

The Triumphal Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-11

Matthew 21:1-11 - *“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. ³ And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”*

⁴ *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

⁶ *So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. ⁸ And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*

¹⁰ *And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”*

¹¹ *So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”*

Background Notes

The Sunday before Easter is traditionally called “Palm Sunday.” When the Lord entered Jerusalem that day the multitudes welcomed Him with palm branches. *“A very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road” (v8).* In that day, palm branches were thrown on the road when a conquering hero rode into a city in triumph. That’s why this event is known as the “Triumphal Entry.”

Notice what the multitude cried out as the Lord passed through the gates of Jerusalem: *“Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”* This is a quotation from Psalm 118 - a Messianic Psalm.

However, the fact that the people were quoting a messianic Psalm certainly does not mean that all these people recognized Jesus as their Messiah. And it doesn’t mean that they were all believers. The word “hosanna” means “Save now,” or “Save, we pray!” Most of the crowd was hoping that Jesus, this *“prophet from Nazareth of Galilee” (v11)*, would save them from the oppression of the Roman Empire, and that’s why they called out, “Hosanna!” When they quoted this Messianic Psalm what they wanted and what they meant was, “Save us, we pray, from our foreign oppressors.”

Our Lord, of course, did not enter Jerusalem to conquer Rome, but rather to conquer sin and death and Satan. His victory would come by means of going to the cross to die for the sins of the world. Where was this disappointed crowd a few days later? Undoubtedly, some of them were part of the crowd that cried out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

On the very day that Our Lord entered Jerusalem, the Jews were bringing their lambs into the city in preparation for Passover. In the same way, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, was entering Jerusalem to be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

Our Lord’s real “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem came on the following Sunday morning when He triumphed over death in His resurrection, and He appeared in Jerusalem in His glorified body. Jesus was crucified and buried outside the city – but after He rose from the dead, what a triumphal entry into Jerusalem! Death itself had been conquered!

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord’s triumphal entry was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Jesus Christ is God, and as God, He knew everything, and in verses 1-3 we have evidence of our Lord’s omniscience. He directed two of His disciples to the exact place where the donkey and the colt were tied. He knew that the owner would give permission to use these animals.

Some skeptics say that this was not an indication of the Lord’s omniscience at all. They would say that Jesus already knew the donkey’s owner, and He had made previous arrangements. Have you ever heard that kind of skeptical comment before? Well, that’s a possibility. However, we certainly don’t need this Scripture to prove the omniscience of Christ as the Son of God - we have plenty of other Scriptures on that subject! I think the fact that Jesus knew all the details here, as well as all the details on the events that were soon to take place, is a good indication of our Lord’s omniscience. Jesus was omniscient because Jesus is God!

Notice: *“All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey” (v4-5). The specific prophecy that’s quoted here is Zechariah 9:9. It was written more than five hundred years before this time! What an amazing fulfillment of prophecy! Once again, skeptics will say this was not the supernatural fulfillment of prophecy. They’ll say that Jesus knew the Scriptures, and he knew about this prophecy in Zechariah, so He planned this donkey-riding event to “artificially” fulfill the prophecy!*

Skeptics will always try to bring up criticisms and arguments. A skeptic of the Bible will always find ways to get around the evidence. It doesn’t matter how much evidence there is, they’ll always try to find a loophole - some way to get around it. It doesn’t matter how much evidence you give the skeptic. If they’re convinced of their own opinion, they’re just going to go

their own way. They'll find some kind of explanation or loophole to avoid the evidence, no matter how weak their explanation may be. They just will not accept the evidence. But the Lord's triumphal entry was a fulfillment of prophecy.

2. The Lord's triumphal entry was a foreshadowing of the "Parousia."

Parousia? What's that anyway? *Parousia* is a Greek word that means "coming." It's one of the words used in the New Testament for our Lord's Second Coming. One reason why I used the word *parousia* in the doctrinal point is that it fits in nicely with the alliteration of the doctrinal points ("fulfillment of prophecy" and "foreshadowing of the parousia"!) But I used it primarily because *parousia* conveys the idea of both the arrival of Christ at His Second Coming and His presence once He arrives. Both of those concepts are built into the word *parousia*: His arrival, and His presence when He arrives.

We have both His arrival and His presence of our Lord's return foreshadowed in the Triumphal Entry. When He comes, His presence will bring both blessing and judgment - blessing for the believers and judgment for the unbelievers. We certainly see His judgment foreshadowed here in this chapter with His cleansing of the Temple, the event that follows His Triumphal Entry.

We see His blessing foreshadowed here as well. *"Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant..." (v14-15).*

So the Lord's Triumphal Entry was a foreshadowing of the *parousia*. The Triumphal Entry was prophetic -- not only His entry into Jerusalem then, but it's also prophetic of His Triumphal Entry in the future. Then He will come with judgment and blessing: judgment for the unbeliever and blessing for the believer. Both of those aspects of His Second Coming, of His *parousia* are seen here. The cleansing of the Temple was judgment; the healings of the sick and disabled were blessing. So the Lord's Triumphal Entry was a foreshadowing of the *parousia*.

Practical Application

Are you willing to ride on a donkey?

What kind of practical application is that? Of course I'd be willing to ride on a donkey! What's the practical application from this passage?

In that culture, riding on a donkey meant taking a very humble position. In fact, the prophecy of Zachariah 9 is quoted here, and the Messiah is contrasted to the conquering hero, Alexander the Great. *"The burden of the word of the LORD against the land of Hadrach, And Damascus its resting place (For the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the*

LORD). Also against Hamath, which borders on it, and against Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. For Tyre built herself a tower, heaped up silver like the dust, and gold like the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out; He will destroy her power in the sea, and she will be devoured by fire.

Ashkelon shall see it and fear; Gaza also shall be very sorrowful; and Ekron, for He dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. “A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take away the blood from his mouth, and the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, and shall be like a leader in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.

I will camp around My house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes” (Zachariah 9:1-8).

You remember Alexander the Great from your history classes, right? These verses are a prophecy about Alexander’s great and sweeping victories. All the conquests over Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod were victories of Alexander the Great. Notice that Alexander the Great was not able to conquer Jerusalem (v9), but he conquered all the cities in verses 1-8.

Alexander the Great didn’t ride into the cities he conquered on a **donkey**. He rode on a magnificent warhorse! That’s the way we would choose to ride into a city as a conquering hero, isn’t it? What a contrast, compared to the way our Lord entered Jerusalem: “*Lowly, and sitting on a donkey...*”

What a great contrast between the **world’s concept** of a “great” person and **God’s concept** of a “great” person? What a contrast between Alexander, the conquering hero whom the world calls “great” – compared to our Lord! Alexander came to conquer, but our Lord came to serve. Our Lord came into the city, humbly, and riding on a donkey. Philippians 2 tells us that He took “*the very nature of a servant... He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!*” He came to give His life for us, to save us from sin.

Are we willing to “ride on a donkey”? Are we willing to abandon our pride and take the humble place? Or do we always look for the up-front jobs or a chance to get into the spotlight? Do we always want to talk about ourselves? Do we always want people to serve us, rather than us serving them?

What a blessing it is to meet a truly humble person! Are you willing to follow our Lord’s example, and take the humble place? Are you willing to ride on a donkey?