

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY (Palm Branches)

Scriptures: Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:28-40, John 12:12-19



Where was this taking place? Bethphage (“House of Figs”) and Bethany (“House of Dates”) were adjacent towns, near Jerusalem. The “triumphal entry” may well have taken Jesus through the Golden Gate in Jerusalem’s east wall, overlooking the Kidron Valley. The procession would have proceeded toward the temple. This was the Passover time and Jerusalem and the whole surrounding neighborhood would be crowded with pilgrims – possibly as many as 2 ½ million. They would literally come from the ends of the earth for Passover.

What about the donkey? A donkey was ridden by rich and poor alike. Royalty would ride a donkey in times of peace rather than a horse, which was associated with war. Jesus had already arranged for the donkey and her colt to be waiting for Him. The phrase “the Master needs them” was a password by which the owner would know the hour that Jesus had arranged had come. The fact that the donkey had never been ridden before made it suitable for such a sacred purpose.

What was the significance of the palm branches? The branches that the crowd waved and laid down on the path were probably from a young date palm. Palm branches were a symbol of grace and victory and were used extensively in celebrations. Date palms, because they grow near life-giving water became also symbols of eternal life and hope. Palm branches and trees figured in many Middle Eastern art forms – in architectural detail, in frescoes, on coins, etc.

Why was Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem in this way such a celebrated event?

News had gone out that Jesus who had raised Lazarus from the dead was on his way to Jerusalem. As the crowds met Him, they received Him like a conqueror. Even though there was a price on Jesus’ head, He entered Jerusalem in such a way as to focus the limelight on Himself. What courage! It was a deliberate claim to be king. Yet, He came in peace, on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9...

“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Could it be that this was prophesied to the day? Those religious leaders who so badly wanted to kill Jesus, had they studied their Scriptures and prophecies better, would have known that this Jesus was the promised Messiah. Daniel prophesied *to the day* the time Jesus would enter Jerusalem at the triumphal entry. He prophesied that there would be 69 weeks of years from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem till the Messiah (Daniel 9:24-27). That decree was by Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11). Note the following chart, as diagrammed by Chuck Missler in his video study on Daniel. It is also necessary to know that years at this time were 360 days.

173,880 days = 69 x 7 x 360

173,740 days = 445 BC (lunar calendar) to 32 AD

+ 24 days = March 14 to April 6 (decree day to triumph. Entry)

+ 116 days = leap years

173,880 days!

As the crowds in Jerusalem on that wonderful day raised their “Hosannas” to Jesus as their king, so should we raise our hosannas to the Lord in this day. Nancy will lead us now in a study of praise and celebration, based on this event.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Zondervan’s NIV Study Bible; Commentaries on all four gospels by William Barclay; “Through the Bible” with Chuck Missler.

HOMEWORK: In preparation for our study on the “Tree of Calvary” next week, read at least one of the following accounts of the crucifixion: Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:17-37. Prepare your hearts through prayer for this lesson on the cross, to be followed by the celebration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

