

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-2 The Triumphal Entry

People express excitement in different ways. Some people like to shout or scream. Sometimes you can't tell what they are saying, but you know something is happening. Excited people also move around or dance, not just sit still. They often grab a flag or something else to wave to express their feelings. When a crowd is gathering, people rush toward where the action is happening.

Passover week had arrived. Many people in Jerusalem expected Jesus to do something very exciting. They believed in Jesus and had experienced his power during his three years of ministry. They wondered if he would proclaim himself as the King of Israel. Perhaps by a miracle from God, he would force the invading Romans to leave.

Jesus and the twelve disciples approached Jerusalem. They came to Bethpage, a village on the Mount of Olives, east of the city. Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away" (Matt 21:1-3).

Those who were sent ahead found it just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, some people standing there asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

They replied, "The Lord needs them and will send them back shortly." So they let them go. Jesus had known where to find the animals. He had directed the disciples to them, knowing the owner would lend them to him to use for a few hours.

Ask yourself this question: Why was it important that Jesus, the Messiah, entered Jerusalem riding on a colt instead of on something else?

Jesus was about to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy given by Zechariah. "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" Zechariah was both a prophet and priest who had lived 500 years earlier. His words, 'Daughter Zion,' referred to the people in Jerusalem expecting the Messiah. Zion was the name King David had given to his city, where the temple of God stood. For Jewish people, it represented the connection between God in heaven and humanity on earth. Here Jews expected the Messiah to reveal himself. The Messiah would not only bring salvation, but he *was* himself their salvation. Jesus would not enter Jerusalem as a conquering king on a white horse. Instead he would come as a servant king riding a colt, which no one had ridden before. He was God's king whom Israel would reject and have killed five days later.

The disciples brought the animals to Jesus and threw their cloaks on the colt. Jesus sat on it. As he went along, some people spread their cloaks on the road. Others cut palm branches from the trees and put them on the road. When he came to the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to joyfully praise God in loud voices

for all the miracles they had seen. The people who went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest.”

The word ‘Hosanna,’ often used in Jewish prayers, means ‘save and sustain us.’ The word is found in the Psalms which were sung during the Passover celebration. As part of their traditions at the Feast of Tabernacles, which followed Passover, people would wave palm branches. These they called ‘hosannas’ too. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and people asked, “Who is this?”

The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (Matt 21:4-11).

Luke adds more details to the story. He tells us that some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

“I tell you,” he replied, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” The religious leaders understood the meaning of the events happening that day. They wanted Jesus to stop the crowd that was proclaiming him to be the Messiah. Jesus knew the time had come to reveal his true identity publicly.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (Luke 19:39-44).

As Jesus rode down the Mount of Olives toward the city, he saw the city that would soon demand his death. He knew that in about 40 years, they would suffer God’s judgment. This would happen because they had rejected Jesus and his supreme sacrifice for their sin. The description Jesus gives exactly matches what happened when Jerusalem was destroyed. A trench was dug around the city so no one could escape. Finally the city fell and most of the people were killed. The temple was burned and each stone moved from its place. And Jesus wept because God was revealing to him all this which was yet to come.

When Jesus entered the city there were two different groups present. Some were still asking, “Who is this Jesus?” Those who were with Jesus had no doubts that he was the promised Messiah sent by God. Yet, they still believed he had come to establish his kingdom and rule over Israel. They did not yet understand that he had to die.

This story is **important** because it reveals the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem exactly as had been prophesied centuries earlier. His disciples made it clear to the people of Israel that Jesus was their promised Messiah and king.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus knew the people would still reject him even after all his mighty works and his entry into Jerusalem as the promised Messiah.

Let's review this lesson—

1. What did the people of Israel do when Jesus presented himself as their Messiah?
A. [Pause] If you answered that some accepted him and others were still not sure about his identity, you are correct.
2. What did the crowds of disciples cry out when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey?
A. [Pause] If you answered that they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" you are correct.
3. Why did Jesus weep when he looked over the city of Jerusalem?
A. [Pause] If you answered that he knew what judgment they would one day face for rejecting him, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory to someone else. After telling the story to friends, ask this question, "What is the one thing you are most looking forward to in your future?" Discuss with them whether that thing deals with eternal issues or with the passing pleasures of this world? (The believers here were looking for Jesus to be their king—with an earthly kingdom that would benefit them.)