

## ALL THINGS NEW // Palm Sunday

Five days before His death, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey and for the first time allowed Himself to be worshiped like a king. The people gathered to see, not only Jesus, but the evidence of Jesus' power in the man named Lazarus, who rose to new life after being dead for four days.

The crowds were astonished, and they wildly celebrated Jesus with shouts of praise and palm branches as He made His triumphal entry into the Holy City. And yet, the very same people who were shouting His praises on Sunday, were demanding His death on Friday.

Today - Palm Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week. Since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, observing Holy Week has been a regular practice within the church, as a designated time to reflect on the events surrounding Christ's final days.

And today, as we make our way toward Easter, we're praying that God would increase our faith... that God would open our eyes, and help us see Him for who He is, and that God would reveal to us the reality that He is making all things new.

Today if you brought your bible, go ahead and turn to John 12...

**John 12:12-26**, "The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!' And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him. The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet Him was that they heard He had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.' Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.'"

### THE PROPHECIES FULFILLED

There are so many fascinating and intriguing aspects of Palm Sunday. One of the most compelling is the Old Testament prophecies, which were written hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, and He fulfills on this exact day.

One of the major modern challenges to trusting in Jesus today is that people are either ambivalent or they don't like Jesus' followers very much so they just write Him off too. And if that's you today, don't base your decision about Jesus on His imperfect followers. Base your decision about Jesus on the person of Jesus.

Because when you really dig into who He claimed to be, the things He did... the extra biblical accounts from historians like Josephus... corroborating who He is and the miracles He performed... all of a sudden, Jesus becomes someone who isn't so easy to dismiss.

**Zechariah 9:9**, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

In the story of Palm Sunday, every aspect of what was written 600 years before the time of Christ is fulfilled on this very day. Then in Daniel 9, the Angel Gabriel shows up to Daniel and gives him a mathematical prophecy.

**Daniel 9:25-26**, "Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing."

Sir Robert Anderson, head of Scotland Yard, wrote a book called the coming prince in 1894 that deal in depth with this prophecy.

The word "week" here is an idiom that was understood as a 'set of 7.' So, in Hebrew tradition we have "weeks" of days, "weeks" of weeks, "weeks" of months and "weeks" of years for Jews. In Daniel 9, the "week" is referring to years.

7 weeks + 62 weeks. So, you have 69 weeks of years. Now, on top of all of this, the Israelites didn't use a 365-day calendar like we do. Both Jewish and Babylonian calendars were 360 days.

So, to simplify, let's convert it to days. In order to convert it to days, you multiply 69 by 7... that accounts for every 7 years... then by 360-day calendar year... and that gives us...

$$69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880 \text{ days}$$

Between the decree given and the arrival of the Messiah,

**Daniel 9:25, “Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince...”**

When did this happen? In Nehemiah 2, King Artaxerxes I of Babylon gave permission to Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem - **March 14, 445 BC** The prophecy of Daniel 9 was given to Daniel about 100 years prior.

So, 173,880 days from March 14, 445 BC takes us all the way to April 6, 32AD.

What happened on that day? For the very first time, as Jesus is riding to Jerusalem on a donkey, He allows Himself to be worshiped as the Anointed One. The Messiah, the King of Israel. A prophecy given over 500 years before the birth of Christ, predicts **to the exact day** when the Messiah would reveal Himself to the world as King.

Isn't it interesting all the times Jesus performed miracles and He's telling people, *“Shhh, don't tell anyone what I've done for you. Be quiet about it...it's not my time yet. My hour has not yet come. Don't tell anyone.”*

Then all of a sudden, on this day, on Palm Sunday, for the first time, He allows Himself to be worshiped as the anointed one of Daniel 9. As the Messiah King.

And then, the prophecy continues. What would happen immediately after this?

**Daniel 9:26, “...an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.”**

Not only would the Messiah reveal Himself and be worshiped as King, but He would be cut off, he'd be killed. It was predicted to the day more than five centuries before Christ was born. What this means is that no matter what the modern secular sensibilities are today, no matter what the public opinion of the Church is, when it comes to Jesus, we can't just take Him or leave Him. We have to make a decision about Him.

Jesus is riding into Jerusalem; the crowds come out of the city and begin worshiping Him! They're shouting HOSANNA! It means “God save us! Save now!” They're shouting and singing Psalm 118: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.” They're laying down their cloaks and palm branches before him! They're worshipping Jesus as the King of Heaven and Earth and He receives it. He doesn't stop them.

In fact, the Pharisees try to get everyone to be quiet and Jesus looks at them and says, if they are quiet, the rocks will begin to cry out.

If you're exploring faith... or even skeptical... and you hear this and go, “Who in the world does this guy think he is!?” That's a great response because it means you're facing the reality of who Jesus claimed to be and who according to prophecy, who He is proven to be.

And maybe you've been wondering if you can trust the Bible. If you can trust its accuracy, it's infallibility... you've been wondering if this really is the word of God. Let me just offer this... there is no way human beings orchestrated these prophecies and their fulfillment that span over half a millennia.

I would pose to you today, that this collection of writings right here, these 66 books penned by 40 different writers over 2,000 years— I would pose to you today that these writings all have 1 divine author. And if you want to make sense of your world, you've got to start right here.

### THE PARADOX OF THE KINGDOM

Now, the people worshipping Jesus that day thought they understood what Jesus was coming to do in Jerusalem to do. See, palm branches represent victory, triumph, and they expected God to FINALLY deliver the Jewish people from the Roman oppressors that were occupying the land of the Jewish people. They wanted Jesus to bring a political revolution and victory.

But what they didn't and couldn't understand is that Jesus came to accomplish something much bigger, much grander than a political victory in the first century world. He came to change the spiritual landscape of the entire universe throughout the course of human history.

But the paradox of the way Jesus does this is not through military might, with calvary flanking behind on both side ready to wage war. He rides into the Holy City on a baby donkey.

Stanley Hauerwas wrote a commentary on Matthew's gospel where he says that in the Triumphal entry we have an incredibly clearly laid out satire of all other Triumphal entries. Historically, when a conquering king would return to their capital city in victory, the crowds would cheer them on as they returned looking gruesome and intimidating...

*"Yet the triumphal entry is an entry that parodies the entry of kings and armies. Victors in battle do not ride into their capital cities riding on [donkeys] but on fearsome horses; this king does not and will not triumph through force of arms."*

- Stanley Hauerwas

In other words, in the Triumphal Entry, Jesus is saying, *"I'm going to triumph through weakness. In my kingdom, you win by losing. You're greatest when you're the least, you're first when you're last, you're the ranked the highest, when you become the lowest."*

In fact, He even says it when He begins talking about:

### THE POWER OF A SEED

**John 12:24-26,** *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever*

**hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”**

If a seed goes into the ground and dies, what happens? In the death of the seed, new life is born. It grows up out of the ground, blossoms, and scatters more seed. It multiplies exponentially. And Jesus is talking about multiple realities in these few verses.

The call to follow Jesus is a call to lay down our lives.

**Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.’”**

It’s a death to self. What this means for us isn’t a physical death, even though many of the early followers of Jesus were martyred for their faith. The call to be a seed that goes into the ground. Not to love your life but lose it for His sake. It means to let go of our idea of what our lives should look like but trust Him with every aspect of life.

Sometimes obedience can feel like death. A seed going into the ground and dying means denying yourself, it’s a death to self, it means to obey Him even when everything in us wants to run the other direction. It’s a laying down of our own will, our own lives, for the cause of Christ.

The death of the seed is about us, but it’s also about Him. Jesus is not only talking about us, He’s talking about the death he’s about to endure on Friday and He’s using a seed as the metaphor.

*He’s saying, “Unless I die, I’ll remain alone. I’ll be the only true child of God in the world. I’ll be the only one to know the Father intimately. I’ll be the only one to bask in goodness of His presence, to know His pleasure and affirmation, to love and be loved by Him. But if I die, and only when I die, my life, my power, my goodness, my presence will be multiplied exponentially in the lives of others. My Holy Spirit is not limited to this human body and will soon, not long from now, reside in each and every one of you. Then you’ll know, THEN you’ll have the power to deny yourself, THEN you be empowered to take up your cross on follow Me”*

See it’s only in the death of Jesus that the kingdom is established. He descended, He died, and because of His death, new life has been springing forth all over the world for the last 2,000 years and will continue to spring forth until He returns!