

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Key Verse: *“Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”*
—Matthew 21:5

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 21:1-11

IN THE SETTING OF TODAY'S lesson, we find our Lord Jesus and his disciples, along with others who had followed them, on their way to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, which would take place in a few days. When the group reached Bethphage, a small village on the Mount of Olives, Jesus stopped and sent two of his disciples to another location close by to bring

him an ass, or donkey, and her young colt. (Matt. 21:1-3) The owner of the animals may have been acquainted with Jesus, and if so, would likely have known the two disciples which Jesus sent. The Master was about to present himself to the people after the manner of their kings of the past, who we are told rode in triumph on an ass or mule. (See I Kings 1:33) In this regard, it is of interest to note that this is the only biblical record of Jesus' riding an animal.

Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, just five days before his crucifixion, was in fulfillment of two Old Testament prophecies, which combine in testimony regarding that which is recorded in our Key Verse. “Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh.” “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter

of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9) The Jews were familiar with these prophecies, and for centuries had been waiting for Messiah to fulfill them. Thus, they were without excuse in their rejection of him, though in God’s plan this blindness would, in due time, be turned away.—Rom. 11:25,26

For the moment, however, the multitudes accompanying Jesus seemed to catch the spirit of the occasion. They made a royal pathway for him, some spreading their garments, and others cutting down palm tree branches to lay before him, all of which were long-standing customs for the treatment of honored rulers. They also shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—Matt. 21:8,9; John 12:13; Ps. 118:25,26

The procession and shouting of kingly honor to Jesus should have had meaning to the Jewish nation—a presentation to them of their Messiah and King. Yet we see, as a nation, Israel failed to receive their king. Jesus soon afterward stated as he wept over the city of Jerusalem, “Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:44) They were left to their own devices, because their hearts were not right, and they were no longer worthy of God’s special favor.—Matt. 15:8; Rom. 11:7,8

We understand that Israel and their experiences were emblematic of the fact that the world in general similarly does not understand the Messiah, the great “Lord of lords, and King of kings,” and the divine purpose through him of blessing not only Israel, but “all the nations of the earth.” (Rev. 17:14; Gen. 22:18) However, those who have faith in God’s promises recognize the importance of these things, and view Jesus as their Messiah, Lord and King. Thus, let us take care that we follow the words of the Apostle Paul, who declared that we are “children of the day: we are not of the night. ... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”—I Thess. 5:5,6 ■