

THE DONKEY FIT FOR A KING

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on what is now known as Palm Sunday, He rode upon a young male foal of a female donkey. John 12:14-15 says, "And Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat thereon; as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on donkey's colt'". However, Matthew says it a little differently. Matthew 21:2, 6, & 7 says, "Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an donkey tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. . . . And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the donkey, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon." Why were both animals brought? Did Jesus sit on both animals at the same time? That would look a little strange. Perhaps Jesus sat on the colt and the female donkey was just brought along to comfort her foal. Another possible explanation would be that both animals represented the characteristics of the Messiah at that point.

The Old Testament Scripture which was fulfilled by Jesus is in Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey." Here Zechariah says the Messiah will ride upon both animals. Again, I don't think Jesus rode on both animals at the same time; however, we should look closer at the reason both animals were included.

Let's begin by looking at the Hebrew definitions of the two donkeys. The female donkey is known as "athown". This comes from the word "ethan" or "eythan". This word means "to continue, permanence, chieftain, hard, mighty, rough, strength, and strong". These are words for a leader and a king. Let's look at the definition of the male colt. The word is "chamor". It comes from the root word, "chamar". Chamar means, "foul, be red, and trouble".

Both animals represent Jesus as the Messiah. According to the Smith's Bible dictionary, the donkey mentioned in the Gospels is not like the European donkey which is known for its stubbornness. This donkey is the Eastern variety. This animal was much desired and known for its patience, gentleness, intelligence, submission, and great power of endurance. It was an animal of peace whereas the horse was an animal for war. Smith's dictionary goes on to say that the Eastern donkey was desired by the noble and honorable among the Jews.

Jesus could have ridden on either of the animals, but since Israel was not ready yet for their Prince of Peace, Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on the colt instead of the donkey. This colt represented "foul and trouble" that awaited Jesus and also represented the sins of the world that Jesus would bear. The colt also represented red, indicating the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God. Whereas the donkey represented a future event. Remember that one of the definitions of the donkey was "to continue". This adult donkey foretold the second entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to begin the Millennium. It is at this point that Jesus will be the Prince of Peace, noble, kingly, strong and mighty as the

definitions of the she-donkey stated. Remember that the colt and the she-donkey were of the same blood and thus symbolic of the Messiah Who was to be the Lamb of God and the Messiah who is to be King of Kings. They are one and the same.

It's interesting to read some of the old Jewish writings on this subject of the Messiah riding upon a donkey. In the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 98a), there is an interesting commentary on Daniel 7:13. The book of Daniel states, "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him." In the commentary regarding this Scripture the Talmud said, "If Israel behaved worthily, the Messiah would come in the clouds of heaven; if otherwise, humbly riding on a donkey." This was obviously a tie to Zechariah 9:9.

Another Talmudic commentary (Babylonian Talmud, Bereshith 56b) says, "If one sees an donkey in a dream, he may hope for salvation, as it says, 'Behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is triumphant and victorious, lowly and riding upon a donkey.'"

Yes, Jesus came victoriously and triumphantly as indicated by the she-donkey and yet He came humbly and lowly as indicated by the colt.