

Who Is This?

04/05/20
Y. Joe Kim

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” ¹¹The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.” (Matthew 21:2-11)

1. Plymouth 400th Anniversary

This year is the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower’s arrival to Plymouth Harbor. In 1620, 102 passengers including 30 crew members set sail from England towards Virginia. The Pilgrims left in search of a better life to worship freely in the new world.

The journey for the Pilgrims was difficult. There were originally two ships, the Mayflower and the Speedwell. The two ships began the voyage but the Speedwell developed serious problems and returned to England. The Mayflower, originally the freight ship, was refitted for the passengers. There was little space for the 102 people on board.

For 66 days, the people endured the small and smelly spaces. Many became seasick. There was little food and water. When the Pilgrims arrived, they originally thought they were going to Virginia. But the Mayflower had gone off course and ended up in Cape Cod. The people would finally settle in Plymouth. The weather in Plymouth was much colder than the people had prepared for. The Pilgrims struggled to build homes. Food was scarce. The Pilgrims came to the new world to worship freely, but the sacrifice was too much. Nearly half of the people who came over died in the first year.

There were many challenges and sufferings for the early Pilgrims. However, they gave thanks to God for bringing them to the new world. What about the life of Jesus who came into the world as the Messiah?

2. Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Matthew chapter 21 tells us about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On their way to Jerusalem from Jericho, Jesus and his disciples go to Bethphage, a couple of miles outside of Jerusalem. Jesus sends two disciples to find a donkey and its colt. Matthew tells us that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey and a colt is predicted 500 years before by the prophet Zechariah. "***Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey***" (Matthew 21:5).

The ancient interpreters read this text as messianic. The coming of the king riding on a colt was not normal. The normal manner in which kings arrived to a city was by riding on horses as conquerors. But Jesus rides on a colt.

Why does Jesus ride on a colt? A colt was a symbol of humbleness and peace. The humbleness of Jesus does not simply represent his humility. It has a deeper meaning. Jesus' humbleness means his sacrificial death.

St. Paul says in Philippians 2:6-8, "***who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.***" Jesus humbled himself and died on the cross to fulfill God's mission of salvation for all humankind.

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem riding on a colt also represents Jesus coming into the world to bring peace. Some say that the world still does not have peace, even after Jesus. This is why some including many Jewish people may not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

However, Jesus tells his disciples, "***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid***" (John 14:27).

Jesus promises his disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the Counselor, who would be with the disciples and us forever and teach us all things that Jesus taught.

Jesus stresses to his disciples that his peace is different from worldly peace. Worldly peace means the absence of conflict. However, Jesus' peace provides his followers the peace of God through the forgiveness of sin and confident assurance in any circumstance.

This is why St. Paul says, ***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 4:6-7).

The world can't give the kind of peace that Jesus gives through the Holy Spirit. St. Paul experienced this kind of peace while he was in prison. That is why despite his circumstances, Paul did not worry about anything because Christ's peace was with him through the Holy Spirit.

3. Hosanna & Who Is This?

Do we know what the crowd at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem wanted? Verse 9 says, ***“The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”***

The people threw their cloaks and tree branches on the road at the arrival of Jesus. These people were pilgrims from Galilee on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The people shouted the words in Psalm 118:25-26, ***“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. ... Hosanna to the Son of David.”***

Do you know what “Hosanna” means? Hosanna literally means “Save (us) now.” By shouting “Hosanna,” the people were asking Jesus to save them from the oppression of Rome. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the entire city asked, “Who is this?” Jesus spent most of his time in Galilee, so many of the people in Jerusalem did not know about Jesus.

Those accompanying Jesus answered, ***“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”*** What does this phrase mean? Moses says in Deuteronomy 18:15, ***“The Lord your God will rise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”*** Matthew tells us that Jesus Christ came to fulfill God's plan for His people.

4. Save Us Now

What would we do if Jesus came to Sagamore Beach today just as he entered Jerusalem 2,000 years ago? I am sure we might shout, “Hosanna! Jesus, save us from our current outbreak!”

The Bible tells us that Jesus healed many who were impacted by sickness and disease. However, when healing does not happen, does this mean that the Lord does not care about us?

The answer to this question can be found in Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, ***“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will, but yours be done”*** (Luke 22:42).

Regardless of what may happen, Jesus prays that he will accept God's ultimate plan. Jesus' death seems like the ultimate loss. But we know that Jesus' death on the cross was God's greatest plan and would forgive all sins and allow us to overcome death to be reconciled with God.

5. Conclusion

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he did not become the king of Israel that the people wanted him to be. Instead, Jesus followed God's plan to die on a cross to bring God's forgiveness and true peace to every human being.

6. Application

The current outbreak has forced the world away from the things that we want and into a time of isolation and restriction. We might hope that Jesus would solve all of our problems and allow us to go back to normal. Today's Scripture tells us that Jesus came into the world, not to satisfy the immediate needs of people, but to fulfill God's plan for this world.

These days the world around us is shaken with anxiety. In this moment, we are reminded that God is in control and has a plan for the world and for each of us. Who is this Jesus? He is the one who came to fulfill God's plan by dying on the cross and overcoming death to forgive the sins of the world.

And now, each of us has received the Holy Spirit, our counselor and encourager, that reminds us that we are able to have peace in any circumstance. God's peace isn't the peace that the world can give, but a peace that we have because of the love of God and God calls us to share this love to our neighbors for the transformation of the world.

John Wesley set out for America in October 1735 and was so excited about the idea of preaching the Gospel to Native American people. During the voyage the ship was struck by a terrifying storm. John was afraid. Many of the passengers aboard screamed in terror. But a group of German Moravians were calmly singing hymns when a huge wave engulfed the ship and water poured down into the cabins. John noticed that he did not have God's peace, but they had.

St. Paul says in his sickness, suffering, persecution, and imprisonment, ***"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither heights, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** I pray that all of us are able to say the same thing to those who are afraid of the current outbreak. Amen.