



Riders of the Holy Express

By Doug Hamilton

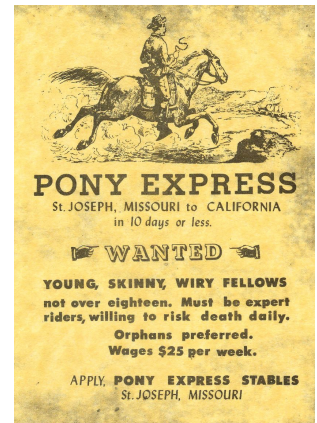
Introduction

It was a cool, April 3rd morning in 1860. Johnny Fry examined his thoroughbred, tightened the saddle, checked the spurs on his boots and took a swig from the canteen. What was he thinking? Perhaps he was meditating on the want ad he answered in the local newspaper a month before. ***“Wanted, young, skinny, wiry fellows. Not over 18. Must be expert riders. Willing to risk life daily. Orphans preferred.”*** Twenty-year-old Johnny was about to leave the boomtown of St. Joseph’s, MO to embark on his career as a message deliverer for the newly established “Pony Express”.



The History of the Pony Express

The Pony Express would deliver mail by horseback from St. Josephs, MO to Sacramento, CA to in ten days. The riders would run day and night, summer and winter, twenty-four hours a day to make the 2,000-mile trip over the roughest area in the country. They had manned stations every 15 to 20 miles that would provide the riders a fresh horse. It was an undertaking of enormous proportions, with 120 riders, 184 stations, 400 horses and several hundred of personnel, all during January and February 1860. Johnny would be the first rider to make trip.



“Will I fall victim to the bandits along the way? Will I be shot at with the arrows from native Indians? Will the rugged terrain at some point over take me?” were some of the questions I am persuaded run through their mind. They loaded the leather, water-resistant mailbag with the messages and a few moments later, a cloud of dust was all there was to see as Johnny galloped away. There was only one thought that Johnny struggled with, **“Get the message through.”**

Many of us have been intrigued with stories of the Wild West. What makes the Pony Express so interesting is the fact that these riders were willing to face death daily to make sure the mail would get through. They had tunnel vision with that very thought in mind “Get the message through.” Before the U.S. Postal Service was saying “...*through rain, sleet or even snow*”, the Pony Express Riders were living it to greater extremes.

The Lesson

I would like to share with you another true-life story of an additional group who risked it all for the sake of getting the message through; they are called Apostles of Jesus Christ. They were not always called Apostles; they used to be called disciples. A disciple is one who follows Jesus. However, before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave the disciples the message: **Matt 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.** They were sent out with the message of the Gospel and told to deliver it unto the world. At this point, they became Apostles and their mission was to be Riders of the Holy Express.

Apostle is Αποστολος in the Greek and interprets “One sent out with a message”. They would have a tunnel vision for getting the message of the prized Gospel of our precious Lord out to the lost world. What will we be encountering? Will the forces of the devil stop us from getting the message out? Will the devil stop us with his fiery darts? The day of Pentecost has arrived and Peter delivers the message to a group of disgruntled Jews.

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Rider 1: Peter

Acts 2

Me: “What are you doing Peter? Don’t you know they are going to get angry with you? Don’t you know they might turn on you? Don’t you know that this is the great day of Pentecost and many of the Jews do not want to hear the name of Jesus?”

Peter’s response: “That doesn’t matter Doug, I’ve been sent out with a message. The gospel has to be delivered. It doesn’t matter what they do, but what I do, for Christ has sent me out with a message.” Weren’t you listening in *Acts 2:36* **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom they have crucified.”** I am a rider of the Holy Express and must carry that message through.”

Acts 3

Me: “Now you’ve done it Peter. The Jews are angry at you for making deliveries to that cripple on the Sabbath. Look out! They are coming to seize you and lay stripes on you. They are going to shut down the Holy Express in your life!”

Peter’s response: “Aren’t you reading your Bible Doug? This message must be delivered. Jesus already told me in John 21:18 **“That I would be girded up and persecuted.** Everything is besides the point of taking that gospel message through to the lost world!”

Acts 6

Me: “Peter, Satan is trying to stop the ‘Holy Express’ again by distracting you from within by the disputes over ministries to the widows. Now everyone is arguing and the Holy Express is being stopped!”

Peter’s response: “Doug, I will not allow Satan and his little gang of bandits to stop the message of our dear Lord from being delivered. Therefore it is time to set up manned stations of the gospel so we will be riding on fresh horses. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, man the horses! This gospel message must make it to the destination of the lost!”

Acts 7

Me: Peter, did you see what they did to Stephen? They have stopped the Holy Express and prevented the message of Jesus from being delivered anymore. Surely this will convince you not to deliver the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you are not careful, you are next!”

Peter’s response: Doug, were you not reading in *1 Pet 3:14* **“But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, {you are} blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled”** The Lord has sent me out with the message of the gospel and the message must make the destination for I am an apostle of Jesus Christ!”

Acts 12

Me: “Peter, why are you still doing this? Now you’re locked up in Herod’s jail on death row. They are going to kill you like they did James. What are you going to do now? It looks like the stopped the Holy Express in your life.”

Peter’s response: “Doug, it doesn’t matter. When Jesus gave me the message to be delivered, He told me to deliver it unto Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the utter most part of the Earth. Until I

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am over or until that is accomplished, I am still going to deliver the Gospel message because that is what Jesus has commissioned me, an Apostle, to do.”

Closing Note on the Apostle Peter: Tradition tells us that he was martyred by being hung upside down on a crucifix. He died trying to take that message out to the world as a Rider of the Holy Express.

Next Rider: Paul

Acts 9

Me: “Paul, what are you doing? The Jews have discovered that you are a Christian; they found out that you are on our side and preaching the Gospel. They are coming to kill you! Watch out for they are waiting outside the wall of the city to destroy you!”

Paul’s response: “Doug, I have to take that Gospel message out to the far regions. Didn’t you hear the Lord when He said in Acts 9:15-16 **“for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.** I have to get the Gospel message out. Woe is unto me if I preach not this Gospel message (1 Cor 9:16). I am an Apostle of our Lord and a rider of the Holy Express!”

Acts 14

Me: “Paul, are you all right? That was a pretty bad stoning they gave you in Lystra. Will you be able to continue with the Holy Express? It looks like your riding days are over for Jesus.”

Paul’s response: “Doug, I must deliver the Gospel to the lost souls of this town, I am sent out with a message, for I am an apostle born out of due time. It does not matter what they say to me, I am sent out with a message. If they leave me alone, **to live is Christ.** If they kill me, **to die is gain.** If they make me suffer, **I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in me.** If they let me live, I am going to serve Christ; if they kill me, I will be with Christ; if they make me suffer, I am going to have more from Christ. In any case, riding in the Holy Express, ITS ALL CHRIST’S! Therefore I will pick up my beaten, bloodied, battered body and march right back in there. I must make this delivery.”

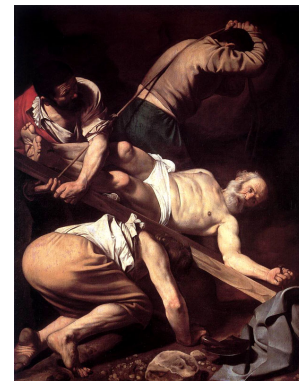
Acts 16

Me: “Paul, look at you now! The Philippians beat you and shamed you. They locked you up in jail and in stocks. It looks like the devil has finally stopped the delivery of the gospel message in your life.”

Paul’s response: “Doug, don’t you understand that this gospel package had a jailor’s address on it. **2 Timothy 1:8 ‘Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God..’** I have a delivery for him and that is my primary responsibility, I am an Apostle. Did you not see that the Lord worked this out for the good of the Holy Express? Did you not see the jailor and his whole family immersed into covenant? We are taking that message successfully to the destination!”

2Tim 4

Me: “Paul, this situation doesn’t look good. Here you are in prison on death row this time. Everybody has left you except Luke. **You are now ready to be offered as a drink offering and the time of your departure is at hand.** It looks like it’s time hang up the saddle and retire the horse to the barn.”



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Paul's response: "Doug, I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:", but I will not hang up the saddle and retire the horse. The message must continue to be delivered. I will turn the reins over to Timothy. Timothy: ***I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; (take the reins) be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*** The Gospel message must go on and the Holy Express shall not end!"

Closing note on the Apostle Paul: Traditional tells us shortly after penning these words that Paul was led out of the dungeon and beheaded on one of the Seven Hills of Rome. All this was done for preaching the gospel of Christ to others.



Conclusion:

The Pony Express was shut down after 18 months because of the telegraph. There were 183 men who rode 650,000 miles. They delivered every piece of mail but one. They were able to boldly handle the task because they had one thought in mind and one thought only, "Deliver the Message!"

The Apostles were sent out with a message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have reached millions. They hung on to the end, through all the persecution, through all the hurt and through all the pain for one reason only, they never forgot the message they were told to deliver. They had to take that Gospel message through to the lost. Let them be our examples.

Application:

We cannot miraculously bring people back from the dead as the apostles did; we cannot make the cripples walk; we do not speak in tongues that have never been studied. There is one thing that all of us have been called to do, ride in the Holy Express, and taking the gospel message of Jesus Christ out to the lost world.

Yes, Satan and his bands of demons will try and rob us with public unrighteousness. Yes, he will be shooting his fiery arrows of guilt to try and knock us off of the horse. Yes, he will make the terrain tough to cross, but we have to get the gospel message through. So, hold close the whole armor of God; and when we see sight of that first arrow, hold up that shield of faith deflecting it for the kingdom of God. Be that Rider of the Holy Express that He has called us to be!