



Jesus Entered Jerusalem: The “Man of War” Offering Peace

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Dr. Mary Craig

Jesus entered Jerusalem. It was a Sunday. Great multitudes of people gathered before the celebration of Passover filled the city. When they realized Jesus was entering Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet Him.

They cried out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” “The King of Israel!” (John 12:12, 13)

Excitement filled the air. So many people, so much energy, so many things needing to be done.

William Barclay, in his *Commentary on John*, notes:

“At such a time Jerusalem and the villages round about were crowded. On one occasion a census was taken of the lambs slain at the Passover Feast. The number was given as 256,000. There had to be a minimum of ten people per lamb; and if that estimate is correct it means that there must have been as many as 2.7 million people at that Passover Feast in Jerusalem.”

So this city of maybe 50 to 100,000 people expanded into one with a population greater than the entire population of Arkansas, or Kansas, the combined populations of Maine and New Hampshire, or the city of Chicago.

Along the way people had been hearing about the resurrection of Lazarus, that Jesus had miraculously raised Lazarus from the dead...after four days. Jesus had called him out—Lazarus, come forth! Jesus had to say his specific name; otherwise, all of the people in that grave place would have likewise come out.

Hearing something can be exciting enough, but more than this, Jews literally streamed into Bethany to gaze at Lazarus, the risen man AND at Jesus, the Messiah they had longed to see (John 12:9). The raising of Lazarus led the Jews to go to the Pharisees and the plot to arrest Jesus privately kindled. The Jewish Pharisaical rulers had already decided to kill Lazarus “because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus” John 12:9-11.

Nationalism added to the excitement. God had ordained the Feast days. Many people wanted to catch up on their friends, what was happening. At Passover, the civic leaders were on high alert, and so were the religious leaders.

When excitement builds in opposition, it's called terrorism; eventually something snaps. His enemies identified Jesus as an insurrectionist. To them Jesus had a bad attitude toward authority. Where did Jesus' authority come from, anyway?

The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead was, in a sense, the pinnacle of Jesus' sign-miracles. The crowds responded, thronging to Jesus; but the Pharisees jealously opposed. They so opposed, that their murderous rage spread beyond Jesus to a man whose only fault was that he had been dead and now he was alive again. He was a passive recipient to boot!

Added to this was Mary of Bethany's extreme act of worship when she anointed both Jesus' feet and head with spikenard. Jesus said it was for his burying, a preparation. But Judas, who was both treasurer and a thief, protested. The spikenard could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Sounds very spiritual, doesn't it? Jesus did not consider it a "waste." Mary gave what was equivalent to an entire year's wages for the typical worker. Her spontaneous act of devotion would be remembered, Jesus had said.

Mary delighted in Jesus. She sat at Jesus' feet. She listened to Jesus teach. She got the message. She was led by the Spirit to anoint Jesus as she did. Jesus would die and be buried. The smell of spikenard filled the air. What was dead would die and what was alive would live. Jesus would rise again from the dead, on the third day. Mary of Bethany did not go to the tomb; she knew.

Even Caiaphas, the high priest that year, had prophesied that it was more expedient for one man to die for the nation.

The disciples did not seem to appreciate the significance of the events unfolding until after Jesus had risen from the dead (John 12:16), but later on they understood.

Tensions were building, but today? Today, on what we now call Palm Sunday, the people participated in a grand procession.

Christ informed the disciples that as they entered the village they would find a female donkey secured by a "tie." With her would be a colt, also hitched. The disciples were to unloose and bring back both animals. (God the Creator loves His creation and cares for them.)

The disciples would be questioned by the animals' owners (Luke 19:33) as to what they were doing. Their response was to be, "The Lord has need of them." Immediately permission would be granted.

This isn't some pre-arranged agreement playing out. It is a dramatic outworking of the sovereignty of God over His creation. God owns everything; everything is at His disposal. Jesus is King and Lord. He rules, even in the midst of His enemies.

The donkeys' owners were more than likely disciples as there was no hesitation, but even if not, they would have had to bow to the power of the prophetic word.

The two donkeys were adorned with the outer garments of the disciples, perhaps not knowing which one or whether both would be chosen by Jesus. Jesus selected the colt, upon whose back no man had ever sat (Mark 1:2; Luke 19:30). The young colt made no resistance; again, a display of divine sovereignty over the animal kingdom. Numbers 22:28; 2 Kings 2:24, etc. All things were made by Jesus and for Jesus. Colossians 1:16.

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. Colossians 1:16, 17.

Jesus has pre-eminence.

Jesus rode down the road toward Jerusalem. Two throngs of people converged upon Him—a massive crowd coming out of the city and another crowd following Him (Mt. 21:9; Mark 11:9). Most were followers.

Some placed their garments on the road; others did the same with layers of leaves. At least some of these were from palm trees (John 12:13).

Spreading garments before a dignitary symbolized submission (2 Kings 9:13). Palm branches indicated victory. Some Jewish coins from the first century had palm leaf engravings with the inscription, “the redemption of Zion.” The palm symbolism portrayed in the book of Revelation in Revelation 7:9 says:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Excitement filled the air. People looked for a Messiah. They expected someone who would lead them to victory over Rome, their oppressor. They expected the return of Israel’s former glory. Their hearts filled with this hope. Remember that.

Then consider the Zealots. They stood ready for combat with Roman soldiers at a moment’s notice. They wanted to engage in a violent overthrow. They wanted to charge headlong against their targeted enemy, Rome, who occupied their nation and kept them from being great in the eyes of their world. The KOG suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. But...Jesus said it is His Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom, speaking of those who are His.

Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. He had said it, but God had blinded the eyes of the people and hardened hearts so as to prevent understanding and be converted and healed. God had a plan, that Jew and Gentile alike would be saved the same way: through faith in the Promise, in Jesus Christ alone, the Messiah, and not through Law-keeping.

Jesus entered Jerusalem for peace. He had offered peace. He will war, but in a different way.

¹⁰ When you march up to attack a city, make its people an *offer of peace*. ¹¹ If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. ¹² If they refuse to make *peace* and they engage you in *battle*, lay siege to that city. ¹³ When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, ... Deut. 20: 10-13.

Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. Luke 14:31, 32.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a slow-paced donkey. The crowds began shouting Psalm 118:26. In Psalm 118, the phrase, “he that comes in the name of Jehovah” means the worshipper drawing

near the temple. They added “King of Israel,” turning the expression directly to Jesus. “Hosanna” comes from the Hebrew word meaning “save we pray.”

Christ the Conqueror entered Jerusalem, but the way He would conquer and what He would conquer would not be as the **hope and expectation** of the people. The crowds looked to Jesus to do the very thing He refused to do. But Jesus, God Incarnate, is not tempted to do evil. Jesus faced down the external temptation for it was not in His heart to do otherwise than to please His Father in a perfect, personal, perpetual obedience, even the obedience that would lead Him to His death.

Previously, when it was not yet His time, Jesus had pulled back, departing to a mountain by Himself alone (John 6:15). He avoided publicity as recorded in several places in the Bible (John 5:13; Mark 3:1-12; Mark 5:35-43; Mark 9:2-9).

Now, though, His hour is come and Jesus deliberately sets Himself to intensify the excitement of the crowd.

Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilled Messianic prophecy.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9

A king came riding on a royal horse when he was bent on war. He came riding upon a donkey when he was coming in peace.

Jesus **shattered dreams** that day. He didn't come as the warrior but as the Prince of Peace. I need to qualify: Jesus didn't come as the warrior people expected but He did come as the Man of War who fights

The LORD is a warrior. The LORD (Yahweh) is His Name. (Exodus 15:3)

The LORD will go forth like a warrior. He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies. Isaiah 42:13

Here came the One of whom it was prophesied, the Messiah. It was the Jesus of the Word, but not the Jesus the people wanted, a Messiah of their own dreams and their own wishes. Even Jesus' disciples had different expectations, not fully grasping what Jesus had been prophesying.

The Romans had triumphal entries. They had mastered a great spectacle. Just remember or go watch the movie “Cleopatra” to see a Roman triumphal entry.

God's spectacles triumph in greater glory. People love parades. God makes the way of Peace.

Jesus entered Jerusalem in demonstration of the nature of His kingdom (John 18:36). He entered the City of David riding upon a donkey. He would fight the battle for souls, yes, but in the spirit realm against all the forces of darkness, against death, hell, and the grave. Jesus was ready for war, a war that had been declared back in Genesis 3:15, and just as His coming had been prophesied, so had His victory.

Jesus entered Jerusalem. His entrance signaled both the deliverance of salvation for some and doom for others. Jesus' cosmic triumph through His crucifixion and death, through His burial and resurrection, would seal and certify eternal life for those “in Him,” and eternal punishment for those not “in Him.”

He had set His face toward Jerusalem. He had wept over this city.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those that believe on His Name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John1:11-13)

Jesus entered Jerusalem, not as at other times, when He had been circumcised, when He became a Son of the Law, or when He sat in the Temple and taught. He entered as the Lamb of God, pure and spotless, without spot or blemish, ready to offer Himself a Sacrifice for sin, bearing the Divine penalty and wrath of a holy God, ready to make peace through the Blood of the Cross, ready to establish the way of forgiveness of sins, ready to redeem a people unto God, ready to destroy the works of the devil. He will make war His way, to do all that is necessary and sufficient to make the Peace.



Just the Messenger,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

Now the God of the Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20, 21.

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