

It's Sunday but Friday Is Coming bible-sermons.org April 17, 2011
(with appreciation for the research of Risto Santala)

Palm Sunday, Hosanna Road, Triumphal Entry, titles we use to describe a day that was known to the Jews as the day of the selection of their Passover lamb. According to the Law of Moses, the Passover lamb was selected five days before so that the family could live with the lamb to be sure it was unblemished. (Exodus 12:3) There was quite a bit of tradition and expectation associated with this day. But for the disciples this was not like any other year. This was a climactic Passover in which everything was about to change.

It had been a few months earlier near Caesarea Philippi that Jesus had begun to warn them that in Jerusalem He would be arrested, spit upon, beaten, flogged, crucified, and in eight of the nine warnings in the gospels He predicted that He would rise on the third day. (Luke 18:31-33) When people warned Jesus of Herod's desire to capture Him, He reminded them of a prediction in Daniel (Luke 13:32). Daniel 9 spoke of a day when the Messiah would be killed in Jerusalem and the city would be destroyed. (Daniel 9:26) No wonder Mark records that the disciples followed Jesus to Jerusalem with fear and amazement. (Mark 10:32)

It wasn't as if Jesus had found some secluded text that no one noticed. Listen to what one sage had written regarding this epoch moment.

*"One day the fathers of the world (the Patriarchs) will come in the month of Nisan to the Messiah and say, 'Ephraim,' (one of the familiar names for the suffering Messiah), 'our true Messiah; although we are your fathers you are greater than us, because you have borne the sins of our children. And upon you has fallen a heavy punishment you have become an object of ridicule and profanation amongst the nations on account of Israel, and you have sat in darkness and gloom . . . All this you have done for the sins of our children.'"*¹

Jesus arrival began with the mysterious acquisition of a donkey. (Matthew 21:2-3) Sages of the day were given whatever transport they needed simply because the sage requested the use of it. That explains why the disciples simply said, "The Master needs it."

As Jesus rode into the city, the Jews would have thought of the prediction of Zechariah 9:9, the gentle king entering on a donkey. Sages associated it with the Genesis 49 prediction of tying the donkey to the choicest vine. The Talmud says that dreaming of a donkey and a vine as predicting the arrival of Messiah.

Commented [Paul1]: Exodus 12:3 (ESV)

³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household.

Commented [Paul2]: Luke 18:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

Commented [Paul3]: Luke 13:33 (ESV)

³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

Commented [Paul4]: Daniel 9:26 (ESV)

²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.

Commented [Paul5]: Mark 10:32 (ESV)

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,

Commented [Paul6]: Pesikhta Rabbati 35-37

Commented [Paul7]: Matthew 21:2-3 (ESV)

² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

Commented [Paul8]: Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Commented [Paul9]: Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The crowds probably understood all these symbols and accepted Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. They threw their cloaks on the road before Him which is how kings were received. **They waved palm branches and sang Psalm 118:21-26** (ESV):

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

It looks like they understood that Jesus had come to save them. It appeared as if they were receiving Him as their Messiah. But wait a minute; the verse that follows those they sang is this: *²⁷ The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!*

They wanted Jesus to be a deliverer from Rome, but not the light of God that exposed their sin. They wanted success over other nations, but not to acknowledge that One came to be a sacrifice for their wickedness. In spite of the appearance of things as Jesus crested the hill looking down over Jerusalem, this was a rejection of what Jesus came to do, not an acceptance of His message. They praised God for the miracles, as well they should have, but they missed the message behind the miracles. (John 6:26)

Man does not see as God sees. The disciples must have been elated. The warning prophecies must have been put to the back of their mind. Maybe it was going to be okay after all. Perhaps Jesus was wrong about how this would turn out. Jesus had stopped at the crest of the hill. They turned and must have been surprised to see Jesus staring out over the city and weeping. And then came the words that brought them back to reality.

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Matthew 23:37-39 (NIV)

Did you notice something? Jesus said they would not see Him again until they said what they had just sung. Until they really could acknowledge that the One who comes in the name of the Lord is blessed, they will not see Him again. Was He accusing them of insincerity or ignorance? Perhaps both! But it was not in anger, but with a broken heart that He made the prediction. He was saying what Micah and Jeremiah had said before Him. *"Zion will be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem a heap of rubble..."* (Micah 3:12; Jeremiah 26:18; Matthew 24:2)

The tendency of our prideful nature is to say that we would never do what these people did. How foolish and immature! But if you cannot see that we are just as prone to misunderstanding and misinterpreting Scripture and circumstances to suit our personal desires, then we are definitely as blind as they were. We must always guard our heart and examine our motives. (Proverbs 4:23)

Commented [Paul10]: John 6:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Commented [Paul11]: Micah 3:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

Commented [Paul12]: Jeremiah 26:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'

Commented [Paul13]: Matthew 24:2 (ESV)

² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Commented [Paul14]: Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Jesus had to die for our sins. There was no other way. It may as well have been us there welcoming Jesus for our own hopes and dreams that have nothing to do with God being glorified. After all, we do it today!

One day in the not too distant future, the Jews will acknowledge the coming of the blessed One who comes in the authority of Almighty God. (Zechariah 12:10) The final and intended prediction in the Psalm will come to pass. But let's return to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus went straight to the Temple to do what He had done on the first Temple visit of His ministry. (John 2:15-16) Apparently, the Sadducean priesthood was once again selling animals in the Temple causing it to be anything but a reverent House of Prayer for all nations. Jesus fulfilled the prediction of Malachi 3: ¹ *"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*

Jesus took authority over the Temple because of His zeal for the worship of, and communion with, the Father. He was certainly using it as a picture of how zealous He is to see our hearts become a place of worship and communion instead of being filled with the racket of the world. (Matthew 21:13) The fact that He got away with it shows the power and authority His presence commanded.

Over the next few days, the days when the Jews lived with their sacrificial lambs, He taught in the Temple courts. (Matthew 21-25) He was the sacrificial lamb living among them so that they could see He is unblemished. The powers that were tried every way they could think of to trip Him up, and finally they gave up and decided the only way to maintain power was to kill Him. (Matthew 26:3-4) They were unwittingly fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 118 that was just sung by the crowds. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. A Jewish exegete had written, "This will not happen in an instant, but there will first be great sufferings."²

On the day of the Passover meal, the Thursday evening of Nisan the 14th, they prepared for a last meal. Peter and John took the lamb to the Temple to be sacrificed. They then roasted it on a pomegranate spit and took it to the home of Mark's mother where everything was prepared for the meal. That house would later become a place of worship for the fledgling church.

The evening began with another note of solemnity. ¹⁵ *And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* Luke 22:15-16 Passover meal at that time began with the first cup of wine. The first prayer is a blessing before the wine is drunk. Jews do not bless the food or drink but the Giver of them. Here is the prayer as it was said then and now: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who createst the fruit of

Commented [Paul15]: Zechariah 12:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Commented [Paul16]: John 2:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

Commented [Paul17]: Matthew 21:13 (NIV)

¹³ "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

Commented [Paul18]: Matthew 26:3-4 (ESV)

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,

⁴ and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

Commented [Paul19]: Bi'ur ha-inyan exposition of Isaiah 28:16

the vine. Be thou praised, who hast kept us in life, and hast preserved us, and hast enabled us to reach this season."

At this point in the traditional Seder, the host would wash his hands. Jesus, however, washed His disciples' feet. He was teaching them the importance of humility and service to one another. (John 13:14-15)

Next came the bitter herbs dipped in brine to remind them of the bitterness of life in Egypt and the tears that were shed. Today they remind us of the bitterness of sin and the tears we shed over the consequences, the most painful of which is Jesus' sacrifice for us. His body was torn upon the cross for our sins.

Next came the blessing before eating the bread. This was the prayer in Jesus' day: *"This is the bread our fathers ate in the desert. Let all those who are hungry come and eat; all those who are in need come to celebrate the Passover."*

From ancient times the Passover meal is associated with the coming of the Messiah. There is a place set for Elijah, the one who comes to prepare the way for Messiah. At one point someone will go to the door to see if Elijah is coming. Rabbis relate the meal to Messiah's coming in various ways.

Next came the second cup of wine. The wine was one part wine and two parts water. The early church continued the traditional mix for communion. Then the youngest one attending is to ask why this night is different from any other. Various Scripture passages are read in reply as the meal begins. This is probably when Jesus uttered the words of Matthew 26:26 (ESV)* *26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."* The English translation adds the word "it". It was probably similar to prayer that is prayed even to this day. "Blessed art Thou O Lord God, King of the universe who gives us bread from the earth."

Then came the third cup, sometimes called the Cup of Blessing, or the Cup of Redemption.* Here is where Jesus would have uttered the words of the rest of our present day communion. *27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* Matthew 26:27-29 (ESV) A new covenant, not made with the blood of bulls and goats, of which God was never pleased (Psalms 40:6), but of the blood of Jesus, who of His own free will chose to die in our place.

Notice Jesus' confident forward focus on the day of celebration in His words, *"that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* Jesus is waiting for that day of celebration at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:9) He is waiting at the

Commented [Paul20]: John 13:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Commented [Paul21]: Psalm 40:6 (ESV)

⁶ In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Commented [Paul22]: Revelation 19:9 (ESV)

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Father's right hand until we can lift our cups together, when the bride is presented pure and spotless to Him. (Ephesians 5:27) He refuses to celebrate until that moment. He lives in anticipation of it.

I made a personal decision long ago that if He will not drink of the fruit of the vine until then, I will wait with Him in anticipation. Are you anxiously waiting for that day?

We close this message where we began, in Zechariah. The same prophecy that speaks of the gentle King coming on a donkey goes on to say that **because of the blood of the covenant with Him, God will free the prisoners from the waterless pit.** (Zechariah 9:11)

Everyone experiences the cistern. A cistern is a huge, deep, hole in the ground where rain water collected. Sometimes there were stairs down into them, but often buckets were lowered to bring up the water. Dry cisterns were used as prisons, the smooth, steep walls prevented escape. Everyone eventually realizes they are in a waterless pit. It is our old selfish and sinful nature that we've been talking about in the past weeks. There is no way out! But because the blood of the covenant, the blood of Jesus, is with us, because we accept what He did in our place, the rope of grace is lowered to us and we are freed.

That is the only way out. Some people try to jump; that's human effort. Some people try to think positive. That, too, is human effort. Some try to be good enough so that they will somehow rise by their own goodness up and out to freedom. That is false religion. The only way out, the only answer to free us from our condition, is that the blood of the covenant must be with us. That is why Jesus came. That is why He had to shed His blood.

Palm Sunday! Are we like those crowds that were thinking of their own agendas as they welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem? Or are we seeing what God sees? Do we see stubborn, selfish, hearts and the inevitable consequences, and our own heart among them? If they realized Jesus was that sacrifice for their sins, would they have acknowledged their sins and welcomed Him with repentance?

It was Sunday when Jesus came to the sound of praises, but Friday was coming. On Friday they would decide they weren't getting out of Him what they had hoped and so the shouts of praise become shouts to have Him crucified. (Matthew 27:22) But it also means He will shed His blood to make the new covenant possible even for those of us who have selfishly tried to use Him for our own ends. Yes, our hearts are selfish, but His grace can lift us up from the waterless pit.

Later that night after the Seder meal, Jesus was arrested and taken to the home of the High Priest for questioning. In the basement of that compound was a waterless pit where he would have been held. Psalm 88 describes the scene. The psalmist heard the words of Jesus a millennium before He spoke them. ⁶ *You have put me in the lowest pit,*

Commented [Paul23]: Ephesians 5:27 (ESV)

²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Commented [Paul24]: Zechariah 9:11 (ESV)

¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Commented [Paul25]: Matthew 27:22 (NIV)

²² "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"

in the darkest depths. ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. Selah ⁸ You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; Psalm 88:6-8 (NIV)

Jesus was held in the waterless pit to free us from ours. He bore the wrath of God on the sin of mankind for you and for me.

Questions

- 1 What was happening in Jerusalem the day Jesus arrived?
- 2 What was Jesus message to Herod?
- 3 Why were the disciples nervous?
- 4 What was the crowd thinking?
- 5 What was the prophecy that was being fulfilled?
- 6 Why did Jesus cry?
- 7 Where did Jesus go? Why?
- 8 Go over the Jesus' last Seder meal.
- 9 How does it connect with the Zechariah 9 prophecy?
- 10 What is our waterless pit?
- 11 How are we freed?