

The King Arrives in Jerusalem

March 22, 2020



While the Coronavirus, toilet paper, hand sanitizer and a ban on meeting in public may be in the *foreground* of our thoughts, today I want to remind us of what's also going on in the *background* – the eternal, spiritual truth that God Almighty is still watching over us and caring for us.

Zechariah 9:9 (NIV)

*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.*

Take a look at your calendar. Did you realize that Easter is just three weeks away? In our devotionals for the next few weeks we're going to look at the week in Jesus' life leading-up to his resurrection, often called the "Passion Week".

Together with whomever is with you today, please read Mark 11:1-11.

Jesus and his disciples are walking from Jericho towards Jerusalem, and the road takes them through the villages of Bethany and Bethpage, on the east slope of the Mount of Olives.

The Mount of Olives is a ridge running north and south for about two miles, just across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. Its summit is 2700 ft, about 200 ft higher than Mount Zion, affording an exceptional view of Jerusalem and the temple itself.

Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday" represents one of the most significant public events of his ministry, recorded in each of the four gospels. Central to each report is Jesus' deliberate choice to ride into the city on a donkey.

- Did you know that a donkey was a traditional mount for kings and rulers in the ancient Near East (Jdgs. 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam. 16:2)? Jesus was therefore making an implicit claim to be the king of his people.
- The act of riding into Jerusalem on a donkey near the time of the Passover celebration invoked a central image of Messianic prophecy (Gen. 49:10-11; Is. 62:11; Zech. 9:9).

Thus, Jesus was also explicitly claiming to be the Messiah, proclaiming that the age of restoration was near.

- Old Testament passages often associate horses with war and human pride (Deut. 17:16; 2 Sa. 15:1; Ps. 20:6-9; 33:16-18; Prov. 21:31; Zech. 9:9-10). Jesus riding a donkey may have presented an image of peaceful humility, making a statement about the nature of his kingship.

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which immediately followed) was the most important of three annual festivals. Jews from all over the region travelled to Jerusalem for the celebration, doubling the population of the city, and forcing pilgrims to often find shelter in surrounding villages.

Upon his arrival to Jerusalem, Jesus was surrounded by people coming into the city, showing honor to him by laying cloaks and branches on the road and shouting praises.

In Hebrew, “Hosanna” was a prayer, “Lord, save us” (Psalm 118:25-26). In this context, it appears that the crowds were appealing to God to save them, now that the Messiah had appeared among them. Whether or not they understood the nature of his kingdom, it seems that they recognized Jesus was the Messiah, finally come!

If we think about Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection as the culmination of his ministry – his ministry to save the world, reconciling us to God (Luke 19:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-19) – what does the King’s arrival in Jerusalem represent? His triumphal entry to the city is fulfilment of prophecy about the Messiah. I’ve already mentioned a few Old Testament scriptures that say the Messiah will come into Jerusalem and riding a donkey.

- 1) Think about a parade that you have seen in person. What did it sound like? What was it like being in a crowd of people? What was significant about those in the parade?

- 2) How did the manner in which Jesus entered Jerusalem confirm his character?

- 3) What do you find most significant about the triumphal entry into Jerusalem?

I also see a connection between Jesus *arriving in Jerusalem*, and *God coming to earth* as the infant Jesus. Jesus descended from heaven and walked among us. He also descended the Mount of Olives, entering Jerusalem surrounded by people he created. Jesus' arrival on earth was a precursor to our salvation, and his arrival in Jerusalem, a precursor to his crucifixion.

1) What other similarities do you see between Jesus birth and his arrival in Jerusalem?

2) Considering your own salvation, what does Jesus' entry to Jerusalem mean to you?

Amidst the unsettling changes of our current events, its reassuring to remember that God is always present, always in control, and always faithful in His love.

Today, thank God for His grace and forgiveness, for His faithful love. Ask Him to give you a spirit of gratitude, and peace in challenging times.