

When Jesus Wept

Luke 19:29–44¹

Humble, and Mounted on a Donkey.

Matthew's account of Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem about a week before He was to be crucified, is very similar to what we read from the Gospel according to Luke. He wrote:

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

And of course, as we have seen, they did. But Matthew included the additional detail:

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.' " Matthew 21:1–5 ESV

Now, if you have a study Bible, you know that this is a quotation from Zechariah, chapter 9, verse 9, where this was originally prophesied. Less obvious is the story that almost certainly provides a reference point, because before there was Palm Sunday, and before there was the prophecy of Zechariah, there was 1 Kings, chapter 1, where David called for Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, one of the commanders of the King's army. When these all came together, they took Solomon, put him on King David's own donkey, and led him out to Gihon where they anointed him King over all Israel.

When the anointing was done, we read in 1 Kings:

³⁹ ...they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!"

and

⁴⁰ ...all the people went up after him...

as he reentered the city,

...playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise. ¹
Kings 1:39–40 ESV

(which is to say, it was really, really loud). And we can almost think of this as act one of the same drama that we read about a few minutes ago in the Gospel of Luke. David's son (in this case, Solomon), was coming into his kingdom, with all the appropriate ceremony, but not as a warrior on a white stallion, rather, gentle—lowly—and mounted on a donkey. Because even though David at this time was old and advanced in years, through him, God had consolidated the kingdom and brought peace to Israel from its enemies all around.

¹ Scripture citations unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

David's Greater Son.

Now, fast-forward to Luke 19...

²⁹ When [Jesus] drew near to Bethphage and Bethany...

(the home of Lazarus)

²⁹ ...at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.

So, notice right away that this was intentional. This was not random or accidental. Jesus, walking in obedience to His Father, was deliberately taking steps to fulfill prophecy as He entered the city. He was, in a sense, fulfilling the coronation of which Solomon's entry was only a type. And note that this was also the providence of God at work. In verses 31 and following, Jesus said:

³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.' ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it." Luke 19:29-34 ESV

And we're told in Mark that as soon as the disciples had pointed this out, they let them take the animal, so not the usual response to someone taking your means of transportation without your permission. But,

³⁵ ...they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Luke 19:35-38 ESV

These were the disciples who had accompanied Him from Bethany, following Jesus up into the city for the feast. But according to John, they were eventually joined by people who were already in the city, pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem who

¹³ ...took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" John 12:13 ESV

As Jesus drew near to the city then, there were disciples behind Him, and others before, and they began to cry out in the words of Psalm 118, verses 25 and 26, "Hosanna!" meaning

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Psalm 118:25-26 ESV

And this happened every year, and on more than one occasion. The Hebrew scholar and author, Alfred Edersheim, noted:

They were but broken utterances, partly based upon Psalm 118, partly taken from it—the ‘Hosanna,’ or ‘Save now,’ and the ‘Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord,’ forming part of the responses by the people with which this Psalm was chanted on certain of the most solemn festivals.²

He continues:

...according to Jewish tradition, Psalm 118. verses 25–28, was...chanted antiphonally by the people of Jerusalem, as they went to welcome the festive pilgrims on their arrival, the latter always responding in the second clause of each verse, till the last verse of the Psalm was reached, which was sung by both parties in unison, Psalm 103:17...

(¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children, ^{Psalm 103:17} ESV)

...being added by way of conclusion.³

So, as the people coming into the city cried out,

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ^{Psalm 118:25–26} ESV

The people who had come out from the city responded,

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. ^{Psalm 118:25–26} ESV

But on this occasion, the people were prophesying and praising better than they knew. They knew who Jesus was, of course, at least they thought they did. He was a teacher; He was a prophet; and some even wanted Him to be King in an earthly, human sense. So, they sang,

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ^{Psalm 118:25} ESV

But they also brought in other scriptures and prophecies as well. In Luke:

³⁸ ...“**Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!** Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ^{Luke 19:38} ESV

And in John:

¹³ ...“**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!**” ^{John 12:13} ESV

Still, when He entered the city, people asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” ^{Matthew 21:11} ESV

And John tells us straight out,

¹⁶ His disciples **did not understand these things at first,**

² Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 368.

³ Edersheim, *The Life and Times...*, 368.

it was only afterward,

...when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. John 12:16 ESV

See, the true King had come. David's greater Son, had arrived in the city, "sitting on a donkey's colt," as prophesied in Zechariah where the full quote goes on to say that

¹⁰ ...his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Zechariah 9:10 ESV

but meanwhile, Herod Antipas ruled in Galilee, and afar way in Rome, Tiberius Caesar ruled the empire, and neither felt so much as a tremor when the disciples of Jesus cried out (echoing the cry of the angels at Jesus' birth),

³⁸ ...**"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"** Luke 19:38 ESV

because even

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things... John 12:16 ESV

Not then. Of course, there were some that day who at least grasped the implications. In verse 39:

³⁹ ...some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." Luke 19:39 ESV

And Jesus replied:

⁴⁰ ..."I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Luke 19:40 ESV

The Return of the King.

So, it was all pretty amazing—the crowds, the chants, the palms, and the Psalms—what a celebration it seemed to be. But the very next verse tells us the King's response to all the fanfare and excitement of the crowd on Palm Sunday.

⁴¹ ...when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it... Luke 19:41 ESV

Of course, sometimes people have called it the triumphal entry, in fact, that's the paragraph heading in some Bibles, and it was a triumphal entry in the sense that in His suffering and crucifixion a few days later, Jesus, the Son of God would triumph over sin, and Satan, and death. But in the immediate context, "The Ironic Entry" might be just as appropriate.

The King had come, the Son of David had returned in fulfillment of the prophecies made about Him, but when the people on Palm Sunday raised their voices in praise of something they did not understand, they missed the message, because

⁴¹ ...when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!"

This, when they had just been singing “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.”

“But now they are hidden from your eyes...

Jesus continued.

⁴³ “For the days will come upon you...

(and they were coming in a mere 35 years, or so),

...when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you...

And why? Why would Jerusalem be destroyed? Why would the temple be thrown down until not one stone was left upon another? Why would the children of the city be torn down to the ground? Because the Romans were an oppressive and evil people? No. According to the King who had just arrived—according to Jesus—this would happen

...because you did not know the time of your visitation.” Luke 19:41–44 ESV

Because you did not understand what this was really all about. And there’s so much more that could be said. But we need to understand that what happened that day, the palm branches, and the praise, the crowds, and the King on a colt, were significant, not for what they appeared to be, but for what was missing.

...you did not know the time of your visitation... Luke 19:44 ESV

Jesus said. You did not understand what this was really about. You thought it was a party. You thought that an earthly king—the politics of this world—would bring peace and prosperity, but you failed to recognize that what you really needed was not peace with the world, but peace with God. You failed to recognize that the King had come not to triumph over Caesar and the state, but over sin with *all* of its fatal consequences. You danced and sang, you postured and praised, but you did not recognize that God had come near for salvation.

And in this so-called “Easter season”, when so many will celebrate one way or another... there will be Easter baskets and lot’s of chocolate, egg hunts and feasts; some will even put on their Sunday best and go to church next week because they see Easter as kind of the Super Bowl of the church year. But again, as always, many will miss the point. Many will fail to recognize that this is not about bunnies and eggs, family, friends, and fellowship. Many will fail to recognize that the reason we celebrate (and not just so-called “Easter,” but every other Lord’s Day too), is that Jesus Christ has come near to save and to deliver—to redeem us from our sin, and to reconcile us to God.

But the King has come. Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God humbled Himself and came into this world. He died for our sin, and rose again on the third day for our justification, and He is now reigning at the right hand of God the Father Almighty where He ever lives to make intercession for His people. This was the message that they missed, and it is and

always has been the message of the Gospel. We cannot let it be obscured by human invention then. We cannot let what seems good stand in the way of what is best. They were not saved by their praise on that long ago Sunday, and neither are we. We are saved by grace, through faith in the finished work of Christ. He is Savior, He is Lord, He is King. We look to Him and to nothing else, for

¹² ...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. ^{” Acts 4:12 ESV}

See,

²² The stone that the builders rejected...

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God the Son

...has become the cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ^{Psalm 118:22–23 ESV}

For

²⁷ The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us... ^{Psalm 118:27 ESV}

²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! ^{Psalm 118:29 ESV}