this person that Jesus will build his church. Jesus, on the other hand, is seeking to understand God's plan.

[21:04] He fully understands that he's up against the authorities, the principalities and powers who seek to control and dominate.

And he knows the consequences of his opposition to them. The closest thing we get to anything being difficult at Easter is rather like my social media feed.

Supermarket after supermarket have had important announcements to make. What could this be? How will it affect my life?

Will I have to rethink my life? Well, apparently, according to my social media feed, yes. They have announced that they're going to be closed on Easter Sunday.

How will I cope? What sacrifices will I have to make? And here we are.

[22:12] Just like Peter, we all like to be positive and say things that are upbeat and happy and cheerful. We run away from talking about things that are unpleasant and, of course, any talk of suffering.

When we encounter suffering, we tend to say the most stupid things, like, oh, God will work it out, or I'm sure you'll feel better soon. We avoid facing the suffering, which is understandable.

We like to have answers, and we like to think that we're in control. Many of us have been taught a version of following Jesus which is very different to having to lose our own lives.

It's more like, respond to an altar call, get converted, become a Christian, it'll be lovely. All your wrongs will be forgiven, and you'll be happy, happy, and have a place in heaven.

Running up to Easter, many people just love to get to the Easter Sunday bit. The Journey to Jerusalem events are all, well, they're just too gloomy.

[23:25] They're not cheerful. We know Jesus died. Let's just leave it at that, and let's concentrate on new life and resurrection. Losing your life, all that means is you have to give up a few things, like chocolate for Lent, for instance.

Nothing drastic. You can carry on pretty much as you are. Jesus on the cross and suffering are often barely mentioned outside church circles.

So many of us miss the point altogether. Easter might as well be a story of happy times, chocolate and bunnies in the springtime, because that is far more comfortable and less demanding.

But this is distinctly not the Journey to Jerusalem. God uses tragedy, suffering, pain, betrayal, and death itself, not to wound you, but in fact to bring you to God.

There is something essential that you only know by dying, by losing what you hold dear, by letting go of what you thought was how things should be.

[24:41] Everything can be transformed, and everything can be used. After all, on the cross, God took the worst thing, the killing of God, and made it into the best thing, the redemption of the world.

If you gaze on the cross long enough, your well-established way of thinking breaks down, and you slowly realize that to call things totally good or totally bad does not work anymore.

Are we to blindly stick to what we are told about things? Do I remain a fool all my life, trusting in things I never question?

It takes time for us all to realize that God uses the bad for good, and that many who call themselves good may in fact not be so good after all.

It is in that moment that you learn humility, patience, and compassion. You lose yourself, and then you find yourself.

[26:04] Suffering is the only thing strong enough to destabilize our own egos, our way of doing things, our sufficient self, is no longer good enough.

Instead, we come to discover our true self, the God self, the Christ self, the God who is with you and in you.

We discover that life is not about us, but we are about life. Our lives are hidden with Christ in God. He is our life. With Jesus, life gets turned upside down, and then reorder comes as we discover who we truly are and were always meant to be.

I'm going to finish with a little reflection. You can follow up on the screen or just sit quietly. I always seem to fall short, not quite good enough, always second best, never pleasing the people who matter.

[27:24] I always seem to come off worst, failing to make the grade, missing perfection, down the ranks from where I should be.

I always seem to be left behind, last one to be picked, far from special, never chosen to be up front. Then someone says, I'm a good person. Someone believes in me when I don't believe in myself and offers a different voice.

And I ask, can this be true? Am I a good person after all? Whose voice is this that calls me good for the first time?

Self-belief from such a small beginning, maybe not, and maybe not yet. But a small voice against a lifetime of put-downs has to be a good place to start.

[28:35] a little bit of a little bit of a little bit. Let me show you a little bit of a little bit of a little bit. Let me show you a little bit of a little bit of a little bit.