

Everyone loves a parade. Parades are a means of honoring heroes and celebrities, maybe a championship team. So take a few moments and pretend that you are standing on the street in Jerusalem as part of the first Palm Sunday parade.

Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem for his final visit. Nearing the city, he sent two disciples with very specific instructions to go to a certain place where they would find a colt tied on which no one had ever ridden. He told them to loosen it and bring it to him. Remarkably, Jesus had already planned out his own parade. He had made the arrangements. He had gone ahead of them.

The arrangements have been made. He didn't wait for his loyal disciples to throw him a retirement party, present him with a gold watch. Remember, his earthly ministry is coming to a close. By the end of the week, Jesus will be dead. Throughout his ministry, he had maintained a low profile, but now the time has come to be recognized.

There was no conceit here at all. He needed a parade and. And he knew the world needed this particular parade. The two disciples sent by the Lord on a special mission found and brought the colt. Luke 19:35 says, "Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him."

They spread their clothes on the back of this little colt like a red carpet for Jesus. They moved off towards the city of Jerusalem.

In the city, the atmosphere is charged. People are pumped up. The noise is almost deafening. The crowd was pushing and shoving, cheering and shouting, even paving the streets with their own jackets and clothes, a custom usually reserved for some famous military leader who has returned to the city after a great conquest.

The question on everybody's mind as you're gathering and trying to get a good vantage point was, "Can you see him yet? Hey, have you caught a glimpse of the coming king?"

The gate has been opened to the city so that the king might come in, and there we are, poised and waiting, not so patiently, because this is perhaps one of the biggest moments of our lives. Not everybody in the crowd has seen him. Most people have heard of him, but now you have an opportunity to put an eyeball on the Lord to see him.

Have you ever wondered why this brief and seemingly insignificant happening should be recalled each year at Easter? Is it because it opened the events of The Passion Week? Or could it be because this event marked a high point in the recognition given to Jesus?

Verses 37 and 38 of chapter nine of Luke describe what happened next.

Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying:

“ ‘Blessed *is* the King who comes in the name of the LORD!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

This is thunderous for all the mighty works they had seen.

Verse 39 tells us that some of the Pharisees thought the whole procession was highly improper, totally out of line. They called him out right there and they said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples. Tell them to be quiet. Tell them to calm down. What they’re doing is wrong.” Jesus said, no way. Let them praise. Let them glorify. Let them magnify me.

What was Jesus saying here? Basically, God’s plan for the world is all wrapped up in his promise of a king who would solve the problems of our sick and confused world. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, that brief recognition declared to the world that God had kept his promise. God’s king had come.

The events of Palm Sunday point to three amazing facts that affect every person born. First, God’s king came to Earth. Secondly, God’s king will come to earth again. And thirdly, God’s king has already begun to reign.

God’s King has Come to Earth

First of all, God’s king has come to the earth. One of the clearest statements of this promise of a king coming to earth is found in Numbers 24:17 and 19.

“I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near;
A Star shall come out of Jacob;
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,
And batter the brow of Moab,
And destroy all the sons of tumult.

Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,
And destroy the remains of the city.”

This prophecy clearly speaks of a scepter and power. The great king to come would have an everlasting kingdom. He would bring peace and blessing for which the world had been longing since its beginning. Oh, a king shall come.

Who is this coming King? Who is this king of glory? The answer is the one who rode into Jerusalem that spring day in what we've come to call the triumphal entry. By this passage, Jesus was fulfilling prophecy and presenting himself as Israel's king.

Zechariah 9:9 says:

“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.

Now is the time. This is the moment of opportunity. Jesus is going to seize the day, fulfill this prophecy. In those days, the donkey was a symbol of peace. Horses were symbols of military might and strength. Conquering generals would come into town riding on horseback. Ambassadors coming on a peaceful mission rode on donkeys. Jesus was an ambassador of peace from the ultimate kingdom.

There was no pride in his heart as he rode in this parade. He was simply making a statement about his greatness and his true identity. Can you see him? Can you recognize him? Can you identify him for who he is? He is king. He was born a king. He was born in a stable, but don't let the manger fool you.

Remember the wise men who came into the house to find him? They asked, “Where is he who is born King of the Jews?” And they did what all wise men do when they come into the presence of a king. They bowed down and they worshiped him. Is a very natural, very normal, a very expected expression, when you're in the presence of a king.

Not only was he born a king, he died a king. True, he was crucified, but as a king. Pilate, the Roman governor, asked him at his trial, “Are you king of the Jews?” And Jesus answered, “It is as you say.” In other words, yes, I am.

At the governor's orders, Jesus' cross bore the inscription for all to read. This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Let it be known. Let it be declared. Can we truly take in what all this means? This divided, warring, and sinsick world has had a visit from its king.

God's King is Coming Again

Jesus did die. He was buried, and he rose the third day, leaving behind an empty tomb. Some of the most proven facts in all of history, because those things had really taken place, and were known to this very generation. A few years later, the apostle Paul could speak of those facts boldly on Mars Hill in Athens. Standing in the intellectual forum of

the day, he promised the king's return to judge the earth. You can read it in Acts chapter 17:30-31.

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Check out the final statement Paul makes here. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead. Catch that. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof that he will return to judge the world.

The Bible speaks of the king's return. It's the theme of Psalm number two. It's the promise made by the angel in Acts chapter one when he said, why stand you here gazing? This Jesus that you've seen taken. He'll come back. Jesus spoke of his return in John 14 and many other passages. The New Testament contains more than 300 references to his Second Coming.

But the next time Jesus comes, he won't be riding on a little donkey. He'll be sitting on a white horse. He's going to come back like all of Israel was hoping he would have come the first time. He is coming back in might and in power as the liberator. Revelation 19 one says, “Now I saw heaven open and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on him was called faithful and true. And in righteousness he judges and he makes war.”

That's your Jesus. He's not a weakling. He's a mighty God. In Psalm 24, this question is asked twice. First of all, in verse number eight. Who is this king of glory? And the answer comes back. The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Again, in verse ten, Who is the king of glory? The Lord of Hosts. He is the king of glory. Who is the king? Who shall we serve? Who shall we follow? To whom shall we bow?

Think about the implications here. One of these days, we are going to meet the eternal King. You and I are going to stand before him. Will we be standing before our savior and our king, or will we stand before him as our judge?

Jesus took the punishment of our sin, but we will not be judged for our sins because the judgment of our sin was nailed to the cross with Jesus. He took the punishment that we deserved, and we thank him for that.

God's King Has Already Begun to Reign

God's kingdom is mentioned more than 125 times in the New Testament. One day, Jesus Christ will establish his glorious kingdom on earth.

Isaiah said of the increase of his government and peace. There will be no end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom. But listen, there is an unseen kingdom already in existence. In Luke chapter 17:20-21,

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

What did Jesus mean by "the Kingdom of God within you?" He was saying that the kingdom had already begun, right under the Pharisees' noses. The king was standing right in front of them, and they had no idea. His kingdom grew, and now it circles the globe.

Colossians 1:13 reminds us that every believer has been delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of his son. You're a citizen of heaven. The king lives in you. That's overwhelming.

What does it mean to be in Christ's invisible, yet mighty, kingdom today? Well, it means forgiveness of sin and a newly found peace with God. Peace with God makes all the difference in our lives. So many people are troubled. So many people are heart sick, worried and anxious.

Being a part of Jesus' kingdom also means assurance of a home in heaven. You don't need insurance for this house. It's not going to rot and fall apart. Jesus, the carpenter's son, has provided it.

You are born again and receive a new heart, a new mind, a new will when you become a part of His kingdom. Everything becomes new when you open the gates to your heart and you allow Jesus to come into your life. All things become new. You're not the same as you used to be outside of Christ. You are a new creature.

As part of His kingdom, you have a special calling to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ and for his gospel. You can't keep this news bottled up inside of you. You have to uncork the bottle and let it flow out of you. You want the world to know that Jesus is alive, and he's coming back again. He's alive in our hearts, and he can move into their lives and make a difference in them too.

Being a part of Jesus' kingdom means having peace of mind, knowing that nothing or no one can separate you from the love of God. You are secure in the embrace of God. Jesus said no man can pluck you out of my hand. He has a tight grip on your life. What greater peace could there ever be?

The king is coming again, yes, but remember, he is reigning now in the hearts of those who are his own. There's nothing like knowing that you're part of His plan, that God has a purpose for you.

The original Palm Sunday parade was primarily for Jesus, to honor him for who he is, but it was also for the disciples. It was for the crowd to give them one more chance to behold his glory and to respond to him as king. People along the road to Jerusalem that day were jostling for position. Kids were up on the shoulders of their parents wanting to see the Lord.

Can you see him? Has God opened the eyes of your faith to believe? Have you caught a glimpse of the glory of who God really is and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son? Have you seen him? He wants you to behold him.

He came into the world to die for us, and because of his death and his resurrection, we live today and we have something to rejoice about. We have something to shout about. We have something to dance about. One day Jesus will come back, and what a reunion it will be in heaven when Jesus opens the gates and leads another parade, one that leads us into glory.

Don't let the world steal your inheritance in Christ. Don't trade off something that is temporal for things that are eternal. Stay focused. Fix your eyes upon the author and the finisher of your faith, the race is just about over.

I only have one question for you as you look at Palm Sunday. Have you heard about Easter Sunday? Palm Sunday is pointing us in that direction. The week that Jesus was about to have—the abuse that He will suffer, the price that He will pay. It all started with this little parade, where for one final time in his life, people would cheer him, praise and glorify him. It won't be long until it'll be another crowd that won't be so kind. They'll be screaming, Hey, give us Barabbas. Take this Jesus, and do with him as you will. Give us the criminal instead of the Christ.

But we're not going to give the whole story away. Let's come back next week.