

PALM SUNDAY
Matthew 21:1-11

Introduction: In my travels in the USA as well as overseas, palm trees are arguably some of the most beautiful of all trees. They have a slender stem rising 40 to 80 feet high, with pale green fronds from 6 to 12 feet long. Palestine was known as “the City of the Palms.” The event of Palm Sunday, celebrated amongst Christians across the globe, illuminates brightly and is indelibly etched in the minds of Christians everywhere. The beautiful Mount of Olives that is situated at 2,700 feet above sea level was about 5/8 of a mile from Jerusalem. The small village of Bethphage (literally “house of unripe figs”) was on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. It was between Bethany (the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) and Jerusalem. According to Halakah, the legal traditions of Judaism, Bethphage was part of Jerusalem, although it was situated in its outermost parts. Because of its close affiliation with Jerusalem, it permitted one to celebrate Passover there.

I. The historical event of Palm Sunday

- A. Jesus arrived in Bethany 6 days prior to Passover, on Friday, the 8th day of Nisan. *John 12:1*. He spent the Sabbath there.
 1. On the first day of the week, Sunday, the 10th day of Nisan, 5 days before His death, He entered Jerusalem seated upon a donkey. The 10th day of Nisan was the day on which the Passover lamb was selected. *Exodus 12:3*. On this day, Jesus symbolically presented Himself to the people as Messiah. This presentation anticipated His death as the Passover Lamb of God.
 2. Jesus sent two disciples into Bethphage to secure a donkey. *Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30*. Apparently the owner knew of Jesus and agreed to let the animals go. No one had ever ridden on these animals, both the mother and her fowl, which was important during sacred uses. This seems to make a connection with the earlier prophecies of Zechariah which shows the Messiah first as Priest and then as King.
 3. Everything Jesus did, especially in His role as the humble Messiah and Prince of Peace, He did in accordance with the words of the prophet Zechariah. Up to this time, Jesus had avoided any public declaration of His ministry as the Messiah. Now, He was ready to make His true identity clear. He was ready to go to the cross.
 4. *Matthew 21:5* comes from *Zechariah 9:9*. Compare also the introduction to *Isaiah 62:11*. Jesus fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecy in *chapter 9* and demonstrated Himself to be the Messiah. He was not a king of violent or political force, but rather a humble king, offering salvation and ruling with peace. The zealots thought otherwise. The Hebrew of *Zechariah 9:9* means He came “being salvation.” The angel had told Joseph before the Child’s birth, “You shall call His Name Jesus: for He will save His people from their sins.” *Matthew 1:21*. It wouldn’t be long before Jesus would accomplish His vision.
 5. In *verse 6* of *Matthew 21*, the disciples obeyed His Word without fully understanding what was taking place. They acknowledged Him to be their Master.
 6. In *verse 8*, the crowds in Jerusalem for Passover were made up of pilgrims from Galilee and Peraea as well as city inhabitants who began spreading branches and their garments on the road, paying homage to the Lord.
 7. In *verse 9*, the shout “hosanna!” – a prayer meaning “save us” – also appears in the so-called hallels. *Psalms 113-118*. This collection of Psalms was especially sung during the Passover. *Matthew 26:30*. *Psalms 118:25* is a part of an hallel which was sung at Passover. It was a call for help. It was customary to shout and sing this Psalm during the feast of tabernacles as the people approached the sacrificial altar carrying their palm branches and shouting “hosanna.”
 8. In *verse 10*, *Matthew* records the crowd’s enthusiasm for Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. The Greek word is “eseisthe,” which in other places is used for describing earthquakes.

Conclusion: Even as the crowd in that day heralded Him as the “Son of David,” we now acclaim Him to be the Son of the Living God. Knowing Him is to know life. Jesus gave His own claim as to who He was. *John 10:10*. The world needs Him as never before. Faith in Him can right the direction of America. We should take advantage of the awakening which is happening in this very hour and spread the Gospel in every possible way.