

## ***Palm Sunday 2002***

Zechariah 9:9, 14:1-5, Revelation 19:11-16

2000 years ago, the Sadducees had a tradition in which they believed the Messiah would show up four days before Passover. They kept the gates of the Temple open so that He could walk right in to His rightful place. Because of this, Jewish nationalistic fervor was at its peak on this particular day. The Romans would have all troops activated and on alert for this day. They feared the Jews would try another revolt under some religiously crazed radical as had happened in the past. Tensions were very high on that day.

That is the very day Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling the prophecy of Zech 9:9 (NIV). <sup>9</sup> *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

I have been up and down Hosanna Street in Jerusalem a number of times. If you are coming from Bethlehem and then through Bethany, the road climbs over a ridge and as you reach the crest, spread out before you on the other side of the Kidron Valley is the beautiful city of Jerusalem. I wish I had a projector to show you the scene from this road. The dominant feature in the view of the city is the Dome of the Rock. The Dome of the Rock now stands where the Temple once stood. The rock inside that dome has the footings of the Holy of Holies in the dimensions recorded in God's word. There is even a carved out area on top of the rock in the dimensions of the Ark of the Covenant. That ridge was once called the Mount of Olives. Two-thirds of the way down that hill into the Kidron Valley is the Church of All Nations and the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus went down that road on a donkey. It was a donkey that had never been ridden. This donkey had yielded its back to its Creator and willingly carried Him down that road. That donkey happens to be a lot like us when we came to Jesus for salvation. We come, used to having our own way, but knowing we have met our Creator and need to yield our life to Him. What an honor to be of use to the Creator of all things!

The crowds that had witnessed Lazarus' resurrection shouted "Hosanna" which means, "Save us now!" Yasha anna in Hebrew. They are quoting from Psalms 118:25-29 (NIV)<sup>25</sup> *O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.* <sup>26</sup> *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.* <sup>27</sup> *The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.* <sup>28</sup> *You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.* <sup>29</sup> *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

They are saying Jehovah (LORD) save us! To come in the name of the LORD is to come in His authority. He has made His light to shine on us. Jesus said He was the Light of the world. Isaiah predicted the Messiah would be a Light to the Gentiles. Then in verse 27 we have variation in the texts. The NIV is more accurate in translation representing a clearer understand of the original language and predicts they will be waving boughs before Him unto the altar in the Temple. Then verse 28 – You are my God! Oh if only they would have heard their own prophecies that they had memorized so faithfully. And verse 29 is incredible as this is what was sung when the Presence of God filled the first Temple built by Solomon. By the way, it's a chorus. As the people sang this in Solomon's day, and I think they sang it more than 2 or 3 times, the Presence of God so filled the Temple that everyone had to step outside. (2Chron 7) And what was happening right there in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday? The presence of God is about to walk into the Temple, the incarnation of God!

Do you see this morning that this is a picture for you? The Lord wants you for a Temple of the Holy Spirit. He wants to fill you, so that it is no more you that live but Christ that lives in you. We need to sing, "He is good and His love endures forever" until we are filled to overflowing with the presence of the King. Are we welcoming His presence into us as a Temple? Are our doors open and waiting? And do we recognize Him when He comes? He comes to us just as humbly, and sometimes we think it is just our brother, just a passage of Scripture, just an event in an ordinary day, but it is the King! The Jews sang Psalm 24 about a generation that sought the face of God. Psalms 24:7(NIV)<sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.* Be always ready for humble King Jesus to come in ways you least expect.

The welcoming crowd shouted, Luke 19:38 (NIV)<sup>38</sup> *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* This was a very dangerous thing to be expressing at that moment. The Pharisees knew the verse in Zechariah about the King coming on a donkey and were aware of the watchful eyes of Rome. It wasn't helping the tense situation to shout about a king on this particular day. They asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples. But Jesus told them if the disciples were quiet the stones would cry out. Jesus was familiar with the prophecy too. He saw the command to the daughter of Jerusalem to "Shout" and knew it would be fulfilled with our without people.

Our culture is fascinated with prophecies. One of the ways I like to get my weekly dose of humor is to look at the tabloid headlines as I go through the supermarket checkout line. They are always proclaiming some hidden prophecy is found or some secret code has helped to understand what some ancient prophet said. What is amazing to me is even when they are in error year after year, people still want to read it. The Bible has never been wrong. Its

prophecies are accurate in every detail. It tells us what is coming in detail and yet most people never pick up their Bible! This prophecy about our Lord entering Jerusalem is amazingly detailed. Zechariah 9:9 speaks of the Daughter of Zion and Jerusalem rejoicing greatly and shouting. The sisters of Lazarus were indeed rejoicing for the resurrection of their brother. The women that followed Jesus were rejoicing that they were loved of God and forgiven. In ancient Israel a shout would be lifted up as an army went into battle. Here is a little rag tag army entering Jerusalem to conquer, but they have come led by the Prince of Peace on a donkey. They lift up a shout of praise.

He came as the righteous One. How many people can be said to have entered Jerusalem in righteousness? And next are those powerful words, "having salvation". Jesus came offering them peace with God. He came in peace to give the people peace. They preferred salvation from taxation to salvation of their souls – and so in a few days they would prefer Barabbas to be freed instead of Jesus. Jesus could see that this was their mindset, and so in the midst of this praise, with people waving the palm branches like a national flag, Jesus wept. Luke 19:42 (NIV) *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.* Peace was not a new king that would war against Rome. It was a King that would offer them peace with God. Jesus could see that their desire to have an earthly king would be their destruction. If they had received the salvation that Jesus offered, they would not have revolted against Rome and been destroyed, crucified by the thousands.

I want to stop here and ask if Jesus weeps for you this morning, because He sees your choice is to try to find peace in something other than Him. He sees the devastation that choice will reap in your life. How He would love to gather you into His arms. Don't be like Jerusalem. Receive His peace this morning. Recognize that only your Creator knows what will truly fill your emptiness. It is not in the things He made, but His very life.

Look at the last part of that amazing prophecy, "gentle and riding on a donkey..." This is how the Lord comes to us today too. He gently knocks upon the door of our hearts. He enters only at our invitation. I'm amazed at His patience. It should break our hearts that He is so persistent and yet so gentle.

The Romans don't seem to have been too concerned. After all, there are no swords. When the ancient kings of Judah, from whom Joseph and Mary were descended, came into a town on a donkey it meant that they came in peace. The town could relax and prepare to welcome them. But if they came on a war-horse, it meant a battle was about to ensue. The time for Jesus to humbly and in gentleness offer Himself to man is drawing to an end. Just as this prophecy and Psalm 118 have been fulfilled in amazing detail, so the other prophecies will soon come to pass. Turn to Zechariah 14 for the real triumphal entry.

Zech 14:2-4 (NIV)<sup>2</sup> *I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.*<sup>3</sup> *Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle.*<sup>4</sup> *On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.* That is the Triumphal Entry! The day is coming when armies will surround Jerusalem. At that time Jerusalem will fall and half the people will be removed. But then the LORD Himself will fight against those nations that have taken Jerusalem.

For more detail we'll turn to Rev 19:11-16 (NIV) <sup>11</sup> *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.* <sup>12</sup> *His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.* <sup>13</sup> *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.* <sup>14</sup> *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.* <sup>15</sup> *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter."* *He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.* <sup>16</sup> *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Now the King of Judah comes on a war-horse. No more gentle Jesus for the time for justice has come. What kind of God would He be if He never called man to account, if He never executed justice on the wicked? Man cries out now when a Hitler or Saddam is allowed to go on. "Where is God?" they ask, when some tyrant kills the innocent. All rebellion against God will be required to face justice when that day comes. No one is going to ask then, "Where is God?" for every eye shall see Him. Of course, then wicked man will be asking, "Where is the God of love?" He is right here, right now on the donkey, gently asking you to realize that the route you're on leads to death. The Day of Lord is coming and then it will be too late for those who have ignored His pleading all their life.

As the armies of the world loot Jerusalem He will descend from heaven on His war-stallion with the saints of God – the redeemed, following Him into battle. Apparently He will dismount upon the Mount of Olives as Zechariah predicted. He will execute justice in the earth, for He is Faithful and True. He would not be faithful or true if He did not punish the wicked that refuse to turn from their rebellion against God. It is in total justice that He judges and makes war. He is the Word of God. John received this revelation and it was John who had written in His Gospel that the Word became flesh and lived among us. The reign of the

Messiah as a ruler of the earth will begin. It was what the religious leaders were hoping for at the first coming, at least in a limited form that included them in some position of power. But it is not the powerful that will reign at His side. No, it is the meek who will inherit the earth.

At the second Triumphal Entry every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Then every one will know that He is the King of kings and Lord of all lords. Jesus told the Pharisees in that day they, too, would utter the words of Psalm 118, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Let us jump back to Zechariah and read from Zech 14:5b-9 (NIV)<sup>5b</sup> *Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.<sup>6</sup> On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost.<sup>7</sup> It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light.<sup>8</sup> On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.<sup>9</sup> The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.*

Just as the first prophecy has been fulfilled, so the second one will be fulfilled in detail. He will reign as King over the earth and execute justice and judgement upon it. I would like us to consider the path the majority of the Jews chose. They wanted a fulfillment to prophecy that met their personal desires for power and position. They wanted a messiah of their own making and for their own purposes. The real Messiah had never made His triumphal entry into their hearts. Gentle Jesus still offers salvation to those who have chosen their own messiahs. He will not take second place to them, and He will not make you give them up. He just continues to offer Himself, and wait for you to offer yourself to Him. One day it will be too late.

We see the focus of the world turn to Jerusalem even this very day. Peace will come but it will suddenly be broken and Jerusalem will be taken. But then the Lord will come and all the holy ones with Him. Will you be with Him when He returns or will you be wishing you did not let false messiahs of pleasure and worldly satisfaction keep you from letting the King reign in your life?

Palm Sunday! The ones that shouted 'yasha anna' will be shouting, "Crucify Him" in just four days, because He did not do what they wanted Him to do. They wanted Him to fulfill their expectations, not be LORD of their life. Where do you stand, total surrender to the Lordship of Christ, or expecting Him to fulfill your expectations? Yasha anna – save now – not from Rome, but from my own misguided desires. If He reigns in you now, He will reign in and through you then. Where will you be at the Second Triumphal Entry? It all depends on if you have allowed a triumphal entry into your heart!