

From a Donkey Ride to an Empty Tomb – Four Lessons from the Most Important Week in His-Story



The King of Kings on a Donkey's Colt – The *“Un-triumphal”* Entry

First, I should write that I looked long and hard for the origin of the phrase “triumphal entry” used to refer to Jesus’ ride into Jerusalem on a donkey of all things. I could not find any specific references other than the words were assigned based on the response of many Jews to Jesus riding into Jerusalem accompanied by a crowd.

His arrival seemed “triumphal” to observers. These people (not their leaders or the Romans) were shouting and singing—praising God and calling on Jesus to “save them now” (Hosanna in the highest”). They threw palm branches in His path.

But Jesus and the crowd had very different agendas. The Jews wanted a political Messiah who would throw off Roman rule and return Israel to them—not at all what Jesus had in mind. He came to save them (us) from their sins—not the Romans! (Luke 5: 32)

The importance of this event and amazing scene is underscored in that it appears in all four gospels. What lessons can we learn from our own observations on what we now refer to as

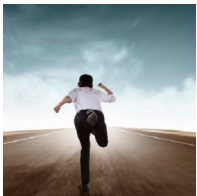
Palm Sunday? Two things stand out regarding Jesus' *ride*—a small donkey.

- **Jesus' abject humility.** It is both interesting and exciting that this humble (and probably uncomfortable) means of travel also fulfilled OT prophecy.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9: 9 ESV

- **Beast of Burden.** Donkeys carried loads for their owners that would be too burdensome, if not impossible, for them to bear. Jesus carried our sins to the Cross, and there bore our burden “once for all” who repent of sins and receive Him as Savior.

What a great start to the most difficult week in His-story!



The First Streaker Recorded in the Bible

“Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. Matthew 26: 56
KJV/ Mark 14: 50

“Every man for himself” may have been what the disciples and others who followed Jesus were thinking or screaming as they literally ran for their lives. All deserted Him—every man who swore they would stand by Him to the end, walked with Him three years—the men Whom He referred to as ***friends!***

Mark shares in his gospel that one young man (himself) was grabbed by the cloak and ran out from under it—naked and very

afraid, escaping with his life (v. 52). Only John, is accounted for at the Cross. We know Peter was hiding – crying bitterly at having denied Jesus three times. And a distraught Judas hung himself.

Honest Christian men will admit to times we also ran away when standing up for Christ got tough, or we were afraid it could cost us our standing with others; perhaps even our jobs.

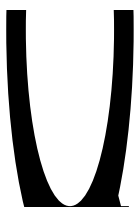
Like His disciples, whose feet Jesus' knelt and washed during the Last Supper, we have experienced His humility, drank from His cup of grace, yet withheld it from others whose needs were no more than our own.

Peter's denial offends no more than ours as we stand nervously in silence or curse Him, not with words, with deeds that reflect our true nature, not His.

The first half of Holy Week was all good for these devoted followers of Christ. It brought popularity and fanfare. The second half brought fear and failure.

Yet out of despair and defeat looms forgiveness and victory. Jesus is heading to the Cross for your sin and mine. We just have to make it 'til Sunday. Happy days lay ahead.

As we approach Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, let's do some introspection that will lead surely to confession as the desperate men we are apart from Christ.



The "King of the Jews" is Dead – Long Live the King!

"When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land

until the ninth hour (12-3 pm) ...And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last.” (from Mark 15: 33, 34 37).

Only John recorded His words, *“It is finished.”* (John 19: 30)

Luke recorded these as His last spoken words before dying.

“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” And having said this, He breathed His last.”” (Luke 23: 46)

Imagine the defeated and hopeless feelings of Jesus' followers, who despite being with Him three years – listening to and living with Him – still did not get it. All they knew was the man who was supposed to save them was dead. How many times did He tell them He had to die to accomplish His purpose. Now He had.

Even nature could not bear to watch, so the sun turned away and darkness covered the earth for three hours. God turned His back on our sin as Jesus became sin. Only now could God's holy demand for justice be satisfied.

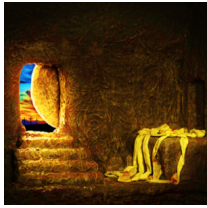
When Jesus breathed His last and yielded His spirit back to God, strange physical manifestations occurred in response. (Matthew 27: 50-53)

- First, the veil of the temple was torn in half from top to bottom – an unimaginable feat. The veil was ~ 60 ft high x 30 feet wide x 4” thick. Only God could rip it in half. He did!
- The earth shook, and rocks split.
- Graves opened, and the bodies of saints came alive again. After Jesus resurrection, they came out and walked around the city.

That's the Good News, brothers, but what a price! Deserving death, Jesus bought us life. So, as you spend this Good Friday and the Saturday Jesus spent in the grave, I challenge

you to consider your life in lieu of His death. Ask yourself this question,

“Has His death made an eternal and obvious change in my life?”



He is Risen Indeed!

He is risen indeed! – the greatest expression in history. Jesus had risen from the grave as promised. Those words of confirmation were first used by eye witnesses and spoken to disbelieving disciples to whom Jesus had not yet appeared. All four Gospels give resurrection accounts, but the Apostle Paul cut to the heart of the matter in terms of its significance in 1 Corinthians 15.

*“if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain...and you are still in your sins...If in Christ we have **hope in this life only**, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* (from verses 16-19)

But Hallelujah, He is risen. Only fools will pity us as we celebrate and share this Good News. If you are in Christ, He lives in you. This is Resurrection Sunday – a day set aside by the Christian church long ago to celebrate His resurrection and the future hope with certainty of ours as well.

My prayer for true believers is that our lives are filled with such undying gratitude and joy that all whom the Lord puts in our paths will want to know the reason for the Hope we have. Our response? **HE IS RISEN INDEED!**

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Celebrating our risen Messiah with everyone who has received Him as Savior,

Walter