

## "Entering the City"

Matthew 21:1-11

Have you ever gone to a new city before? Have you traveled to a city so different from what you knew that you didn't recognize it? Or was it a familiar city where you have been before, but there is so much more going on. In our modern day life as Americans, it's not unusual for us to visit different cities. It's not unusual for us to travel to new places unlike our own.

Yet in Christ's time, travelling was different. Going to a city was a major ordeal, perhaps might only be done once in a lifetime. You wouldn't travel from one place to another quickly. In Judea of Christ's time you more than likely walked from one city to another. For the normal person in Judea going to Jerusalem would be like going from tiniest rural town to the biggest city in the region.

Jerusalem itself would have been quite the sight. Standing in full view would have been the Temple Mount, where the Temple stood high so all could see the magnificence of Herod's rebuilding. There would have been random Roman buildings in the city, as a sign of the occupiers of the territory. It would have been full of people, bustling going every which way imaginable.

Now imagine the typical entrance into such a city as a common peasant person. There would be no one to greet you. There would be no one there to watch you come into the city unless you were expected by relative or friend. Regardless, it would have been a rather mundane and boring affair entering into the city.

Now for a person of high status, coming into the city would be a dramatic affair. A ruler such as the Roman Governor would be accompanied by soldiers and maybe even a whole legion.

It would be a massive event, with people standing and waving and cheering. It would probably please the ruler who came into the city and would feel justified in their position.

Considering all of this, what do we do with Christ's entrance into the city. If you notice, Christ came to the city, initially humbly, but instead was greeted by a crowd. People shouted out stating that he was prophet Jesus as predicted by the prophets of old. He was proclaimed in a way that would have made him the Messiah. People believed that a great King had come to Jerusalem and all of the city went abuzz with this news.

To the Pharisees and rulers of the cities, they would have decried such an event. The Pharisees would have seen that this would have been an abomination, that the so-called Messiah was a man who came from a dirty ramshackle town on the edge of obscurity. This was not their King, this man was a traitor.

We can see that Christ's entry into Jerusalem caused quite the stir. We can see that in this hour of triumphant entry his leading critics were gaining ammunition to prosecute Christ with horrible crimes. His adversaries were building.

To the Romans, this calling out that Christ was a King was a political issue. The Romans wanted to keep a firm grip on their land, and made sure that the people they ruled knew who was in power. It was quite common for people to be executed for the simple act of defying an empire. The Romans were ruthless and were set on exploiting the people that they conquered. They did not care for those who tried to stand in the way of their power.

We can see then that the Roman powers would not have been pleased. Christ's entry would have been like that of a ruler coming into the city. The grand parade and waving of palms and throwing down of cloaks was reserved only for those at the top, the Roman Governor

or maybe Herod. Yet the devotion of those cheering for Christ, would never have matched the cheering for the governor.

Those that cheered for Christ saw his message of hope and a better tomorrow. They knew that they were cheering for a man that promised a new life and a better tomorrow for everyone. The people that devoted themselves to Christ were willing to give their allegiance not to the Romans, but to Christ and ultimately to God.

Imagine how you would treat such an act as a Roman governor. You would be frustrated, because the people loved Christ out of love, whereas the people that would cheer for you did so out of fear. You know that the people feared Rome and you were the face of that Rome.

I believe that Christ's entry into Jerusalem is making a point. I'll be crude, but I basically believe that in Christ's entry to Jerusalem he is telling the powers that be where they could put it. Christ came to show that indeed God was the one who had true power and a true way to life. The Pharisees and the Romans did not have this claim to power like Christ did, for Christ's authority came from God the Father alone.

What do we do today with this entry to the city? I believe we should celebrate this entry and proudly proclaim our allegiance to Christ. We should be glad that the King of Kings had arrived in the holy city and was ready to take on the powers that were there. Christ was there for a battle of hearts, which we still do to this day as we try to spread the gospel to those who have not heard it. Today as we sign hosanna we proclaim ourselves to be on the side of hope and the love of God.

Yet as we know in our time and place, celebration doesn't last for long. It comes time for the darkness to enter into the world. There comes a time when hope will fight for everything. There will even be a moment when hope is lost and there seems to be nothing but the darkness.

We have to experience all of this to be the Christians that we are. We have to be ready to go on the journey with Christ.

As we celebrate the entry of Christ, we must be ready to go the distance with Christ. We must be ready to stay with Christ in his darkest hour. We are called to follow Christ wherever he goes, and this day, we will put that to the test.

Today, we celebrate, but today, we see what is going to happen. In our lives we experience the darkness and question what can come from the dark periods of our lives. Today, we will see the dark periods of Christ's life.

But I stand with you in the darkness and remind you that we have an advantage that Christ's followers did not have originally. We know the end of the story. We know that at the end there will be triumph. But now, we must be in the present. Ready your hearts, as we begin the journey with Christ. Amen.