

The Nonviolent Palm Sunday and The Nonviolent Holy Week of 33 AD

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As there are uses and abuses, by commission and omission, of history, theology, sociology, psychology, etc., in the service of ideology and politics, so also there are uses and abuses by commission and omission of religious liturgy for the same purposes. Just in case your Palm Sunday and Holy Week liturgies do not communicate it clearly, or just in case your priest, minister, bishop, preacher or pastor do not tell you it from the pulpit, Palm Sunday and Holy Week are 100% about the victorious and salvific Nonviolent Coming of God into His Nonviolent Kingdom through the Nonviolent Messiah Jesus.

The Palm Sunday narrative of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey is recorded in all four Gospels, which means it is highly probable that it is based on an historical event. But, since Jesus has journeyed to Jerusalem on foot from Galilee, why does He choose to complete His journey by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey? There is no serious scholarly doubt that by this gesture He is symbolically referencing Himself and His mission to ZECHARIAH 9:9-10. There is also no serious scholarly doubt that the Apostolic communities as evidenced by the Four Evangelists were well aware of this and understood its importance to the proper proclamation of the Gospel in general and in particular to the center piece of the Gospel, the Passion Narrative. Zechariah (9:9-10) announces:

*“Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion,
shout with gladness, daughter of Jerusalem!”*

*See now your king comes to you;
he is victorious, he is triumphant,
Meek and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
He will banish chariots from Ephraim
and horses from Jerusalem;
The bow of war will be banished,
he will proclaim peace for the nations.
His kingdom shall stretch from sea to sea,
from the River to the ends of the earth.”*

It is as certain that the manner of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is meant to be a direct reference to this prophetic passage in Zechariah, as it is certain that Jesus' words on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?", are a direct reference to PSALM 22, which opens with these words. But look at the words of ZEC 9:9-10: "meek," "banishing chariots and horses." Chariots and horses are the equivalent in Jesus' time of today's Stealth bombers and nuclear missiles: the maximal destructive technology of the hour. Again look at the words, this king of ZEC 9:9-10 will proclaim "peace" and his kingdom which shall stretch "from the River (Jordan) to the ends of the earth" will be completely without arms, the instruments of human destruction, "the bow of war."

This unambiguous Nonviolent Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem is the beginning of the end of Jesus' journey of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. Contrary to popular piety it will not be

merely a “via dolorosa,” a way of suffering. It will be a Way of suffering in order to embody and make visible God’s Nonviolent Love for all—even for lethal enemies, e.g., the healing of the ear of the armed servant of the high priest who comes to Gethsemane to take Him to His death; “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” The Nonviolent King, who enters Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfillment of ZEC 9:9-10, ultimately receives the stature prophesied for Him when He mounts His throne—the Cross of Nonviolent Love—and has, by order of Pilate, the ruling Roman official of the kingdom of the world at the time, a placard, written in three languages, placed above His head on His throne: “King of the Jews.”

For the Nonviolent Jesus there is a direct route starting with His Nonviolent symbolic announcement of the Coming of the Reign of the Nonviolent God of Love on Palm Sunday, proceeding to His unequivocal incarnation of that God on Good Friday, and culminating with the incontestable validation of the power and wisdom of that God on Easter Sunday. Take the Nonviolent Love of Jesus out of Palm Sunday, out of Good Friday, out of Easter Sunday and there is no Palm Sunday, no Good Friday, no Easter Sunday. It is integral to the very meaning and purpose of those days. Take the Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies of Jesus out of Holy Week and there is no Holy Week. There is no “Holy” in the week. There is just a week of brutal violence, injustice, suffering and death. Why? Only God is Holy. Jesus is the incarnation of Nonviolent Love because God, the Holy One, Blessed be He, is Nonviolent

Love. The Father and Jesus are one. The person who sees Jesus see the Father. Jesus comes to do the Father’s will exclusively. There is no violence or cruelty in God, the Holy One, Who is Love. Starting on Palm Sunday, through Good Friday and on to Easter Sunday, it is the Nonviolent Love of Jesus, God incarnate, that makes this week Holy.

A week of Jesus entering Jerusalem in a chariot, surrounded with manned war horses carrying the most advanced killing bows made in His day would not be the beginning of a Holy Week. A Jesus telling Peter to “finish off” the armed servant of the high priest would not make for a Holy Week. A week in which Jesus calls down from the cross curses and retribution on those who are killing Him would not be a Holy Week. A week that ended with a body corrupting in a tomb after a life of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies would not be a Holy Week. It is the Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies enfleshed in Jesus, the Word, the Way and the Truth of God who is Love, that makes the week Holy.

The events and revelations of Holy Week in Jesus unto the redemption and salvation of the world are events and revelations ineradicably united with the Nonviolent Jesus who taught and lived unto death and resurrection a Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies! This is the Jesus of history and of the Gospels and therefore must be the Jesus of Liturgy and the pulpit. If this is not the Jesus proclaimed in Liturgy and from the pulpit during Holy Week, then an abuse or misuse—culpable or nonculpable—of Liturgy and of pulpit is taking place.

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