

## Palm Sunday – “The King Is Coming”

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The account of Palm Sunday is a familiar passage to many. It’s a time where we see Jesus purposefully moving toward the cross, the very reason that He came to this world. This week between Palm Sunday and Resurrection Sunday is known as passion week or Holy week. This week is named after the Latin word *passio*, which means *suffering* or *enduring*. Jesus suffered much as He willingly and passionately gave Himself for us sacrificially. His love was on display always but was revealed to its fullest when He laid down His life.

Palm Sunday sets that process in full swing.

Today I want to look at this familiar passage and look at some lessons to be learned from Palm Sunday, or what is also known as His Triumphal Entry.

**Matthew 21:1–11, *"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup> And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” <sup>4</sup> All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: <sup>5</sup> “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ” <sup>6</sup> So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. <sup>8</sup> And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!” <sup>10</sup> And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup> So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.””***

### 1. Jesus comes as King to Fulfill His Word.

God’s Word will always come to pass.

It was evident with the disciples having to just go and trust Jesus at His word.

Jesus said, ‘Go into a village and you will find a donkey with her colt?’ I’m sure

there would be many options. Which one should I take? And I'm supposed to just take one, no questions asked? Seems weird. But they acted upon Jesus' Word. That's always what we're called to do. To act upon His word, no questions asked. Our obedience brings about His blessing. Our disobedience hinders our blessing.

- Jesus has all things worked out. He doesn't send you on failed missions. When we follow God's Word in obedience, we'll see things fall into place. No matter how it works out, our obedience is the success no matter the outcome.
- Luke 19:32 reminds us that these disciples *'found it just as He had said to them.'*

This again is a clear example of the divine omniscience and foreknowledge of Jesus. He knows all things. He knows what's going on in your heart, in your thoughts, in the secret place. Nothing is hidden from Him. That either brings great comfort to you or great terror. I pray it's a comforting reality for you today.

Now, not only did Jesus' word come to pass to His disciples, but this fulfilled *to the day* the prophecy Daniel gave in Daniel 9:24-26. 70 weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city. From the time of the decree to go and rebuild Jerusalem (given in Nehemiah 2) until Messiah the Prince, there shall be 69 weeks. This is 69 groups of 7 years, or 483 years or 173,880 days based on the 360 day Babylonian calendar, which is where Daniel was writing from).

This is important because when Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, it was the first time He allowed Himself to be praised as the Messiah. This fulfilled Daniel 9 and fulfilled it to the day. Jesus said in **Luke 19:42**, *"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."*

- He calls them to account for not recognizing that this day was coming and was now here! It was all fulfilled perfectly.

The Triumphal Entry also fulfilled what was written hundreds of years prior in **Zechariah 9:9**, *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."*

- Now those would have been comforting words to the people in Zechariah's day. Zechariah 9 begins by unfolding the coming campaign of Alexander the Great, 200 years before he would march in with military might and swiftness. That brought terror to the people.

- But in great contrast, Israel's true King would come gently and humbly. It would be cause to rejoice.
- Now riding on a donkey doesn't seem too impressive to us. Alexander the Great came on a great horse, he even had a name for it: Bucephalus (meaning ox-head). It was a great Stallion, and they were inseparable in battle for nearly 20 years.
- But Jesus is a King riding on a colt. This was not unusual to the Jew because a king would come into a city on a donkey if he was coming in peace. Jesus came to bring peace. Peace with God through the forgiveness of sin that He was going to accomplish in just a few days from now on the cross.
- So Jesus fulfills Zechariah wonderfully by coming this way. Luke says this was a colt that had never been ridden before. Have you ever gotten on an animal that has never been trained to carry a person before? [Illustration of riding out of Petra on a donkey].
- It's a great reminder that when we allow Jesus to have His way, it's going to be a smooth ride. Too often we can buck against the will of God thinking we've got a better way. But when we yield to our King, it's going to be a smooth and enjoyable journey.

Now what's interesting is that Matthew doesn't quote the first part of Zechariah 9:9 where it says, *'Rejoice greatly'*. Why is that? Because it was a word of comfort in Zechariah's day, but it would be a sad occasion in Jesus' day. He was going to the cross. He was going to be rejected. The shouts of *Hosanna* soon turned to *crucify Him*. Jesus wept over the city because they didn't recognize what was truly being done for them. And as a result, judgment was coming.

Matthew also leaves out, *He is just and having salvation*. Jesus' first coming was filled with grace and mercy, not justice. He took the injustices of man upon Himself. Salvation was available, but many refused to accept it.

The next time Israel will see her King Jesus will be returning with great power and glory (Revelation 19:11-16). This is when Israel will call out to Him.

Sadly, they missed it the first time. Jesus said in **Matthew 23:38–39**, *"See! Your house is left to you desolate; <sup>39</sup> for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"*

This brings us to our next lesson:

## **2. Jesus comes as King – but not as Expected.**

As Jesus came into the city people were quick to praise Him. They began to lay down their palm branches and give Him the red-carpet treatment. This is why it's called Palm Sunday.

They began to publicly praise Him as their Messiah. Again, it was the first time Jesus allowed this. Not because He was unsure before, but because this was the right time for Him to come this way. He knew the moment He allowed Himself to be received as the Messiah, it would hasten His enemies.

So the crowds are singing out a familiar Messianic Psalm that was often sung around Passover: **Psalm 118:25–26**, "*Save now, I pray, O Lord; O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.* <sup>26</sup> *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.*"

*Save now*, is what the crowds were desiring at this moment. The term **Hosanna** means, *save now I pray!* They were hoping for Jesus to be their political Messiah, the one to overthrow Roman rule and oppression. They've been waiting for this. They're out there waving Palm branches which was a very patriotic, nationalistic thing to do. They're wearing their red 'Make Israel Great Again' yarmulka's.

But as we've already seen, Jesus was coming with an entirely different mission. He wasn't coming to save them from a political entity, He was coming to save them from a spiritual enemy. The greatest need was to save them from their sin.

- Though they wanted a king to take back the throne of David, they needed a Saviour to rule from the throne of their hearts.

This is why so many turned within a few days from singing *Hosanna*, to *Crucify Him!*

This is why we must be willing to set aside our preconceived notions and let our perspectives be reshaped by the Word of God.

Even today, we can look around at the landscape of our world and wonder if things are ever going to get better. Is Jesus really going to come? Is He going to come anytime soon at least? But remember that God is at work in ways that exceed our expectations. We may think things are going to happen a certain way, but God does things often in very different ways.

We just can't limit God. I love the account of Suleiman the Magnificent, who more than 400 years ago when the Turks conquered Jerusalem, had the ancient walls and gates rebuilt. But when he came to the Eastern Gate, he ordered it to be sealed up. Many believe it fulfilled or partially fulfilled **Ezekiel 44:1–2**, *"Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut."*

But why did Suleiman order it to be sealed up?

- Many theories have been given, but the most believable is that while this project was taking place, a rumour swept Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming. Suleiman inquired of some Jewish rabbis to tell him about their Messiah. They said that he would be a military leader sent from God and would enter Jerusalem from the East. He would enter through the Eastern Gate to liberate the city from foreign control.
- Suleiman not wanting to relinquish control ordered the gate to be sealed up. He further had a Muslim cemetery placed in front of the Easter gate thinking that no Jewish holy man would defile himself by walking through a Muslim cemetery. The Gate remains sealed up to this day. It's the only gate of the 8 around the old walled city that is sealed – just as prophesied in Ezekiel.

I believe when Jesus returns, He's going to follow that same route He took on that Palm Sunday. The Bible says that He's going to touch down on the Mount of Olives and make His triumphal, victorious entrance into the city. And just like many think a sealed gate may hinder that, when Jesus touches down, the whole mount is going to be split in two it says (Zech 14:3-4). That gate is just going to burst open.

I say all that to say, we may think that there's things holding back Jesus from coming or working, we may begin even to doubt that things are unfolding in the way that the Bible reveals, but God is able to turn things around in an instance. He's ready to burst onto the scene at any time and remove whatever obstacles may be there. Don't underestimate what God can do.

- Keep living with hope in who He is. Keep believing that God is at work and on the move. Don't get discouraged or complacent. Be living lives ready to see Jesus.

Now again, things may look very different than we're expecting. Jesus came humbly, riding on a donkey. He wasn't coming to a coronation, He was preparing

for a crucifixion. It wasn't time for a crown, it was time for the cross. And it sets the pattern for us in following Him.

### 3. Jesus comes as King and Calls us to Take Up Our Cross.

The Triumphal Entry ultimately teaches us about the cost of following Jesus. We can get trapped into following Him based on superficial reasons and allegiance. The crowds warmly welcomed Jesus that day, but when they began to see that He wasn't moving in the direction they wanted, their worship proved fickle. It goes to show how we can easily celebrate Jesus while misunderstanding what a life devoted to Him actually demands. It will mean sacrifice, just as He came to provide Himself as a sacrifice for us!

This is why Paul would say in **Romans 12:1**, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."*

It's reasonable because it's what Jesus has done for us. Through His coming, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, He's provided life for us! He's forgiven us by His grace and mercy. Life lived for Him may not always be easy, but it is worth it and it is reasonable. Have you counted the cost?

Too often at the slightest sign of suffering, people can question the faithfulness of Jesus. But Jesus' faithfulness is not measured by your comfort and ease in life, it's measured by what He's already done for you and what He will eventually accomplish in you. You have a seat at the table with the Lord for all eternity. That's amazing.

So may we all live lives that honour Him. That don't worship only when we think it's profitable for us. May we worship Him simply because He is deserving and because He is our King! He is coming again, despite how you may feel and despite what you may see.

The triumph of this event is found in Christ, not in those who witnessed it happily and responded positively. Because what began as a celebration ended in tragedy. But it was God who ordained it this way to accomplish something beyond what we could have understood in the moment.

The Triumphal Entry invites us to look honestly at our own hearts. It's easy to wave palm branches when Jesus seems to be meeting our expectations – but

will we still follow when He leads us to the cross instead of the throne? The same King who rode into Jerusalem in humility now reigns in glory, and He still comes to us – not always as we expect, but always as we need. The question is not whether Jesus is King – the question is whether He is ***your*** King.