



The Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ





Introduction

Today, we celebrate *Palm Sunday*, the day the Royal Messiah, Jesus Christ, rode triumphantly into Jerusalem and began His journey to face the mockery of a trial, cruel mistreatment at the hands of unjust men, an excruciating death on a Roman cross, and His glorious resurrection from the dead. This is the first day of *Passion Week*, so called because of the use of the Latin word for suffering in Acts 1:3 of the King James Version: “To whom He also shewed himself alive after his **passion**...”

“Follow now at the side of the Redeemer, until He struggles to the end of His rough and thorny path, and in fierce strife, bleeding to death, His sufferings end for us.”

- The Oberammergau Passion Play, 1990

Immerse Yourself in the Story

Follow now at the side of the Redeemer. Attend to the details of His journey from Bethany into the city of Jerusalem. Open your eyes and your heart to the testimony of the four Gospels and consider the two most important questions that should be considered about this momentous event in the life of our Lord:

- What are the historic details of the *Triumphal Entry*?
- What is the meaning of this significant event, then and now?

In the Liturgical or Church Year of 2019, we have already celebrated *Epiphany* (January 6), *Ash Wednesday* (March 6), and are currently in the season of *Lent* (March 10-April 20). Let us now remember, with thanksgiving and praise, our Royal King as He enters Jerusalem.

Philip Yancey



“The church I grew up in skipped past the events of Holy Week in a rush to hear the cymbal sounds of Easter. We never held a service on Good Friday.”

“Today and throughout this Holy Week, join all creation in unhindered praise and welcome to the Triumphal King.”

- Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, Max Lucado, & Joni Eareckson Tada

The Four Evangelists: Gaudi's *Sagrada Familia*



Matthew
A Winged Man



Mark
A Winged Lion



Luke
A Winged Ox



John
An Eagle

The Triumphal Entry: Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

References for the Four Symbols of the Evangelists: Ezekiel 1:5-10; Rev. 4:7



La Sagrada Familia

Barcelona,
Spain

Matthew's Account

“And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to Me. And if anyone says something to you, you shall say, “The Lord has need of them”; and immediately he will send them.’ Now this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”’”

Matthew's Account

“And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid on them their garments; on which He sat. And most of the multitude spread their garments in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees, and spreading them in the road. And the multitudes going before Him, and those who followed after were crying out, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!’ And when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, ‘Who is this?’ And the multitudes were saying, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee’” (Mt. 21:1-11).

Characters in the Story

- **Jesus Christ, the Royal Messiah** (Mt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:29-44; Jn. 12:12-19)
- **Mary**, anointed Jesus with a pound of very costly, genuine spikenard-ointment (Jn. 12:3)
- **Judas Iscariot**, protested Mary's use of such expensive ointment (Jn. 12:4-8)
- **Martha**, Mary's and Lazarus' sister, prepared and served supper in their home for Jesus (Jn. 12:1-2)
- **Lazarus**, brother of Mary and Martha, raised from the dead by Jesus (Jn. 12:1)
- **Other guests** at the Sabbath-feast in Bethany, reclined at supper with Jesus (Jn. 12:2)
- **The Twelve**, the men whom Jesus trained to be His Apostles (Mk. 11:11)
- **Two unnamed disciples**, retrieved the colt for Jesus at Bethphage (Mt. 21:1-7)
- **Great multitude in Jerusalem for the Passover**, streamed forth to meet Jesus (Jn. 12:12-13)
- **The multitude who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead**, bore witness of Jesus (Jn. 12:17)
- **Pharisees and the chief priests**, plotted to kill Jesus and Lazarus (Lk. 19:39-40; Jn. 12:10-11)



Historical Context

Carl W. Wilson has calculated that “there are a total of ninety chapters in the Gospels and Acts 1 about Jesus Christ’s appearance and ministry in the world.” **Five chapters** have to do with the coming of Christ into the world, while the last **thirty-three chapters** focus on Jesus’ death and resurrection. The **fifty-two chapters** between the first five and the final thirty-three describe how Jesus trained the Twelve and prepared them to reach the world with the message that we can have life in His name by grace through faith.

On this first day of Passion Week, Matthew reminds us that Jesus had withdrawn to Perea, to the place where John had baptized Him, healed two blind men at Jericho, met Zaccheus, told the Parable of the Money,

Historical Context

was anointed by Mary with very expensive ointment at Bethany, and was present when the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death.

It is reasonable to assume that Jesus reached Bethany on Friday, six days before the Passover (Jn. 12:1), and enjoyed the Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) in the home of Simon the leper with his friends - at least 16 of them: the Twelve, Simon, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. That evening, a supper was given in Jesus' honor with Martha serving. While there, a great crowd of people came to see Jesus *and* Lazarus, "because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus" (Jn. 12:11).

Chronological Overview

1. Jesus left Perea and crossed the Jordan. He restored the sight of two blind men at Jericho.
2. He traveled from Jericho towards Jerusalem with his disciples and told them about His impending arrest, sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection (Mt. 20:17-19).
3. He reached Bethany before sunset on Friday, six days before the Passover (Jn. 12:1).
4. Jesus enjoyed the Sabbath rest with his friends from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.
5. A supper was given in honor of Jesus on Saturday evening.

Chronological Overview

6. Mary anointed Jesus with a pound of very precious ointment (Jn. 12:3).
7. Judas Iscariot objected to wasting the ointment.
8. A large gathering of people flocked out of the city of Jerusalem on their way to see Jesus and Lazarus at Bethany.
9. On Sunday (Palm Sunday), Jesus left Bethany and sent two of his disciples to get a donkey for Him.
10. The disciples threw their outer garments on both animals, not knowing which one Jesus will choose.
11. Jesus started toward Jerusalem.

Chronological Overview

12. The people who accompanied Jesus from Bethany spread their garments on the road and cut branches from the trees.
13. A multitude of pilgrims came pouring out of the eastern gate to meet Jesus, cutting fronds from the palm trees that lined the road.
14. The two throngs met.
15. As Jesus descended the western slope of the Mount of Olives, the throngs began to shout, "Hosanna!"
16. The envious Pharisees appealed to Jesus to stop the praise.
17. Jesus broke into loud weeping when the city came into view (Lk.19:41-44).

Chronological Overview

18. Jesus entered Jerusalem; the entire city was stirred (Mt. 21:10-17).
19. Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple (Mt. 21:14).
20. The children in the temple began to shout, “Hosanna to the son of David” (Mt. 21:15).
21. That evening, Jesus and the Twelve returned to Bethany and lodged there for the night (Mt. 21:17).



Bethany

- Bethany was a small village about 2 miles from Jerusalem (Jn. 11:18), near the Mount of Olives (Mk. 11:1; Lk. 19:29).
- People who lived there: Simon the leper (Mk. 14:3); Lazarus, Mary, & Martha (John 11:1).
- Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany and had supper with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary (Jn. 12:1).
- Jesus went to Jerusalem and “came into the temple; and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late” (Mk. 11:11).

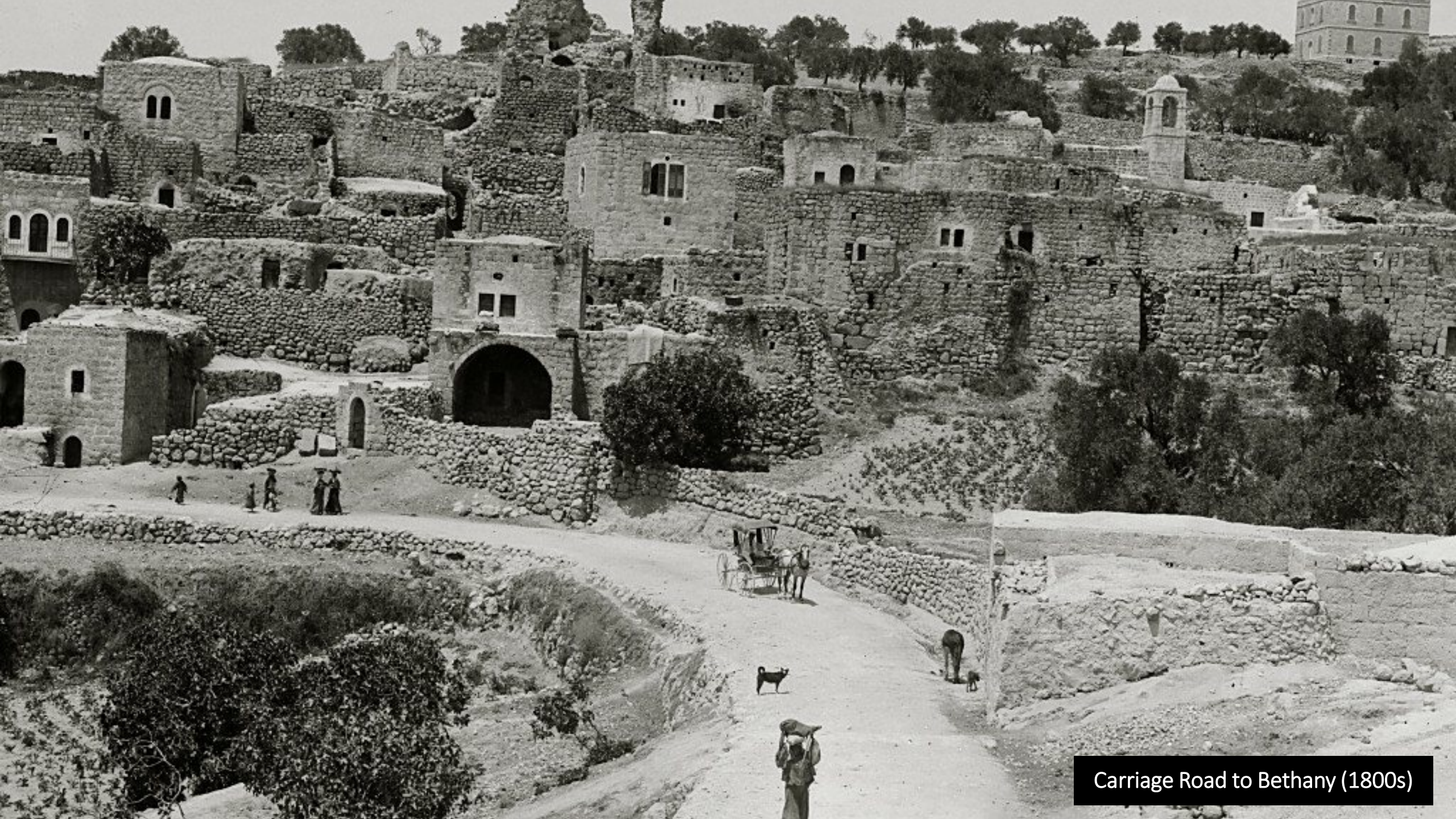


Bethany

- Two days before Passover, Jesus was still in Bethany and reminded his disciples that “the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion” (Mt. 26:2). While in the home of Simon the leper, a woman anointed Jesus with a very costly perfume from an alabaster vial (Mt. 26:6-7).
- Jesus led the disciples “out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them” (Lk. 24:50).
- Today, the hamlet is called *El ‘Azariye* (of Lazarus), “perched on a broken rocky plateau on the other side of Olivet.” “It is a miserable untidy and tumble-down village facing East on the S.E. slope of the Mount of Olives” (ISBE).



Bethany (c. 1890-1900)



Carriage Road to Bethany (1800s)



Greek Orthodox Church of St. Lazarus

Roman Catholic Church of St. Lazarus

Aerial photograph of the village of
El-Azriya in eastern Jerusalem

Sunday, Spring A.D. 30

After a night's rest, Jesus and his companions left Bethany, about 2 miles east of Jerusalem, to make their way towards the eastern slope of the mount of Olives. He sent two of his disciples into a small village, probably Bethphage ("house of unripe figs"), to get a donkey on which He would ride into Jerusalem.

From the time Jesus left Galilee, He had "resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:51). Now the time for His sacrifice had come. Jesus was about to make His entry into Jerusalem as the Messianic King. Having been born in Bethlehem 33 years before, the perfect God-man now willingly begins to move towards Golgotha.

The Colt

- Jesus' instructions: "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to Me" (Mt. 21:2).
- The disciples went to a small village, Bethphage, to retrieve the donkey and colt (Mt. 21:7).
- They did just as Jesus had directed them (Mt. 21:6; cf. Mt. 26:19; 27:10), and the owners let them take the donkey and colt, on which no man had ever sat (Mk. 11:2; Lk. 19:30).
- Two different Greek words are used: (1) the donkey (Mt. 21:2); and (2) the colt (Mt. 21:2; Mk. 11:2; Lk. 19:30).



The Colt

- The disciples brought both the donkey and colt to Jesus (Mt. 21:7).
- The disciples laid their garments on the colt and Jesus sat on it (Mt. 21:7).
- The text could certainly be translated in this way: “and laid upon them their outer garments, on which he took his seat” (Mt. 21:7). Jesus was not riding the donkey and the colt. The closest antecedent of “them” is “outer garments,” not the donkey and the colt.
- Everything happened just as Jesus predicted.
- Jesus rode the colt; no further knowledge is given about the donkey.



A Horse vs. A Donkey

“There is evidence that the horse was the preferred royal mount. Consider Solomon’s trade in and use of horses (I Kings 9:19), imitating the Egyptian custom. The idea of a royal descendent having a donkey had been stated by Jacob as he blessed his son Judah (Gen. 49:11). The preferred conclusion then is that as the righteous, victorious, saving, and gentle king comes to his people, he comes as one of the humble and poor. Indeed, he is the representative of Yahweh, the owner of all the wealth of the nations (Hag. 2:8-9), but as the royal Priestly One he comes to his people in humility and poverty (Is. 52:12-53:6).”

- Gerard van Groningen



Zechariah's Prophecy

- 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.”
- “Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden” (Mt. 21:5).



The Meaning of the Prophecy

- The *Daughter of Zion* is Israel. “Behold your King is coming to you!” “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:12).
- Your King is coming to bless and benefit **you**, to save you from your sins.
- He is gentle and mounted on a donkey.
- This King is fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. “He is both great and humble, exalted and lowly. He is the One who in this very act is riding...to his death, and thus to victory, a victory not only for himself but also for his true people, those who believe in him” (Hendriksen).

The Meek King

- Jesus is not panoplied and riding on a prancing, high-spirited war steed. He is the Servant-King riding to His death on a donkey, and thus to victory for Himself and His children.
- A meek person is one who does not resist (a meek person is *not* a weak person).
- The very mission Jesus came to fulfill excluded the use of force, just as He told Pilate: “If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews” (Jn. 18:36).
- Jesus came to win the hearts of people with the truth, not to coerce them with force.

The People of Israel

- “And the multitudes going before Him, and those who followed after were crying out...” (Mt. 21:9).
- The first group of people were those who had followed Jesus from Galilee and Perea, those who were guests at the Sabbath feast in Bethany, and the people who had come to see both Jesus and Lazarus (Jn. 12:12,17).
- John tells us that a second group of people went out from the city of Jerusalem to meet Jesus. They had come to the Feast.
- A third group of people were the bitter and jealous Pharisees (John 12:19).

Why Did the Multitude Come?

- They had learned that Jesus was in Bethany and wanted to see him (Jn. 12:9).
- They wanted to see Lazarus (Jn. 12:9), some of whom had actually **seen** Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 12:17).
- Others came because they had **heard** that Jesus had “performed this sign” of raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 12:18).
- So, there were eye-witnesses to Lazarus’ resurrection, curiosity seekers, people who had followed him from Galilee and Perea, the dinner-guests in Bethany – word spread rapidly through Jerusalem.

Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

“And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’....And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes’” (Lk. 19:37-38,41-42).



Jerusalem From the Road Leading to Bethany
Coloured lithograph by Louis Haghe after David Roberts, 1842



Second Temple: Herod the Great



What Did Jesus See?

“Tears were in His eyes, not because of the Cross which awaited Him, but because of the woes impending over those whom He came to save and would have none of Him...He saw with historical accuracy the descent of the forces of Titus, and yet the eyes that saw the future so clearly were almost blinded with tears. He spoke of Himself as willing and able to have averted that doom by gathering the guilty ones under His wing as the hen doth gather chickens, but they would not. As the great patriot of all ages, He looked beyond His own suffering and fixed His eyes on the city that rejected Love...What prompted His tears were the eyes that would not see and the ears that would not hear.”

- Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, PhD

Hosanna!

- “Hosanna to the Son of David...Hosanna in the highest!” (Mt. 21:9).
- Hosanna means *save now*.
- “Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord” (Ps. 118:25-26).
- The crowd interpreted and applied the Psalm to this event.
- Their cry is to the royal, Messianic Servant-King; their praises ascend “in the highest,” which signifies the abode of God. The Hosannas are to sound in heaven within earshot of the angels.

R.C. Sproul



R.C. Sproul
1939-2017

“As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He was on the cusp of the culmination of who He was and what He had come to do as the supreme Prophet, who would give the clearest revelation of God; the ultimate Priest, who would present the perfect sacrifice; and the almighty King, who would reign forever and ever.”



Of Christ the Mediator

“It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, and glorified” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*).

Q. 42: Why was our Mediator called Christ? **A.** Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure; and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to **execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his church**, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.



The Root of *Messiah*

- The root of the Hebrew word for Messiah is the verbal form which generally carries the meaning of “smear” or “anoint.”
- “The common usage of *Messiah* (Hebrew) is to express the idea of anointing, which is done by pouring or sprinkling oil on objects or persons. This act of pouring oil has profound significance in the Old Testament” (Gerhard van Groningen).
- “*Messiah* and related terms refer to the divine, royal, sacred, and revealing person, represented by various offices and personalities, who has specifically designated tasks, determined goals, and the means by which to achieve these” (van Groningen).

The Functions of the Prophetic Office

- “And the multitudes were saying, ‘This is the *prophet Jesus*, from Nazareth in Galilee’” (Mt. 21:11).
- The prophet was God’s spokesman.
- The prophet would say, “Thus saith the Lord.”
- “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him” (Dt. 18:18-19).
- Jesus is the supreme Prophet; He is the very Word of God (John 1:1).



The Functions of the Kingly Office

- “Behold your **King** is coming to you” (Mt. 21:5).
- The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Gen. 49:10).
- Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and, therefore, qualified to be King.
- Jesus “fulfilled all of the Old Testament promises of the coming King who would restore the house of David and usher in the kingdom of God. To this King, God would give all authority in heaven and on earth, and His reign would be eternal” (R.C. Sproul).

The Functions of the Priestly Office

- The priest was the mediator for the people to God. “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time” (1 Tim. 3:3-4).
- Jesus’ sacrifice fulfills the Old Testament sacrifices of bulls, goats, lambs, doves, flour, wine, and oil.
- Jesus’ passive obedience refers to his suffering and death.
- His sacrifice accomplished expiation, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption. Jesus not only performed the work of a priest in offering a sacrifice; He was the sacrifice.



First Application: Beware of Fickleness

“With Palm Sunday comes the arrival of holy week in all its darkness, in all its brilliance. Each year as palms are waved in the aisles, I imagine my place in this drama. Would I have been with the marching crowd that cheered him as King only to cheer again as he was marched to Golgotha? What I long to imagine was a fickle crowd – an illustration of the power of mobthink, or a sign of a hard-hearted people – only to remind me of my own vacillations with the Son of God. How easily our declarations that he is Lord become denials of his existence. How readily hands waving in praise and celebration become fists raised at the heavens in pain or hardship. Like a palm laid down and forgotten, the honor we bestow on Sunday can easily be abandoned by Wednesday” (Jill Carattini, RZIM).



Second: Embrace the Everlasting Kingdom

- It is theocratic – not democratic.
- It is spiritual – not political.
- It is based on truth – not force.
- It is dynamic – not weak or ineffectual.
- It is eternal – not temporal.
- Malcolm Muggeridge (1903-1990): “I think of St. Augustine when in A.D. 410 the news was brought to him in Carthage that Rome had been sacked. It was a sore blow, but as he explained to his flock, ‘All earthly cities are vulnerable. Men build them and men destroy them. At the same time, there is the City of God which men did not build and cannot be destroyed and which is everlasting.’”



Third: Open the Doors of Your Life

“This Easter week, open all the doors of your life and welcome Jesus with out-stretched arms. Uproot the weeds of discontent and pull out the briars of deceit from your life, and offer them as palm branches. Take off the layers of pretense and the robes of self-centeredness that smother your heart, and lay them at the feet of Jesus.”

Fourth: Glorify God



C.S. Lewis
1898-1963

“A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word *darkness* on the walls of his cell.”