

The Lamb on the Donkey (Matthew 21:1-11)

We have come to the final week before the Cross (Sunday in the text to the Sunday of resurrection = 8 chaps)

There are incredible theological, prophetic, messianic, Jewish, social and political threads coming together in this text...

- A historical account full of rich imagery, beautiful symbolism, and biblical fulfillment
- As usual, Jesus is coming and acting in an unexpected way (social & religious constructs of the day)
- Jesus changes protocol from “do not tell anyone” to a clear self-revelation of who He is

Verse 1

- Jesus was arriving in Jerusalem at the beginning of Passover week (a Sunday)
 - The remembrance and celebration of God delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt (lamb story)
 - Huge deal; all Jewish males over 18 required to be there; pilgrimage; 2.7 million
 - = **Tensions with Romans, and longings for the Messiah (high alert; earshot)**

Just days before, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead (kinda a big deal) (see **John 11:43-57**)

- Tension, excitement, intrigue, and plotting hung thickly in the air (Cf. v.10 = “stirred”; shake into shock)

Jesus intentionally lays hold of the electric atmosphere and intrigue to reveal His identity as Messiah King

- He sets the stage (**verses 2-3**)
- Messianic fulfillment (**verses 4-5**)
- The scene (**verses 6-8**) (**Cloaks** and **branches** = a ceremonial carpet for the king!)
- Normal sort of entry for a king or ruler... (describe)
 - **Except for the donkey**
 - Kings rode magnificent horses on such occasions
 - Cnt. Warhorse (Cf. Alexander the Great in 332 BC)
 - = **Here we begin to see the paradox of Jesus' entry emerge**
 - He clearly is arriving as a king (and at a time of desired deliverance—wartime)
 - Cf. **Cloaks** and **branches** and “**hosanna**” (**verses 9**)
 - = **Clearly, Jesus arrives as a king—but one of peace (Prince of Peace)**
 - He is not coming to conquer political powers
 - He is coming to suffer on behalf of sinners
 - He will confront a different set of tyrannies—sin, death and the devil
 - He will do so as **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**

Remember that this day was the beginning of the Passover week

- Something was happening at this moment which was telegraphed every year for thousands of years in every Jewish home
- **Exodus 12:3, 4-7, 12-14, NIV**
 - On this very day, every Jewish household was choosing **its** lamb
 - They would bring it into the house for the week
 - 1. To observe that it was without blemish
 - 2. To see it's innocence and feel the reality of it dying for them (i.e. **their** lamb)
 - = **This moment was God presenting to Israel and the World His Lamb**
 - “Behold the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)
 - Jesus would be “**in the household**” (the Temple) the next 4 days being observed
 - After that “**all the members of the community**” would slaughter Him
 - Abraham and Isaac...
 - “**God will provide for Himself the lamb for the offering...**” (Genesis 22:8)
 - **Isaiah 53:5-7b, NLT**
 - The parallelism, the fulfillment, the imagery, is stunning

¹ Cf. 2 Kings 9:13 and King Jehu

All of these prophetic, theological, messianic, and salvific threads are coming together in this moment

- It is not entirely lost on the crowd, obviously (**verse 9**)
 - **Hosanna = please save!** (and later a general exclamation of praise)
 - They are using it as **both** praise (**9c**) and as petition (**9a**)
 - **9a = Hosanna to the Son of David** (= messiah and son of the warrior king) (⊗ Caesar)
 - **Psalm 118** = a psalm of petition and praise for deliverance from national enemies
 - **Psalm 118:25-26**, NIV; **Psalm 118:21-27**, NIV
 - So, even though Jesus is on a donkey (perplexing), they are getting the deliverer king part
 - Cf. The **Lion of the tribe of Judah** (Cf. Rev 5:5)
- What they are not getting is the **lamb that will be slain** part (Cf. Rev 5:6)
 - Though the donkey was perhaps perplexing, maybe they should have got it
 - **"... if they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass. King Shapur said to Samuel, 'Ye maintain that the Messiah will come upon an ass: I will rather send him a white horse of mine.'" -Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 98a**
 - I.e. Messiah upon a white horse and coming with the clouds is more appropriate!
 - But, if they people are not deserving, He will come on a donkey
 - Perhaps that is exactly the point of His coming: We are undeserving!
 - And He comes lowly—to suffer for us!

But the crowds (with as much as they got) were missing the main point

- **Luke 19:41-42a**, NASB (Cf. **Bethphage** = "House of the Unripe Figs"; cf. v. 18ff)
- They thought peace meant extermination of external enemies (The Romans)
- But true peace was found in the confrontation of the internal enemies of sin and guilt
 - So, the King came to die
 - In that we are meant to find true joy! (**Zechariah 9:9-10**, NASB) **JOY**

But, the King is coming again!

- There is more to be fulfilled (**Zechariah 9:10**, NASB) **HOPE**
- This time, He will come with the clouds and on a white horse to exert His external rule over the nations!
- **Revelation 19:11-16**, NASB

None of this is lost on us... we have the privilege of the full picture

- We see **the Lamb that was slain** for the sins of the world
 - We can welcome the **Prince of Peace in faith** **PEACE**
- We see **the Lion of the tribe of Judah** who comes in glory in the clouds on a white horse to bring a righteous day of reckoning
 - We can look forward to the **King of Kings in faith** **COMFORT: CONFIDENCE**

Gladly surrender to this King

- Came to us, as lowly as possible (manger to colt of a donkey) (identifying with the plight of humanity)
- God provided the Lamb for us! (though undeserving)
- We sing "Hosanna!" as praise for salvation that has come (past tense declaration)
- Joy, hope, peace, comfort and confidence in Him
- We should joyfully and fully follow and serve Him (from 'hosanna' to 'crucify Him') (⊗ show and shouts)