



Advancing into Conflict

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BIG IDEA – Crowds look for comfort; Kings lead into conflict. Cruise lines are for party celebrations; battleships are **crew carriers** to engage, to rescue, defend and win.

Scripture Focus – When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of **his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. “Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!”** But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!” He replied, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!” **But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. Luke 19:37-42 NLT**

The crowds were ready to crown a King. Jesus was fixated on a cross.

They thought the tyranny was ending. Jesus knew the real battle was just beginning.

What would look like final victory was actually a debt payment; one He did not owe. Every moment in time, before the cross held its breath, hoping the cost would be enough. Every season after would open the floodgates of freedom for all who believe and follow Him.

Palm Sunday isn't a celebratory parade; it's an advancement. Not a sendoff, but a finality into fighting for souls.

There is a big difference between the sights and sounds on a Cruise Ship vs Battleship.

Here's what you might hear on a Cruise Ship...



Cruise Director Announcements

- “Good afternoon guests, lunch is now available at the buffet.”
- “Join us for sunset viewing on the upper deck.”
- “Our crew is happy to assist you with anything you need.”
- “Last call for boarding—all guests please return at your leisure.”



Commander Directives

- “All hands, stand by for orders.”
- “General quarters. All hands to battle stations.”
- “All personnel report to assigned stations—now.”
- “Stay focused—mission priority.”
- “Maintain vigilance at all times.”

Navy Slang!

In our series *The Church: Cruise Ship or Battleship*, the final lesson is the difference between a captain of a cruise and a commander going into battle.

Because, as captain of a cruise ship, their duty is to guarantee a safe, smooth, satisfying journey. Contrarily, the commander of a battleship has a duty to engage in the mission by making sure each crew member is at their best to complete the objective together – in one piece and bring every single sailor safely home.

In an odd twist of events, **Palm Sunday is the perfect way to conclude our series!**

The comparison to Palm Sunday is the one day in history when expectations were at their highest – word had gotten out and filled the streets of Jerusalem!

One person had risen to the level of being the fulfillment of ancient promises!

Their King was coming, just as prophesied 550 years prior in Zechariah 9:9

“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, **your king is coming to you**. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, **riding on a donkey**— riding on a donkey’s colt.”

When a conflict arises, a King also rises to lead.

When a leader sees the intensity of what it takes, they set their minds determined to win.

Luke tells us Jesus was resolute!

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”—**Luke 9:51**

Jesus “stérizó”  **solutely fixed his face on his mission, which would take place in Jerusalem, the Holy City of God’s people.**

The true believers in the Messiah King **thought that this was the beginning of the end to all of Israel’s suffering and shame.**

Little did they know and could not comprehend – it was the end of **the** battle which would end **everyone’s suffering and shame**. But, from our human perspective – the battle was just beginning.

The crowds celebrated a King, Jesus advances toward the cross. Palm Sunday is not a vacation parade; it’s the opening movement of the decisive week.

Triumphal Entry → Temple Confrontation **Why the donkey matters.**



After telling this story, Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples. As he came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see **a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden**. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that

colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that colt?” And the disciples simply replied, “The Lord needs it.” So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on. **Luke 19:28-35 NLT**

A. Textual precision (this is not accidental)

- Luke 19:30 — “a colt... **on which no one has ever yet sat**”
- Mark 11:2 — same detail
- Matthew 21:2-7 — ties directly to prophecy

Why this matters:

1. **Unused animals = sacred purpose**
In Jewish practice, animals not previously used were set apart for holy use (cf. Numbers 19:2; Deut. 21:3).
→ This signals **consecration**, not convenience.
2. **Control and authority**
An unbroken colt would normally resist. Jesus riding it calmly implies **authority over creation** (a subtle but real theological signal).

B. Prophetic fulfillment (central meaning)

- Zechariah 9:9
“Your king comes to you... **humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt.**”

Step-by-step significance:

1. **This is a recognized Messianic text** in Second Temple Judaism.
2. Jesus is **intentionally enacting it**, not coincidentally fulfilling it.
3. The phrase “young/colt” matches the prophecy’s specificity.

This is a **deliberate public claim**: “I am that King.”

C. King imagery (peace vs. war)

- Ancient kings:
 - **Horse** = war, conquest (e.g., Assyrian, Roman generals)- **liberation through power.**
 - **Donkey/mule** = peace, legitimacy within Israel. **Liberation through peace. Nobody’s ever heard of a WAR DONKEY!**



1 Kings 1:33 — Solomon rides David’s mule at coronation.

- Then King David ordered, “Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.” When they came into the

- king's presence, the king said to them, "Take Solomon and my officials down to Gihon Spring. Solomon is to ride on my own mule.
- Why? Because David was a man of bloody war ([1 Chronicles 28:3 NLT](#)), he wanted his son to rule in peace.

Meaning:

- Jesus is not rejecting kingship
- He is redefining **how His kingship wins**

Truth:

Jesus is announcing **a kingdom that comes in peace, not war. Jesus would conquer through sacrifice, not violence.**

Why religious leaders saw this as explosive

They were not confused. They knew exactly what Jesus was doing.

John has a couple of comments that let us know how the religious leaders were up against with Jesus announcing himself in this way:



The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, "Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Hail to the King of Israel!" **John 12:12-13 NLT**

Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. Then the Pharisees said to each other, "There's nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!" **John 12:17-19 NLT**

This triggered immediate alarm:

1. **Public Messianic symbolism (Zechariah 9:9)**
2. **Crowd shouting royal language ("King," "Son of David")**
3. Occurring during **Passover** (heightened political tension; Josephus notes large crowds and volatility)
 - This is not subtle theology

- It is a **visible, political-theological claim in a powder keg moment**
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Were there other “messiah-like” entries into Jerusalem?

There were many messianic or prophetic figures, but they did **NOT** replicate this symbolic entry pattern.

- Judas Maccabeus
 - Entered Jerusalem after military victory (~164 BC)
 - **Military triumph**, not symbolic humility (1 Maccabees 13:51)
- Simon bar Kokhba (132–135 AD)
 - Claimed messianic status
 - Led **armed revolt**, no prophetic donkey imagery
- Theudas (Acts 5:36)
- Egyptian prophet (Josephus, *War* 2.261–263)
 - Gathered followers, promised signs
 - **No recorded symbolic entry into Jerusalem on a donkey**

What historians say:

- **Messianic claimants typically:**
 - **Led revolts**
 - **Promised miracles**
 - **Gathered crowds in wilderness or outskirts**

They did NOT:

- Stage a **prophecy-specific royal entry**
 - Combine **humility with kingship symbolism**.
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What makes Jesus’ entry unique

Step-by-step uniqueness:

1. **Prophetic precision**
 - Direct enactment of Zechariah 9:9
2. **Symbolic contradiction**
 - King, but humble
 - Authority, but nonviolent
3. **Immediate escalation**
 - Entry → weeping → temple cleansing → parables of judgment
4. **No military follow-through**
 - Completely unlike every other claimant

Scholarly support:

- N.T. Wright: Jesus is **redefining messianic expectations**, not fitting them
 - E.P. Sanders: Temple action + entry explains why authorities moved quickly to execute Him
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Spiritual significance

The donkey is not just about humility—it’s about method.

- The crowd wanted:

- Power
- Overthrow
- Immediate relief
- Jesus brings:
 - Sacrifice
 - Confrontation of sin
 - A different kind of victory

Takeaway

Jesus didn't choose a donkey because **He lacked power**—He chose it to show **how God's power works**.



DIG DEEPER: What was special about this particular Passover?

Triumphant Entry

Jesus purposely setup **how** he would enter Jerusalem!

- He knew what it meant.
- He knew the locals would understand it.
- He knew that the “outsiders,” the Galileans would have questions about it.
- It was intentional and it went exactly as God had planned it to go.

What is actually happening in the Triumphal Entry? (Luke 19:28–44; Mark 11:1–11; Matthew 21:1–11)

Observed facts from the texts:

- Jesus **intentionally stages** the moment (sending for the colt; Luke 19:30–34).
- He rides a **donkey**, not a war horse (Matthew 21:5 → Zechariah 9:9 fulfillment).
- The crowd declares **messianic language**: “Blessed is the King...” (Luke 19:38).
- Pharisees push back; “**STOP THEM,**” they say. Jesus responds: “**If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.**” (Luke 19:40).
- Immediately after, Jesus **weeps over Jerusalem** (Luke 19:41–44).

Interpretation (step-by-step):

1. **Claim of Kingship (deliberate, not accidental) – they did not “make” him King – he declared it through an ancient object lesson!**
Jesus is **publicly accepting the role of Messiah/King**. This is one of the few times He does not silence it.
2. **Type of King (peaceful, not militant)**
Donkey = humility/peace (not conquest). This directly contradicts expectations of revolt against Rome.
3. **Crowd misunderstanding**
They expect **political liberation** (common 1st-century Jewish expectation).

Source: N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (widely accepted scholarship).

4. **Jesus' grief reveals the real issue**

Luke 19:42 — “**you did not recognize the time of God's coming.**”

The people believed that Rome was their oppressor. They did not understand the conflict has always been **spiritual blindness**, not human persecution.

Conclusion:

This is not a celebration of victory. It is a **collision between expectations and reality**—a King entering conflict on His terms.

Then why did Jesus start crying?

Why does Jesus weep right after being praised? (Luke 19:41–44)

- He predicts **Jerusalem's destruction** (fulfilled in **70 AD by Rome**).
- He was deeply grieved upon the **failure to recognize God's visitation** (v.44).

The crowd was praising Him **while not really knowing Him**.



Temple Confrontation

Why **cleanse the Temple** immediately after? (Luke 19:45–48; Mark 11:15–19; Matthew 21:12–17)

Observed facts:

- Jesus drives out sellers and money changers.
- Quotes:
 - Isaiah 56:7 — “house of prayer for all nations”
 - Jeremiah 7:11 — “den of robbers”

What is actually wrong? (clarified):

- Not simply “commerce in church.”
- The issue is **corruption + obstruction of worship**:
 - Possible exploitation of exchange rates (historically documented by Josephus).
 - Occupying the **Court of the Gentiles** → blocking access for non-Jews.
 - The money exchange (exchange tax) & temple tax abuse has been overplayed. [Daniel's Blog](#).



Jesus accomplished these three things during Holy Week:

1. **Judgment on religious system**
Jesus is confronting leadership, not just behavior.
2. **Restoration of mission**
“For all nations” → the Temple was meant to be outward-facing.
3. **Escalation of conflict**
Luke 19:47 — leaders now seek to destroy Him.

Jesus is not avoiding conflict—He is **initiating it** where truth is compromised.

Jesus is not drifting into conflict—He is advancing into it with precision.

Jesus’ model in Holy Week:

- He **refuses false expectations**
- He **confronts corrupted systems**
- He **exposes spiritual fruitlessness**
- He **forces a decision**

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem he was announcing General Quarters, alerting all the Angels of heaven and giving notice to all the demons of hell – the battle over souls was on full alert.

O’dark-thirty – Jesus would be entering the darkest hours of humiliation and physical abuse, while most of Jerusalem slept.

Jesus didn’t ride into Jerusalem to be celebrated—He rode in to **challenge, confront, and claim what was His.**

The donkey is a deliberate public claim: “I am that King.”
Jesus would conquer through sacrifice, not violence.

REFLECTIONS

The tension:

- **The crowd was large, loud, and hopeful—but didn’t understand what kind of King they were cheering for nor the battle that was coming.**
- **The religious leaders see: a false & dangerous messianic claim**
- **Jesus knows: The beginning of the end is near - the cross is coming**

APPLICATION

Church: Cruise Ship or Battleship – Advancing into Conflict

Cruise Ship

- **Before going out to comfort, the Cruise Ship must be guest accommodation ready.**
- **A cruise ship mindset** avoids tension and preserves comfort.
- **A cruise ship wants a captain who serves their comfort**

Battleship

- **Before going into combat, the Battleship must be battle ready – every person is called to “General Quarters.”**
- A **battleship mindset** moves toward what must be confronted.
- **A battleship crew follows a commander who would give their own life**

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem he was announcing General Quarters, alerting all the Angels of heaven and giving notice to all the demons of hell – the battle over souls was on full alert. On Good Friday it would be 0'dark-thirty – Jesus would be entering the darkest hours of humiliation and physical abuse, while most of Jerusalem slept.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

NKJV

SCRIPTURES

Zechariah 9:9 NLT

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.

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Luke 19:28-35 NLT ON SCREEN

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John 16:33 NKJV ON SCREEN

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DIG DEEPER NOTES



What was unique about this particular Passover?

Historically:

There is no evidence that this particular Passover (the one during Jesus' Triumphal Entry) **was unique in attendance or structure compared to other years.**

What was normal:

- Passover was one of the three major pilgrimage feasts (Exodus 23:14–17).
- Jews from across the Roman world traveled to Jerusalem.
- The city's population multiplied dramatically during the feast.

What was unique:

- Jesus' public Messianic action (Triumphal Entry)
- Immediate escalation: entry → temple cleansing → confrontation
- Heightened tension with Roman oversight already on edge

The Passover itself was not unique—but what Jesus did during it made it explosive.

Were there really a million people there?

The source of that claim:

- The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (War 6.9.3) reports:
 - ~256,500 lambs sacrificed
 - Suggests up to 2–3 million people in Jerusalem

Critical evaluation (step-by-step):

1. Math behind Josephus' claim
 - If 1 lamb = ~10 people
→ $256,500 \times 10 = \sim 2.5$ million people
2. Modern scholarly consensus
 - These numbers are widely considered exaggerated
 - Reasons:
 - Jerusalem's size could not physically support millions
 - Water, sanitation, and space constraints
3. More realistic estimates

- Most historians estimate:
 - Population: ~80,000–100,000 (normal)
 - Festival surge: ~200,000–400,000+

Conclusion:

- “A million+” → not reliable
- “Hundreds of thousands” → strongly supported

Were there a lot of Galileans there?

Yes—this is well supported.

Evidence:

- Luke 19:37
→ Crowd of disciples praising as He descends the Mount of Olives
- John 12:17–18
→ People who saw Lazarus raised were spreading the word
- Galilee was Jesus' primary ministry base

Cultural reality:

- Pilgrims often traveled in regional caravans
- Galileans were:
 - Numerous
 - More rural and less Jerusalem-centered
 - Sometimes looked down on by Judeans (cf. John 7:52)

Conclusion:

A significant portion of the crowd likely came from Galilee, many already influenced by Jesus' ministry.

Did many people miss the donkey symbolism?

Yes—many likely did.

Why:

1. Different levels of biblical literacy
 - Jerusalem religious elites → highly trained in Scripture
 - Rural pilgrims (especially Galileans) → less formal training
2. Messianic expectations were skewed
 - Most expected:
 - Political liberator
 - Military overthrow of Rome
 - Not:
 - A suffering servant (Isaiah 53)
3. Textual evidence of misunderstanding
 - John 12:16
→ **“His disciples did not understand these things at first”**
4. Even insiders didn't get it
 - If the disciples missed it initially, the crowd likely did too

Who did understand what Jesus was doing?

The religious leaders

They recognized:

- Zechariah 9:9 symbolism
- Messianic claim
- Political danger during Passover

Evidence:

- Luke 19:39 — “Teacher, rebuke your disciples”
- Their reaction shows they understood the implications

What is fact.

- A massive Passover crowd (hundreds of thousands)
- A strong Galilean presence (Jesus' base)
- A crowd emotionally charged but theologically mixed
- Leaders who fully understand the claim and feel the threat