

## **Jesus Is Anointed at Bethany**

*<sup>12</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, the man he had raised from death. <sup>2</sup> They prepared a dinner for him there, which Martha helped serve; Lazarus was one of those who were sitting at the table with Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took a whole pint of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house. <sup>4</sup> One of Jesus' disciples, Judas Iscariot—the one who was going to betray him—said, <sup>5</sup> "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would help himself from it.*

*<sup>7</sup> But Jesus said, "Leave her alone! Let her keep what she has for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me."*

### **The Plot against Lazarus**

*<sup>9</sup> A large number of people heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there, not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from death. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus too, <sup>11</sup> because on his account many Jews were rejecting them and believing in Jesus.*

### **The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem**

*<sup>12</sup> The next day the large crowd that had come to the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the King of Israel!"*

*<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a donkey and rode on it, just as the scripture says,*

*<sup>15</sup> "Do not be afraid, city of Zion!  
Here comes your king,  
riding on a young donkey."*

*<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand this at the time; but when Jesus had been raised to glory, they remembered that the scripture said this about him and that they had done this for him.*

*<sup>17</sup> The people who had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from death had reported what had happened. <sup>18</sup> That was why the crowd met him—because they*

*heard that he had performed this miracle. <sup>19</sup> The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, we are not succeeding at all! Look, the whole world is following him!" (John 12:1-19, GNT).*

## The Hidden Wonders behind the Palm Sunday Story

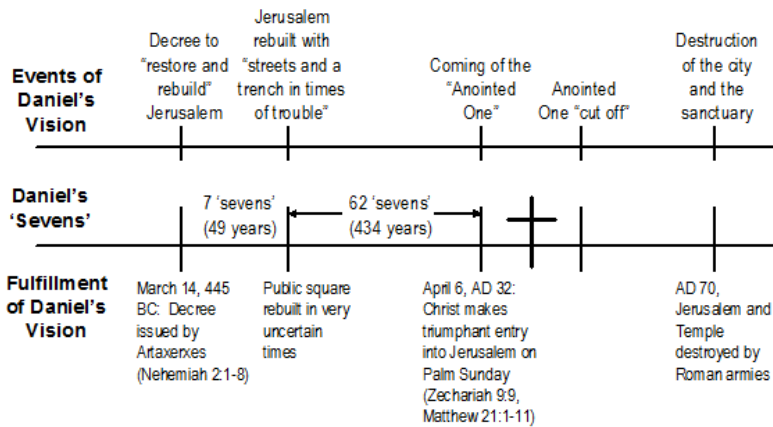
When we read the Palm Sunday account it's sort of like reading the Genesis 1 account. You just *know* that there is something much deeper in this story as there is so much symbolism. There is so much drama. The chapter starts out with the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. We find in other gospels that the sisters of Lazarus were heart broken that Jesus had delayed in reaching their sick and dying brother. Other texts in the Bible tell us that Jesus waited on purpose before coming to attend to them. They were expecting a healing. However, against their expectations and everyone else's, Lazarus was not healed. He was instead was brought back to life (John 11:1-44). There is a great lesson in those verses that God sees things way differently than we do, and He doesn't do the things we need done in the way that we always expect. Lazarus was raised from the dead, but he had to die first. They never conceived that he could die first and then be raised from the dead. This was an INCREDIBLE EVENT. This occurrence was almost within shouting distance from Jerusalem which explains, in part, how a crowd gathered the next morning and the whole Palm Sunday triumphal entry event came about.

Next, as the event unfolds, we see people waving palm branches. There is this man, this miracle worker, riding on a donkey. Men, women, and children are shouting "God bless the King of Israel." They were shouting "Hosanna!" We should all wonder, "What do those words really mean?" The text tells us that there was confusion in the disciples' minds as to what it all meant. It was only after Jesus died and rose again from the dead that they remembered the things written and came to realize that they had been in the presence of God Himself in human Messiah form.

About five years ago I led this congregation in a study of the Book of Daniel. In that study we read prophecy that at the time seemed incredible. It still seems incredible to me. We looked at differing prophetic analyses that literally pinpoint the exact day that the Messiah would be presented to Israel. It really isn't that complicated. The prophecy comes out of the writings of Daniel, and what is stated is that from the decree to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem" there would be time periods of sevens until Messiah came. For your study, I've put one of the charts you can readily find on the internet here below. I have also footnoted a couple of websites that explain this.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/reconciling-daniels-prophecy-palm-sunday/>  
<https://www.evenatthedoors.com/timeline11palmsunday.html>



According to Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard, and the London Royal Observatory, there were exactly 173,880 days from the issuing of the decree by Artaxerxes on March 14, 445 BC to the first Palm Sunday on April 6, 32AD. The prophecy of Daniel was true and correct, and on that first Palm Sunday, the Messiah, King Jesus, was presented to the Jewish people exactly as prophesied.

That is the first story behind the Palm Sunday story that we can uncover. God's prophecies are true and they continue to unfold throughout the passage of time. Jesus was prophesied to come at a certain time and He did.

Going back to the text, we can notice in verse 12, that John is giving us the exact idea of when these events are happening. In verse one, we saw that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before Passover, so now we see that this next day would have been on the 5th day before the Passover feast. This is very important information.

On this same day, every Jewish family would take aside a Passover lamb for sacrifice. This would happen on the 5th day before the Passover. That is the VERY day that was Palm Sunday. On that day, each family took a lamb that they thought was without spot and blemish and they set it apart. For the next 4 days the family would observe that lamb to make sure it was without spot or blemish. This was a time of examining. They didn't even realize what they were doing. This is exactly what was happening with Jesus throughout this same time period. God the Father on this same day, set aside the perfect lamb, His only Son, Jesus, who then went through trials, testing, and "examination" by Israel. He was examined by the Sanhedrin. He was brought before Pilate who examined Him, questioned Him, tested Him, and tried Him. Pilate knew the game the Jewish leaders were up to. He saw through their jealousy when he declared, "I find no basis for a charge in this man." Pilate's wife was even given a warning by God specifically about Jesus. The Bible tells us, *"While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."(Matthew 27:19, NIV).*

The writer of Hebrews speaks about that perfect lamb in scripture written after this event, *"<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need."* (Hebrews 4:15, NASB).

He was a sinless. He was God's perfect sacrifice for each of us. He was able to bear our sin because of His perfection. It is too strange for us to understand, but all of that Old Testament animal sacrifice business was to help humans understand the great cost and the great price of wrongdoing.

Returning again to verse 15 of our Palm Sunday text, we then read "Do not be afraid." Why in the world would the ancient quote out of Zachariah say, "Don't be afraid". Why would anyone possibly be afraid if this Messiah figure were riding on a donkey's colt? Well, it was because the Messiah would ride in peace and not as a warrior. As Jesus came down from the Mount of Olives and rode in to Jerusalem, it was like He was waving a white flag as He came into the city. Jesus came in peace; and not as a king of war. This was the last sign to Israel that their Messiah was coming in peace. Make no mistake about it, when He does come again, it will indeed be on a war horse. But at this time of His revelation, He was a King of Peace.

I now want to hop over to Luke 19 to make a few observations about things not found in the text in John.

*<sup>37</sup> When he came near Jerusalem, at the place where the road went down the Mount of Olives, the large crowd of his disciples began to thank God and praise him in loud voices for all the great things that they had seen: <sup>38</sup> "God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God!" <sup>39</sup> Then some of the Pharisees in the crowd spoke to Jesus. "Teacher," they said, "command your disciples to be quiet!" <sup>40</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting." (Luke 19:37-40, GNT).*

Jesus is there in this last moment offering peace between God and man. There was this wall of separation, and God came in the personhood of Jesus to bridge that gap...and the Jews missed it. There was no peace. In AD 70 this prophesy (Luke 21:6, Matthew 24:2) was fulfilled when the Temple was knocked down and burned, and it has never been restored even until today.

Being God, prior to entering Jerusalem, Jesus knew that His own people would reject Him. We are told in other gospel accounts that He wept over Jerusalem because He knew what was going to happen to them. But the account then tells us that they were waving branches and shouting Hosanna. Just what could this mean?

*<sup>13</sup> they took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began shouting, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, indeed, the King of Israel!" (John 12:13, NASB). They were standing on the street side waving palms and screaming out Messianic prayers. Hosanna literally means SAVE US!*

*Hosanna* is often thought of as a declaration of praise, similar to hallelujah, but it is actually a plea for salvation. The Hebrew root words are found in Psalm 118:25a which says, "Save us, we pray, O LORD!" (ESV). The Hebrew words *yasha* ("deliver, save") and *anna* ("beg, beseech") combine to form the word that, in English, is "hosanna." Literally, *hosanna* means "I beg you to save!" or "please deliver us!"

So, as Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, the crowds were perfectly right to shout "Hosanna!" They were acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah, as shown in their address "Son of David." Theirs was a cry for salvation and a recognition that Jesus is able to save.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus weeps over each of us. He longs to be in a relationship with us for all of eternity. He comes into our hearts and many of us cry out Hosanna to Him. Others never show up to the event. Some of us shout "hosanna" because we think He's coming on a "war horse." I think that is analogous to us asking Him to save us, but having our own ideas of how that salvation ought to occur. This same crowd that was waving palm branches on Palm Sunday were also shouting "crucify Him" in just a few short days. Many accept Jesus based on Him doing something in their lives that they think ought to be done. But that's not the way it works. I think that the raising of Lazarus and the Palm Sunday procession accentuate for us that it is easy for us to be fickle in our belief, devotion, and love for God. It is easy for us to think that God should work one way, when in fact He works things out in another way. We get upset when He does it His way. We cry Hosanna one minute and crucify Him the next. This is a deep story. It is the gospel story. He still comes today to love, heal, and forgive. As I wrote these words, my mind drifted to the beautiful old Gaither song, "Because He Lives."

God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus  
He came to love, heal and forgive  
He lived and died, to buy my pardon  
An empty grave, is there to prove, my Savior lives

Because He lives,  
I can face tomorrow  
Because He lives,  
all fear is gone  
Because I know,  
He holds the future

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/hosanna.html>

And life is worth,  
the living just, because He lives

As a pastor, it is easy to fall into the trap of wanting to come up with the greatest sermon ever preached on a day like Palm Sunday or Resurrection Sunday. But the beauty of the gospel is the most beautiful and insightful thing that I could preach. It is the human part of man that wants to complicate it all and present you with the WOW.

The gospel is complicated because our human minds can't comprehend it all. However, at the time, it is simple. It all seems so strange that the Creator of the Universe would choose to come in the form of a Man who would end up dying on a Roman cross. That is just weird. It makes no sense to my human logical brain. But it didn't end there. He was put into the ground and He arose and "more than 500 saw Him". It is the same gospel that existed 2,000 years ago. All of us have sinned (that's the cause) and all of us have come short of the glory of God, and eternal death and separation from God is the result (the effect) of that sin. And then in His marvelous grace He says to you and me, just believe this and trust in Me and you will be saved and have eternal life.

Jesus told us, *"<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:13, NASB). And that, my friends, is exactly what He did. That is what Palm Sunday and the entire Passion Week are all about.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese-Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.