

**Question: "What is the significance of the triumphal/triumphant entry?"**

**Answer:** The triumphal entry is that of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday, the Sunday before the crucifixion (John 12:1, 12). The story of the triumphal entry is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus which appears in all four Gospel accounts (Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19). Putting the four accounts together, it becomes clear that the triumphal entry was a significant event, not only to the people of Jesus' day, but to Christians throughout history. We celebrate Palm Sunday to remember that momentous occasion.

On that day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey's colt, one that had never been ridden before. The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to sit on, and the multitudes came out to welcome Him, laying before Him their cloaks and the branches of palm trees. The people hailed and praised Him as the "King who comes in the name of the Lord" as He rode to the temple, where He taught the people, healed them, and drove out the money-changers and merchants who had made His Father's house a "den of robbers" (Mark 11:17).

Jesus' purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to make public His claim to be their Messiah and King of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew says that the King coming on the foal of a donkey was an exact fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus rides into His capital city as a conquering King and is hailed by the people as such, in the manner of the day. The streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him, and like a king He ascends to His palace, not a temporal palace but the spiritual palace that is the temple, because His is a spiritual kingdom. He receives the worship and praise of the people because only He deserves it. No longer does He tell His disciples to be quiet about Him (Matthew 12:16, 16:20) but to shout His praises and worship Him openly. The spreading of cloaks was an act of homage for royalty (see 2 Kings 9:13). Jesus was openly declaring to the people that He was their King and the Messiah they had been waiting for.

Unfortunately, the praise the people lavished on Jesus was not because they recognized Him as their Savior from sin. They welcomed Him out of their desire for a messianic deliverer, someone who would lead them in a revolt against Rome. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ as Savior, nevertheless hoped that perhaps He would be to them a great temporal deliverer. These are the ones who hailed Him as King with their many hosannas, recognizing Him as the Son of David who came in the name of the Lord. But when He failed in their expectations, when He refused to lead them in a massive revolt against the Roman occupiers, the crowds quickly turned on Him. Within just a few days, their hosannas would change to cries of "Crucify Him!" (Luke 23:20-21). Those who hailed Him as a hero would soon reject and abandon Him.

The story of the triumphal entry is one of contrasts, and those contrasts contain applications to believers. It is the story of the King who came as a lowly servant on a donkey, not a prancing steed, not in royal robes, but on the clothes of the poor and humble. Jesus Christ comes not to conquer by force as earthly kings but by love, grace, mercy, and His own sacrifice for His people. His is not a kingdom of armies and splendor but of lowliness and servanthood. He conquers not nations but hearts and minds. His message is one of peace with God, not of temporal peace. If Jesus has made a triumphal entry into our hearts, He reigns there in peace and love. As His followers, we exhibit those same qualities, and the world sees the true King living and reigning in triumph in us.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/triumphal-entry.html>

## SLIDES 2-3

***Entry of Christ into Jerusalem.*** 1617, Anthony van Dyck

**“Then they hastened and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, “Jehu is king!”** 2 Kings 9:13 (KJ21)

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! He is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.**

Zechariah 9:9 (KJ21) BibleGateway.com

Van Dyck's presentation of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is quite consistent with the biblical accounts. The [ass](#) foal he rides is almost entirely enveloped by his robes of rich blue and crimson. He is surrounded by his disciples on foot, and jubilantly welcomed by a crowd of locals who lay branches in his path. It is a very youthful, vigorous work, full of bright colors and slashing brushstrokes. The restlessness and muscularity of the figures are very Baroque, the use of exaggerated motion and clear, easily interpreted detail to produce drama, tension, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, theater, and music. The style began around 1600 in Rome, and spread to most of Europe.. The naturalism, first widely used by painters of the Netherlands and attempts to exhibit little stylism, and large size of figures gives them tremendous immediacy, lending drama to the narrative.<sup>[2]</sup>

Painted when van Dyck was only about 18, *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* demonstrates his early mastery of the medium. He was already Peter Paul Rubens' principal assistant. While already working on developing his own, more robust style, van Dyck was heavily influenced by Rubens, as can be seen in the vibrant colors, dynamic composition, and grand scale.

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Matthew 21:1-17, biblegateway.com

## SLIDES 4-5

### *Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple.*

1605, El Greco

The painting depicts the cleansing of the temple.

**Doménikos Theotokópoulos** ([Greek](#): Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος [[ðo' minikos θεoto 'kopulos](#)], 1541 – 7 April 1614), most widely known as **El Greco** (pronounced: [[el 'greko](#)]; [Spanish](#) for "The Greek"), was a painter, [sculptor](#) and [architect](#) of the [Spanish Renaissance](#). The nickname "El Greco" refers both to his [Greek](#) origin and Spanish citizenship. The artist normally signed his paintings with his full birth name in [Greek letters](#), Δομήνικος Θεοτοκόπουλος (*Doménikos Theotokópoulos*), often adding the word Κρής (*Krēs*, "[Cretan](#)").

El Greco was born in [Crete](#), which was at that time part of the [Republic of Venice](#), and the center of [Post-Byzantine art](#). He trained and became a master within that tradition before traveling at age 26 to [Venice](#), as other Greek artists had done.<sup>[2]</sup> In 1570 he moved to Rome, where he opened a workshop and executed a series of works. During his stay in Italy, El Greco enriched his style with elements of [Mannerism](#) and of the [Venetian Renaissance](#). In 1577, he moved to [Toledo, Spain](#), where he lived and worked until his death. In Toledo, El Greco received several major commissions and produced his best-known paintings.

El Greco's dramatic and expressionistic style was met with puzzlement by his contemporaries but found appreciation in the 20th century. El Greco is regarded as a precursor of both [Expressionism](#) and [Cubism](#), while his personality and works were a source of inspiration for poets and writers such as [Rainer Maria Rilke](#) and [Nikos Kazantzakis](#). El Greco has been characterized by modern scholars as an artist so individual that he belongs to no conventional school.<sup>[3]</sup> He is best known for tortuously elongated figures and often fantastic or phantasmagorical [pigmentation](#), marrying [Byzantine](#) traditions with those of [Western painting](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

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Matthew 21: 12-17, biblegateway.com

## SLIDES 6-8

### ***THE LAST SUPPER, 1492-94, 1498, Da Vinci***

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519)

Leonardo's *Last Supper*, on the end wall of the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, is one of the most renowned paintings of the High Renaissance. Recently restored, *The Last Supper* had already begun to flake during the artist's lifetime due to his failed attempt to paint on the walls in layers (not unlike the technique of tempera on panel), rather than in a true fresco technique. Even in its current state, it is a masterpiece of dramatic narrative and subtle pictorial illusionism.

Leonardo chose to capture the moment just after Christ tells his apostles that one of them will betray him, and at the institution of the Eucharist. The effect of his statement causes a visible response, in the form of a wave of emotion among the apostles. These reactions are quite specific to each apostle, expressing what Leonardo called the "motions of the mind." Despite the dramatic reaction of the apostles, Leonardo imposes a sense of order on the scene. Christ's head is at the center of the composition, framed by a halo-like architectural opening. His head is also the vanishing point toward which all lines of the perspectival projection of the architectural setting converge. The apostles are arranged around him in four groups of three united by their posture and gesture. Judas, who was traditionally placed on the opposite side of the table, is here set apart from the other apostles by his shadowed face.

#### **The Apostles**

The identity of the individual apostles in *The Last Supper* is confirmed by *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*. From left to right in the painting, they are depicted in four groups of three, and react to the news as follows:

- Bartholomew, James, son of Alphaeus and Andrew form a group of three, all are surprised.
- Judas Iscariot, Peter and John form another group of three. Judas is wearing green and blue and is in shadow, looking rather withdrawn and taken aback by the sudden revelation of his plan. He is clutching a small bag, perhaps signifying the silver given to him as payment to betray Jesus, or perhaps a reference to his role within the 12 disciples as treasurer.<sup>[8]</sup> He is also tipping over the salt cellar. This may be related to the near-Eastern expression to "betray the salt" meaning to betray one's Master. He is the only person to have his elbow on the table and

his head is also horizontally the lowest of anyone in the painting. Peter looks angry and is holding a knife pointed away from Christ, perhaps foreshadowing his violent reaction in Gethsemane during Jesus' arrest. The youngest apostle, John, appears to swoon.

- [Jesus](#).
- Apostle [Thomas](#), [James the Greater](#) and [Philip](#) are the next group of three. Thomas is clearly upset; the raised index finger foreshadows his Incredulity of the Resurrection. James the Greater looks stunned, with his arms in the air. Meanwhile, Philip appears to be requesting some explanation.
- [Matthew](#), [Jude Thaddeus](#) and [Simon the Zealot](#) are the final group of three. Both Jude Thaddeus and Matthew are turned toward Simon, perhaps to find out if he has any answer to their initial questions.

In short, the painting captures twelve individuals in the midst of querying, gesticulating, or showing various shades of horror, anger and disbelief. It's live, it's human and it's in complete contrast to the serene and expansive pose of Jesus himself.

## Christ

As in all [religious paintings](#) on this theme, Jesus himself is [the dynamic centre](#) of the composition. Several architectural features converge on his figure, while his head [represents the vanishing point for all perspective lines](#) - an event which makes *The Last Supper* the epitome of Renaissance single point [linear perspective](#). Meantime, his expansive gesture - indicating the holy sacrament of bread and wine - is not meant for his apostles, but for the monks and nuns of the Santa Maria delle Grazie monastery.

## Judas

[In most versions of \*The Last Supper\*, Judas is the only disciple not to have a halo, or else is seated separately from the other apostles. Leonardo, however, seats everyone on the same side of the table, so that all are facing the viewer. Even so, Judas remains a marked man. First, he is grasping a small bag, no doubt symbolizing the 30 pieces of silver he has been paid to betray Jesus; he has also knocked over the salt pot - another symbol of betrayal. His head is also positioned in a lower position than anyone in the picture, and is the only person left in shadow.](#)

## Communication

Leonardo employed new techniques to communicate his ideas to the viewer. Instead of relying exclusively on artistic conventions, he would use ordinary 'models' whom he

encountered on the street, as well as gestures derived from the sign language used by deaf-mutes, and oratorical gestures employed by public speakers. Interestingly, following Leonardo's depiction of Thomas quizzically holding up his index finger, [Raphael](#) (1483-1520) portrayed Leonardo himself in the [The School of Athens](#) (1510-11) making an identical gesture.

### **Mathematical Symbolism**

The painting contains a number of allusions to the number 3, (perhaps symbolizing the Holy Trinity). The disciples are seated in groups of three; there are three windows, while the figure of Jesus is given a triangular shape, marked by his head and two outstretched arms.

### **Still Life**

Laid out on the table, one can clearly make out the lacework of the tablecloth, transparent wine glasses, pewter dishes, pitchers of water, along with the main dish, duck in orange sauce. All these items, portrayed in immaculate detail, anticipate the [still life](#) genre perfected by Dutch Realist painters of the 17th century. [visual-arts-cork.com](#)

THE GOLDEN MEAN/RATION OR DA VINCI'S DIVINE PROPORTION: A mathematical and philosophical view proposed by Aristotle that there is a desirable midpoint to found between extremes; courage is a virtue but if taken to extremes it would become recklessness and to deficiency cowardice. Da Vinci portrayed both the philosophical view and the mathematical view in The Last Supper. The Golden Mean is seen in both the arrangement of the Disciples arranged around the Christ and in the design of the painting through the architecture, table arrangements and the placement of people and objects on the canvas.

## **SLIDES 9-10**

### ***The Agony in the Garden, El Greco***

The Agony in the Garden testifies to an astonishing development of the artist. The Italian influences recede to the same degree as El Greco frees himself from his obligation to nature. The figures lose their sense of substance, while their expressiveness is amplified by the unreal shapes assumed by the landscape. Thus Christ is literally heightened by the rock behind him, while the disciples are seen in a sheltering cave as a symbol of sleep. The figures are absolved from logical relationships of scale. The falling diagonal which leads from an angel, through Christ, to the soldiers on the right-hand edge of the painting is a visual statement of the inevitability of Christ's

fate. Such departures from the natural model, also evident in the visionary apparition of the moon, were one of the major reasons for the revival of interest in El Greco's work around 1900. [www.wga.hu](http://www.wga.hu)

## SLIDES 11-12

### ***The Taking of Christ. 1602, Caravaggio***

*The Taking of Christ* ([Italian](#): *Presa di Cristo nell'orto* or *Cattura di Cristo*) is a painting of the [arrest of Jesus](#) by the Italian [Baroque](#) master [Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio](#), originally commissioned by the Roman nobleman [Ciriaco Mattei](#) in 1602.

There are seven figures in the painting: from left to right they are [St John](#), [Jesus](#), [Judas](#), three soldiers (the one farthest to the right barely visible in the rear), and a man holding a lantern to the scene. They are standing, and only the upper three-quarters of their bodies are depicted. [Judas has just kissed Jesus](#) to identify him for the soldiers. The figures are arrayed before a very dark background, in which the setting is obscured. The main light source is not evident in the painting but comes from the upper left; the lesser light source is the lantern held by the man at the right (believed to be a self-portrait of Caravaggio; also, [presumably, representing St Peter, who would first betray Jesus by denying him, and then go on to bring the light of Christ to the world](#)). At the far left, a man (St John) is fleeing; his arms are raised, his mouth is open in a gasp, his cloak is flying and being snatched back by a soldier. The flight of the terrified [John](#) contrasts with the entrance of the artist; [scholars claim that Caravaggio is making the point that even a sinner one thousand years after the resurrection has a better understanding of Christ than does his friend.](#)<sup>[1][a]</sup>

Two of the more puzzling details of the painting are, one, the fact that the heads of Jesus and St. John seem to visually meld together in the upper left corner, and, two, the fact of the prominent presence, in the very center of the canvas and in the foremost plane of the picture, of the arresting officer's highly polished, metal-clad arm. Regarding the detail of the polished metal arm of the soldier in the center of the picture, Franco Mormando suggests that it was meant by the artist to serve as a mirror, a mirror of self-reflection and examination of conscience (such as in Caravaggio's *Conversion of Mary Magdalene* in Detroit): as do many spiritual writers and preachers of the period, the artist may be 'inviting his viewers to see themselves reflected in the behavior of Judas' through their own daily acts of betrayal of Jesus, that is, through their sin.<sup>[2]</sup>

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## **SLIDES 13-15 – *And they crucified Him...***

### ***Christ Crucified. 1632, Velázquez***

It is a life-size frontal nude, without the support of a narrative scene.

Description[[edit](#)]

Velázquez followed the accepted iconography in the 17th century. His master, [Francisco Pacheco](#), a big supporter of [classicist painting](#), painted the crucified Christ using the same iconography later adopted by Velázquez: four nails, feet together and supported against a little wooden brace, in a classic [contrapposto](#) posture. Both arms draw a subtle curve, instead of forming a triangle. The loincloth is painted rather small, thus showing the nude body as much as possible. The head shows a narrow halo, as if it came from the figure itself; the face is resting on the chest, showing just enough of his features. The long, straight hair covers a great part of the face, perhaps foreshadowing the death, already inflicted as shown by the wound on the right side. It lacks the characteristic dramatic qualities of [Baroque](#) painting.

History

Because of lack of information, the date of the painting is unknown. Nevertheless, historians believe the work was made after Velázquez' return from [Italy](#), probably between 1631 and 1632. The influence of Classicist painting is shown by the calm posture of the body, the idealized face and the leaning head. On the other hand, the influence of [Caravaggism](#) can be seen in the strong [chiaroscuro](#) between the background and the body, and in the strong, artificial lightning over the [cross](#).

It was most likely a commission for the San Plácido Convent sacristy. The painting was among the impounded items of [Manuel Godoy](#), but was returned to [María Teresa de Borbón, 15th Countess of Chinchón](#). After her death, the painting was passed on to her brother-in-law, the Duke of San Fernando de Quiroga, who gave it to King [Fernando VII](#). The king then sent the painting to the [Museo del Prado](#).

Legacy

The spirituality and mystery of this painting have inspired much religious writing, notably the poem *El Cristo de Velázquez* by the Spanish writer and philosopher [Miguel de Unamuno](#).

### ***Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus). 1954, Salvador Dali***



*Corpus Hypercubus* is composed of oil on canvas, and its dimensions are 194.3 cm × 123.8 cm (76.5 in x 48.75 in).<sup>[4]</sup> Consistent with his theory of “nuclear mysticism”, Dalí uses classical elements along with ideas inspired by mathematics, science, etc. Some noticeably classic features are the drapery of the clothing and the Caravagesque lighting that theatrically envelops Christ, though like his 1951 painting *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, *Corpus Hypercubus* takes the traditional Biblical scene of Christ’s Crucifixion and almost completely reinvents it. While he did attempt to distance himself from the Surrealist movement after his development of “nuclear mysticism”, Dalí still incorporates dream-like features consistent with his earlier surrealist work in *Corpus Hypercubus*, such as the levitating Christ and the giant chessboard below. Jesus’ face is turned away from the viewer, making it completely obscured. The crown of thorns is missing from Christ’s head as are the nails from his hands and feet, leaving his body completely devoid of the wounds often closely associate with the Crucifixion. With *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, Dalí did the same in order to leave only the “metaphysical beauty of Christ-God”. Dalí sets the painting in front of the bay of [Port Lligat](#) in [Catalonia](#), Dalí’s home, which is also the setting of other paintings of his including *The Madonna of Port Lligat*, *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*, and *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*. One’s eyes are quickly drawn to the knees of Christ which have a grotesque exaggeration of realism detail. If one observes the original painting closely, 5 different images of Gala appear in Christ’s right knee and 5 different images of Salvador appear in his left; the most prominent two being Gala’s back/neck/back of head with right arm extended upward and Salvador’s face replete with trademark up swept mustache. Additional knee images translate extremely poorly to reproductions/prints.

## SLIDES 16-17

### ***The Resurrection.* 1597-1600, El Greco**

Jesus is risen from his grave. The guards look on, taken by surprise. One of them, with the helmet on his head, is still asleep.

The white banner symbolizes the triumph over death. The purple cloak represents martyrdom and sacrifice.

Jesus’ halo has a remarkable shape: it is a rhomboid, or parallelogram. Some say it is a Byzantine tradition that El Greco probably learned when he still painted icons on Crete.

The painting is part of an altarpiece for the church of the monastery Lady Mary of Aragon in Madrid. The altarpiece also included an [Annunciation](#), *Baptism*, *Crucifixion* and [Pentecost](#).

El Greco’s *Resurrection*: Ahead of its Time

Looking more like a creation from the twenty-first century than the sixteenth, [\*The Resurrection\*](#) by El Greco stands out as a work ahead of its time. The dramatically elongated figures, bold colors and loose brush strokes were considered somewhat odd in the Baroque period in which it was painted. But El Greco considered spiritual expression to be more important than public opinion and it was in this way that he developed a unique style that has allowed him to be regarded as one of the great geniuses of Western art.

Painted in oils around 1600, *The Resurrection* stands just over nine feet tall and portrays the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to Christian scripture. The nude figure of Christ, dressed in only a brilliant red cloak and grasping a billowing white flag, looms serenely at the top of the painting. Beneath him are the writhing figures of several guards, their bodies contorted in surprise and amazement. According to scripture, Christ's body was placed in a cave after his crucifixion and a boulder was placed at the entrance to seal the tomb. But on the third day after his interment, Christ arose from the dead, cast the heavy boulder aside and appeared before the awestruck guards. It is the resurrection of Christ that is celebrated during the holiday of Easter.

Swirling drapery, contorted bodies and vivid colors add to the drama of the painting. High-contrast lighting, broad brush strokes and the chaotic placement of the figures create energy and tension. The angularity and elongation of the figures are often viewed as Byzantine in nature which is not surprising since El Greco, "the Greek," whose name was actually Doménicos Theotokópoulos, was born on the island of Crete and trained as an icon painter of the Cretan school which grew out of a tradition of Byzantine art.

Although El Greco was a significant painter of his time and received many important commissions, his work was generally not valued after his death, probably because it did not espouse the principles of the early Baroque style that was popular at that time. Unlike the realistic and detailed figures of Baroque painters, El Greco's curiously elongated bodies and imprecise brush strokes were considered queer and eccentric. It wasn't until the arrival of the Romantic period in the early 1800s that El Greco's works were re-examined and found to be praiseworthy and the painter himself came to be admired as a romantic hero whose genius had been misunderstood.

It is believed by many art historians that El Greco's visionary style set the stage for the modernism of the early 20th century. It appears that Cubism was directly influenced by El Greco's angularity and effusive lighting. Picasso, in particular, seems to have been influenced by his ascetic figures and cool tones during his blue period. The emotional effect caused by El Greco's distorted figures seems to be closely linked with the Expressionist movement that originated in Germany and Austria as well as the Abstract Expressionism that developed in New York City and pioneered by Jackson Pollock.

*The Resurrection* is believed to have been part of the high altarpiece of the Church of

the College of Doña María de Aragón in Madrid. It now resides in the Museo del Prado in Madrid where it is revered as one of El Greco's most spectacular and unique religious works.

## SLIDES 18-19

### THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST. 1958, SALVADOR DALI

Dali's surreal style of juxtaposing images one would not ordinarily associate in order to create a deeper meaning requires going beyond a rational exposition of faith. But Dali's depiction is not devoid of reality, as the prominent feet would have been the last thing that the Apostles who witness the Ascension would have seen.

Dali attributes the inspiration for "The Ascension of Christ" to a cosmic dream that he had in 1950 full of vivid color where he saw the nucleus of an atom. Dali was an ardent atheist but he later re-embraced his Catholic faith (perhaps after an exorcism) but Dali often fused his conceptions of Christianity with science. Dali realized that the nucleus was the true representation of the unifying spirit of Christ. This nuclear mysticism is meant to connect everyone.

Dali's "Ascension of Christ" does have some incongruities. Dali was inspired by the atom but it looks like a sunflower or perhaps a stylized depictions of the sun. Dali was often intrigued with continuous circular patterns like a sunflower floret as it followed the law of logarithmic spiral, which [Dali explained to Mike Wallace](#) in 1958 was associated with the force of spirit in chastity.

While the dove ready to descend from the clouds seems like an allusion to the Pentecost liturgically celebrated in 10 days. But why is Gala (Dali's wife and artistic muse) peering out from the clouds? In other Dalian religiously inspired paintings, Gala represented the Virgin Mary. Historically, the dormition of the Theotokis happened long after Christ's ascension into heaven. However, Mary is often considered the Queen Mother of Heaven and as the resurrection transcended time and space, it could show the Mother of God weeping at her son's departure from the Earth from her prospective place in heaven.

Other aspects to appreciate in Dali's depiction of Christ's glorified body ascending to heaven is his hands and feet. Aside from the positioning of the foot, notice how the soles of his foot were soiled, as reminders that our Messiah walked among us. Also the Jesus' fingers are curled, which lends some visual drama to the painting but combined with with electrified heavens hints at power.

Whether we are spoken to by Donne's metaphysical conceits or dazzled by Dali's

depictions of nuclear mysticism, the Ascension of Christ into heaven is a foretaste of what the faithful may expect in our eventual heavenly home.