

Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Pastor Nolan Wright slipped in the back of the sanctuary just before the service started. Shekinah Glory Tabernacle, Pastor Campbell's 3,000 member church, was having a special youth service.

Nolan had felt honored and humbled when Pastor Campbell had asked him to be on the program, but because of a prior commitment, Nolan declined. It was with surprise and a little gratitude that Nolan met the last-minute news of the cancellation of his prior commitment. As the pastor of a small church in a neighboring city, Nolan had been of the mind to stay home and get some needed rest. But Pastor Campbell and his youth kept coming to his mind.

Dressed in jeans and a plain sports coat, Nolan now sat in a back pew. After about 30 minutes, he was feeling rejuvenated and happy he had come.

Then Pastor Campbell stepped to the podium.

"Is Pastor Wright in the house tonight?"

Nolan dropped his head, smiled, and waved his hand.

"Pastor Wright is from Triumph Church. He is a mighty man of God and has just become recognized as a dynamic singer and songwriter! He was recently nominated in the Stella Award's New Artist of the Year category. It looks like his prior commitment has fallen through. Brother, would you bless us with a selection?"

As the congregation continued to applaud, Nolan humbly got up and made his way down the aisle.

1. *Why is humility a hard quality to find in many people?*

2. *Why would a humble leader be preferable to a haughty leader?*

3. *Why might you rejoice when a haughty leader is humbled?*

Preparation for the Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-3, KJV

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

Matthew 21:1-3, NIV

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.

³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

Matthew's account of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem begins with the Lord sending two of His disciples into Bethphage to obtain both a donkey and her colt. Bethphage no longer exists. It appears to have been on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives (v. 1) about a mile from Jerusalem. Jesus started His day in Bethany (John 12:1, 9-12) and journeyed to the mount, which received its name because of its abundance of olive trees. Once the disciples returned with the donkey and her colt, Jesus began His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The Lord had avoided such open displays of His identity in the past, but now He would enter Jerusalem claiming to be the long-awaited Son of David, the prophesied King of a future kingdom for Israel. He had also previously avoided arrest, but within a week's time Jesus would allow the Jewish authorities to both apprehend Him and condemn Him to death.

Jesus displayed His humility through the response He told His disciples to give to those questioning the disciples taking the animals. It was a humble request rather than a

demand; He told them to simply say “that the Lord needs them.”

4. *What instructions did Jesus give to the two disciples He sent into Bethphage?*

The Fulfillment of Prophecy

Matthew 21:4-7, KJV

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

Matthew 21:4-7, NIV

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵“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.’ ”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.

With His ride into Jerusalem, Jesus fulfilled the words of Zechariah 9:9 that predicted Israel’s future “King,” the Messiah, would ride into Jerusalem on “the foal of a donkey” (vs. 5). “Zion” refers to a hill within Jerusalem that later became synonymous with the city itself. Jesus acted purposefully to fulfill this particular prophecy; the Jews of His day fully understood this referred to their promised Messiah.

Zechariah also wrote about the Messiah’s humility—that He would ride into Jerusalem on a colt, which indicated meekness as well as a sense of royalty. Jesus did not enter the city on a horse as a conquering general would do in the first century A.D., but rather in an unassuming manner

fitting for the Prince of Peace.

The prompt obedience of the two disciples showed their utmost confidence in the Lord. From Mark 11:5-6, we learn that onlookers who saw the disciples take the animals questioned them about their action, but did not raise further objections after the disciples repeated the Lord's response to them. Once back with Jesus, the disciples took off their loose outer garments and placed them on the colt as a saddle. Such action displayed the disciples' honor for their Master whom they already regarded as the Messiah, the long-awaited King of the Jews.

5. *How did Jesus fulfill the words of Zechariah 9:9?*

6. *What does the fulfillment of Jesus' request by the disciples tell us about their faith in Jesus?*

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:8-11, KJV

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Matthew 21:8-11, NIV

⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that 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 heaven!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

¹¹The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

The crowd coming out to see Jesus from Jerusalem added to those already with Jesus traveling from Galilee. Prompted by His earlier raising of Lazarus from the dead, many thronged to see the One they believed was their Messiah as such hopes had reached a fever pitch.

The people honored the Lord by laying their garments on the road for the donkeys to walk upon and by cutting off branches of nearby trees and placing them before the Savior as well. John alone mentions that the branches came from palm trees (John 12:13). This also signified their belief that Jesus was their long-awaited King and worthy of a royal entry into Jerusalem.

The large throng accompanying Jesus shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David," another indication of their messianic hopes. The phrase "Son of David" was synonymous with saying that Jesus was indeed the Christ, whom they expected would be a descendant of David. The words of the crowd came from Psalm 118:25-26, a psalm often sung during Passover celebrations.

Those in the city wondered about the One who arrived with such fanfare and adulation. They asked, "Who is this?" wondering who would be worthy of such a great honor (vs. 10). Though many had seen Jesus' miracles and heard Him teach, they still questioned His identity.

In spite of all the signs that verified Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, most of the Jews in Jerusalem at the time regarded Him as no more than a prophet. His being from Nazareth in Galilee disqualified Him from being anything more than that. Was this disparagement of Jesus by the masses in Jerusalem a sign of things to come by the end of the week?

7. *Where did the large crowd come from that accompanied Jesus on His triumphant entry into Jerusalem?*

8. *How do we know that the crowd regarded Jesus as the Messiah?*

9. *How did the city of Jerusalem respond to Jesus' arrival?*

Humility Is the Fear of the Lord

Humble leadership paves the way for thriving companies, churches, businesses, families, countries, and governments. Joyce Banda, the former president of the south African country of Malawi (2012–2014), boosted her country's falling economy by selling the presidential jet and the fleet of 60 Mercedes limousines. As a result, one million people were fed. This humble leader believes in sacrifice. She requested that her salary be cut by 30% because of the near-collapsing national economy. She said she wanted "to show we are making sacrifices."

On leadership she has said, "I learned that leadership is about falling in love with the people and the people falling in love with you." She goes on to say, "It's about serving the people with selflessness, with sacrifice, and with the need to put the common good ahead of personal interests."

Solomon began his reign as an outstanding symbol of a humble leader. He loved God, and when he became king, God asked him a question in a dream. It was a profound question: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5). What an amazing request from God, and what a response from Solomon! He could have asked for thousands of acres of land, many cattle, multiple servants, and enormous wealth. However, in humility, Solomon basically said he was not qualified for the job of governing God's great people. So, he asked the Lord for wisdom to do the job. God granted his request—and, in addition to wisdom, gave him tremendous wealth and honor as well.

As Scripture says, "Humility is the fear of the LORD; its wages are riches and honor and life" (Prov. 22:4).

10. *Why is humility especially important in leadership?*

11. *Why would God reward humility?*

12. *How does Proverbs 22:4 help us understand humility?*

Serve Your Humble King

God has given us victory; we rejoice because we have won through King Jesus! That does not mean, however, that in our rejoicing we look down on others or think we are in some way more special. Jesus showed us what it means to be humble, and we follow Him by sharing with others the joy we have in serving Him.

► *Rejoice today and celebrate the humble King who came to save us. One way to rejoice is share the Good News about Him with others who need to hear it for the first time or be reminded about it. You may also celebrate by writing here a praise song to Jesus like the Jewish people sang or later share a praise song you know with someone who needs encouragement.*

KEY VERSE

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King comes unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

—Matthew 21:5, KJV

“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

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of April 4 through April 10

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 116:1-15—God Is Gracious and Righteous.
- Tue.** Deuteronomy 16:1-8, 15-17—Celebrate Where God Chooses.
- Wed.** Matthew 26:1-2, 6-16—Jesus Anointed.
- Thu.** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26—Do This In Remembrance.
- Fri.** John 13:31-35—Disciples Love One Another.
- Sat.** Psalm 118:1-9—God’s Care Endures Forever.
- Sun.** Matthew 26:17-30—Jesus Shares Passover.