

The Presentation of the King”
“A time for Tears of Joy and Expectancy”

In the Christian calendar, this week has one rival for the heart of every Jesus-devotee, the other being the incarnation of our Lord. “The Word became flesh and dwelt (“tabernacled”) among us... (John 1:14).” While the first celebrates the gift of a child who will become the “King of Kings,” this week brings us to a second stunning reality, totally unique in many ways for royalty. As in the birth of our Lord, this one met with extreme hostility, yet proved unpreventable. In this instance, it brought hostility and death once again, but also proved unpreventable. By His death, resurrection, and ascension (enthronement), He establish His right to rule over a people that He has and will gather, the only true king ruling in an eternal monarchy. At the end of this unusual week, this king departed and we celebrate His triumph over death and destruction, yet He left us with a promise of a return and the accomplishment of having gathered a people over whom He will reign forever and ever.

To prepare us for this amazing week, I want to reflect on it through the lens of a promise revealed four centuries before “Palm Sunday” and yet to be ultimately fulfilled in a day to come.

“Behold Your King is Coming to You”

Zech. 9:9

A Time of Joy with Hesitation

The text is found in Zechariah 9. The time of the writing is the post-exilic period. Cyrus the Persian granted the Jews the right of return (“aliya”) in 536. Under Zerubbabel, the returnees came into the land to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. They began, but, threats and discouragement stopped the work for sixteen years. In that context, God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to continue the work, both succeeding in 520. The Temple was completed in 516 (seventy years after its initial destruction). Zechariah wrote both to chastise and encourage. Part of the encouragement was Haggai’s statement that the glories of that Temple would be greater than Solomon’s. Zechariah’s encouragement center on the coming of the promised One, the true Temple.

The message today is to begin with the promises found in Zechariah and use it as a reflective lens to see how the four gospels explain more fully and fulfill the prophet.

A. His first advent, Zech. 9:9

1. His coming, v. 9a

“...your king is coming.” It will bring rejoicing. Though a king, he would not come on a war horse, the symbol of a conqueror.

2. His character, v. 9b

This coming one will be a deliverer who is just, as well as humble.

d. His manner, v. 9c

His coming, this time, will be in humbleness, riding on a symbolic beast, the foul of a donkey.

What does Matthew add?

Matthew takes twenty chapter to cover His 3 ½ year ministry and eight His last week.

1. The coming of Jesus to Bethpage, 21:1-3.
Bethphage, a town on the Mount of Olives, was considered the outer limit of Jerusalem.
2. The securing of donkey and its foal, vv. 6-7a
The account of the securing of a donkey and her colt is one of those instances that indicate that Jesus pre-arranged it.

He appears to have sat on the foal of an animal that had not been ridden (this would explain why there are two animals in the account since a mature donkey would accompany its offspring).

3. The reaction of the crowd, vv. 7b-9
The crowds that received Him with adulation were likely composed of the multitudes that came up with Him, hearing His teaching and seeing His miracles (e.g., the two blind men, Lazarus).



JESUS ENTERING JERUSALEM

Jesus rode on a colt, an unbroken animal. That itself is a miracle; the animal remains calm. The disciples place their coats on the animal; the people place theirs with palm branches in the street (an evidence of royalty).

By such action, Jesus was presenting Himself as the Messiah, the Son of David.

The praises of the people come from Psalm 118:25–26. It is praise and a prayer as well as a cry for deliverance. The psalm was used at the feasts of Tabernacles, Dedication, and Passover. By such action, Jesus was presenting Himself as the Messiah, the Son of David.

The spreading of leafy branches cast before him by the crowd is an allusion to Maccabean triumphs (the engraving on Jewish shekels). The crowd sees him through their political aspirations. Notice: He did not ride on a warhorse yet a conqueror of nations he will be!

4. The understanding of His person, vv. 10-11
All that Jerusalem was willing to say is that He was a prophet from Nazareth.
5. The cleansing of the Temple, vv. 12-14
Jesus quotes Isa. 56:7 the prophet looks forward to a time when the temple would be called a house of prayer. He is claiming that He is the fulfillment of Haggai and Zechariah.

What does Mark add?

Mark contains sixteen chapters, ten on His 3 1/2-year ministry and 6 covering His last week.

1. The bringing of the donkey and colt to Bethany, 11:1-4
Mark tells us of olive groves on the slope of the mount facing the Kidron Valley (“Gethsemane” means the place of an olive press). The town, along with Bethany (“the

house of dates”), was considered the outer limits of Jerusalem. Mark’s mention of the town and the mount may be rooted in an allusion to King David, thus recalling his exile and return in triumph after the death of Absalom (II Sam. 19-20). David rode on a donkey returning to the city, Solomon did so at his coronation as David’s successor (I Kings 1:38-40). This is the first time we hear of Jesus riding on a donkey.

2. Mark connects the event to Zechariah 9:9.

3. The entry into the temple area, v. 11

If the Triumphal Entry is interpreted as the presentation and claim of Jesus to be the nation’s Messiah, the Son of David, Israel’s royal deliverer, the entrance into the Temple is His claim to be Israel’s great High Priest, the one who is in authority over religious life.

What does Luke add?

Luke is split with 19 chapters leading up to the Triumphal Entry and 5 chapters afterward.

1. In the process, the crowd quotes Ps. 118:26, so we hear the voice of celebration, 19:38

2. The rebuke of the Pharisees in the crowd; thus, the crowd quite mixed, v. 39

3. Jesus answered their rebuke. "I will tell you, if these become silent, the stones would cry out (v. 40)."

4. Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem, vv. 41-44

What does John add?

John’s split is 11 chapters before and 9 chapters after with an epilogue.

1. We are told when Jesus came to Bethany, six days before Passover with His disciples, so it was a Saturday, 12:1

2. We are told that he came to the home of Lazarus, his family, and was taking a meal with the family, v. 2

3. We are told of the anointing by Mary and Judas’ inordinate behavior, vv. 3-8

Wiersbe said it this way, “When she came to the feet of Jesus, Mary took the place of a slave. When she undid her hair (something Jewish women did not do in public), she humbled herself and laid her glory at His feet (see 1 Cor. 11:15). Of course, she was misunderstood and criticized; but that is what usually happens when somebody gives his or her best to the Lord.”

4. We are told of an assassination plot, vv. 9-11

5. The fear of the Pharisees, vv. 12-13

“And the Lord their God will save them in that day
As a flock of His people;
For they are a stone in a crown
Sparkling in His land.
For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs....”

Zech. 9: 16-17

A Time of Endless Unprecedented Everlasting Joy

B. His second advent, 9:10-10:12

A second source of encouragement, a second coming of a king arises from the Zechariah, a truth separated by centuries. Often in prophetic literature time is suppressed, gaps appear in such a way as they are unseen.

1. The establishment of peace, v. 10

The imagery here is that of war and its final aftermath, which for the first time will lead to an enduring peace through the "Prince of Peace." It will spread through the habitation of all peoples ("...from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth") in the coming kingdom.

2. The prediction of deliverance, vv. 11-17

a) The encouragement of Israel, vv. 11-12

While the deliverance is yet future, its disclosure would be an encouragement to the exiles filling them with hope. The "blood of My covenant," since the context refers to the divine promise of redemption, it refers to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:8-21). A restoration is coming greater than anything in the past, even the Solomonic "Golden Era."

b) The conflict with paganism and ultimate triumph, vv. 13-15

Before the fulfillment of the promise, conflict will characterize the fortunes of the people of God. However, that is not the final chapter in God's plan.

c) The deliverance of Israel, vv. 16-17

The final deliverance, "in that day," will be an era of blessing and plenty.

Thoughts:

1. What we celebrate annually on "Palm Sunday" is the official claim by Jesus that He was the Promised One, the King. He did not assume the throne promised to the "Son of David," but He presented His credentials for the nation to evaluate.
2. That Jesus' first action after His presentation was to enter and cleanse the Temple indicates that He was not only claiming to be their king but also the great High Priest, the offeror of the final sacrifice.
3. The offices of prophet, priest, and king were presented that day in one person.
4. In His coming, His office was that of prophet and priest. Seven days later, He became for us the priest that not only offered a sacrifice behind the "veil in the Holy of Holies," the symbolic presence of God, offering Himself as the final Passover Lamb. Who else but God, all other creatures being inferior to Him, could stand in His presence acceptably for us!
5. Yet once enthroned, He is to reign as King when His enemies are destroyed, and He rules in a kingdom over a people that will adore Him forever. That is at the Second Coming of Christ when the offices of prophet, priest, and king will culminate as one, for all His children to enjoy forever.
6. In the first coming they expected a king, but were presented with a humble Savior. In the second, they will cry out for a savior but face a just monarch! Is that not sad!!!
7. Palm Sunday is the stepping-stone of the Lord as our priest. In a future day, we will see Him as our King in a domain unlike anything we have experienced on the best of day here.