

Jesus' Royal Entry into Jerusalem

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IBR Jesus Project Paper 4. Critical examination of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem yields the conclusion that Jesus orchestrated for himself a provocative, royal entry to the city. The entry thus represents a significant shift in his self-presentation to Israel and sheds light on his trial before Pilate and his crucifixion. Nevertheless, despite its dramatic tone, it was modest in size and easily overlooked by the Roman authorities at Passover.

Key Words: triumphal entry, Jesus in Jerusalem, Jesus and politics

The image is familiar: enthused crowds escort Jesus into Jerusalem and hail him as the one who comes “in the name of the Lord” as he rides a donkey’s colt, the very picture of humility. The crowds’ enthusiasm turns out to be ironic, for these same people will demand Jesus’ death a few days later. This image could be culled from any one of several movies that depict the last days of Jesus—but is it the image of the gospel records; and, more critically, is it a fair depiction of the historical Jesus?

Jesus’ Entry into Jerusalem is noteworthy in several ways: it is one of a handful of narratives to appear in each of the four Gospels (Matt 21:1ff.; Mark 11:1ff.; Luke 19:28ff.; John 12:12ff.); in each it signals the beginning of Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem; it was potentially his most self-consciously messianic act; and finally, it was an act open to great misunderstanding by the witnesses and early readers of the Gospels. These points would seem to make it an ideal candidate for careful scrutiny by members of the Jesus Seminar (hereafter JS), and by historical Jesus scholars more generally, yet the scrutiny that the Entry seems to warrant has rarely materialized. The Entry is excluded without comment from the JS’s recent book that catalogs the acts of Jesus that the JS regards authentic.¹ This omission cannot be taken to suggest there is a consensus of critical opinion on the subject: many critical

1. Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do? The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998). The core event of the Entry can only manage a “gray” score, while the individual Gospel accounts of it all score “black.”

scholars regard as authentic the Entry described in the Gospels—including at least one prominent member of the Seminar itself!²

It is nevertheless important to ask and understand why so many critical scholars doubt the authenticity of an event that seems, on the face of it, to be so well attested. The objections generally fall along two lines. The first we might label the “christological objection.” Jesus could not have selected the colt and ridden it into Jerusalem as the Gospels³ describe because, it is thought, to do so would have been out of character; that is, he seems consistently to eschew messianic identification in the earliest traditions found in the Gospels—but choosing to ride a colt into Jerusalem is clearly a messianic act; hence it is inconsistent with the overall picture of Jesus we possess. Rudolf Bultmann long ago anticipated this objection to historicity when he formulated the classic statement: “die Voraussetzungen, die man machen müßte, um den Bericht als geschichtlich anzusehen—daß Jesus die Erfüllung von Sach 9,9 inszenieren wollte, und daß die Menge den Esel sogleich als messianisches Reittier erkannte—, sind absurd.”⁴ It may be stipulated from the outset that very few historians who raise this particular objection doubt that Jesus came to Jerusalem at the outset of his final week; instead, they question the particular details of the biblical accounts of his arrival, details which, they assert, are more “christological” than “historical.”⁵ Upon closer examination we discover that this

2. I.e., Marcus Borg, *Jesus, a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) 173–75; see also C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Collins, 1971) 141–44; and, more recently, A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (The Bampton Lectures, 1980; London: Duckworth, 1982) 120–28; and Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Vintage, 1999) 243–55.

3. Strictly speaking, only the Synoptic Gospels have Jesus arranging to ride the colt beforehand; John appears to view Jesus’ riding as spontaneous—there will be more to say about this later.

4. *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931) 281. English trans.: “The presuppositions which one must make in order to view the report as historical—that Jesus wanted to produce the fulfillment of Zech 9:9, and that the masses immediately recognized the donkey as a messianic mount—are absurd” (my translation). He does not go so far as to say that Jesus did not come to Jerusalem, only that the elements of the story that make it notable were probably missing.

5. Of course, this assertion immediately brings into play the issue of presuppositions and criteria because it is not immediately obvious why a regal or messianic self-affirmation on the part of Jesus cannot be “historical” (apart from the *Voraussetzungen*, as Bultmann might say, that require the distinction a priori). Indeed, the penetrating arguments set forward years ago by Morna Hooker concerning method (“Christology and Methodology,” *NTS* 17 [1970–71] 480–87) and I. Howard Marshall concerning the relationship between history and theology (*Luke: Historian and Theologian* [Academie Books; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970]) have rarely been engaged by skeptics, much less answered satisfactorily. This is not the place to examine the methodological flaws that characterize some JS scholarship; others have done that well enough and at length (for

case against authenticity has typically been not so much argued as asserted.⁶

The second category of objection to the Entry's historicity we might call the "historical anomaly objection." E. P. Sanders raises the question with customary flair: "If the entry was what we are told it was, why did it take so long for the Romans to execute Jesus? Why were the

this, see Ben Witherington's *Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995] 42–57; also Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* [JSNTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000]; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001] 63–66; and, perhaps most provocatively, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco, 1996). In addition to these, see the helpful background essay by William Lane Craig, "The Problem of Historical Knowledge" in *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994) 157–91. Having said that, for the purpose of this study, it may be stipulated that, when sensitively employed, the criteria for authenticity of (i) multiple attestation, (ii) embarrassment, (iii) dissimilarity, (iv) effect (or "explanation"), (v) memorable content or form, (vi) language and environment, and (vii) coherence are both valid and useful. These criteria are ably summarized by Mark Alan Powell in *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1998; 46–50). In my view, the Gospels represent the attempts of various first-century Christians to chronicle important features of the Jesus story for particular audiences. This would certainly be the case for Luke, who specifies that he is writing for "Theophilus" (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1); it may well be true for others, but on this note, see the caution sounded by Richard Bauckham in his important, recently published essay "For Whom Were Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 9–48. As such, there is a genuine interest to know and preserve what Jesus said and did as well as to highlight those features of his life adjudged to be most salient to the first readers/hearers of the Gospels by the Gospel writers. The Gospels were written by Christians, that is, by those with a faith commitment to the veracity and personal relevance of the Jesus story at the time of writing (e.g., Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31), but while this undoubtedly influenced the selection and/or exclusion of material, it does not necessarily follow that a faith commitment produces historical error and distortion. To be sure, many people, including some scholars, believe that it does, but that assertion lies in the realm of opinion, not fact or logical necessity. I realize this last statement, included as it is in a paper that arguably is part of the "Third Quest," may well leave me open to R. W. Funk's charge of engaging in an "apologetic ploy" (*Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996] 65); so be it—I intend to go where the evidence leads me. Craig A. Evans pointedly suggests that religious bias does not necessarily "invalidate historical Jesus research [any more] than the love of art invalidates the work of an art critic or the love of science invalidates the research of a scientist" ("The Need for the 'Historical Jesus': A Response to Jacob Neusner's Review of Crossan and Meier," *BBR* 4 [1994] 133).

6. Jürgen Becker supplies a good contemporary example of this. Early in his book *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: de Gruyter, 1998), he attempts to lay out for the reader in an even-handed fashion the criteria by which he will judge authentic Jesus material. He says,

There is an increasingly positive attitude today about the trustworthiness of the synoptic tradition, especially when compared with the early days of Form

disciples not rounded up and killed? . . . The Romans were not slow to act when sedition threatened.”⁷ Sanders’s skepticism rests on the as-

Criticism. This change is due in part to the fact that today we recognize two false judgments that earlier fed historical skepticism: the assumption that only ideally formed, simple traditions can be original, and an exaggerated view of the creative power of the church to which everything was attributed at the slightest suspicion that something might not be authentic. While it is true that we needed to move beyond the earlier skepticism, today’s more positive attitude unfortunately reveals a wholesale assertion within a general milieu, which for historical scholarship simply is not adequate. Therefore, we conclude this section on methodology by emphasizing again that we must submit both general skepticism and general trust to trial by fire and that we can do that only in the analysis of each individual tradition. (p. 15)

Yet when it comes to Jesus’ Entry, Becker’s fire seems to have run out of gas. He writes, “In its present form the account is heavily christological. If it preserves any historical recollection at all, it might be that Jesus was so well known among the pilgrims from Galilee that they surrounded him wherever he appeared” (p. 345). Becker does not identify those features of the account that he finds historically troublesome, nor does he explain precisely what about them requires a critical historian to regard the account as historically problematic. A notable exception to this lack of argumentation is David Catchpole (“The ‘Triumphal’ Entry,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* [ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984] 319–34). He argues that Mark’s entry narrative is built on the model of other entry stories from antiquity where a great leader enters a town to acclaim, after achieving victory or receiving kingly authority. For Catchpole, since Jesus’ victories and putative kingship are features of Markan redaction, the historical basis for the Entry narrative is undercut and with it the historicity of the Entry itself. But Catchpole’s arguments are flawed. In the first place, his conclusions rely on Mark as the sole primary source for information about the Entry and, as J. F. Coakley observes, “it may be noticed how hasty is his [Catchpole’s] pronouncement against the possibility that there was any account of the messianic entry independent of Mark’s” (“Jesus’ Messianic Entry into Jerusalem John 12:12–19 par.,” *JTS* n.s. 46 [1995] 466). As we shall see, there is a persuasive case for John containing tradition independent of Mark in the matter of Jesus’ Entry. A second obstacle to accepting Catchpole’s argument is that he implies Jesus’ Entry is messianic (as we shall see, this characterization is also open to question), but its messianism is built on prior healings and his identification as a son of David (both of which are historically unreliable, in his view). But even if the healings and so on proved historically untenable, Jesus could yet have made a distinctive Entry into Jerusalem; that is to say, there is nothing to make the features that make the Entry most noteworthy impossible—Jesus’ ride on a colt to the acclaim of witnesses—save the a priori assumptions that a prior recognition of kingship based on observation of Jesus’ miracles is necessary to the Entry to have occurred. Put somewhat differently, Ben Witherington notes that “Catchpole appears to be guilty of a common fallacy when pursuing a *formgeschichtliche* approach to a narrative: he assumes that because the narrative seems to fit a particular formal pattern, one can therefore draw conclusions about the historical authenticity of the narrative’s essential content” (*The Christology of Jesus* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990] 104).

7. *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 306. Sanders contends that the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ Entry into Jerusalem are, historically speaking, merely “probable” (p. 307). His views may have changed over the years; see his more-recent *Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993) 253–54, 272.

sumption that a demonstration of the sort found (or, to anticipate a later conclusion, *thought* to be found) in the Gospels would have provoked a swift Roman response. But is Sanders's assumption of the likelihood of Roman intervention warranted? Equally important, what does he mean by "if the entry was what we are told it was"—what *are* we told? How many of the assumptions built into the objection of Sanders and others are open to question?

Related to but somewhat beyond the question of authenticity or historicity is the matter of what meaning Jesus intended to convey through the event (assuming, for the moment, that it bore some resemblance to the Gospel accounts of it). Was the Entry, as many think, designed to identify him as a particularly humble king?⁸ Conversely, perhaps (as S. G. F. Brandon argues), it was deliberately provocative: an act designed to "challenge both the Jewish leaders and the Romans."⁹

In this article I intend to assess the historical trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem by (i) examining them in the light of various critical criteria for authenticity and (ii) giving a plausible sketch of "what really happened." In the course of doing this I will address the two objections against authenticity just raised and explore the issue of Jesus' intentions. I propose to argue that the Entry is best understood as a deliberately provocative—indeed, *royal*—act on the part of Jesus, one that represented a shift in his self-presentation to Israel. I further argue that, despite its implicitly provocative nature, it was a relatively modest affair—one easily overlooked by the Roman authorities charged with maintaining order at the Passover season.

HISTORICITY

Several criteria traditionally employed by Jesus scholars to assess historical reliability argue for a preliminary verdict in favor of the Entry's historicity.

The Criterion of Multiple Attestation

The Entry is not mentioned in extrabiblical sources such as the *Gospel of Thomas*; this is not surprising, since that and similar works are dedicated to the words (as over against the acts) of Jesus. This being the case, the possibility of meeting the criterion of multiple attestation is greatly reduced. Nevertheless, each canonical Gospel has Jesus coming

8. E.g., J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1930) 240; W. A. Visser't Hooft, "Triumphalism in the Gospels," *SJT* 38 (1985) 491–504; Witherington, *Christology*, 104–7; Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994) 91.

9. *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967) 349–50.

to Jerusalem on a colt to the royal acclaim of his disciples (Matt 21:1ff.; Mark 11:1ff.; Luke 19:28ff.; John 12:12ff.). The Synoptic Question easily explains the narrative's appearance in Mark, Matthew, and Luke¹⁰ — but John's account differs from them in some notable ways, thus raising the possibility that the Johannine account preserves an independent tradition concerning Jesus' Entry. Three features of John's account vis-à-vis the Synoptic Gospels point to John's dependence on non-Synoptic tradition.

One, every Synoptic Gospel devotes several lines of text to depicting Jesus as engineering the whole episode—*he* sends disciples with explicit instructions to fetch a special colt and bring it to him, so that readers are not surprised when he rides it into Jerusalem. From John, however, we form a different impression: without apparent provocation from Jesus, his enthusiastic followers acclaim him “king”; later, he locates a colt and sits on it (John 12:12–13). Since considerable space is given in each of the Synoptics to the fact that it was *Jesus'* plan to arrange for a ride, the complete absence of his arranging the ride beforehand in John suggests that an independent tradition may be at work.

Two, in each of the Synoptics the Entry narrative is introduced by the story of Jesus' encounter with a blind man (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43) or blind men (Matt 20:29–34) at Bethany. It is important to note that John, too, introduces the Entry account with a mention of Bethany, but for him, Bethany is not significant on account of any healing of a blind man but rather because it is the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1ff.). Again, this incidental detail corroborates the Synoptic accounts but in such a way as to suggest the presence of an independent tradition.¹¹

10. While I acknowledge the usefulness of “Q” as a designation for material common to Matthew and Luke (but not Mark), the often heterogeneous nature of the material as to its form, order, and function casts doubt to my mind on its existence as a single documentary source of material for Matthew and Luke. Although I grant that a documentary source may underlie some of the Q material (see, for example, the long sections of verbatim agreement in Matt 3:7–10/Luke 3:7–9; Matt 4:1–11/Luke 4:1–13), I find that the Entry narrative does not show the kind of agreement between Matthew and Luke (and divergence from Mark) that one finds in the other sections; thus it is improbable that a documentary Q is behind the variations in the Entry accounts. In an extensive treatment of Q, S. Schulz does not count this section in Luke as Q material (*Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* [Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972]). With respect to Luke's knowledge of Matthew, see C. M. Tuckett, “On the Relationship between Matthew and Luke,” *NTS* 30 (1984) 130–42.

11. In addition, Coakley argues that significant differences between John and Mark exist in the matters of the crowds' actions, in their acclamation of Jesus, and in the use of the OT in the account (“Jesus' Messianic Entry,” 466–77). D. Moody Smith, Jr. (“John 12:12ff. and the Question of John's Use of the Synoptics,” *JBL* 82 [1963] 58–64), also argues that John here is an independent source. He is especially concerned to demonstrate that the apparent similarity in the OT quotations used in the Entry narratives by John and the Synoptics need not favor the dependence of the former on the latter.

Three, there is significant disparity between Mark and John in the size and composition of the crowds attending the Entry. Mark makes no mention of Lazarus, nor does he leave the impression that any crowd other than the disciples attended Jesus until he neared the city (11:1–10). By contrast, according to John's Gospel the crowds that accompany Jesus were drawn to him both from Bethany, where Jesus had reappeared at Lazarus's house (11:38–12:2), and from the crowds that had descended on Jerusalem for the Passover feast (12:12).

The Criterion of Embarrassment

By invoking the criterion of embarrassment, I mean that the Gospel Entry accounts preserve details that we might have expected the Gospel writers to exclude because they could have been problematic or “embarrassing” for the nascent church in some way or other. Early Christians were suspected and sometimes accused of disloyalty to Caesar and the Empire. The evidence for this is early, widespread, and virtually undisputed. That Christians should fall under suspicion is entirely comprehensible in the social-cultural milieu of the first century on two counts. One, their founder had suffered a criminal's death—indeed, a *sedition* criminal's death—at the hands of a duly appointed Roman governor.¹² Two, as the Christian movement began to be viewed not merely as a Jewish sect but as a distinct and new religion, it would have been subject to the apprehension that seemed typically to accompany religious novelty.¹³ The Christian movement thus encountered

12. On crucifixion as punishment for sedition, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 33–38, 46–50.

13. In the past, it was common to find writers who admired the capacity of Rome to accommodate various religions and sects, but recent studies have indicated that this accommodation was made reluctantly. The growth of a new sect or religion caused concern among Roman authorities, who disliked change in religion, inasmuch as novelty, whether in religion or politics, was often viewed as a challenge to the stability of the Empire. This perspective is illustrated, for example, where Dio Cassius puts in the mouth of Maecenas the extended discourse to Augustus Caesar:

Those who attempt to distort our religion with strange rites you should abhor and punish, not merely for the sake of the gods . . . but because such men, by bringing in new divinities in place of the old, persuade many to adopt foreign practices, from which spring up conspiracies, factions, and cabals (Dio Cassius 52.36.2; see further J. A. North, “Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 44 [1976] 1–12; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979]; and Peter Garnsey, “Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity,” in *Persecution and Toleration* [ed. W. J. Sheils; Studies in Church History 21; Oxford: Blackwell, 1984] 1–27).

The Romans did not separate religion from politics, nor would they have expected to find such a dichotomy among their subjects. In a world where subject peoples typically

formidable cultural and political obstacles as it sought to spread the gospel message throughout the ancient world (and, as we shall see, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Entry would not necessarily have made the job easier).

There is evidence, of course, that Christians were sensitive to these kinds of "political" accusation. For example, Luke repeatedly shows his awareness of political issues by editing material taken over from Mark in such a way as to distance Jesus and the early Christian movement from revolutionary leaders and seditious movements of the first century. To cite but one example, at Luke 9:23 Luke appears to clarify the metaphorical nature of Jesus' comments in Mark 8:34 about "taking up the cross" by inserting the phrase καθ' ἡμέραν ("daily"). Luke does not want Theophilus to think Jesus was in the habit of encouraging his followers to actions that would *literally* result in crucifixion,¹⁴ since these would almost invariably have been seditious acts.

As to the Entry narratives, the Greco-Roman background of παρουσία would have figured prominently in the evaluation of Jesus' Entry

continued to worship their own gods, and proselytism for the sake of religious ideology was rare, the link between local gods and local/nationalistic interests was natural. Two pre-Christian exceptions to this lack of emphasis on proselytism were the Bacchanalia and the Jews. The Roman historian Livy explains that the newness of the former along with its deplorable orgiastic initiation rites and cultic practices were the reasons for its official suppression. J. A. North argues that the cult was probably not new to Rome per se but that it represented the first step in the evolution of the nature of religious organizations, namely, "the creation for the first time of groups of specifically religious function" ("Religious Toleration in Republican Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 25 [1979] 95). With its emphasis on joining by free choice (and, perhaps, on concomitant proselytizing), it subverted state control of religious practices and was viewed as a threat. The Jews faced expulsion from Rome at various times, owing to their proselytizing (cf. Valerius Maximus 1.3.3; Dio Cassius 57.18.5). Josephus recognized the sensitive nature of Jewish proselytizing (L. H. Feldman, "A Selective Critical Bibliography of Josephus," in *Josephus, the Bible, and History* [ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata; Leiden: Brill, 1989] 373–74), although he attributes the expulsion under Tiberius to four Jewish swindlers who took advantage of Tiberius's friend (*Ant.* 18 §§81–84; see also E. Mary Small-wood, *The Jews under Roman Rule. From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* [SJLA 20; Leiden: Brill, 1981] 128–32, 201–16). If the Romans were inclined to be tolerant of foreign religions prior to the establishment of emperor worship, that religious liberalism probably had more to do with the resistance that would have been engendered by the quashing of local customs than with a modern regard for "toleration" (see R. M. Grant, *Augustus to Constantine* [London: Collins, 1971] and Garnsey, "Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity"). The newness of Christianity surely produced concern among the authorities. M. Goodman has suggested that the Druids of Gaul and Britain provide a NT era example of the difficulties that could be posed by foreign religions (see *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, a.d. 66–70* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987] 239–47).

14. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 46–50. See also my "Luke's Exoneration of John the Baptist," *JTS* n.s. 44 (1993) 595–98, along with the NT admonitions to Christians to submit to imperial authorities in Romans 13 and 1 Pet 2:13–17.

by eyewitnesses to the event and by the first readers of the Gospels.¹⁵ In the Hellenistic world a *παρουσία* most often signaled the coming of a ruler or royal figure. It began to be a notable feature of imperial practice during the Principate.¹⁶ Numerous extant sources, including literary, epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological materials, provide information about celebratory welcomes (here *παρουσία*) in the ancient world, and from these data basic patterns of behavior emerge.¹⁷ The conventions revealed in the inscriptions and literary accounts are broadly consistent, whether an entry occurs in Asia Minor, Palestine, or Egypt.¹⁸ It is hard to overestimate the importance of the breadth of

15. For more on this, see my *Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem: In the Context of Lukan Theology and the Politics of His Day* (AGJU 28; New York: Brill, 1995) 25–65. While “victory” is surely the main thrust of the well-known Roman Triumph, the Triumph itself is the least likely precedent for Jesus Entry. The Roman Triumph is one of the background motifs that scholars sometimes appeal to when discussing Jesus’ Entry (e.g., H. Flender, “Heil und Geschichte in der Theologie des Lukas,” *BEvT* 41 [1965] 85; J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* [5th ed.; RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1977] 526). The most exhaustive classical treatment of the Triumph is H. S. Versnel’s *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* [Leiden: Brill, 1970]). The traditional label for the event, the “Triumphal Entry,” naturally invites comparison between Jesus’ Entry and the Roman Triumph proper. Such a comparison can have only limited value, however, for several reasons. First, the ideology of the Triumph is not likely to have been as relevant to Jesus’ Entry as the ideology of the *παρουσία*. The Triumph in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. was fundamentally a military honor and did not essentially involve notions of kingship or the “divinity” of the magistrate/emperor being celebrated. True enough, Caligula sought divine honors, and Augustus and others accepted them (though primarily when abroad and explicitly not in Rome). But regarding the Triumph held at Rome, emperors in and around the NT era were not eager to be viewed as kings in the traditional sense of the term (in fact, they clearly avoided the label). On the other hand, the *παρουσία* typically did involve the coming of a royal figure (without necessarily celebrating his military prowess). This is not to say there is no comparison at all between Jesus’ coming and the advent of emperors for, as we know, the Hellenistic *παρουσία* imagery was often incorporated into imperial ceremonies (beginning with the Principate), particularly in the provinces. Second, the traditional Triumph could only be held at the city of Rome, and the first witnesses to the event are not likely to have drawn comparisons between a Triumph at Rome and Jesus’ Entry at Jerusalem. Third, the Triumph was given to an eligible Roman magistrate, and on this count Jesus hardly qualifies.

16. For example, Augustus was regularly welcomed on his travels, both within and outside Rome (Dio Cassius 51.20.2–4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 53.1). Caligula was fêted despite the fact that he was accompanying the body of Tiberius for burial (Suetonius, *Calig.* 4.1). Similarly, Nero received grandiose welcomes in his travels (Suetonius, *Ner.* 25.1–3). Trajan, too, was splendidly welcomed (Pliny, *Pan.* 22.1–5).

17. See *TDNT* 5.859–60; A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (4th ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927) 368–73; see also *Description Historique des Monnaies. Frappées sous l’Empire Romain, Vol. I: Néron* (ed. H. Cohen; Paris: Rollin & Feuwardent, 1880) §391, 403 and *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum. Corinth, Colonies of Corinth, etc.: Corinth* (ed. B. V. Head and R. S. Poole; London: Longmans, 1889) §567.

18. E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 11 §329; Plutarch, *Vit. Luc.* 2.5; Philostratus, *VA* 5.27; Cicero, *Pis.* 51–52; *Sest.* 63; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.60.2–3; Diodorus Siculus 37.26.1. In

these data, for it indicates the extent to which society at large would have been aware of the phenomena associated with celebratory welcomes and, as a result, provides an illuminating background to Jesus' Entry.

For now, we can summarize that παρουσίαι tended to be highly politicized events. No Gospel writer could have overlooked this fact—and yet, when it comes to the Entry narrative, its appearance in Mark opens both Jesus and the disciples to charges of political unrest because the Entry as depicted by Mark is planned by Jesus, regal in nature, and participated in by disciples. The Entry is perhaps the only action (as opposed to “saying”) in Mark that could plausibly leave Jesus open to the charge of making himself “king” (Mark 15:2,9; cf. Luke 23:2)—and it was this charge that was not only partly responsible for getting Jesus crucified (an event whose historicity is well established) but was also one that Christians subsequently had to defend themselves against (e.g., Acts 17:7). And still the narrative appears in Mark.

Similarly, John's inclusion of the Entry account is potentially embarrassing in that it introduces an apparent contradiction in Jesus' attitude about kingship. While Jesus privately accepts the label “son of God” as tantamount to “king” according to John 1:49, in a more public venue Jesus is alarmed by the prospect of being “made king” (ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα) and withdraws from the crowds (John 6:1–15). Yet at his Entry in John 12:12ff., Jesus is lauded as king (ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, [καὶ] ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, v. 13) but makes *no* attempt to avoid the crowds or suppress the acclaim.

Luke, too, has Jesus instigating his own royal entry into Jerusalem and refusing to concede that the disciples were misguided in acclaiming him “king” (Luke 19:28–40).¹⁹ It has been observed that certain features of Luke's redaction of the Entry narrative itself can best be traced to Luke's political apologetic concerning Jesus (thus the Entry narrative was not preserved uncritically); nevertheless, his retention of the basic contours of Mark's Entry narrative suggests that they were considered to have been helpful, in Luke's mind, to convey to Theophilus his “carefully investigated” story (Luke 1:1–4) in spite of the fact that the Entry could have been “politically embarrassing.”

To sum up: when set against the dual backgrounds of the commonly understood political nature of an entry and the early church's concern not to be viewed as seditious or anti-Roman, the criterion of embarrassment points to the authenticity of the Entry narratives in the

addition, see W. Weber, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Hadrianus* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907) 92 n. 310.

19. On this, see my “‘The Stones Will Cry Out’ (Luke 19,40): Joy or Judgment?” *Bib* 75 (1994) 232–35.

Gospels, for in them we find the sort of clear political overtones that would appear to be at odds with the apologetic and redactional interests of early Christians. This brings us to the criterion of “effect.”

The Criterion of Effect

Assuming for a moment the historicity of the basic contours of the Entry narratives—what consequences flowed from the event, and are they historically reliable? The criterion of effect argues that a later effect must have adequate antecedent causes, and along these lines I suggest that the Entry supplies a key ingredient to the charges made by the Jewish authorities against Jesus before the Roman governor, Pilate. How so?

We know that Jesus was sentenced to death by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.²⁰ We further know that Jesus was crucified, a form of execution consistent with a charge of sedition.²¹ According to the Gospel trial narratives, Pilate understood that Jesus was being accused of a political crime (Mark 15:1–15; Matt 27:11–23; Luke 23:1–7, 13–24; John 18:33–19:16), and the appearance of the *titulus* on his cross, while conceivably exaggerated or sarcastic in its reportage,²² nevertheless accords well with a charge rooted in the perception of political agitation.²³ The question is, what action or statement of Jesus could warrant

20. Acknowledged as authentic (i.e., it is colored “red”) by the JS itself (*Acts of Jesus*, 567). See also Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 11–35, who writes: “He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. It would be no exaggeration to say that this event is better attested, and supported by a more impressive array of evidence, than any other event of comparable importance of which we have knowledge from the ancient world” (p. 11).

21. Jesus’ crucifixion is mentioned in the earliest Christian writings (Gal 3:1; 6:14; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Phil 2:8; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20; Rev 11:8) and is there occasionally acknowledged as a potential hindrance to faith. The tradition of Jesus as crucified is also found outside the NT (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; perhaps also Josephus, *Ant.* 18 §§63–64; for the latter, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, volume 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1991] 59–69). For crucifixion as the supreme penalty for sedition, see Hengel, *Crucifixion*. These data along with the argument to follow constitute a reply to Gerd Thiessen’s comment that “Apart from the rarely doubted fact that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, there are no clear views about who provoked Jesus’ condemnation and on what grounds he was executed” (Gerd Thiessen and Annette Metz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998] 442).

22. For this, see especially Ernst Bammel, “The *titulus*,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 353–64.

23. P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (2nd ed.; rev. and ed. T. A. Burkill and G. Vermes; Studia Judaica; Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1961) 108; B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979) 176–78; Gerhard Schneider, “The Political Charge against Jesus (Luke 23:2),” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 403–14.

this charge, or, at the least, make it plausible when represented to the governor?

While the mention of Jesus as king is found in each of the Gospel trial narratives,²⁴ there is only one event in the Synoptics prior to his trial where Jesus is called “king”—the Entry into Jerusalem, which, according to the Gospels, occurred just a few days before his arrest and trial.²⁵ Because certain anti-Roman Jewish figures had made royal claims in the years just prior to Jesus’ ministry, Pilate would at least have had some grounds for regarding Jesus with suspicion had the Entry occurred as the Gospels suggest. A handful of significant disturbances involving would-be royal figures erupted in Roman Palestine in the period between the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.E.) and Jesus’ trial (c.e. 30–33).²⁶ Josephus refers to the activities of Judas, the son of Ezekias (the latter was said to be an ἀρχιλήστης, *Ant.* 17 §271) shortly after the death of Herod the Great (ca. 4 B.C.E.).²⁷ Josephus credits him with two dominant attributes: greed and an “ambition for royal rank” (*Ant.* 17 §271).²⁸ He assembled a band of desperados in Galilee, as-

24. Darrell Bock observes that the charges made before the Jewish council are considerably different from the ones made before Pilate (*Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* [WUNT 2/106; Tübingen: Mohr, 1998]). My reference here is to the trial before Pilate.

25. Craig A. Evans (“From Public Ministry to the Passion: Can a Link Be Found between the [Galilean] Life and the [Judean] Death of Jesus?” in *SBL 1993 Seminar Papers* [SBLSP; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993] 460–72) outlines the link between Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God in Galilee and the later political charges that he faced in Judea; Evans’s arguments provide an additional background against which to view the charges made before Pilate, particularly if the charges directly involved a “royal entry.”

26. While acknowledging that the issue is disputed, I take the view that Jesus was crucified in C.E. 33. For differing views and reviews, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) and Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1.386–433.

27. As R. A. Horsley notes, this Judas is not himself called a λήστης by Josephus, though one could argue that in this context the implication is “like father, like son” (“Josephus and the Bandits,” *JSJ* 10 [1979] 39). Clearly, his activities are bandit-like, as even Horsley admits (*ibid.*).

28. This account appears anachronistic in Josephus, inasmuch as the very next book of the *Antiquities* refers to a rebel leader named Judas, also from the region of Galilee. He is not identified as the first Judas (*Ant.* 18 §§4–9, 23). Scholarly opinion is divided as to whether or not Josephus is referring to one or two men. Support for the view that Josephus refers to the same person is found in E. Schürer (*The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* [3 vols.; ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, P. Vermes, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–87] 2.600); J. S. Kennard, “Judas of Galilee and His Clan,” *JQR* n.s. 36 (1945–46) 281–86; and Martin Hengel (*The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* [2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989] 331). Those who distinguish the two include F. J. Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake; London: Macmillan, 1933) 1.424, Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 153 n. 40, and Horsley, “Josephus and the Bandits,” 39–40. On the whole, the arguments distinguishing the two are to be preferred.

saulted a palace, took arms and other valuables, and embarked on a career of thievery. It is notable that, in Judas, royal aspirations were linked to armed resistance to Rome.²⁹ Simon, a slave of Herod the Great, was able to attract many followers, who acknowledged him as king by placing a diadem on his head (*Ant.* 17 §273). He burned the royal palace in Jericho but not before he plundered it. This was followed by other similar acts. He was eventually caught and executed with help from the Romans (*Ant.* 17 §§276–77). Athronges crowned himself and organized his armed followers into companies under the command of his four brothers, who “applied themselves vigorously to slaughtering the Romans and the king’s men” (*Ant.* 17 §§278–81).

This brief survey of royal pretenders supplies a useful background for thinking about the criterion of “effect”: because royal claimants had repeatedly been associated with sedition and other unlawful activities, the royal claims implicit in Jesus’ Entry could have been used against him at trial, should it have proven convenient for his accusers to do so. Once we recognize the Entry narratives as basically authentic, we have grounds for understanding how the political charges made against Jesus and his subsequent crucifixion could have been presented to Pilate.

Of course, one may well ask, “Why, if the Entry was such a politically charged event, did the Romans not arrest Jesus as he made his royal procession?” This question touches on the issue of “what really happened” at the Entry and will be dealt with below; for now it is important to recognize that I am not suggesting that the Entry *necessarily* resulted in Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion on political charges—I am saying the Entry, unique among Jesus’ actions (excluding, possibly, the so-called Temple cleansing), provided Jesus’ opponents a way of exploiting a Roman governor’s concern with sedition to achieve their own aims because of the political associations that were often attached to such events. The Entry left Jesus open to a charge of sedition, even if such a charge was a distortion of what really happened or what Jesus really intended.

It seems best to consider other criteria for authenticity in a later section; for now, we can conclude that at the very least the criteria considered thus far make the story of Jesus’ Entry historically plausible; indeed, the data surveyed up to now strongly point to a verdict in favor of historicity, though the survey is admittedly incomplete.

29. R. A. Horsley has argued that Judas became the focus of a popular messianism that had its political support from the peasant classes and an ideological framework derived from the Scriptures (“Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus,” *CBQ* 46 [1984] 485). He recognizes the difficulty of supposing there to have been unequivocal messianic expectations yet nonetheless draws attention to regal imagery from the OT to illuminate popular ideas of “anointed” kingship (pp. 473–80).

WHAT HAPPENED

Jesus scholars endeavor to construct a plausible picture of the basic contours of Jesus' life and ministry; if a convincing reconstruction emerges through the fires of critical studies, it will be commended as such, not because it provides an uncontested picture of Jesus, but rather because it accounts for more of the data about Jesus than competing theories. When it comes to reconstructing a particular event, such as his entry to Jerusalem, the task is all the more daunting on account of the relative paucity of data and the need to make certain assumptions as the data are incorporated into the larger life of Jesus. Having said that, we now turn to the Gospel narratives to explore the question of how Jesus' Entry and related events might have appeared to eyewitnesses and what can be inferred from these actions about Jesus' intentions.

Jesus' Actions

In each Gospel, the narrative of Jesus' Entry occurs at the outset of Jesus' final week and gives the impression, at least, of taking place at the Passover season.³⁰ Every Gospel account of Jesus' Entry recalls that he rode into Jerusalem on a colt and was, either explicitly or implicitly, acclaimed king. Mark's story of Jesus' Entry is shorter than its Matthean and Lukan counterparts. Mark (along with Matthew, Luke, and John) locates the Entry's beginning near the small villages of Bethphage and Bethany (11:1), the former being identified as a suburb of Jerusalem and inhabited from the second century B.C.E.³¹

In Mark Jesus gives explicit instructions to the disciples to assist them in finding a colt (11:1–6); afterward, he is placed on it and rides to the city as people supply a royal welcome (11:7–10). The Markan narrative seems to credit Jesus with unusual, one might almost infer *supernatural*, prescience in knowing where the colt would be located and the response of bystanders who witnessed the disciples fetching it (Mark 11:1–3; pars.). But the account does not have to be read in this way; it may simply be the case that Jesus arranged beforehand with the colt's owner for it to be picked up (roughly the same thing appears in Mark 14:12ff., where arrangements for the last supper have apparently been made in advance by Jesus). With respect to the Johannine

30. For years scholars have debated the season or festal time at which Jesus entered Jerusalem. Those who favor Tabernacles include T. W. Manson, "The Cleansing of the Temple," *BJRL* 33 (1951) 271–82; C. W. F. Smith, "No Time for Figs," *JBL* 79 (1960) 315–27; and idem, "Tabernacles in the Fourth Gospel and Mark," *NTS* 9 (1963) 130–46. The majority of commentators view Passover as the time of Jesus' Entry.

31. *ABD* 1.715.

account of preparations for Jesus' Entry, J. F. Coakley takes John's deliberate ambiguity concerning the finding of the colt as a mark of authenticity, for, he notes, John is not reluctant to credit Jesus with special foreknowledge or insight elsewhere (1:48; 4:17–18; 6:6); the failure to mention it here likely means the colt was gotten in a rather pedestrian way.³²

Mark's Jesus specifies that the πῶλος is unriden (ἐφ' ὃν οὐδεὶς οὕτω ἀνθρώπων ἐκάθισεν, Mark 11:2). Before asking what an unriden animal might signify, we should clarify what sort of animal Mark envisions. W. Bauer argued that the "colt" in view must have been that of a horse, since when the term πῶλος appeared without further qualification (i.e., "of a camel," "of an ass") it normally had equine associations.³³ This was denied in subsequent essays by H. W. Kuhn and O. Michel.³⁴ Michel in particular showed that πῶλος was easily exchanged for the Hebrew עִיר and often denoted a young, strong ass—even when no further qualification appeared. Mark's use of the ambiguous πῶλος is, it seems, clarified by other writers who, for political or theological reasons, note that Jesus was astride the colt of an "ass" (Matt 21:2; John 12:15).³⁵

The fact that the animal had not been ridden before could have suggested to eyewitnesses and early Gospel readers that it was preserved for royal use. In several other ancient Near Eastern locales it was not uncommon for special animals to be set aside for important persons, including royalty.³⁶

32. "Jesus' Messianic Entry," 477.

33. "The 'Colt' of Palm Sunday (Der Palmesel)," *JBL* 72 (1953) 220–29.

34. H. W. Kuhn, "Das Reittier Jesu in der Einzugsgeschichte des Markusevangeliums," *ZNW* 50 (1959) 82–91; O. Michel, "Eine philologische Frage zur Einzugsgeschichte," *NTS* 6 (1959–60) 81–82.

35. Matthew's clarification to Mark might have stemmed from a desire to show that Jesus' ride was in fulfillment of prophecy, for example, Zech 9:9, or perhaps to indicate that Jesus was not riding a horse, an act that would surely have been viewed as politically suspicious. One occasionally finds a scholarly comment to the effect that Matthew was so preoccupied with depicting the event as fulfillment that he has Jesus seated on the *two* animals mentioned in Zech 9:9. This theory might stem from a misreading of Matt 21:5–7. In v. 7 we learn that the disciples "brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them" (ESV; so also NIV, NKJV; Greek: ἤγαγον τὴν ὄνον καὶ τὸν πῶλον καὶ ἐπέθηκαν ἐπὶ αὐτῶν τὰ ἱμάτια, καὶ ἐπεκάθισεν ἐπάνω αὐτῶν). The nearest antecedent to the αὐτῶν at the end of the verse is τὰ ἱμάτια ("the garments"); thus when we read Jesus sat on "them," we should probably understand that he sat on "the garments" (not the two animals). John explains that the disciples were not aware of any prophetic significance to Jesus' coming (12:16).

36. Special animals for important persons to ride on were not uncommon in the ancient Near East (e.g., Gen 41:43; Esth 6:8; Ezek 23:6; Jer 17:25; Appian, *Mith.* 27.117; *Pun.* 9.66; Dio Cassius 51.21.9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 8.67.9; Josephus, *J.W.* 7 §152; Livy 45.39.8; 45.40.4; Ovid, *Tr.* 4.2.54; Plutarch, *Aem. Paul.* 34.6). See J. D. M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Palm Sunday Colt," *NovT* 13 (1971) 248–53; but against this, compare J. Fitzmyer, *Luke XXIV* (AB 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985) 1249. On the

What Jewish precedents may have existed for Jesus' arrival, in particular, his use of a colt to ride on? The wealth of classical material that deals with Greco-Roman entries stands in contrast to the relative lack of information dealing with Jewish celebratory welcomes. The OT and related traditions offer the reader stories about various processions and greetings, yet the sort of formal protocol that characterized the παρουσία, the Roman Triumph, and other entries seems neither to be reflected in the OT nor to have developed in the intertestamental era.³⁷

Given the stress in the Gospel narratives on the fact that Jesus *rode* rather than walked, we should look for OT celebratory welcomes that also contain this feature. There are two: the entry of Solomon in 1 Kings 1 and the coming of Zion's king in Zechariah 9.

According to 1 Kings 1,³⁸ as the aged and enfeebled David neared the end of his life, two "parties" vied for Davidic approval and its consequent royal power. One favored Adonijah; the other preferred Solomon. Having decided to appoint Solomon to be his heir after hearing the worrying reports of Adonijah's activities, David acted to legitimize and publicize his choice of a successor through a public demonstration (1 Kgs 1:33–40). David himself specifies how the ceremony is to proceed, and his instructions are meticulously fulfilled in the narrative (vv. 33–39). The anointing and accompanying celebration for Solomon took place in public (in contrast to the initial anointing of both Saul and David).³⁹ The choice of the Gihon Spring, a water source located be-

debated question regarding the presence here of an allusion in the tethering of the animal to the "oracle of Judah" in Gen 49:10–12, see J. Blenkinsopp, "The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry," *JBL* 80 (1961) 55–64; cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1248–49, who discounts the influence of the Oracle here (contra I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978] 712, who acknowledges it). It is possible that readers with a Palestinian background would have recognized (developed?) these allusions, since the connections between Messiah and the "Oracle of Judah" are most developed in the Targums (Blenkinsopp, "The Oracle of Judah," 57).

37. An exception to this would be the greeting to welcome Jonathan Maccabeus into Askalon, probably accounted for by the fact that the city was "thoroughly Hellenized" (*EncJud* 2.190; also Schürer, *Jewish People*, 2.105–8; and Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* [3rd ed.; WUNT 10; Tübingen: Mohr, 1988] 43, 52). For a more thorough examination of the various "Jewish entries," see my *Jesus' Entry*, 56–64.

38. This chapter of 1 Kings has been the subject of numerous studies (e.g., R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative* [SBT 2/9; London: SCM, 1968]; J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* [SSN 17; Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975] 1.345–430; P. K. McCarter, "Plots, True or False," *Int* 35 [1981] 355–67; P. R. Ackroyd, "The Succession Narrative (So-Called)," *Int* 35 [1981] 383–96). Form-critical questions concerning the Hebrew text are not an important consideration for this study. For comments on the slight differences between the LXX and Hebrew versions of the story, see J. W. Wevers, "A Study in the Exegetical Principles of the Translators of 2 Sm 11:2–1 Kings 2:11," *OTS* 8 (1950) 37.

39. 1 Sam 9:25–10:1; 16:13.

tween Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives in the Kidron Valley, as the site of the anointing would naturally have been understood as an ideal location at which to present Solomon to the people. The mule (ἡμίονος)⁴⁰ is specifically mentioned in connection with the houses of Saul and David,⁴¹ and here Solomon is placed on a mule⁴² and rides

40. According to the LXX, three animals served as royal mounts. In Israel the mule (ἡμίονος) was a gift to celebrated or royal figures (Gen 12:16; 45:23; 1 Kgs 10:25; 18:5; 1 Chr 12:40; 2 Chr 9:24) and a simple beast of burden (Jdt 2:17; 15:11; Isa 66:20; Ezek 27:14). The colt (πῶλος) was ridden by Jair the Gileadite (a “judge”) and his sons (Judg 10:4; 12:14) and, significant for the present study, the “coming king” of Zech 9:9 also rides one (taking the καὶ in καὶ πῶλον νέον as ascensive). Finally, the more generic beast of burden (ὑποζύγιον) was accompanying the animals that the household of King David would ride (τὰ ὑποζύγια τῆ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ ἐπικαθησθαι) when he was given the inheritance of Mephibosheth (2 Sam 16:2). The horse seems rarely, if ever, to have been used as a royal mount—a clear example of the Jewish king riding a horse is not to be found. This latter statement requires some qualification. David and Solomon both collected horses (2 Sam 8:4; 1 Kgs 4:26), and it could be inferred that, if the kings owned so many horses, they were likely to have ridden them. One may also surmise that horses often pulled chariots in which kings traveled (e.g., 1 Kgs 12:18; 2 Kgs 8:21; 9:16, 21; 10:15–16). Amaziah was murdered and brought to Jerusalem for burial ἐφ’ ἵππων (2 Kgs 14:20). Jer 17:24–25 and 22:4 speak prophetically of Israel’s kings riding through the gates of Jerusalem “in chariots and on horses” if a certain condition is met—namely, observance of the Sabbath. Outside the OT, a possible exception to this is the bronze coin from Palestine minted in C.E. 38/39, which depicts Agrippa II on horseback with the inscription “Agrippa, son of the king” (*Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* [ed. Y. Meshorer; Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1967] pl. 85 and p. 138). Later commentators seem to envision the Jewish king riding on a horse, for one admonishes, “None may ride on his [the king’s] horse” (*m. Sanh.* 2:5; this purports to be a quotation from R. Simeon, ca. C.E. 140–60). Much later the rabbis refer to the common use of a horse (e.g., *b. Pesa.* 53a). Nevertheless, the observation stands: a clear example of a Jewish king riding a horse is not to be found in the OT.

41. Doeg the Edomite pastured τὰ ἡμίονους Σαουλ (1 Sam 21:8; 22:9); that is, the royal flocks. When Absalom held the dinner party at which his brother Amnon was slain, each of his other brothers (i.e., the princes of Israel) fled the scene of the crime ἐπὶ τὴν ἡμίονον αὐτοῦ (2 Sam 13:29). During the crucial military battle in his rebellion against David, Absalom happened to meet his father’s soldiers ἐπιβεβηκῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἡμίονου αὐτοῦ (2 Sam 18:9).

42. In the LXX of 1 Kgs 1:33, the verb ἐπιβίβάζω describes the action of placing Solomon on the mule, and in the context of 1 Kings, the choice of this verb may point to Solomon’s passivity—and in so doing highlight the difference between him and his usurping brothers, Absalom and Adonijah (cf. 1 Sam 8:11; 2 Sam 15:1; 1 Kgs 1:5). Another important element in the account of Solomon’s accession to the throne is the very obvious association of kingship and anointing: Solomon is anointed king by the high priest. A detailed investigation concerning the use and development of anointing does not fall within the scope of this study. The studies by H. Weinel (“משח and seine Derivate,” *ZAW* 18 [1898] 1–82), E. Kutsch (*Salbung als Rechtsakt im Alten Testament und im alten Orient* [BZAW 87; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1963]), L. Schmidt (*Menschlicher, Erfolg und Jahwes Initiative: Studien zu Tradition, Interpretation und Historie in Überlieferungen von Gideon, Saul und David* [WMANT 38; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970]), and T. N. D. Mettinger (*King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* [ConB 8; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976]) would be fundamental to such a study. For helpful summaries, see

into Jerusalem amidst an ostentatious display of public support, including shouts of “Long live King Solomon!”⁴³ Since this is the first account of dynastic succession in Israel,⁴⁴ it might be expected that some of the details found here will reappear in later narratives that deal with kings; this is almost certainly the case with respect to Zech 9:9,⁴⁵ to which attention is now turned.

Zech 9:9–10 lies in the midst of a more extended oracle of the Lord. Zechariah 9 is the first chapter of the larger complex of writings now most commonly referred to as “Deutero-Zechariah,” the dating, authorship, and referents of which are matters of considerable scholarly dispute.⁴⁶ The first seven verses of Zechariah 9 speak of God’s judgment falling upon the inhabitants of regions and cities to the northwest, west, and southwest of Jerusalem: Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Askalon, Gaza, and Ekron. Jerusalem itself comes into view in v. 8, where the Lord speaks of establishing a garrison in Jerusalem that will afford the city protection from marauders. The passage continues,

(9) Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; proclaim aloud, daughter of Jerusalem: Behold! Your king comes to you, righteous and bearing salvation, humble and seated upon an ass, even a new colt. (10) And I will completely destroy the chariots from Ephraim and the horses from Jerusalem and the bow of war will be utterly destroyed and he will speak peace to the nations; and his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Mettinger (pp. 185–232) and the review of Mettinger by H. G. M. Williamson (*VT* 28 [1978] 499–509).

43. The phrase “May king [so and so] live!” (1 Kgs 1:39) is also found in 1 Sam 10:24, 2 Kgs 11:12, 2 Chr 23:11 (where Samuel and Joash are “enthroned”), and in 2 Sam 16:16, where Absalom entered Jerusalem and was greeted by Hushai.

44. That is to say, it would have been first in the minds of readers of the OT, insofar as it describes events prior to those found in Zechariah (i.e., it is not important for the present study to determine when 1 Kings was composed vis-à-vis Zechariah or the Psalms).

45. Most commentaries on Zechariah do not mention the link between 1 Kings 1 and Zech 9:9–10 (e.g., B. Otzen, *Studien über Deuteriosacharja* [ATD 6; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1964]; M. Sæbø, *Sacharja 9–14: Untersuchungen von Text und Form* [WMANT 34; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener Verlag, 1969]). For an exception, see P. Lamarche, *Zacharie IX–XIV: Structure littéraire et messianisme* (Ebib; Paris: Gabalda, 1961) 115–16. What is perhaps surprising, given the OT habit of employing the language used to describe crucial early events in the telling of later events (note, for example, the terms shared between the accounts of the plundering of the Egyptians by Israel and Abraham), is that the model of Israel’s king riding into Jerusalem is used *only* one other time in the OT, namely, here.

46. D. E. Sellin remarked, “Die Frage der Zeit des Verf. von Sach 9–13 bzw. 14 kann getrost als eine der schwierigsten und umstrittensten der ganzen alttest. Einleitungswissenschaft bezeichnet werden” (*Das Zwölfprophetenbuch* [KAT 12; Leipzig: Deichert, 1922] 487).

The language employed immediately evokes memories of David because it addresses Jerusalem as the daughter of Zion—the city of David (2 Sam 5:7, 9; 6:12, 16; 1 Chr 15:1–3).

The description of the coming of Zion's king found here is reminiscent of the arrival of Solomon narrated in 1 Kings 1. Both stories are set in Jerusalem. In each passage the capital city responds to the king's appearance with joyous celebration. There are linguistic parallels between the verbs used for "mount" in each narrative, both in the MT and in the LXX.⁴⁷ There are one or two noteworthy differences, as well. The coming of Zion's king is associated with God's deliverance for Jerusalem, something not mentioned in connection with Solomon's advent.⁴⁸ Furthermore, while it is clear that Solomon's entry in 1 Kings 1 is part of an enthronement ceremony, it is not so clear that enthronement is in view in Zechariah 9. It could be argued that Zechariah 9 envisions an enthronement, insofar as it is based on 1 Kings 1. However, owing to the militaristic tone of Zech 9:10, Zechariah 9 could be understood equally well as describing a victory celebration or an event prior to the beginning of conflict. In fact, it is difficult to characterize precisely what is being pictured in the Zechariah passage. Still, whether it is an enthronement, a victory celebration, or a call to battle, Jerusalem is being summoned to welcome its king.

Against this scriptural background, Jesus arranges to ride a colt into Jerusalem.⁴⁹ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that his actions constitute anything but a deliberate attempt to cast himself in the role of Jerusalem's king (it can also be observed that riding a colt would not necessarily signify that he was a nonthreatening or particularly humble king: biblical precedents suggest, or could have suggested to a first-century Jewish mind, that a donkey's colt was precisely the sort of animal a Jewish king might have been expected to ride into Jerusalem).

47. The Hiphil of רכב is used in 1 Kgs 1:33 and rendered in the LXX by the verb ἐπιβιβάζω. In Zech 9:9, the participle of רכב appears and corresponds to the participle of ἐπιβαίνω (ἐπιβεβηκω) in the LXX. On the significant differences here between the MT and LXX, see Kinman, *Jesus' Entry*, 54–56.

48. Modern readers of the NT have undoubtedly grown accustomed to Matthew's citation of Zech 9:9, which mentions the meekness (πραῦς) of the king (Matt 21:5). However, it seems this royal virtue was not necessarily at odds with the idea of a warrior king. While the term *meek* normally refers to people in the OT who, though presently oppressed, can expect God to vindicate them in the future (Job 36:15; LXX: Pss 36:11; 75:9; 146:6; 149:4; Sir 10:14), in at least one instance these same people are enjoined to be warriors and take up the fight (LXX: Joel 4:11). In Zech 9:9 the meekness refers to the king's attitude of contrition and submission to God, not his aversion to battle.

49. Coakley argues that Jesus did *not* take the initiative to ride; rather, he was forced on the colt by the bystanders ("Jesus' Messianic Entry," 479). It is true that Jesus' motives are more opaque in the Johannine account, since the details of acquisition found in the Synoptics are missing. Yet Coakley overstates his case here. In John 12:14 it is Jesus, not others, who locates the animal (εὐρών δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς).

This is not the same thing as saying Jesus intended his entry to be seen as fulfillment of Zech 9:9; the point is, fulfillment or not, the OT precedents just mentioned imply that Jesus was following, if not a prophetic prediction, at least a royal model in coming on a *παῖλος*. Beyond this, however, another question emerges: was Jesus' Entry not merely | royal but also messianic? Could it have been royal but not messianic?

The preceding question implies a particular understanding of "messianic." The development of the various forms of first-century Jewish messianism is a fascinating topic; and, while it is not possible to regard first-century Jewish messianic hopes as homogenous, it is fair to conclude that, when the various first-century Judaisms are taken as a whole, the notion of a coming Davidic ruler was not only important and routinely mentioned but also dominant.⁵⁰ As John J. Collins summarizes, "This concept of the Davidic messiah as the warrior king who would destroy the enemies of Israel and institute an era of unending peace constitutes the common core of Jewish messianism around the turn of the era."⁵¹ Biblical (e.g., 2 Sam 7:12–16; 1 Chr 17:11–14; Pss 89:3–4, 19–29, 35–37; 132:10–11; Isa 9:3–9; 11:1–14; Jer 17:23–26; 23:5; Ezek 37:24–25) and extrabiblical texts (e.g., *Psalms of Solomon* 17; 4 *Ezra* 12:32; 4Q285; 4QFlor 1:10–13; 4QpIs^a; *b. Sanh. 98a*; *y. Ta'an. 4:7*) illustrate the repeated connection between a descendant of David and the establishment or restoration of Israel's political fortunes.

Richard Horsley contemplates evidence from a critical sociological-historical perspective and argues that the royal pretenders Judas, Simon, and Athronges (mentioned here, above), whose exploits are chronicled by Josephus, emerged as royal and perhaps even messianic figures a few years prior to the time of Jesus precisely because they had

50. For an example of the diversity of expectations, see *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); A. Chester, "Jewish Messianic Expectations and Mediatorial Figures and Pauline Christology" (in *Paulus und das antike Judentum: Tübingen Durham-Symposium im Gedenken an den 50. Todestag Adolf Schlatters* [ed. M. Hengel; WUNT 58; Tübingen: Mohr, 1991] 17–89, esp. 17–65); and John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1995). For the messianic ideas in the Targums and their relevance to the present discussion, see Chester, "Jewish Messianic Expectations," 39–40, 80–81.

51. *The Scepter and the Star*, 68. Collins's work is outstanding. Years earlier C. Burger wrote, "Die Beobachtung, daß während der beiden Jahrhunderte vor und nach Christi Geburt in allen jüdischen Texten, die den erwarteten Messias eindeutig als Daviden kennzeichnen, die Terminologie weithin konstant ist und immer wieder dieselben alttestamentlichen Stellen herangezogen werden, ist insofern von Bedeutung, als daraus gefolgert werden kann, daß auch die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Davidssproß in ihrem Kern sich gleich bleibt" (*Jesus als Davidsson: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* [FRLANT 98; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970] 23); D. C. Duling agrees; see "The Promises to David and Their Entrance into Christianity: Nailing Down a Likely Hypothesis," *NTS* 20 [1973–74] 60).

engaged in the sort of actions that engendered support by the peasantry—they engaged Romans militarily.⁵² While it is clear they sought or claimed kingship for themselves (Jos., *Ant.* §§271–81), there is no clear evidence that they offered themselves as having a Davidic pedigree (Josephus does comment that one, Athronges, had been a “shepherd”—an echo, perhaps, of David, though Josephus also says Athronges was not distinguished as to ancestry; *Ant.* 17 §278). Nevertheless, at least with respect to one important element of what a messiah was expected to do—fight those perceived to be oppressors of the nation—we can concur with Horsley that some may have regarded these men as messianic.⁵³ By contrast, as Jesus made his last journey to Jerusalem, he did not approach as one who had taken on Israel’s enemies in the popularly anticipated way. He had not engaged the Romans militarily nor encouraged his followers to do so. His wonderworking ministry brought to mind certain of the biblical pictures of a new era (e.g., Isa 35:5–6), but he had not fulfilled other, more central expectations concerning judgment and national liberation. To answer the question posed earlier: while it might have been possible, in principle, to detach royal from messianic (“messianic” as reflecting the dominant, Davidic expectations outlined above), in practice it appears on the basis of available evidence not to have been done prior to Jesus.⁵⁴

As to Jesus’ Entry, scholars have often characterized it as messianic—but insofar as *Jesus’* actions are concerned, this characterization

52. He notes that Josephus “apparently avoids any suggestion of the distinctive Jewish tradition of an anointed king in his accounts of Judas, Simon, and Athronges” (“Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus,” *CBQ* 46 [1984] 484). Horsley appears to use the term *anointed* as equivalent to “popular among the people, particularly among the peasant classes” (as opposed to “anointed according to the pattern described in Israel’s Scriptures”). Thus for him “messianic” does not necessarily mean messianic according to the expectations reflected in the many biblical and extrabiblical texts cited.

53. *Ibid.*, 471–95. In a rather different vein, William R. Farmer makes the intriguing argument that these men either were or claimed to be of Maccabean descent, thus accounting for the support they enjoyed from Jews who wished to see another purge of Gentile elements from the land. Farmer notes that this Maccabean link was more likely for Judas and Athronges than Simon (“Judas, Simon and Athronges,” *NTS* 4 [1957/58] 147–55).

54. One possible example of royalty minus messianism is Herod the Great. His royal pedigree was apparently a matter of some dispute. Harold Hoehner surveys the differing comments made by Josephus and others before concluding that Herod was likely not Jewish but Idumean, or half-Jewish. He was proclaimed King of the Jews by the Roman Senate in 40 C.E. To the extent that he was viewed as authentically royal by his subjects, he provides an example of being king without being messiah. He surely came regularly to Jerusalem without being hailed as messiah, as would also his sons have done. Everyone knew of their friendship with Rome, and no one expected them to effect national deliverance. But other leaders emerged who did engender such hopes. On the lineage of Herod and the date of his accession, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (SNTSMS 17; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 1–2.

does not stand up to scrutiny. There was not a “messianic way” to enter Jerusalem, and nothing in the manner of Jesus’ approach would have encouraged his followers to take up arms and oppose the Romans; as will be noted below, if anything, he tried to discourage that sort of militancy. Concerning any messianic associations with Zech 9:9, two points can be made. The first is that there is no clear evidence to support the view that Zech 9:9 was considered a “messianic prediction” within Judaism prior to the writing of the Gospels. The earliest comment from the rabbis is found in *b. Sanh.* 98a, where R. Joshua b. Levi speculates about how messiah might appear to Israel; this comment was made in the third century C.E. and thus provides no secure basis for understanding how the passage was understood in the days of Jesus. The second point is this: there seems not to have been any awareness at the time of the Entry that it constituted any sort of “messianic fulfillment.” Mark does not depict the entry as “fulfillment,” though to be sure, the writing up of the narrative in Matthew and John, especially the introduction of the OT quotation and the characterization of the event as “fulfillment,” does. J. F. Coakley observes that John, having first quoted Zech 9:9, then adds this caveat, “these things the disciples did not understand at first” (John 12:16a). Coakley writes,

their significance [the words in 16a] lies precisely in the admission here by the evangelist that the events just narrated did not—except to the eye of faith—obviously conform to the interpretation later placed upon them. If that is true, then it cannot be that the whole narrative⁵⁵ is controlled by the commentary.

Having observed that there was not a particularly “messianic way” to enter Jerusalem, I hasten to add that it is obvious that any entry made by messiah would by definition be “messianic.” And so the question becomes, “Was Jesus the anticipated Davidic messiah?” Unfortunately, a thorough discussion of this question, to which Christian tradition has replied with a resounding “yes,” clearly lies outside the scope of the present investigation. For now, we can affirm that with respect to *Jesus’* actions, it appears that his coming was above all a “royal” event and not necessarily a messianic one. But what about other features of his arrival—namely, the actions of those who spread branches as he traveled to Jerusalem and offered him their acclamations?

The Disciples’ Reactions

According to Mark 11:8–10, Jesus’ actions to secure a colt are followed by two reactions on the part of the disciples. They make a show of recognizing him as king first by their actions and then by their words.

55. “Jesus’ Messianic Entry,” 467–68. He further argues that this comment demonstrates John’s preservation of historically trustworthy data here.

After Jesus mounts the colt, the disciples spread garments and leafy branches on the road as pavement, so to speak, for his ride into Jerusalem.⁵⁶ The spreading of the garments is featured in all the Gospels save John, while the cutting and spreading of branches is found in all but Luke. Such actions were common to celebratory entries in the ancient world whether the entrant was a king or some other important person.⁵⁷ There is no clear indication of what prompted this response from the disciples, though the most natural inference from the text is that they recognized the royal connotations of Jesus' riding a colt and reacted accordingly to honor him.

Mark's bland depiction of the disciples' cutting branches and laying them ahead of Jesus finds interesting confirmation—and greater specificity—in John's account. In Mark the disciples obtain the rather nondescript *στιβόας* (branches) from the fields to lay before Jesus. John is more specific, noting that the crowds cut *φοίνιξ* (palm branches) from the fields as part of their greeting. John's greater specificity seems not to be readily attributable to any obvious Johannine christological or apologetic motif, and it contributes to the view that Mark's account is based on sound historical footing. How so?

The identification of palm branches as nationalistic symbols is well documented.⁵⁸ The mention of palm branches together with royal acclaim for Jesus makes the Johannine version of the Entry somewhat inflammatory because it associates Jesus and his disciples with the sort of nationalistic symbolism easily perceived as seditious. Yet elsewhere,

56. There is scriptural precedent for laying garments under a king in 2 Kgs 9:13, where Jehu's fellow army commanders scramble to honor him as king following his impromptu anointing by an unnamed prophet's servant.

57. E.g., Suetonius, *Ner.* 6.25.

58. Memories of the Maccabean exploits persisted in Jesus' day. They were especially strong in Roman Palestine, as W. R. Farmer demonstrated in *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus: An Enquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) esp. 125–58. Two episodes in Maccabean history are germane to the discussion of “foliage.” After Judas Maccabeus fought the army of Lysias, he went to Jerusalem to cleanse the Temple (1 Macc 4:36). Branches and palm fronds were carried by the participants on their way to the Temple (2 Macc 10:7). Palm branches were also mentioned prominently in the procession of Simon Maccabeus to Jerusalem and his rededication of the Temple (1 Macc 13:51). Farmer explored the connection between the palm branches taken up by the crowd in John 12:13 and in Maccabean precedents and showed that these branches were distinctive nationalist symbols and easily recognized as such (“The Palm Branches in John 12,13,” *JTS* n.s. 3 [1952] 62–66). W. A. Meeks observes that, though palm branches regularly denoted victory, they had “no necessary connection with royalty” (*The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* [NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967] 86). They appear on various Jewish coins and in the literary accounts of the Maccabees' exploits along with other collections of branches (cf. P. Romanoff, “Jewish Symbols on Ancient Jewish Coins,” *JQR* n.s. 34 [1943–44] 425–40). They originally emerged as symbols in association with the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40).

this is precisely the impression John wants to avoid (6:15). Hence, if this feature of the story (the palm branches) is retained in spite of its potential for misinterpretation, there is high probability that it is authentic. This would also mean that Mark's general reference to laying branches before Jesus is doubly attested.

In each of the Gospels the disciples' tacit recognition of Jesus' kingship is followed by explicit statements to that effect. Mark says this: "And those going ahead and those following were crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.'"⁵⁹ The first half of the purported acclaim is a quotation from Ps 118:26 (ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου); the second half contains the apparently unprecedented (at least in the extant literature) mention of "David's kingdom" (εὐλογημένην ἢ ἐρχομένη βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Δαυίδ).

Psalms 118 (LXX:117) is applied to Jesus' Entry by every Gospel writer (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13). There is some evidence that the psalm developed in a cultic environment with particular application to a ceremony involving the king.⁶⁰ This early, apparently ritualistic use was recognized and expanded on by later interpreters, who delineated the roles of the participants in the antiphonal singing.⁶¹ But the psalm could not have been used in precisely this fashion in the postexilic era, when no "son of David" occupied the throne of Israel, and the nation was dominated by foreign powers. There is some debate about whether these Hallel Psalms were sung on the way to Jerusalem or were confined to use inside the Temple.⁶² The Mishnah indicates that the Hallel was sung in the Temple during the sacrifices at Passover (*m. Pesa*. 5:7), while at Tabernacles it was sung by pilgrims approaching Jerusalem (*m. Sukkah* 4:5). This makes its appearance here—prior to Passover—seem anachronistic. Having said that, we are hardly in the position to aver that the Hallel could not have been sung at other times; it is not as though there was a proscription against singing it at times other than the "appropriate" feasts. If the Hallel were sung or chanted by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem, the appearance of the quotation from Psalm 118 here in the Gospel

59. On the meaning of the phrase, see E. Lohse, "Hosianna," *NovT* 6 (1963) 115.

60. Psalms 113–18 formed the Great Hallel and, according to tradition, were sung by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem. They were typically recited at the major Jewish religious festivals of Passover in the spring (Unleavened Bread; *m. Pesa*. 5:7) and Tabernacles in the autumn (*m. Sukkah* 3:9). They were also employed at the celebration of Hanukkah. See Str-B 1.845–50; and S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (2 vols.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) 1.3, 120–21.

61. *Tg. Ketab*. Ps 118; *b. Pesa*. 119a; see also E. Werner, "'Hosanna' in the Gospels," *JBL* 65 (1946) 115.

62. Lohse says they were sung on the way to the festivals, "Hosianna," 113–19; S. Zeitlin believes they were sung *inside* the Temple ("The Hallel," *JQR* 53 [1962] 22–29).

narratives would be unremarkable.⁶³ Yet the Gospel accounts leave the impression that the disciples were not simply reciting pilgrim songs at an auspicious moment—they seem to be directing their acclaim and the words of the psalm toward Jesus: the branches and garments are laid before *him*, onlookers are both preceding and following *him*, and the quotation from the psalm is picked up where an individual (εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος) (coming to Jerusalem is in view. Given that Jesus has just exercised, as it were, a royal prerogative by having the colt fetched and riding it, and given that the psalm itself was historically understood as featuring Israel's king, its application to Jesus at this moment by onlookers is both comprehensible and dramatic.

Some scholars have concluded that the particular portion of the psalm cited by Mark, ὡσαννά· εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου, was recited here by onlookers because the term ὁ ἐρχόμενος had in some quarters taken on messianic associations.⁶⁴ For them, the “one who comes in the name of the Lord” (v. 26) was not a figure from the past or the current sovereign who was to be fêted as part of a regular national celebration; rather, he was an as-yet-to-be-revealed deliverer.⁶⁵ On closer examination, however, we discover the evidence for this view of Ps 118:26 is far from persuasive, and John Meier puts the theory to rest with this observation:

However, all that these texts [employing the notion or phrase “coming one”] necessarily show is that the verb “come” . . . can take on a solemn eschatological resonance in a given eschatological context. The verb in itself is not attached to any one eschatological figure. Indeed, in an eschatological context, almost everything and anything is said to “come,” including the days.⁶⁶

As noted above, the tone of the Entry—at least as set by Jesus—is royal but not clearly messianic or eschatological. So what are we to read into the citation of the psalm here? Had Jesus stirred the messianic impulses of the crowd by riding?

Perhaps. It is not difficult to understand how the crowd accompanying Jesus, or at least some members of that crowd, would have had eschatological and possibly even messianic expectations aroused as Jesus came to Jerusalem. After all, he had been preaching about the soon appearance of God's kingdom and performing wonders that not

63. As Harvey argues, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 127.

64. *TDNT* 2.667–71; see also J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966) 256–60.

65. *TDNT* 2.670; Werner, “‘Hosanna’ in the Gospels,” 97–122. Note in particular the clear but sparing references to an expected figure in the *Sibylline Oracles* and *Psalms of Solomon* (see the discussion in Schürer, *Jewish People*, 2.501–13).

66. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, volume 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 199.

only lent credibility to his teaching but were also themselves signs of the kingdom's presence.⁶⁷ As Sanders and others have noted, Jesus himself expected to occupy a central role in this kingdom, and now, at the religiously and politically charged Passover season, he leads an entourage to Jerusalem.⁶⁸ Moreover, his identification as "son of David" by blind Bartimaeus would have further set the stage for the response of onlookers at the Entry.⁶⁹ While it cannot be established that the recitation of Psalm 118 here was messianic, when taken together with the other elements of the context just mentioned, the scene surely does take on an eschatological coloring and this, together with the royal one supplied by Jesus, can easily be understood to have led onlookers to "regard the whole moment as messianic. It is important here to reiterate that I am not saying that this perception corresponded to *Jesus'* intentions; rather, it was largely the product of other people's hopes, expect-

67. For the timing of the kingdom's appearance as preached by Jesus, see especially Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 169–88; also Witherington, *Christology*, 192–203; and my *History, Design, and the End of Time* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) 49–64.

68. On this see, for example, Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 238–48; Witherington, *Christology*, 203ff.

69. In each Synoptic Gospel, Jesus' Entry is bracketed, on one end, by the healing of the blind man outside Jericho (Mark 10:46–52; Matt 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43) and, on the other, by the account of the Temple cleansing. The JS regards both of these bracketing episodes as probable ("pink"), and many other critical scholars agree (e.g., Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 254–56; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 357; Funk, *Acts of Jesus*, 560; Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 207–12. For the most thorough, and to my mind persuasive argument in favor of historicity, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2.686–90). One of the most interesting features of the blind man story is how it raises the "son of David" question as Jesus approaches Jerusalem; to be even more specific, although the label is employed in the appeal of the blind man (in spite of the crowd's desire to quiet him, Mark 10:48), Jesus does not ignore, sidestep, or correct him. The phrase "son of David" would have had messianic connotations for many eyewitnesses; and royal ones, at the least, for all. It is true that according to Mark Jesus distances himself from titles that could be construed as messianic early in his ministry (e.g., "the holy one of God," Mark 1:25, 34; "son of God," Mark 3:12; "the Christ," Mark 8:29–30; "my beloved son," Mark 9:9), but that only makes his apparent embrace of "son of David" here all the more intriguing. His response to the blind man—to listen, grant his request for healing, and commend him with the words "your faith has saved you" (Mark 10:52)—contains not the slightest discomfort with or objection to the "son of David" label. If anything, Jesus' actions and words are implicit confirmation that the man has spoken well (on the range of possible connotations of "son of David" in this context, see C. C. McCown, "The Christian Tradition as to the Magical Wisdom of Solomon," *JPOS* 2 [1922] 1–24; L. R. Fisher, "Can This Be the Son of David?" in *Jesus and the Historian: Written in Honor of Ernest Cadman Colwell* [ed. F. T. Trotter; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968] 82–97; Burger, *Jesus als Davidsson*, 16–24; K. Berger, "Die königlichen Messias-traditionen des Neuen Testaments," *NTS* 20 [1973–74] 3–9; Duling, "The Promises to David and Their Entrance into Christianity," 55–77, esp. 55–69; idem, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 [1975] 235–52; and Bruce Chilton, "Jesus *ben David*: Reflections on the *Davidssonfrage*," *JSNT* [1982] 88–112, esp. 92–101). Many of these scholars note that the label "son of David" in a context where healing is sought would have perhaps had more "Solomonic" than "messianic" associations.

tations, and reactions. Indeed, if we can rely on Luke's Gospel, there is some evidence that Jesus himself was wary of the nationalistic overtones that seemed to be emerging. Luke claims to have investigated the Jesus story "carefully" (Luke 1:3), and it might therefore be significant that at the Entry narrative he inserts two pericopes that have the effect of demonstrating Jesus' caution about the eschatological and nationalistic hopes that seem to have been aroused as he journeyed to Jerusalem. In the first instance, between the narratives of the healing of the blind man (Luke 18:35–43 = Mark 10:46–52) and the Entry (Luke 19:28–44 = Mark 11:1–10) Luke has inserted the story of Jesus' meeting the diminutive chief tax-collector, Zacchaeus (19:1–10). If this reflects the actual order of events in Jesus' life, it is highly relevant to the issue of how Jesus viewed the whole scene leading up to the Entry, for he embraces Zacchaeus, something the leaders of various first-century nationalistic movements would have been reluctant to do, given the commonly perceived link between tax-collectors and the Roman oppressors. Second, the Zacchaeus episode is followed by Jesus' telling the parable of the nobleman going to a far country to receive his kingdom (19:12–27);⁷⁰ Luke explains that Jesus told the parable "because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they [his disciples] supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately"⁷¹ (19:11). If, as seems likely, Jesus is the "nobleman" in the parable, it serves to put off expectations that the consummation of the kingdom would come straightaway. The parable demonstrates Jesus' awareness that the time for political expectations to be fulfilled had not come.⁷² On the one hand, if these two Lukan additions to Mark's narrative reflect the actual order

70. For a thorough discussion of the parable's meaning, see my *Jesus' Entry*, 86–87.

71. Although the parable's source and possible historical referent are debated, it is typically seen to put in the mouth of Jesus a clear warning that expectations of an immediate coming of the kingdom were misguided. Some argue that Luke has combined two separate parables here—the Q-based parable of the talents (cf. Matt 25:14–30) and another one dealing with a "throne-pretender" (see M. Zerwick, "Die Parabel vom Thronanwärter," *Bib* 40 [1959] 654–74; E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* [NCBC; London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1974] 222). J. Jeremias suggests the parables were combined in a pre-Lukan tradition (*The Parables of Jesus* [rev. ed.; London: SCM, 1963] 59). Others believe that Luke has edited the parable of Q without combining it with another (D. F. Hauck, *Das Evangelium des Lukas* [THKNT 3; Leipzig: Deichert, 1934] 231). S. Schulz speaks of a "Motiv vom Thronprätendenten" rather than a preexisting throne pretender parable (*Q: Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten*, 288–93). Marshall contends that one parable, which was subjected to a considerable development in its preliterary form, lies behind the Matthean and Lukan versions (*Luke*, 701; also C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* [3rd ed.; London: Nisbet, 1936] 146).

72. H.-W. Bartsch suggests that Luke's comments may have been intended to correct the view that "the Passion of Jesus in Jerusalem was already bringing the Parousia" ("Early Christian Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS* 11 [1964–65] 393). Luke's parable seems a very oblique way of refuting such a view; more applicable, perhaps, would be Acts 1:6–11, which refers to the return of Jesus.

of events in Jesus' life (and I see no compelling reason why they could not), they suggest that Jesus intended to dampen nationalistic expectations as he approached Jerusalem (his "intention," I submit, was neither entirely discerned nor heeded); if, on the other hand, the two Lukan stories were motivated by Luke's redactional interests, they nevertheless show Luke's perception of the potentially embarrassing nature of Mark's Entry narrative as it stood.

Jesus intended his Entry to be seen as "royal"; others introduced its eschatological and messianic flavoring, though he could hardly have found this turn of events surprising. There remain two important backgrounds to the Entry to explore: the size of the crowd that witnessed it and Pilate's own coming to Jerusalem.

The Size of the Crowd

In connection with the objections of E. P. Sanders and others (noted earlier), it is appropriate to consider how large the entourage that accompanied Jesus might have been. Was the size of the group itself large enough to raise imperial suspicions? In the Gospel accounts it is easy, at first reading, to suppose that the eyes of everyone in Jerusalem were upon Jesus as he approached the city. But this is hardly the image required by the Gospel texts. Mark 11:8 reports, "And many (πολλοὶ) spread their garments on the road, and others (ἄλλοι) spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields." The term πολὺς as used in Mark is rather elastic. It can refer to crowds numbering from, at most, several dozen (Mark 2:2, 15; 5:26) to several thousand (6:34). Context normally narrows its range of meaning, but in Mark 11 context supplies little help. Jesus has emerged from Jericho with his disciples and a "great multitude" (ὄχλου ἰκανοῦ), yet by the time we come to the Entry narrative, the story of the colt's acquisition has intervened and disrupted any unambiguous identification of the crowd of people who might be counted among the "many" of 11:8. Matthew's account is comparable to Mark's, although the subject in the first clause of Matt 21:8 is "most of the crowd" (ὁ δὲ πλεῖστος ὄχλος).⁷³ As in Mark, the identity of this group accompanying Jesus is ambiguous—its size and makeup are unspecified. It might refer to the crowd that witnessed the healing of the blind men outside Jericho, although strictly speaking, the "crowd" in the nearest context is composed of disciples (Matt 21:6). Furthermore, the language hints that only part of the crowd with Jesus joined in the ritual greeting.⁷⁴ Luke 19:36 is less specific in identifying

73. The RSV, NASB, NLT, and ESV translations retain the force of the superlative here; the NIV and NKJV do not.

74. For this use of the superlative, see *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur von W. Bauer* (6th ed.; ed. K. Aland and B. Aland; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988) 1382–83.

those who “spread their garments” (ὑπεστρώωνυον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν), although technically they are the two disciples commissioned to fetch the colt (v. 29).

Similar disparity over the crowd’s identification is reflected in the following unit that rehearses the crowds’ acclamation based on Ps 118:25–26. Mark 11:9–10 attributes the twofold blessing to “those who went before and those who followed” (οἱ προάγοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες), presumably subsets of the “many” mentioned in v. 8. For Matthew, the blessing comes from those “preceding and following,” who are later simply called “the crowds” (οἱ ὄχλοι, 21:9). It is not clear whether this label expands the size of the group mentioned in Matt 21:8. The Lukan account is here more specific. Luke 19:37–38 locates the event “at the descent of the Mount of Olives” and attributes the acclamation to the whole multitude of the disciples (ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν). This latter phrase J. A. Fitzmyer regards as “Lukan hyperbole,” and J. Ernst suggests that Luke expressly mentions a large crowd (though not specifically numbered) in order to stress that Jesus had many followers.⁷⁵ But by identifying the group as Jesus’ *disciples*, Luke’s text conceivably *reduces* rather than enlarges the size of the crowd: it was indeed “a crowd” but one composed of disciples, not the public at large.⁷⁶ We might get some idea of its size by looking ahead to Acts 1:12–15, where Luke gives the impression that most if not all the disciples had assembled in the upper room after Jesus’ ascension and that they numbered 120.

As to how the soldiers might have viewed this entourage, Josephus tells us that Roman troops stationed in Jerusalem for the festival were typically housed at the Antonia and were primarily concerned with maintaining order in the Temple precincts.⁷⁷ To revisit Sanders’s earlier objection, one need not imagine that the crowd accompanying Jesus outside Jerusalem was so large as to have commanded the attention of soldiers, who were primarily concerned with events inside the city and Temple. In fact, one valid way of reading the text is that the lack of military intervention suggests that a smaller group accompanied Jesus than is often envisioned.

John’s picture is somewhat different and at first reading seems to picture a larger group greeting Jesus than do the Synoptics. He describes the onlookers as a “large crowd” composed not only of those traveling with Jesus but also those inside Jerusalem who had heard of his approach and made their way outside the city to welcome him

1. Fitzmyer, *Luke XXIV*, 1250. Similarly, see C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (TPINTC; London: SCM, 1990) 680; Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 526.
2. For more on how these comments correspond to Luke’s redactional interests, see my *Jesus’ Entry*, 120–22, 175–79.
77. *J.W.* 5 §§243–45.

(John 12:12). A closer examination, however, reveals the crowd need not be perceived as very large. The ὁ ὄχλος πολὺς of 12:12 seems to be identical with the group mentioned earlier at 12:9 ([ὁ] ὄχλος πολὺς), which refers to those friends and curiosity seekers who had visited the revived Lazarus. The large crowd may further be traced to the “many Jews” who had consoled Mary and Martha when Lazarus died (11:19ff.). Somewhat later, John adds that the crowd was made up of “those who had been with him when he raised Lazarus from the dead” (12:17); the last text hardly contemplates a crowd of thousands, or even hundreds for that matter, because it refers to those Jews “who were with her in the house” (11:31).

This theory that the crowd that witnessed Jesus’ Entry was relatively small is made all the more likely when we consider, by way of comparison, the size of the crowds that would have been ascending to Jerusalem at festival time. The season of Passover attracted large crowds of Jews to Jerusalem from various parts of the world. As J. Jeremias observed, the population of the city would have been greatly enlarged at this time, and the days prior to the celebration would have witnessed a steady stream of visitors, undoubtedly thousands, to Jerusalem.⁷⁸ They would have approached the city from various directions—there were entry points to the city on all sides. If Sanders is correct that the pilgrims would typically arrive several days in advance of the Passover itself and if he is also correct in calculating that some 300,000 might have traveled, it would mean that on average thousands of people per day would have come to the city or loitered in its precincts.⁷⁹ Given this scenario, it is not difficult to imagine that the crowd that accompanied Jesus would have had to have been extremely large for it to be distinguishable from others who were making their way to the city and thus to have attracted Roman attention. It should additionally be noted that the laying of branches under Jesus’ feet may well have been beyond the Roman soldiers ability to see. The Synoptics agree that the colt was secured for Jesus in the town of Bethphage, outside Jerusalem. While the acclamations began, according to Luke, at the “descent of the Mount of Olives,” at least some of the action took place beforehand: in both John and Luke, the garments and the palm branches are thrown down in front of Jesus *before* he mounts the colt. While the Roman lookouts would probably have been chosen, at least in part, for their keen eyesight, recognizing the palm branches men

78. *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu: Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte* (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) 66–98. E. P. Sanders suggests that Jerusalem could have held 300,000–400,000 pilgrims! (*Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 b.c.e.–66 c.e.* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992] 125–28).

79. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 249–51.

tioned in John 12 from a distance of several hundred yards would have been difficult, to say the least.

Furthermore, even if the entourage had been observed, the potentially seditious nature of the event had largely to do with what was *said* by the disciples. According to the Gospels they hail Jesus as king—but what is the likelihood that what they said would have been heard and understood by the Romans charged with keeping the peace? The soldiers nearest them would have been about 300 yards away, and the human voice is not particularly resonant, even less so at high altitude (i.e., at the altitude as far above sea level as Jerusalem). And yet, even on the assumption that the soldiers could have heard what was being said about Jesus, the question remains: would they have understood its import? For, although the Roman soldiers with Pilate were not regular Italian soldiers (they were largely drawn from Samaria and other nearby regions⁸⁰), it is by no means certain that all of them would have been sufficiently bi- or trilingual to understand the words spoken or chanted from a distance, presumably in Hebrew or Aramaic, by Jesus' disciples.

Finally, even if a larger demonstration than the one proposed here had occurred, it is far from clear that it would have commanded the notice of the Romans. As noted earlier, the Roman soldiers' attention would likely have focused on action *inside* rather than outside the Temple, because that is where trouble was most likely to erupt.⁸¹ Moreover, the considerable height of the Temple wall in Jesus' day would have meant that only the lookouts that happened to be facing eastward, outside the city, could conceivably have seen Jesus' entourage. But it is unlikely that merely seeing Jesus approach would have caused distress: after all, he was riding a donkey's colt, hardly the sort of animal to raise concern, much less strike fear, into the heart of a Roman soldier. Taken together, the points raised make it likely that the crowd that accompanied Jesus was rather modest in size. No wonder, then, that it failed to raise imperial suspicions.

The Background of Pilate's Entry

The welcome extended to a royal or other dignitary was designed to court the favor and/or placate the wrath of the visiting celebrity through an ostentatious greeting ceremony. In the Hellenistic world this combination of arrival and greeting was often associated with terms such as παρουσία, ἀπαντάω and ὑπαντάω (but even if these particular terms were absent, other elements in a description would have

80. Schürer, *Jewish People*, 1.362, 365.

81. *Ibid.*, 1.366.

made it clear that a special sort of entry was in view). The importance of the occasion in the ancient world is illustrated by the fact that eras were often reckoned from the date of a given παρουσία.⁸² There is overwhelming evidence to indicate that the eyewitnesses to Jesus' Entry and the first readers of the Gospels would have been familiar with παρουσία, and the protocol of entries would have been familiar to first-century Palestinian Jews not only from the sources just mentioned but also from a recent experience much closer to home—the coming of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

The Gospels agree that Jesus stood trial before Pilate. Because Roman governors headquartered in Caesarea Maritima, his presence in Jerusalem requires explanation. It is likely that Pilate had come to Jerusalem at the time of Passover not only to ensure civic order in the city but also, in accordance with the custom of Roman governors elsewhere,⁸³ to conduct trials.

The coming of a Roman governor to a city presented its rulers, merchants, and inhabitants with an opportunity to enhance their position in the governor's eyes or, conversely, to risk the retaliation that likely would follow from behavior thought to be curt or insulting.⁸⁴ A proper welcome could prove to be a financial and judicial advantage to individual citizens as well as city officials; an improper one could have unpredictable and unfavorable results.⁸⁵ These intricate sociopolitical relationships and expectations were current in the days of Pilate's rule

82. See Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 372 and nn. 2–6.

83. Brent Kinman, "Pilate's Assize and the Timing of Jesus' Trial," *TynBul* 42 (1991) 282–95. For recent discussions of Pilate, see J.-P. Lémonon, *Pilate et le Gouvernement de la Judée: Textes et Monuments* (Paris: Gabalda, 1981); B. C. McGing, "Pontius Pilate and the Sources," *CBQ* 53 (1991) 416–38; and, most recently, Helen Bond's *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (SNTSMS 100; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Both Josephus and Philo portray him as an eminently dislikable man. Philo describes Pilate as "naturally: inflexible, a blend of self-will and relentlessness . . . vindictive and possessed of a furious temper" (*Leg.* §§301, 303). He also suggests that Pilate was corrupt, having committed "briberies, the insults, the robberies, the outrages and wanton injuries" (*ibid.*, §302). C. Kraeling tempers Philo's remarks ("The Episode of the Roman Standards at Jerusalem," *HTR* 35 [1942] 263–89); see also McGing, "Pontius Pilate."

84. Examples of a city's failure to welcome its distinguished guests are rare, and with good reason—a city's failure to render the customary regard could have grave consequences and thus was to be avoided. Dio Cassius does mention the notable example of the Roman magistrate T. Virginius Rufus, who besieged the city of Vesontio because it did not receive him properly (Dio Cassius 63.24.1). In a related story, the chief priests at Jerusalem urged the crowds to meet the troops of the Roman governor of Judea, Florus, with customary regard so that he might not have any grounds for further destruction in the city (*J.W.* 2 §§318–24). The priests' actions show an awareness of appropriate entry customs and the need to observe them.

85. Fergus Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London: Duckworth, 1977) 28.

in Judea.⁸⁶ Despite his unpopularity, there were arguably several parties interested enough in maintaining the status quo (i.e., their own retention of power) to ensure that he would receive the “welcome” he “deserved” as he approached Jerusalem at the Passover season.

In Judea, Sadducees, Pharisees, and ordinary citizens would probably have been mobilized to greet Pilate as he arrived. These groups would admittedly have formed an ill-at-ease congregation; still, for the purpose of political expediency, it is not impossible to believe they would have cooperated with one another (as seems to have been the case at Jesus' trials; Mark 15:1ff.; that is, the Council was composed of both Pharisees and Sadducees). The Sadducees had a special interest in placating the governor, for the high priest who was inevitably chosen from among their number was appointed by the prefect;⁸⁷ furthermore, according to John's Gospel the Pharisees had vested interests in appeasing Pilate as well (John 11:48).⁸⁸ Jerusalem's citizenry could have been encouraged by the prominent religious leaders to greet Pilate—as modern-day events reveal, crowds and demonstrations can always be arranged. Merchants, traders, and other businessmen would have their own reasons for seeing Pilate (as mentioned above).

Precisely how they would have greeted him is another matter. The coming of a provincial governor often took on the trappings of a stately, if not royal, procession. For example, the Roman magistrate Lucullus received a royal welcome when he visited Egypt in the first century B.C.E.,⁸⁹ and a few years later Cicero recorded that at the outset of his judicial tour (in 51 B.C.E.) “extraordinary throngs of people have come to meet me from farms and villages and every homestead.”⁹⁰ Elsewhere in the Empire, a band of municipal officials and other citizens,

86. As Millar observes, “The various forms of relationship here referred to, which by their very indeterminacy constituted a sensitive area in the contact between subject and governor in the provinces, persisted through the later republic and into the empire” (ibid., 29). In fact, the possibilities for benefit and harm were sharpened during the time of the emperors when a governor was vested with the power of Rome (which he held by delegation from Caesar), for an insult perceived to be directed toward Caesar (via his appointee) might not be diffused through senatorial interventions, as could have been the case in the republic. Millar adds, “When monarchy was established, all these social and political aspects of a governor's journey reappeared on a larger scale” (p. 31).

87. This was true for the time of Pilate, in which the Roman prefect governed Judea. Earlier, Herod and Archelaus had appointed high priests (see Schürer, *Jewish People*, 2.227–32; also E. M. Smallwood, “High Priests and Politics in Roman Palestine,” *JTS* n.s. 13 [1962] 14–34).

88. See especially Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 253–55, and her discussion of those passages in Josephus that show how Jewish religious leaders faced the wrath of political leaders when insurrection broke out, even without the support of the religious leaders.

89. Plutarch, *Vita Luculli* 2.5.

90. *Ad Atticum* 5.16.

including the social, religious, and political élite, typically proceeded some distance from the city in order to meet an approaching dignitary well in advance of the city walls.⁹¹ From the little we know of Pilate, there is no reason to suppose that he, like Roman magistrates elsewhere, would have expected less than a splendid, even if insincere, welcome. Jewish officials were certainly not strangers to the intricacies of Roman diplomacy; they sent embassies to Caesar and his representatives on more than one occasion (Jos., *Ant.* 17 §§300–314; *J.W.* 2 §280) and greeted other dignitaries at Jerusalem with customary regard (Philo, *Leg.* §297; Jos., *Ant.* 16 §§12–19; 18 §90; *J.W.* 2 §297).

While the governor's arrival would have been accompanied by acclamations from the local inhabitants, his appearance would have been staged with an eye toward discouraging those who might have been contemplating a test of Roman power through devious or seditious acts. Although Pilate would not have had the privilege of accompaniment by certain officials,⁹² he still would have had an impressive entourage. The largest, most formidable group (from the point of view of intimidation) to travel with a governor would have been the soldiers under his command. It seems probable that both infantry and horsemen would have accompanied Pilate from Caesarea, and the massive increase in Jerusalem's population during the festivals, the Jews' prior record of inciting troubles at festivals, and the Romans' oft-demonstrated intention to maintain order all suggest that his retinue would have been large. On the analogy of troops required to put down both previous and later disturbances, it is not unlikely that something on the order of one thousand troops would have been with Pilate.⁹³ Assuming that there were one thousand soldiers, their impact would have been considerable. Roman soldiers were impressively fitted with a large shield, breastplates and headpieces, swords, a spear, an axe,

256. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (3rd ed.; 4 vols.; ed. W. Dittenberger; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–42) 332, lines 33–38. The description is comparable to that found in extant literary texts that contain similar language and stock phrases (cf. Polybius 16.25.5–8).

257. Cicero mentions the following persons as constituents of a consular entourage: an *accensus* (*QFr.* 1.1.13), lictors (*Fam.* 12.30.7), prefects (*Att.* 6.1), legates and a quaestor (*ibid.* 5.16; also F. Millar, "The Emperor, the Senate, and the Provinces," *JRS* 56 [1966] 157; and A. H. M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1960] 119). Not all the officials from Cicero's list would have accompanied Pilate, since he was himself a prefect, functioned as a quaestor (a financial officer), and was subordinate to a legate (the legate of Syria).

258. For a discussion of troop strength, composition, and location in Syria–Palestine at this time, see T. R. S. Broughton, "The Roman Army" (in *The Beginnings of Christianity* [5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1933] 5.427–41); and Schürer, *Jewish People*, 1.357–91. The size of this group is admittedly difficult to determine (Josephus says the prefects were accompanied by a cohort, and there is some debate about the precise number of soldiers in a cohort [*ibid.*, 1.362]).

and pick-axe. The horsemen also had breastplates and headpieces, a sword, shield, and several spears.⁹⁴

Even though history affords us a look at what was customary with respect to Roman governors and their treatment by locals, we cannot *insist* that Pilate's visit to Jerusalem would have conformed in *every* respect to those of other Roman officials. But it will be instructive, and suggestive for the purpose of this essay, to recognize that Pilate would almost certainly have received a splendid, if not altogether sincere, welcome upon his arrival. Indeed, Marcus Borg suggests that Jesus' Entry on the eastern side of Jerusalem was coincidental with Pilate's arrival on the western side.⁹⁵

The background of Pilate's coming is important for understanding both the Gospel accounts of Jesus' Entry and the apparent lack of response to it on the part of the Roman soldiers. How so? Jesus' Entry was a modest affair compared with the splendid welcome enjoyed by dignitaries generally and by Pilate in particular. One of the reasons Jesus' coming failed to arouse imperial suspicions was that it was not large enough to have done so during festival days. The soldiers knew when something was large enough or threatening enough in tone to count as sedition or as competing with Rome's governor: Jesus' coming failed to do so on all counts. Moreover, Jesus' Entry also differs from the seditious actions of rebel leaders who came to Jerusalem and *did* attract imperial attention.⁹⁶

CONCLUSIONS

There are several reasons to commend the view that the basic shape of the Entry as described in the evangelists and outlined above is historically reliable.

1. There is multiple attestation for the acquisition and ride on the colt, for the event beginning in Bethany near the Mount of Olives, for the crowd's acclaim of Jesus through the use of Psalm 118, and for the laying of branches in front of him as he rode. Despite minor discrepancies, these sources place the event at the same point in Jesus' life and describe it in roughly the same way.

94. Josephus, *J.W.* 3 §§93–96; Polybius 6.22.1–4; 6.23.1–16. See also J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army 31 BC-AD 235* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) and, by the same author, *The Roman Army 31 BC-AD 337: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1994).

95. *Jesus, A New Vision*, 173–74.

96. Fredriksen makes much the same argument in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 242. She suggests that Pilate's familiarity with Jesus' teaching led him to overlook the potentially seditious nature of the scene's "basic historicity": "pilgrim crowds hailed Jesus as messiah as they all coursed into Jerusalem the week preceding his last Passover" (p. 243).

2. The core of the account remains fixed, despite certain features of it that could have been seen as problematic or embarrassing by the Gospel writers. The simple fact that Jesus arranged to ride on a colt could arguably, in the eyes of some people in the first century, have made him a self-promoting opponent to Caesar and the imperial order (indeed, this possibility seems to have been exploited by the religious leaders and reflected in the political charges against him at the trial before Pilate; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:2; cf. Acts 17:1–7).
3. The concept of *effect* commends the Entry narratives as authentic. By accepting the basic historical trustworthiness of the Gospel Entry narratives, we are able to make sense of other events in Jesus' last week, especially the charge made against him of claiming to be king at his trial before Pilate. Furthermore, by reading the Gospel narratives closely and thereby understanding the Entry as a relatively modest affair, we also can understand why there was no Roman intervention as he came to Jerusalem.
4. When the criterion dealing with language and environment is applied, it does not render a verdict of "inauthentic," for as seen against the background of the OT, Jesus' coming conformed to the sort of entry we might have expected a Jewish king to make (though there are admittedly few precedents for such).
5. Finally, even though the criterion of memorable language or form is typically applied to Jesus' sayings in the Gospels, it may be relevant to his Entry not only in that many of its features are doubly attested but also by the tenacity of the core material, even as it is molded in one way or another by Matthew and Luke.

Thus there are several reasons to view the story as authentic, but beyond them the skeptic must ask and answer: Why would an early Christian invent this story? To do so would confer no political advantage for Christians as they sought to spread the story about Jesus; its politically embarrassing features have already been discussed at length. Nor is it easily interpreted as enhancing our image of Jesus: it shows nothing of his compassion or mercy or wonder-working or teaching; to the sensitive reader of the OT it does indicate Jesus' intention to make a royal entry, but to those not familiar with the OT his coming is either insipid (alone on a "colt") or liable to be politically misunderstood. The notion that the manner of his coming was christologically important because it constituted "proof from prophecy" (cf. Zech 9:9) is particularly weak, for riding into town was the sort of thing anyone could conceivably do as opposed to the stronger

“evidence” of healings or exorcisms or resurrection (all miraculous and unusual and not easily replicated), or, for that matter, Davidic descent (which Jesus had no control over); moreover, it is not clear that there were any messianic associations connected to Zech 9:9 at the time of Jesus’ coming.

And so we come to the question of Jesus’ intentions. Given that he rode in as a king, and given that he himself was behind the arrangements to do this, we must conclude that Jesus intended to present himself as Israel’s king when he came to the city at the Passover season.

Does this cohere with our other knowledge of Jesus?

Four strands of secure tradition suggest it does.

1. Jesus came preaching about the kingdom of God (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ)⁹⁷ and his words point to his own central role in that kingdom. This is not inconsistent with a royal self-understanding on his part, an understanding that most clearly emerges at his Entry to Jerusalem.
2. As noted above, Jesus is accused of claiming kingship for himself at his trial before Pilate, and his manner of execution fits this political charge—these two data are entirely consistent with the royal manner of Jesus’ Entry.
3. On two occasions Paul’s letters mention Jesus’ Davidic descent (Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; see also Rev 5:5). They were surely (in the case of Romans) or most likely (with respect to 2 Timothy) written before the Gospels and thus point back to an early, traditional belief that Jesus was a royal person.
4. Jesus appointed twelve disciples with himself as their leader. As Scot McKnight has argued, this “*implies a political vision, a vision for the nation, and this in some ecclesial sense [italics in original]*,”⁹⁸ and in this vision, Jesus is the leader of the twelve. Again, this coheres with and is certainly not inconsistent with a royal self-understanding on the part of Jesus reflected at his Entry.

Having noted that the Entry coheres in one way or another with what we know about Jesus, it must also be recognized that in two respects the Entry appears to be unique: (i) at last Jesus is identified openly as Israel’s king, (ii) Jesus himself has encouraged this identification by engineering the acquisition of the colt, by riding it into Jerusalem, and by implicitly welcoming the acclaim of the disciples. His Entry appears to have signaled a new phase in his mission.

What did Jesus hope to achieve by this remarkable self-presentation? I will conjecture (stipulating that this conjecture has no bearing

97. See n. 69.

98. See “Jesus and the Twelve,” *BBR* 11 (2001) 203–31.

on the issue of the Entry's historicity): He presented Jerusalem and its leaders with a dilemma—either alter their prior assessments of him and acknowledge him as Israel's king, thereby risking not only their reputation and social standing, but also the wrath of imperial Rome; or, conversely, arrest and prosecute him despite his popularity with many of the people in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. Indeed, this dilemma corresponds almost perfectly to the one Jesus later presents to the leadership on the issue of the nature of John's baptism (Mark 11:27–33 and pars.).

In retrospect, two things are clear. One, Jesus intended to enter Jerusalem as its king and provoke its people either to affirm or deny allegiance to him and his message. Two, he was rejected. The Jewish leadership undoubtedly hoped that by subjecting him to the tender mercies of the Roman governor on the political charge of being a king,⁹⁹ they could be rid of him and his followers. How wrong they were.

99. I wish to thank the members of the IBR Jesus Group and my colleague, Pastor Craig Smith, for reading and critiquing earlier drafts of this paper.