

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold your king is coming to you,
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

Matthew 21:5

Beast of Burden

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES had been in Jericho, but were now on their way back to Jerusalem, taking the seventeen-mile road built by Rome for its armies. For His followers, this was just one more leg in their travels with the Master—first here then there, teaching, healing, rebuking, miracle upon miracle, stories and parables, steps and, for them, missteps. For the disciples this was just another day like the rest.

But Jesus knew what awaited them in the great city. More than that, He could feel the cosmic forces circling the coming event like stars swirling into an immense black hole. Jesus knew this was the moment; everything that had occurred since His incarnation had moved Him unalterably toward something that would become the very navel of history. Only He, out of all the people on earth, knew the importance of what was about to take place.

They neared the companion villages of Bethphage and Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem, and there Jesus had two of His disciples secure a donkey. By means of this humble transport the King, the Son of David, Son of Man would enter the holy city for the last time.

So many times in the past three years the manifested Son of God had discouraged the full disclosure of who and what He was. Time and again He had instructed those He healed not to tell anyone.

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: "See that no one knows *about this!*"

Matthew 9:27-30

And even though in the past he had parceled out clues as to His true identity, now it was time to declare Himself fully—not as the Messiah Israel expected, but as the Messiah God the Father had always intended.

Jesus knew there was no better way to illustrate His true purpose and character—the servant king—than to fulfill the old prophecy of Zechariah.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

And so He did, to the acclamation of His many followers and the cries of

expectation from the crowds in the city for Passover.

The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,
“Hosanna to the Son of David;
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest!”

Matthew 21:9



When Matthew penned his account of the event, he quoted Zechariah’s prophecy, and as many writers would, closed the passage with a synonym, rather than just repeating the same word. So instead of repeating *onos*, the Greek for “donkey,” Matthew ended the quotation with *hypozygion*, the word for an animal under the yoke—more often than not in that place and time a donkey—but translated into the English, “beast of burden.”

...since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1 Peter 2:21b-24

Here is the anguished poetry of heaven. Christ Jesus, to illustrate for the crowds His true nature and calling, rode a humble beast of burden into the city of Jerusalem. But at the cross, He Himself became a “beast of burden” when He bore on the cross the load of sin for all humanity.

Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;

Isaiah 52:14 NKJV

Disfigured by beatings and the putrid corruption of mankind’s sin, Jesus hung there under the unimaginable weight of that misery—to the extent that the Father had to turn away in disgust.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

Matthew 27:45-46

The One who had ridden a beast of burden had become one Himself.
For us.