

Palm Sunday – 2023

Saturday, 4/1 at 4:00 & Sunday, 4/2 at 9:00



His Final Steps... Led to a Donkey



Text: Matthew 21:1-11 NAS-95

Holy Th: 11 & 7; Good Fr: 11 & 7; Holy Sat: 4; Easter Sun: 9

Introduction: Dear friends: *Welcome to Palm Sunday!* Try to imagine being in Jerusalem on that very day:

- ➔ You have traveled there to celebrate the Passover,¹
- ➔ multitudes are there with you,² and
- ➔ many think that Jesus may be the Promised Messiah, so *many are longing to see Him!*

As the week begins: ♦ Many are super-excited about Jesus, but ♦ the Jewish Leaders have already *decided and made it known* that He must be arrested and be put to death. What a contrast – *many loving Jesus, some hating Jesus.*

- Why did many love Him? They believed He was ♦ the Promised Messiah, ♦ the Son of David, ♦ the King of Israel. And why were such things significant for many? Israel had been under the rule of others nations for

¹ That is, the first three annual spring festivals, which took place over an eight-day period – Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits.

² Tacitus estimated that 600,000 lived in Jerusalem – 40 years after Jesus' time. Josephus said that Jerusalem swelled to more than two million during Passover.

600+ years, so they longed for the Great Deliverer who would rally the people and defeat the Romans!

- Why did the Jewish Leaders hate Jesus? Since He was drawing the people away from them to Himself, *those leaders were worried about their jobs and nation!*

With all of that in mind, we go to **Matthew 21:1-11**:

1. **Behind the Scenes Preparation:** ¹ When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you *[Bethany]*, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”
 - a. Get the donkey: Go..., you will find a donkey and her colt. Untie them... When you are questioned, say this and they will send them.
 - b. Realize that I know everything: ▶The donkey’s location, ▶the owner’s question, ▶the owner’s response, ▶My coming death, ▶the coming ministry of My disciples, and ▶the details of all your hearts and minds.
 - c. Realize our important location: They were in Bethphage – *east of Jerusalem* (the donkey was brought there from Bethany). Why is Bethphage significant? The LORD gave **Ezekiel** a vision shortly before the fall of the southern kingdom (**11:22-23**); he saw the glory of the LORD depart the temple and stand over the mountain to the east of Jerusalem – *the area of Bethphage*. Then, it was from there that Jesus, *who fully glorified God the Father*, entered Jerusalem – *from the east!*

2. **God's Unfolding Plan:** ⁴ This took place [*the behind the scenes preparation*] **to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet [Zechariah (9:9)]:** ⁵ **“SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, ‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL [*the baby*] OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.”**
- a. Since before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1:17-21), *God had a grand plan to save the world!* So 500+ years before the time of Jesus, *the HS moved Zechariah to tell in advance what would happen on Palm Sunday!*
- b. Why a donkey and not a powerful horse? The humble Jesus rode a humble animal – *not trusting in Himself but following the perfect plan of the Father in heaven.* Let us also be humble in all things *and trust in God!*
3. **More Behind the Scenes Preparation:** ⁶ **The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them,** ⁷ **and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.** // Then, everything was in place to start moving *from the east* toward Jerusalem.
4. **The One-Mile Procession to Jerusalem:**
- a. As the donkey moved forward, many were already present to welcome and honor Jesus: ⁸ **Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.**
- b. Crowds in front of Jesus and behind Jesus: ⁹ **The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David [*that is, Save, we pray, Son of David*]; **BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD** [*Psalm 118:25-26*]; **Hosanna****

in the highest!”// Those great crowds welcomed Jesus as ♦the Promised Messiah, ♦the Son of David, ♦the King of the Jews. They ♦acknowledged Him, ♦prayed to Him, and ♦blessed Him. For most, they wanted the LORD to bless Jesus so that He would ✓gather them, ✓lead them, and ✓conquer the Romans.

5. **Those in Jerusalem:** [The ones in the procession then came to the ones in the city:] ¹⁰ **When [Jesus] had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred** [*that is, shaken – like an earthquake, only mentally and spiritually*], **saying, “Who is this?”** ¹¹ **And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”**
- Many were wondering, many were interested: The excitement continued Holy Monday as Jesus cleansed the Court of the Gentiles; then, on Holy Tuesday, Jesus taught over 20 different lessons ([Matt. 21:18-26:13](#))!
 - Why did wonder and interest turn to “Crucify”? For many they *wrongly* thought the Messiah would be an earthly king – to ♦defeat the Romans and ♦restore the nation to the glorious days of King David. However, when the people saw that Jesus’ plan did not align with their plan, *they rejected Him!* What do YOU want – His way or your way? His mission was FAR GREATER than political freedom, *He purchased our eternal freedom!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Jesus, humble us to trust in You, forgive our sins, and help us to always seek Your direction for our lives!

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