

An Austrian daredevil plummeted into the record books on Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012., breaking the mark for highest-ever skydive after leaping from a balloon more than 24 miles above Earth's surface. Felix Baumgartner stepped into the void nearly 128,000 feet above southeastern New Mexico, then landed safely on the desert floor about 20 minutes later. His harrowing plunge shattered the skydiving altitude record, which had stood for more than 50 years. However, technically this skydive was not the real world record for the highest skydive. That record belongs to a person who climbed into the skin of humanity and jumped from an altitude where only angels fly. This skydive from heaven not only broke distance records, it shattered the sin barrier that stands between God and us. Who is this guy? It's Jesus. Now that He has landed, is he interested in just speaking engagements, endorsing products to gain royalties, and living the rest of his life out as a rich and famous person. Let's find out why he made this skydive to earth. Consider: A Skydive To Save!

It was early on a Sunday morning as Jesus was walking toward Jerusalem. Jesus stops for a moment & sends 2 of his disciples ahead of Him into a nearby village to carry out a special errand. They are to go the next village, find a colt tied up, that no one had ridden. They are to untie it and bring it to Jesus. If anyone asks any questions, tell them the Lord needs it." The 2 disciples must have wondered about what Jesus told them to do, because nowhere in Scripture does it ever mention Jesus riding any animal to get from one place to another. He must have walked hundreds of miles up & down the land we now call the "Holy Land," but there is no mention of Him ever riding, except in a boat across the Sea of Galilee. But now, He gives this unusual command to go into the village to get a colt that had never been ridden, & to bring it to Him. And on top of that, to ride into the city on a colt, rather than to walk into it as He had often done before, must have been an even more difficult decision, because riding a colt into the city was a public declaration that He was a King. You see, in times of war the conqueror would ride upon a prancing stallion. But in times of peace, the king would ride a colt to symbolize that peace prevailed. So, for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem upon a colt is to declare that He is a King.

As Jesus rides down toward the gate of the city, the crowds are growing, & there is a festive air, for it is Passover & pilgrims are gathering from far & near for this greatest of all Jewish holidays. Great crowds had collected on both sides of the road. They were there! They had cut palm branches & were shouting, "Hosanna to the king!" Excitement prevailed throughout the whole city!

As Jesus looked over His waiting audience, he must have seen the mixture of expressions on their faces. . There were those who loved Him: Perhaps Bartimaeus was there, a man who had received his sight, no longer in his beggar's rags. How about Zacchaeus? He had paid back his debt to society, & had made his peace with God. And the lepers? Their skin had been cleansed & now they were rejoicing for the healing that the Lord had given them. There were also sinister faces there. Faces with squinty eyes, waiting for Him to say one wrong word - to make one mistake. The Sadducees & Pharisees were there. They were supposed to be keepers of the law, the spiritual leaders. But Jesus had gained so much popularity that they felt threatened. So, full of jealousy, they watched Him.. The Romans were there, fearing revolt & watching for any sign of rebellion against Rome. They were ready & waiting to crush any uprising. Jesus realized, as He listened to their "Hosannas," that soon the sinister voices would drown out the

voices of love - that those crying for Him to be King would soon be crying, "Crucify Him!" or simply standing aside, saying nothing at all.

Now Jesus is descending along the road from the Mt. of Olives, across the brook, toward the gate, the crowds thronging around Him. I wonder how the apostles were reacting to all of this? I have always thought that Judas was probably ecstatic - basking in the reflected glory - because Judas may have wanted an earthly Kingdom more than any of the others. I imagine that Peter walked with chest expanded -enjoying the throngs & the cheers of the crowd - maybe with one hand on his sword just in case something went wrong - thinking to himself, "Maybe it was worth it to leave the fishnets & boats. Maybe at last we are going to get what we deserve." Possibly there was Thomas, a bit skeptical about everything that was going on - wondering what is going to happen next. Maybe Andrew was overwhelmed by it all. He was so used to bringing people to Jesus one by one, or in small groups - & now look at them all! What about James & John? Do you suppose they were thinking about Jesus being crowned King - so that they could be on His right & left hand in positions of authority & power? They were all there in Jerusalem - loving faces - sinister faces - anxious apostles. Crowds trampling almost one upon another - when suddenly - the whole procession stopped.

Do you suppose it could have been a little like rush hour traffic on the big city expressway? One car stops, then all the other cars stop, like a chain reaction. I can just hear the people way back in the crowd that day saying, "What's the holdup? What is going on? Why don't you guys move on?" But the people who were closest to Jesus could see - & they realized that it was He who had stopped the parade. Then they saw His body begin to shake. He was not laughing. He was crying. The Bible tells us of two times that Jesus cried. One time He cried at the grave of Lazarus. You remember, Mary & Martha were both weeping, & it says that Jesus wept with them. He wept for them. He entered into their grief with compassion & He identified with their sorrow & despair.

This was the 2nd occasion. He looked at the city of Jerusalem. He saw the mixture of faces & the masses of humanity crowding there - & He realized the emptiness of their lives. They had not heard the message of peace. They did not understand the purpose of His coming. Listen as I read Luke 19:41-44. "As He approached Jerusalem & saw the city, He wept over it. & said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you & encircle you & hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you & the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.'"

They had eyes, but they didn't see. They had ears, but they didn't hear. They missed the whole point of the message that God had given to them. The fact they waved palm branches showed that they didn't understand, because that is exactly what they did when the Maccabees overthrew the Syrian oppressors & reestablished worship in the temple. By waving palm branches they were showing that they expected Jesus to be another warlord - another general of the armies - one who would lead them to overthrow the Romans. They were saying that they were ready to pick up their swords & shields & go to war if He would lead them! Jesus said, "I didn't come for that purpose. I came to seek and to save the lost. Why don't you see me as your spiritual king? Why don't you see me as your Savior from sin?" These were God's people - God's chosen people. God

had loved them & led them across the wilderness & into the Promised Land. But they did not understand the Messiah when He walked in their midst. Because of that, Jesus wept.

What a contrast! As He sits upon the beast of burden, He sees the towering Temple of God silhouetted against the sky. But beyond that - in the years immediately ahead - He sees the armies of Titus surrounding the Holy City. He sees Temple stones being taken down & the whole city leveled. He sees bodies in the streets & blood running in the gutters & hundreds of thousands of people crying because they are starving to death while Titus waits for Jerusalem to surrender. All of that because they didn't recognize the Messiah when He came! How different their lives could have been. How different the history of Israel could have been if they had only recognized the one who came into their midst, riding on a colt.

Today, just like the city of Jerusalem, we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus. I wonder what He finds when He looks into our faces? Does He see people concerned about so many things - worried about taxes - worried about family members - worried about their health, or lack of it? Does He see people who are so busy doing things here & there - so busy that they never bother to consider those things that are eternally important? Does he see people who recognize Him for who He is? The Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God? When He turns & looks into our lives, I wonder, will He weep once again because of what He sees? My prayer is that you see Him as I do, my Savior King.

We may never see the miracles that the disciples did. But we will always have reason to praise our King. Kings of the world live in great palaces, huge mansions and estates. They are difficult to access or talk to. This King, whom heaven and earth cannot contain, chooses to live within your heart, making our bodies His temples by His Spirit. We can talk to him any day and at any time. He is readily available to us.

Kings of the world make great demands of their people and work them to death. They abuse their power to enrich themselves. This King came to suffer and die. Crowned with thorns, He died on the cross, the notice: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" posted above his head. He paid for the sins of the world—your sins, my sins. And by His blood, reconciled the world to Himself. Earthly Kings depend on earthly advisors to give them information and advice. Jesus Christ, our Savior-King is all knowing. He knew where that donkey and colt would be found, knew what the owners might be thinking, and gave his disciples the words they needed to say to obtain that donkey. Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus knows all things? If he knew that a donkey was waiting for him in the next town, he certainly knows what's down the road for you. Therefore there is no need to worry about what tomorrow will bring because Jesus is already there. We can also trust that following his commands won't send us on a wild goose chase. Just as the disciples found the donkey as Jesus said they would, we can trust that when Jesus directs us to put our trust and faith in him for our eternal salvation and for our temporal good he will not let us down.

Kings of the world have their pick of the litter when it comes to a bride. Many in the near east will take a harem, made up of only the most perfect of women. And when a woman in a harem becomes less than perfect, such a wife or concubine is abandoned for a new one. However, this King of Kings calls us, His believers, who are far from perfect, His Bride. We bring Him nothing, but He cleanses us from our sins, and will present us as glorious and spotless before Him. When we fall short of perfection and God's glory, as

we often do, He does not cast us away—no, He forgives us, and showers us with His grace all the more! So what does this Jesus deserve from us as he rides into Jerusalem? He deserves our very best. Its time for us to throw out the Palm branches of service, the coats of offerings, and loud worshipful praise. Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.