

All Hail King Jesus

Matthew 21:1-11

We tend to think of Palm Sunday as a day of celebration. Children waving palm branches. People singing songs of praise. In contrast, Palm Sunday is a day of clashing expectations. The Jewish people wanted a conquering hero. Jesus came as a king of peace. The people wanted a military leader. Jesus came as a suffering servant.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus presented his credentials as the Messiah, the one who fulfills the promises of Scripture. He called attention to himself and challenged the religious establishment. The responses to Jesus' claims ranged from praise and adoration to statements of personal expectations to outright resistance and disrespect. Palm Sunday hinges on the question, "Who is Jesus?"

Three events immediately precede Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and help explain what occurs.

- Matthew 20:17-19 – For the third time, Jesus predicts his imminent death.
- Matthew 20:20-28 – In a discussion on rank and privilege, Jesus explains that greatness is based on service.
- Matthew 20:29-34 – In a nation of spiritually blind people, Jesus gives sight and salvation to the blind.

Weaving the four gospels together, here is a chronology of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (Adapted from *Matthew: New Testament Commentary*. William Hendriksen, Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Book House, 1973, p.760-762.)

1. Jesus makes preparations for his entrance into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-3, 6, 7a; Mark 11:1-7a; Luke 19:28-35a; John 12:2, 12).
2. Jesus starts riding toward Jerusalem (Matthew 21:4, 5, 7; Mark 11:7b; Luke 19:35b; John 12:14, 15).
3. People accompanying Jesus from Bethany spread their outer garments on the path, while others cut branches from the trees to help pave the way (Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36).
4. Pilgrims already in Jerusalem who had heard about the raising of Lazarus join in the celebration (John 12:1, 12, 13a, 18).
5. As the two groups meet, the enthusiasm mounts (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; Luke 19:37, 38; John 12:13b).
6. The excitement reaches a climax as those who had seen the resurrection of Lazarus bear testimony (John 12:17).
7. Beside themselves with envy, the Pharisees appeal to Jesus to stop the celebration (Luke 19:39, 40).
8. Jesus, upon seeing the city, weeps for Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44).
9. As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the entire city is stirred (Matthew 21:10, 11; Mark 11:11, 12).

On Palm Sunday, the question is asked, "Who is Jesus?" (Matthew 21:10). Some think he is the Messiah (Matthew 21:9). Others believe he is just a prophet (Matthew 21:11). What the people missed is that Jesus had already presented his credentials.

Jesus is the Sovereign King who brings salvation.