

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Rev. Alungbou Newmai, ES, LNBA (M)

Before Jesus paid the supreme sacrifice it was necessary that he should be conclusively identified with Messiah-King of Israel.

Spiritual Blindness (Matt. 21:1–11)

Since it was Passover, there were probably about 2 million people in and around Jerusalem. This was the only time in His ministry that Jesus actually planned and promoted a public demonstration. Up to this time, He had cautioned people not to tell who He was, and He had deliberately avoided public scenes.

Why did Jesus plan this demonstration? (1) For one thing, He was obeying the Word and fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9. This prophecy could apply only to Jesus Christ, for He is the only One with credentials/qualifications that prove He is Israel's King. We usually do not associate the lowly donkey with kingship. There were actually two animals involved, the mother and the colt (foal). Jesus sat on the colt with the mother walking beside.

By comparing Matthew's quotation with the original prophecy in Zechariah, we discover some interesting facts. Zechariah's prophecy opens with; "Rejoice greatly" but Matthew omitted this phrase. When Jesus approached the city, He wept! How could He (or the people) rejoice when judgment was coming?

Mathew also omitted "He is just, and having salvation." Our Lord's coming to Jerusalem was an act of mercy and grace, not an act of justice or judgment. He did have salvation for them, but they refused to accept it (John 1:11). The next time Israel sees the King, He will ride in great power and glory (Rev. 19:11ff).

This colt had never been ridden (Mark 11:2), Riding a donkey (21:5). In the ancient world when a king rode a horse, it symbolized war. When he rode a donkey, it symbolized peace. The people missed the symbolism. They expected Him to lead a rebellion against Rome, and when He did not, the shouts of “Hosanna” quickly became the cry of “Crucify Him.”

There was a second reason for this public presentation:

It forced the Jewish leaders to act. When they saw the spontaneous/unplanned demonstration of the people, they concluded that Jesus had to be destroyed (see John 12:19). The prophetic Scriptures required that the Lamb of God be crucified on Passover. This demonstration of Christ’s popularity incited the rulers to act.

The people acclaimed Jesus as their King both by their words and their deeds. They shouted Hosanna which means, “Save now!” They were quoting from Psalm 118:25–26, and this psalm is definitely messianic in character. Later that week, Jesus Himself would refer to this psalm and apply it to Himself (Ps. 118:22–23; Matt. 21:42).

Keep in mind that this Passover crowd was composed of at least three groups: the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, the crowd from Galilee, and the people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17–18). Sharing the news of this miracle undoubtedly helped to draw such a large crowd. The people wanted to see this miracle-worker for themselves.

But the Jews still did not recognize Jesus as their King. What caused Israel’s spiritual blindness? For one thing, their religious leaders had robbed them of the truth of their own Word and had substituted man-made traditions (Luke 11:52). The leaders were not interested in truth; they were concerned only with protecting their own interests (John 11:47–53). “We have no king but Caesar!” was their confession of wilful blindness. Even our Lord’s miracles did not convince them. And the longer they resisted the truth, the blinder they became (John 12:35ff). May God bless you!