Jesus’ Big Entrance

Key References: Matthew 21:1-11; The Desire of Ages, chap. 63, pp. 569-579; The Bible Story (1994), vol. 9, pp. 33-38; Our Beliefs, nos. 12, 14, 11
“Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Hosanna in the highest!’” (Matthew 21:9).

Try to picture Jesus’ triumphal entry to Jerusalem.

Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!” Shouts of joy filled the air as people covered the ground with garments and waved palm branches to welcome Jesus. Everyone was pondering whether this was the King who was going to deliver them from the Roman domination.

Jesus and His disciples had made the long journey to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Pausing for a rest outside the city of Bethphage, He turned to two of His disciples and said, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me” (Matthew 21:2).

Happy to do what Jesus asked, the disciples brought the donkeys, and placed their outer coats on the colt. It was Jewish custom for kings to ride on donkeys, as it was a symbol of honor. They, along with the assembling crowd, remembered the words of the prophet Zechariah: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey’” (verse 5).

As Jesus climbed on the donkey, a shout of triumph reached quickly through the crowd. The people were excited and joined the procession to Jerusalem. People who had never seen Jesus wondered about all the commotion and asked, “Who is this?”

Those in the crowd responded, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matthew 21:10, 11).

The priests back in Jerusalem said to each other in dismay, “Look, the whole world has gone after Him!” (John 12:19). Afraid that the crowd would declare Jesus king, a few of them came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” Jesus simply responded, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:39, 40).

As the crowd came to Jerusalem, Jesus paused. The setting sun made the Temple look spectacular, almost as if it were glowing. It was a beautiful sight—the golden pillars, the white marble walls, the
delicate workmanship catching the rays of sun, shining with the glory of heaven.

While the people were taking in the scene, Jesus began to weep. Not tears of joy, or even from an appreciation of beauty. He wept because, in all of her splendor, Jerusalem—His beloved city—would reject the opportunity of salvation. “If you had known, even you,” He lamented, “especially in this your day, the things that make your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:42-44).

The crowd, confused, looked at Jesus. They did not understand why their King was in agony during such a time of rejoicing. They did not see what Jesus saw. They, along with the disciples, thought that Jesus was coming to establish an earthly kingdom. However, Jesus saw what they could not see. His kingdom was a kingdom of all believers—the church. Rather than a physical structure, it far surpassed any physical boundaries. It is built up of those who believe in Jesus and live in harmony with His teachings. They are from among “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” (Revelation 7:9).

Later the disciples would remember that day and realize what Jesus was trying to tell them all along. Even the procession to Jerusalem was true to the simplicity and humility that characterized the earthly life of Jesus.
Instead of outward show and ceremony, the people gave Him the gift of genuine, happy worship. Instead of costly gifts, they gave Him their outer garments and the branches of olive trees as a carpet. Instead of waving the flags of royalty, the people waved palm branches (the national symbol of victory). They greeted Him with loud, happy shouts of “Hosanna!” Many of the people whom Jesus had healed and blessed, the blind, dumb, crippled, widows, orphans, lepers, and even Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, were in the crowd.
This was the kingdom Jesus wanted to establish. He welcomed those who were oppressed, outcast, and broken, and offered them rest for their souls (see Matthew 11:28, 29).

This is the church: a community of believers who delight to follow the
example and teachings of their Savior in everything they do (see Ephesians 5:23).

This is the church: a community of faith, having Jesus Christ as the foundation and “chief cornerstone” (see 1 Corinthians 3:9-16; Ephesians 2:20).

This is the church: a global movement of people called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and fill the whole world with the knowledge of God.
Instructions: Rearrange the seven double columns of letters into a 7 by 14 rectangle of letters. A dark square indicates the end of a word. When you have placed all the double columns in their correct places, you will be able to read the Bible verse across the diagram from left to right, top to bottom.