

Teaching Points

Discussion: Let's begin our study tonight with discussion. What do you know about the event that is commonly referred to as "Palm Sunday" or the "Triumphal Entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem? What happened and why is it so significant?

All four Gospels record Jesus entering Jerusalem triumphantly. The Synoptic Gospels stress the elaborate preparations and deliberate orchestration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of passion week (Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-38). John omits these details. Instead, he emphasizes the event itself. There is tremendous Messianic significance in this event. Jesus is openly declaring who He is by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. And the crowd treats Him as a coming king.

Let's remember the context: Jesus' fame is spreading. His latest and greatest sign was raising Lazarus from the dead. Word has spread. His teaching and healing ministry have been on display for several years now causing the peoples' expectations to rise. While some are merely curious and some want Him dead, there are those who believe. The hope-filled expectations of the people that their Messiah/King would come deliver them has grown with Jesus' popularity and displays of power. Could He be the One? Psalm 118 is a royal Psalm used in the processions of the king. Turn there and read verses 25-26. The people of Jesus' day are filled with such expectation. So much so that they burst with prayer and praise over Jesus using these very words. They cry out:

1. **"Hosanna!"** is a prayer which means "Lord, save us!"
2. **"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"** The people are calling down blessing on the One whom they believe to be their liberator. It referred to the Messiah. Clearly the people believe Jesus to be Him.
3. **"The King of Israel!"** is a title not found in Psalm 118, but was ascribed to Jesus by Nathanael in John 1:49 and is found later in John's Gospel. This exclamation is evidence of their hope for their royal Messiah, the conqueror descended from David. Their understanding of Jesus was primarily as a political leader. Still, they were centered on the messianic king and deliverer.

Why palm branches? Grant Osborne says, "These branches were a Passover tradition stemming from the Maccabean revolt, when the Jewish people welcomed Judas Maccabeus ("the Hammer") into Jerusalem for the rededication of the temple. They were also used at both Tabernacles and Passover to signify victory and new life for the community. Here they demonstrate national hope for liberation and are a sign of messianic fervor."

Jesus does not quell those expectations, but chooses instead to fulfill a very specific Messianic prophecy by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 says, **"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.” Jesus is presenting Himself to the nation as the Messiah. He orchestrated this entrance to once again prove His identity.

Discussion Questions: How is this figure of Zechariah 9:9 described? Who is he? What is he like? What does he do?

Thoughts: *He is a king. He is a king who comes to his people. He is just. He has salvation. Yet he is also lowly which means he is humble.*

Discussion Questions: Do you think Jesus wanted the people to recognize His true identity and make Him their King? Was this part of His mission, but the people “missed” it? Was the cross “plan B” because they chose to crucify Him instead of crown Him?

Thoughts: *Jesus was not trying to circumvent the cross with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The plan for Him to save His people from their sins through His death on the cross has been in place since before the foundation of the world. He was again fulfilling prophecy even as the people proclaimed Him to be their blessed King while they would crucify Him one week later.*

The disciples did not understand the significance of these events until after Jesus was “glorified.” That is a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was glorified when He laid down His life on the cross in full obedience to the will of His Father and was then raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples to remember His words and works (read John 14:26).

Then the disciples came to understand that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament words of Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9. It was then that they understood how all the events of that “Palm Sunday” were part of God’s predestined time at this point of world history.

Prayer Focus

1. Praise God for orchestrating all things to bring about His perfect plan. Despite our lack of complete understanding, we can praise Him for knowing all and doing all for His glory and for the good of His people. Praise God for His use of so many details including so many people and so many events to bring about His Son’s triumphal entry.
2. Ask God to open our eyes to His work in the world today. Ask Him to lead us by His Spirit to a greater understanding of His purpose and His plan. Ask Him to give us hearts that our consistently submitted to Him.