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The miracle of salvation can be a mysterious one, and surely differs for us all. Outwardly it may appear, for some of us, as though very little happened. To others, there is a transformation beyond description. Yet in all cases, there is one factor that remains constant: *When Jesus is received into one's life, His entrance is triumphant!* When Christ moves (no matter how things appear through the eyes of the world) mountains tremble, rocks split, and curtains are torn. A template of this may be perceived in the 21st Chapter of Matthew; an example of what happens when Jesus enters into our own Holy of Holies.

“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her.”¹

Could Jesus have walked into the city? Yes. For all intense and purposes Jesus could have flown into the city. Why the donkey? There are many reasons for His choice of entrance; for instance, prophecy was being fulfilled, a counter-cultural statement was being delivered, but most importantly . . . a lesson was being taught. When we think of a donkey, we see the dual nature of man: a beast that may be stubborn and obstinate, or an animal of submission and obedience. The latter of the two receives the privilege of becoming a vehicle of the LORD.

The way that Jesus entered the city is the same way that He enters our lives . . . on the backs of others. Just as Salvation was carried into the Holy City of Jerusalem on the back of this submissive animal, so is salvation brought to us on the backs of God's obedient servants. Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. How was the donkey acquired in the first place? The answer to this question can be found in the 'cycle of salvation'. A cycle that Jesus began, and one that only Jesus will end!

Jesus clothed Himself with flesh in order to become our Lord and Savior, but He also became our perfect example. As He walked through this world, Jesus called men to witness His example. Those men then, in turn, called others to Christ, thus began the 'cycle of salvation'. In other words, Jesus uses those He disciples to disciple others. This can be seen as a three-step process in the following verses:

“Untie them and bring them to me.”²

First, as a loving child we must learn to listen for the Father's voice. Every waking day spent in this fallen world we are inundated with the voices' of the masses. As a lost child must filter out the din of the crowd and focus on the voice of his calling Father; likewise a child of God must focus on His voice, and truly listen to what He is saying to us.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.³

Second, as a faithful servant we must learn to be obedient to the instruction of the Master. We may not understand His purpose. Often what He asks will contradict what the world has taught us, but the job of a servant is not to question – it is to obey!

¹ Matthew 21:2a

² Matthew 21:2b

³ Matthew 21:6

‘If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’⁴

Finally, as a bond slave we must sacrifice all under the instruction of He who owns us. A slave does not own property; he just tends the possessions of his owner. A person subject to slavery ceases to have individual rights and becomes property of the One that owns him. However, there is a difference between a slave and a bond slave. A bond slave has been released from his obligations and yet out of love, he chooses to remain in the possession of his owner.

These are the three disciplines expressed by a follower of Christ: listen, obey, and sacrifice. Through these disciplines Jesus entered Jerusalem 2000 years ago; likewise, the expression of these disciplines is the vehicle for the salvation of Christ today. When Jesus enters our lives through the actions of others, or when we observe these disciplines in those around us, we are bound to ask who is behind it all.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’⁵

When Jesus permeates the borders of our city we also ask, “Who is this? Who is this man who listens to the voice of God, obeys Him even unto death, and sacrifices all for the sake of others?” And in resounding unison, those who carry salvation within them reply, “Jesus!”

The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’⁶

As Peter instructed, we must be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope we have. The reason is Christ; furthermore, the hope itself is Christ.

When Jesus breached our borders on the backs of obedient servants we came to know Him, the very name of salvation and hope, but it mustn't end there. Jesus does not wish to dwell within our city, He wishes to reign within our temple. Every person created by God contains a temple, a never-ending hunger to worship something. It is not a question of whether or not one contains this temple as it is an axiom of life. The true question is who reigns on the throne of your temple? Whom do you worship? Whose blood covers your altar and atones for your sins? In this pluralistic world one might have many answers such as, money, children, love, Mohammed, career, sex, Buddha, drugs . . . self. Yet there is only one true answer by which men are saved, and that is Jesus Christ. Some believe this to be closed minded and exclusive, perhaps they are right. For the truth is not open for debate, by its own definition it is exclusive and in its practice it is all encompassing. It is not subjective or defined by ones perspective. Two plus two always equals four, three and five are not viable answers. You are afforded free will and have the right to put your faith in any answer you want, but when confronted with this equation should you choose five, you will be wrong. When confronted with the equation of salvation should you replace Jesus with any other variable, you will be wrong. Mohammed is not a viable answer. Love is not a viable answer. Spirituality is not a viable answer. The only key that fits this lock, the only dividend that leaves no remainder is the name of Christ Jesus.

As stated earlier, it is when Jesus enters our city that we come to know Him, but only when He enters our temple does He come to know us. For when the Day of our Lord arrives the

⁴ Matthew 21:3

⁵ Matthew 21:10

⁶ Matthew 21:11

question will not be, “Did you know Christ?” The true deciding factor of a man’s salvation will be, “Did Christ know you?” The only way that Christ can truly know a man is by exploring the temple within. Whom is it a temple for? Who sits upon the throne?

‘It is written,’ he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”⁷

When Jesus finally gains access to our temple he finds it in a state of disorder and perversion. One can’t help but think of Paul’s reprimand to the Corinthians, “ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”⁸ The warning of this verse remains relevant to this day. The temple of God thirsts for a sacrifice to bring us into communion with the Father. We offer Him a sacrifice of works and self-righteousness; yet the blood of His Son is the only thing that quenches. We let thieves rob God of His glory as others defile His throne. Jesus will not share His glory, His temple, or His throne with any other ‘For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God’.⁹

‘Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.’¹⁰

Light cannot remain in the presence of darkness as the LORD will not remain in the presence of sin. Once Jesus has entered our temple He cleanses it from the perversion of false gods and the corruption of money. He expels the objects of useless sacrifice. As a gardener tends his field so Christ pulls up the roots of all kinds of evil. Christ is not content to merely live within our city or dwell within our temple; He must reign upon our throne. Once our temples are in order amazing things begin to happen.

‘The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them’¹¹

As sinners we are blind as though we sit in darkness but the LORD “made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”¹² As a lost people we are crippled by sin but after Jesus cleanses our temple He commands us to “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!”¹³ Christ has delivered us from being one who sits in the darkness, to one who walks in the light! Now it is a question of how far we will walk and in what direction.

God is the initiator of all things. We may believe that we chose Him but in all actuality He chose us. God makes all things possible and through His Holy Spirit woos us, but in the end we decide whether we will continue to follow Him. Once we accept Christ He’ll never leave us, but have we received Him yet? We’ve let Him enter the city through the works and words of others. We’ve let Him enter the temple where He’s shone His light and even touched our lives.

⁷ Matthew 21:13

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:19

⁹ Deuteronomy 4:24

¹⁰ Matthew 21:12

¹¹ Matthew 21:14

¹² 2 Corinthians 4:6

¹³ John 5:8

But has He ascended the throne yet? Have we truly accepted Him as Lord and Savior of our lives? We shall soon find out.

“And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.”¹⁴

At this time the LORD exits our temple and withdraws from our city for the ‘night’. Darkness descends upon us without Christ. Will we call out to Him? Will we continue to walk in the light? Above all, Jesus wishes to see what we will do with what He has done. How appropriate that He spends this time at the neighboring village of Bethany; which means ‘House of unripe figs/dates’. For He has planted seeds within us and He now waits to see if they shall produce fruit and ripen.

“Early in the morning, as he was on His way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it ‘May you never bear fruit again!’ Immediately the tree withered.”¹⁵

As day breaks and trials pass, the LORD returns to see what has become of us. He sees a plant of His seed within our city, green and lush. Yet upon closer inspection He finds it to be useless. Full of leaves yet lacking fruit, it is a plant of selfish and immature roots. Leaves are needed to sustain life, but it is only through the fruit that reproduction occurs. Others who eat the fruit of Christ’s plant ingest the seed and so the ‘cycle of salvation’ continues. Without fruit the plant is useless so the LORD withered it. This is truly the fate of those who do not remain in the LORD. ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.’¹⁶

I do not wish to debate whether one can lose his or her salvation. I suppose it is more of a question of when do we receive our salvation. Is it when we hear of the LORD? Is it when He is introduced to us through others? Is it when He touches our lives? Or is it when we bear fruit in His Name? Jesus can bring us life but it is only when we bear fruit that we can be assured of our salvation. When Jesus returned to the city why didn’t He find fruit on the plant? He had entered the city, entered the temple, and even cleansed it and healed those within? If we use this as a parallel of salvation and the fig tree as an example of the seeds He planted, why no fruit? The answer is simple; Jesus came in as Savior when He entered the temple but until He ascends the throne He is not Lord. It is only when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior of our life that salvation can truly be received.

¹⁴ Matthew 21:17

¹⁵ Matthew 21:18,19

¹⁶ John 15:5,6