

## The Triumphal Entry

<sup>12</sup> The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup> took branches of palm trees [expressing joy in victory] and went out to meet Him, and cried out:

**"Hosanna! [Yasha Anna "save us, please!"]**

*'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'*

*The King of Israel!"* [recognizing Him in some aspect as a king]<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:

<sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion;  
Behold, your King is coming,  
Sitting on a donkey's colt."

<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. <sup>18</sup> For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. <sup>19</sup> The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!" (John 12:12-19, NKJV plus parenthetical explanations).

Let us pray.

This morning, we're going to do something a little different. We're going to hear from an eyewitness to the events of Palm Sunday. We'll hear him talk about that morning and how he felt about the events that were going on. He signed his name at the bottom of the scroll as Yosef Ben-Yehuda. Recently Sue Wimberly and Karen Brown were going through the church documents and they found an old scroll with his testimony on it. I think it is really interesting to get the observations of someone who was there that very day. I will now read it. **NOTE: The finding of a scroll is a fiction to help all of us get a fresh look at the morning that we call Palm Sunday**

My name is Yosef Ben-Yehudah and I testify that everything I am writing in this scroll is a true and correct account of what I have seen. A strange rabbi named Jesus came into the City of Jerusalem this morning. If you're on the Mount of Olives looking over at the Temple mount, Bethany is behind you and right over the hill. What happened in Bethany yesterday triggered what is going on today. There has been a whole lot of talk, and people are saying that the poor mysterious rabbi from Galilee, a man named Jesus, has raised a man named Lazarus from the dead right there in Bethany. It sounds crazy, but it is what everyone is talking about.

Some people of course doubt that any of the report is real, but others are flooding back to Jerusalem and it is on everyone's lips. It seems like everyone knows someone who has been over there and has seen the whole thing happen. Some are wondering whether this is really Him. Is this the Messiah that we have awaited for so long? Boy, if we ever needed a Messiah, it is now. The Romans have moved into our country, and they have taken over and made alliances with many politically powerful Jewish families. Our leaders are in cahoots with the Romans. This just leaves us normal Jews out in the cold. We who are poor simple religious Jews, are left with no voice, no power, no resources, and no hope. We are a conquered people, living as subjects of the Romans with all of their paganism and heathen temples. It kind of makes us all sick to walk by these temples that they have made to themselves and their gods. Something needs to change. If ever there was a good time for the Messiah, our deliverer, to come, it is now. The chatter in the city is about Jesus and the Lazarus whom He has raised from the dead.

Early this morning, I heard someone mention that this rabbi, this Jesus, was on his way to Jerusalem. The crowd began to grow and people kept coming. It seemed like a sea of people. I was watching the Roman soldiers as they watched the mob growing. They all looked nervous to me. The people lining the streets had arrived with palm branches and they were already starting to wave them, getting ready to hail their newest Messiah, this son of David from Galilee. The Romans have seen palm branches before. They are well aware of what it means. Every time a conquering general comes back to parade through the streets of a conquered city, palm branches are waved. Everyone knows that a conquering hero is greeted in this way.

Any crowd makes the Roman soldiers nervous because these types of crowds can get out of hand very quickly. One minute people can be rejoicing, and the next minute they can be killing someone. Crowds are fickle. That means they love something one minute and the next minute they hate it. Crowds like this take on a mind of their own. This makes the Jewish leaders nervous too. I was watching them and they were getting VERY antsy. They didn't like what they saw. And they didn't like what they were hearing. All of this "king business" will end up with the Roman armies pouring in, and once again butchering a lot of Jewish people. People are restless. They are tired. They are desperate for a change. It seemed that we Jews were standing on the street wanting to make this man from Galilee a messiah whether He is or not.

Probably what bothers our Jewish leaders the most is that nagging thought in the back of their heads about Daniel's prophecy. They have all read and discussed that odd passage near the middle of the scroll (Daniel 9:25). They have spent years calculating the time-sequence of Daniel's prophecy. A few of the more learned rabbis have done the math. They have gone over the numbers again and again, and they know that this is the time period that "The Anointed One," the Messiah, is due to come. And here, THIS day in Jerusalem, a rabbi that some call The Messiah, has come into Jerusalem. They have all argued and discussed the date, but today is within a year of when Daniel said he will come. One of the religious leaders that I used to spend time with told me that this Yeshua, this rabbi, needs to be stopped. He said that this Jesus doesn't look at all like the Messiah we have all been expecting. Jesus has been challenging their authority, and they feel like they are losing control of the situation.

I too am greatly interested in the prophecies of Daniel. I have heard them read during the Haftara readings each week in the synagogue since I was a little boy. I have even asked several of the Jewish leaders to interpret that cryptic passage in Daniel. I was always fascinated that the scroll said that when He would come, His purpose would be: (1) "to finish transgression," (2) "to put an end to sin," (3) "to atone for wickedness," (4) "to bring in everlasting righteousness," (5) "to seal up vision and prophecy," and (6) "to anoint the most holy." But I am still not sure of what it all means.

I have even asked one of Jesus's disciples about some of these things. This disciple admits that he and the other disciples don't really know or understand exactly what is going on. They have told me that Jesus has been telling them all this last week that He would be rejected, and would even face death, but that doesn't make sense. The Messiah isn't supposed to die. Various people have different ideas about who Jesus is. This morning, as Jesus rode in, I heard a man that works in the Temple shouting out the words of the Prophecy Zecariah.

*"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. (Zechariah 9:9, NKJV).*

When I heard him shouting the words, I had chills up my spine and my hair stood up on my arms. I was seeing what he was shouting. This made me wonder a few things:

- 1) Jesus calls himself a king, but what is he king over? From all that I can see, it seems like Caesar is still the king.
- 2) However, as I think through the words, I realize that Jesus is coming not to the Romans, but to the "daughters of Zion." That's us, the Jews! I sure hope he is a king. I'm tired of seeing Roman pagan images on the gate to our temple complex. I'm tired of paying taxes to a Caesar who could not care less about us and doesn't observe Torah.
- 3) Jesus might be a fraud, but He seems to have a certain righteousness about Him that I can't make sense of. Not in a big-headed way, but something deep I can't quite put my finger on. But His teachings do call for repentance.
- 4) The Messiah is supposed to bring salvation. He's supposed to conquer all these evil people running the world. Why is it always the evil maniacs in charge? From what I saw, Jesus doesn't seem interested in any sort of conquest.
- 5) But on the other hand, Jesus came riding down the streets of Jerusalem on an untamed colt of a donkey. This was a sign that was "lowly" and "gentle." He was not on a white horse, but humble, born in a manger riding on a donkey. But that is the way God does things, isn't it? He uses what is weak and humble for great things. He

chose his people Israel. He could have chosen those powerful Egyptians with their massive pyramids. He could have chosen Babylon with its towering ziggurats and hanging gardens. But instead, He chose us Jews, and we are the least among the nations. What do we have? Just lilies in a field.

Probably the strangest thing about the whole morning was that no one quite understands what is happening. If this is the Messiah, are we about to go to war? What does this mean for our people?

When I am confused, I go to an expert in the law. There's one named Nicodemus. I saw him standing there under a palm tree watching Jesus enter the city. It looked like he had tears in his eyes. I went over to him to speak. He shared with me that he has secretly come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One, but he hasn't really told anyone about his decision. He told me that Jesus had told him that he had to be born again. I'm just not sure what exactly that means.

*"<sup>13</sup> No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:13-17, NKJV).*

Nicodemus seems to think that Jesus is the Messiah AND that something terrible will happen to him. That doesn't make any sense to me, but it has me thinking.

When I finished talking to Nicodemus I went back to the crowd and found some scribes (those are the men who have copied ancient passages again and again). I figured that surely they know what is happening. I went up to one of them that I have known from my childhood and I asked him, "What in the world is going on?" He answered me, "It's happening. Look it's happening. It's happening just like we sing about it in the synagogue." He recited from memory the passage he was talking about.

*<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of ADONAI,\*  
the righteous can enter it.*

*<sup>21</sup> I am thanking you because you answered me;  
you became my salvation.*

*<sup>22</sup> The very **rock that the builders rejected**  
**has become the cornerstone!***

*<sup>23</sup> This has come from ADONAI,  
and in our eyes it is amazing.*

*<sup>24</sup> This is the day ADONAI has made,  
a day for us to rejoice and be glad.*

*<sup>25</sup> **Please, ADONAI! Save us!***

***Please, ADONAI! Rescue us!***

*<sup>26</sup> **Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI.**  
**We bless you from the house of ADONAI.***

*27 ADONAI is God, and he gives us light.  
Join in the pilgrim festival with branches  
all the way to the horns of the altar.*

*28 You are my God, and I thank you.  
You are my God; I exalt you.*

*29 Give thanks to ADONAI; for he is good,  
for his grace continues forever. (Psalm 118:29-27, Complete Jewish Bible).*

- This is the word יהוה which we render in English as "Yahweh." It is read as "The Lord" by religious Jews.

Excited, this scribe was yelling in my face. It's happening, just like in Psalm 118!

The praises and the shouts that I heard were deafening. The people were beside themselves because they were convinced that Jesus would deliver us from the Romans. It makes me wonder whether this is the Messiah or a false savior of their own making?

**(Several days pass and Jesus has been crucified.)**

Well, it seems we were fooled again. The disciples were fooled. Nicodemus was fooled. The scribes were fooled. Jesus's own disciples have left him. It was all a farce. And the crowd turned on Him so quickly. We can love a leader one minute, and then hate him the next. If our expectations aren't met, we get turned off, grow cold, or even turn on someone who has been the object of our affections.

After the events of that morning, things turned ugly. As the end of the week drew to a close, it was the time of the Passover. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, has a custom of freeing a Jewish prisoner right before the Passover. He had already declared Jesus innocent of anything worthy of death (Luke 23:15). Pilate had seen through what the Jewish leaders were doing (Mark 15:10) and he was looking for a way out to release Jesus. So, Pilate offered a choice to this same crowd that had been there on the roadside shouting Hosanna. He offered the release of Jesus or Barabbas, a well-known murderer who had tried to lead an insurrection in the city (Luke 23:19).

The choice before the people could not have been more crystal clear. They could free a quiet, gentle rabbi who had healed the sick and worked many wonderful miracles, or they could free a murderous revolutionary. This same crowd that had shouted "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" chose Barabbas over Jesus.

Pilate was surprised by the crowd's insistence of freeing Barabbas. Pilate told them that he found no fault in Jesus and the charges against him had no basis (Luke 23:14). Pilate appealed to the crowd THREE TIMES to make the right choice, but with loud shouts they insistently demanded that He be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. Pilate washed his hands of the whole matter, and he handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be scourged and crucified (Luke 23:25).

Well, I decided to write these events down because it's been three days now since the Romans killed Him. There's a part of me that is really sad that he wasn't the Messiah. He

wasn't the conqueror we were expecting, but there was something gentle about him, yet powerful, comforting, scary, yet overwhelmingly genuine. I just wish that... wait, there's one of his disciples running toward me. They're saying something odd is happening at his tomb. I'll write more down in this journal when I figure this out."

**The account of Yoseph Ben-Yehudah ends there. So what are we going to do with this amazing testimony? What does it mean for the congregation at Union Grove Baptist Church of Whitehall?**

The Wrap Up

I thought this would be a good way to remind us that we should never fall in love with a Jesus of our own imaginations and expectations. The people that lined the streets that Palm Sunday morning decided Who and What they wanted Jesus to be. So let me ask you this morning, "Are you fickle in your faith?" Is your faith in Jesus dependent on Him doing something that measures up to your expectations? Does your loyalty and love depend on what you want Him to do to make you happy? As a believer you are never offered happiness. You are offered holiness.

The story of Barabbas and his release from condemnation is a remarkable parallel to the story of each and every one of us. We stood guilty before God and we were deserving of death (Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23), but then through God's grace, Jesus was chosen to die in our place. He substituted Himself for our punishment. We are Barabbas, guilty and deserving of death, but Jesus the Messiah was punished in our place and we were allowed to go free. We are given total freedom with no condemnation. *"He that knew no sin was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21, Pastor's paraphrase).

I haven't read the cornerstone Messianic passage this morning, but here it is. It was written by the Prophet Isaiah some 700 years before Jesus was ever born. It can refer to none other but Jesus.

*Surely He has borne our griefs  
And carried our sorrows;  
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten by God, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup> But He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities;  
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,  
And by His stripes we are healed.  
<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
We have turned, every one, to his own way;  
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.  
(Isaiah 53:4-6, NKJV).*



I encourage you to go to the website "One for Israel" and hear many Jewish people testify that when they heard these words read, they came to realize that this can be Jesus and none other. Listen to this beautiful testimony of Mottel Baleston.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oQlgKPbyds>

(Testimony of Mottel Baleston)

You also might enjoy listening to this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVatQlqBiGU>  
(Shoshanna's Story – Jews for Jesus)

My question to you this morning is two-fold:

- (1) Do you know Him? This is the path to an eternity with Him.
- (2) If you do know Him, have you submitted yourself to His sovereignty? That is the path not to salvation, but to obedience. Don't look for a salvation (deliverance) different than what Jesus offers you. My prayer is that throughout this day, you will cry Hosanna in your heart.

Let us pray.

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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.