

## Riding In on a Donkey

*“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ” Matthew 21:5 NIV*

### *The Prince of Peace*

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What would you do if you knew you had one week to live? Would you do anything different if you knew for a fact, that at the end of the next seven days, life as you knew it would change drastically. Not everyone gets the luxury of knowing that they have only a few days left, but what if you did? Jesus knew that his time on earth as the Son of Man was up. He knew that this was *it*, and he knew that he had already fulfilled several hundred prophetic words or prophecies about Messiah.

The word *Messiah* literally means “coming King”, and for centuries there had been prophets throughout the Old Testament who had said there is coming *“One Who will be a Deliverer - a Breaker - One Who will rescue the people of Israel from oppression.”* They believed that God had not forsaken or abandoned them, because hundreds of prophecies had been made about a coming Deliverer who they called *Messiah - Yeshua Hamashiach - Jesus the Christ - the One that would come and rescue.*

These words were sometimes specific, and at other times, vague metaphors, but Jesus, in his short time in public, for approximately three and a half years of ministry with his disciples, went from place to place preaching the Gospel - the Good News of the Kingdom of God. As he was preaching about the “Kings Domain”, he fulfilled over three hundred of those old testament prophecies, and on the day of his crucifixion, he fulfilled twenty eight prophecies, just in that one day.

On the day of Palm Sunday, we celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In all of the pomp and circumstance of the coming King, the same question arises, *“Would you do anything different if you knew it was your last week to live?”* What Jesus did during that last week was that he fulfilled his mission on the planet. He was so “mission oriented” that he knew that he knew that he had things to do - specific things that needed to be fulfilled in his life - and in his last week, he walked those out - he continued on and finished strong.

The last thing we would expect for a triumphal entry would be the Messiah coming in on a donkey instead of on the biggest, baddest horse - a stallion - a war horse - for the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah*! But he was also the *Prince of Peace* - the *Lamb of God*.

*"One of the scariest questions in the Palm Sunday story.... How will I respond when Jesus comes riding humbly into my life? Will I recognize the time of God's coming to me? Will I recognize and welcome God's personal visit?" - Pastor Marty Boller*

Matthew 21:1-7 NIV

*"As they all approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage. It was on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent out two disciples. He said to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a donkey tied up. Her colt will be with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them. The owner will send them right away.' This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet would come true. It says, 'Say to the city of Zion, "See, your king comes to you. He is gentle and riding on a donkey. He is riding on a donkey's colt.'" (Zechariah 9:9) The disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. They brought the donkey and the colt. They placed their coats on them for Jesus to sit on."*

Picture a king entering a city - what would that look like? It would be a grand spectacle! But, Jesus came in on a baby donkey, no doubt with his feet all but dragging the ground. The people were lined up and waiting.

Luke 19:41-42 NIV

*"He approached Jerusalem. When he saw the city, he began to weep. He said, "I wish you had known today what would bring you peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes."*

Matthew 21:7-8 NIV

*"They brought the donkey and the colt. They placed their coats on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the [palm] trees and spread them on the road."*

The palm tree was a symbol of triumph, joy, victory, peace (shalom), and eternal life - the highest honor was to wave palm branches in celebration. *Shalom* in Hebrew is *eirēnē* (*i-rah'-nay*) in Greek, and means "nothing missing, nothing broken - wholeness - integration - everything together as it's supposed to be". Jesus wept because the people did not see or recognize the time of his visitation. They also had a different expectation of the King.

The Jews had been under Roman rule for over a century - the “hammer of Rome” was crushing them. Rome was corrupt and the Jewish leaders were complicit with them. Immoral and unethical things happened in that culture, much like today in our nation. Things haven’t changed a whole lot in terms of human nature.

Matthew 21:8-9 NIV

*“A very large crowd spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Some of the people went ahead of him, and some followed. They all shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” ( Psalm 118:26) ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ ”*

John 12:12-13 NIV

*“The next day the large crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. So they took branches from palm trees and went out to meet him. They shouted, “Hosanna! ” “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” ( Psalm 118:25,26) ‘Blessed is the king of Israel!’ ”*

The Roman Emperor demanded absolute loyalty and submission, and the people were crying out for another king. *Hosanna* literally means “save us now” - actually a cry of desperation for salvation from the hammer of Rome. They were under oppression and taxation - they were a devastated people, no longer free, and they were crying out for the *Messiah - the One - their King* - to “save them now” - *Hosanna*. Even now, our prayer is *Hosanna - Save us now - rescue - deliver us now*.

Matthew 21:10-11 NIV

*“When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. The people asked, ‘Who is this?’ The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus. He is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’ ”*

The people wanted Jesus - the Prince of Peace riding on a donkey - to supernaturally and immediately morph into a warrior on a stallion, with a brazen sword, and mow down the government of Rome, ousting them from Israel. That was their belief for centuries - that the Messiah would deliver them militarily and politically - but Jesus is all about flipping the script. He came on a donkey, basically saying, *“There are no enemies!”*

## The Triumphal Entry - Making It Real for Real Life

With all the Jewish people crying out, *"Our King! Our Deliverer!"* Now the Pharisees know that the hammer of Rome is about to come down, so this provokes them to put into motion a plan - a strategy and scheme to take Jesus out. And, so began the process.

1] Jesus Flips the Script of Every Life He Touches - not just in answering prayer, but for their whole lives and trajectories - changing everything.

Isaiah 9:6 NIV

*"A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace."*

2] Jesus Weeps Where There is No Peace

Luke 19:41-42 NIV

*"He approached Jerusalem. When he saw the city, he began to weep. He said, 'I wish you had known today what would bring you peace! But now it is hidden from your eyes.'"*

As sons and daughters of God - followers of Jesus - we should weep for what makes *Him* weep - the division, disfunction, disruption, decimation, destruction (from the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy). Jesus was weeping because the people had no idea that God, himself - Emmanuel - God-with-us - was visiting them. They missed the time of their visitation because they were looking for something else. They were looking for a military deliverer - but he came and went - they missed it because they didn't recognize their time of visitation.

3] The Crowds are Answering, "This Is Jesus!"

Romans 10:8-10 NIV

*"But what does it say? 'The message is near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart.' (Deuteronomy 30:14) This means the message about faith that we are preaching. Say with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord.' Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Then you will be saved. With your heart you believe and are made right with God. With your mouth you say what you believe. And so you are saved."*

John 1:12 NKJV

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...”*

When you know who you are and where you are going, you will know what to do and how to live! If Jesus was to walk into the room right now, would we even recognize him? He would be the most humble person in the room. Jesus didn't come to change our circumstances - he came to change us. When we cry out for revenge and retribution over what someone did to us, Jesus comes and changes our hearts - he *flips the script on us*.

Palm Sunday is all about Jesus flipping the script and coming to us in a way we didn't expect or see. He often brings us what we need in a package we don't necessarily look for or like. He's not a Deliverer who comes to fix everything - but surprisingly rides in on a donkey - *weeping* - doing what only he can do - changing a human heart. Our circumstances may not change but our heart towards them does. The people in conflict with us may not change but our heart towards them does... *because He flips the script!*

## **Prayer**

*Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus, thank You that You flipped the script on our lives. You came to us in a way we didn't see coming. Even the people in Jerusalem didn't know the time of their visitation, so Lord, we're asking - would You open our eyes right now and not let us miss this moment - this time of Your visitation? Today is the day of salvation - now is the time - and we thank You for being here now! This is our moment and this is our opportunity to believe, receive, and become what You designed and created us to be. Lord, we re-commit and surrender all that we are to You, so that You can flip the script on our lives. We celebrate You and cry out, “Hosanna to the King!” Hosanna ...Save us now! In Jesus' name. Amen*