

# Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb

**Matthew 21:1-11 and 14-17; Mark 11:1-11;  
Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19**

**Sunday the tenth of Nisan**

**DIG:** Why do you think all four Gospel writers record Christ's triumphal entry? Why did the people celebrate Yeshua's entrance into Jerusalem? Why did Messiah weep when He saw Tziyon while all the people were praising Him? Why did Jesus come riding a donkey's colt instead of a stallion? In light of the response He received, what were the crowds' expectations? What does Yeshua's response to the Pharisees imply about Him?

**REFLECT:** What part of the crowd do you stand with today? Have your ideas about Christ come from what others have said or from your own personal relationship with Him? Have you personally welcomed Jesus into your life with the words, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of ADONAI?" How can time spent with the Lord minimize our feelings of disappointment with God? What convinced you that Jesus is your King?

**Singing at the Temple:** This particular day for Isra'el was the Sunday of all days. From the Talmud Tractate *tamid* we know exactly which Psalm would have been sung on which day of the week in connection with the daily burnt offering in the Temple. It is astonishing how closely each of the Psalms coincides with the singing of these daily readings. In addition, it is amazing how the daily psalms coincide exactly with the daily events during the Holy Week.<sup>1241</sup> So as Yeshua ha-Meshiach triumphantly entered Tziyon in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, exactly on the day that the Levitical choir with instrumental accompaniment from the Temple orchestra, sang:

The earth is ADONAI's, with all that is in it, the world and those who live there; for He set its foundation on the seas and established it on the rivers. Who may go up to the mountain of ADONAI? Who can stand in His holy place? Those with clean hands and pure hearts, who don't make vanities the purpose of their lives or swear oaths just to deceive. They will receive a blessing from ADONAI and justice from God, who saves them. Such is the character of those who seek Him, of Jacob, who seeks Your face. Lift up your heads, you gates! Lift them up, everlasting doors, so that the glorious King can enter! Who is He, this glorious King? ADONAI, strong and mighty, ADONAI, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, you gates! Lift them up, everlasting doors, so that the glorious King can enter! Who is He, this glorious King? ADONAI the Lord of heaven's armies - He is the glorious King (Psalm 24:1-10 CJB).

The messianic ministry of **Yeshua** and the **twelve apostles** had taken a rather roundabout route in the previous months. From northern Galilee, across the Jordan River to Perea, down to the ancient city of Jericho, crowds continued to flock to see and hear the popular **Rabbi from Nazareth**. Tziyon drew them to herself like a magnet. **When the rabbis thought of their City in her glory, they said, "The world is like an eye. The ocean surrounding the world is the white of the eye; its black is the world itself, the pupil is Jerusalem; but the image within the pupil is the Sanctuary."**<sup>1242</sup> It was the place where Melchizedek went out to meet Abraham (**Gen 14:18-20**); it was Moriah, the mount on which the sacrifice of Isaac had been offered (**Gen 22:1-19**). Here Solomon had built the first **Temple (1 Kings 6:1-38)**. So naturally, the **talmidim** were full of excitement as they approached **Zion**.

**Isra'el** had rejected the messiahship of **Jesus** about a year and a half earlier (see **Ek - It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, that This Fellow Drives out Demons**). Because of her national rejection, **Yeshua** declared the generation of **His** day guilty of the "unpardonable sin." From that point forward, **Isra'el** fell subject to the judgment that would come in 70 AD. Furthermore, the **Lord's** offer of the **Kingdom** to that generation of Jews was rescinded and would be re-offered to a later Jewish generation (see my commentary on **Revelation Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**).

The **Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem** was not for the purpose of **Jesus** offering **Himself** as **King**, because that had already been decided by **His** national rejection. Its purpose was to set **Himself** aside as the **Lamb of God** for the **Passover** sacrifice. **Yeshua** knew that this final **Pesach** of **His** life would provide a complete and sufficient atonement for sin by virtue of **His** substitutionary death (**Luke 22:14-16**).

As the road took them up the eastern approach from Jericho to **Jerusalem**, they came to the area of the **Mount of Olives** and then to **Bethany**. After spending a restful **Shabbat** at the home of **Miryam**, **Martha** and **Lazarus**, **Yeshua** was ready to declare **Himself** as the long awaited **Meshiach**. This was **His** hour. **Christ's** whole life had pointed to that moment when **He** would ride into **Zion** and declare **Himself** the **King of the Jews**.

**Christ's** entry into **Jerusalem** took place on a specific date on the Jewish calendar. It was the **tenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan**. **Exodus 12:3-6** tells us that day was to be set aside for close inspection of the **Passover** lambs (see my commentary on **Exodus Bw - Christ and the Passover**). Then they would be slaughtered at dusk on the **fourteenth of Nisan**, and then eaten at the **Seder** that evening on the **fifteenth of Nisan**. This testing of the **Lamb** took place Sunday through Thursday. It was no coincidence that **Yeshua** entered **Jerusalem** on the very day that the lambs were being chosen. During those five days, **Jesus**, the **Lamb of God** (see my commentary on **Revelation Cf - You Are Worthy To Take the Scroll**), was tested to prove that **He** was without blemish or defect (**First Peter 1:19**).

Jesus sent two of His talmidim from Bethany, saying to them: **Go up to [Bethphage]** (the smaller and lesser known of the two villages) **ahead of you, and just as you enter it you will find a colt tied there that no one has ever ridden.** The colt was unbroken, had never been ridden, as befitting an animal dedicated to a sacred purpose. Our Lord was also buried in a tomb where no one was ever laid. These claims to uniqueness forcibly contrasted with His usual descent into the circumstances of an ordinary human life.<sup>1243</sup> He continued to direct the two apostles, saying: **Untie the colt and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" say, "The Lord needs it, and He will send it right back here shortly"** (Mt 21:1-3; Mark 11:1-3; Luke 19:29-31). The two of them went ahead to Bethphage. Their ultimate destination would be two miles up over the crest of the Mount of Olives, down into the Kidron Valley and up again to the golden city of Yerushalayim.

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: Say to the daughter of Tziyon, Look! Your King is coming to you, riding humbly on a donkey's colt, the offspring of a beast of burden (Matthew 21:4-5 CJB; John 12:15; Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9). **The rabbis debated the many possibilities by which Meshiach would come to Isra'el.** The following quote stresses two distinct ways the Messiah might appear: **Rabbi Alexandri said: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi cast together two verses. It is written, "And behold, one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven," and it is written, "Humble, and riding on a colt!" Therefore, the rabbi deduced that if Isra'el [is worthy of God's salvation] Messiah will come "with the clouds of heaven." But if Isra'el [is not worthy of God's salvation] Meshiach will come "riding on a colt."**<sup>1244</sup>

Without realizing it, **Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi** gave the nation of Isra'el a glimpse of the possibility that there might actually be two appearances of the Messiah. **The rabbis believe there will be two Messiah's not two appearances. They teach that Meshiach ben Joseph will come to suffer and die, then at a later date Meshiach ben David will come to establish His messianic Kingdom** (see **Mv - The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's**). In a rather ironic sense, **Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi** was somewhat correct without even realizing it. The Lamb of God did come the first time and the nation of Isra'el was **not worthy of God's salvation** because she rejected and crucified His one and only Son; and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will come a second time **with the clouds of heaven** (see my commentary on **Revelation Ai - Look, He is Coming With the Clouds**).

Every detail worked out just as their Rabbi had predicted. They went and found a donkey, with her colt next to her outside in the street, tied at a doorway just as Jesus had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "What are you doing? Why are you untying the colt?" They answered as Christ had told them to, and the people let them go (Mark 11:4-6; Luke 19:32-34). The fact that they were satisfied with the answer of the talmidim, shows that Yeshua was well known in the

neighborhood (John 11). They knew that He could be trusted and were probably proud of the fact their colt would be used by Him.

They brought the colt back to Bethany as the Lord had requested, and placed their robes on it and Jesus sat on the colt in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Many people spread their robes on the road, while many others spread branches they had cut in the fields (Matthew 21:6-8; Mark 11:7-8; Luke 19:35-36; John 12:14). What a contrast! King Messiah was not arriving on the victorious white horse of a military commander, or with the pomp and circumstance of an earthly king. He was a King, yet riding on a humble colt! This was a perfect picture of the entire life of Jesus as the Servant of the LORD.<sup>1245</sup>

The rising of Lazarus from the dead had rekindled the hope of the masses. Now the crowd that was with Him when He called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word (John 12:17). As a result, when Jesus left from Bethany on the colt that no one had ever ridden, a stream of worshipers went with Him and His talmidim continuing up the Mount of Olives to Bethphage. It was a little over a mile.

Then, coming from the other direction, many people were going up from Jerusalem toward Bethany because they had heard that He had given this miraculous sign of Lazarus, and went out to meet Him (John 12:18). It was Pesach, and the expectations of the Jewish people that Messiah would return on Passover were extremely high.

It was at that point that two streams of people met at Bethphage, one coming from Bethany and the other coming from Jerusalem. We can only imagine how the fire would leap from heart to heart. When He came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the crowds that went ahead of Him from Jerusalem, and those that followed from Bethany, began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen (Mattityahu 21:9a; Mark 11:9a; Luke 19:37). The multitude that had come from the City was mostly from Galilee and Gentile counties because many of the people of Zion were bitterly hostile to Christ. The multitude of those coming from outside the City could be dangerous to the apostate religious leaders in Yerushalayim.<sup>1246</sup>

Gradually, the long procession swept up over the ridge where the descent begins down the front side of the Mount of Olives towards Tziyon. At this point the first view of the southeast corner of Jerusalem could be seen. The slope of the Mount of Olives on the right hid the Temple and the more northern portions of the City.

As the road descends, the glimpse of the golden City is again hidden behind the ridge of the Mount of Olives. A few moments later and the path rises again, it climbs a rugged ascent. Continuing, it reaches a ledge of smooth rock and in a short time the whole city bursts into view. There is little doubt that this rise and turn in the road, this rocky ledge,

was the exact point where the procession paused again.

As Yeshua approached Zion and saw the City, He wept over it (Luke 19:41). In His moment of triumph, He was in agony. The weeping here is loud with deep sobs as there was before He raised Lazarus. Messiah saw things that the rest of them could not see. The contrast was indeed terrible between the City seen by the others around Him with all its beauty, glory and security, and Jerusalem that He saw in vision dimly rising on the horizon. Jesus could see the camp of the enemy encircle Jerusalem and hem her in on every side, hugging closer and closer in a deadly embrace. The Jewish historian Josephus gives us the sordid details (see Mt - [The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD](#)).

Seeing this near historical scene through His eyes alone, Jesus sat silently and sad among the excited masses, the trail of tears over Jerusalem streaming down His face. Finally, full of emotion, He said: **If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side (Luke 19:42-43). They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls.** Always guarding against the possibility of uncleanness, no dead body could remain within the City walls overnight; no tombs were there, except those of the house of David and the prophetess Huldah. Not even domestic chickens might be kept, nor vegetable gardens be planted, lest the smell of decaying vegetation should defile the air, and no furnaces could be built for fear of smoke.<sup>1247</sup> Yet when judgment came, the City of David would be choked with dead bodies. **They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you (Luke 19:44).** Notice that this was no re-offering of the Kingdom. Rather, when He speaks, His words are words of judgment on unfaithful Isra'el (Hosea 9:10-17). That judgment would be fulfilled in 70 AD with the destruction of Yerushalayim.

What the people said and what they did indicated that they believed that Jesus was riding into Jerusalem to set up His messianic Kingdom. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut palm branches from the palm trees and spread them on the road (Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36). This is what you do on Sukkot: On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars and rejoice before the Lord your God (Leviticus 23:40). The messianic Kingdom will be fulfilled by the feast of Booths. The large crowd made the same mistake that Peter made at the mountain of Transfiguration (see Gb - [Jesus Took Peter, James and John up a Mountain where He was Transfigured](#)). In effect, they were saying, "The Kingdom is here, so let's break out the palm branches, chant the Hallel as we celebrate the fulfillment of Sukkot." It wasn't even the time of year to celebrate Sukkot, but that didn't matter to them. They were welcoming Jesus as the King of Isra'el no matter what time of year it was.

Three times **Jesus' twelve apostles** had been told of **His death**. So **at first they did not understand all this**. Only after **Christ was glorified** did they realize that **these things had been written about Him and that these things had been done to Him (John 12:16)**.

**The people** were thinking of a military conquest. It had the look of a royal Roman procession coming back from a victorious campaign. Only two previous times had **palm branches** been put down before a Jewish victor. First, it was Simon Maccabeus when he cleansed **the Temple** (First Maccabees 13:51), and secondly, Judas Maccabeus when he expelled the *Gentiles* from the Temple (Second Maccabees 10:7). It was also reminiscent of the respect shown to King Jehu when the people **took their cloaks and spread them** on the road before him.

Now the crowd that was with Christ when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that He had performed this sign, went out to meet Him. Not everyone bowed down. A group of "separated ones" had been waiting for Jesus and looking on with disgust. **So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after Him" (John 12:17-19)**! The Nazarene had powerful enemies within the very walls of **Jerusalem herself**.

The great crowd that had come for the festival heard that **Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem (John 12:12)**. Yeshua coaxed the colt forward. Step by careful step, **He descended the Mount of Olives**, crossed the Kidron Valley, as **He** traveled through the tunnel of worshippers. **The Son of God** rode majestically up the hill and into **the golden City**.

When Jesus entered the **City of David**, the whole city was stirred and asked: **Who is this?** They were stunned, and shaken to the core. **The crowds** offered a simple yet profound response: **This is Yeshua, the prophet** (note the definite article) **from Nazareth in Galilee (Mattityahu 21:10-11)**. This is a reference to the words of the Torah that exhorted all **Isra'el** to be on watch for a special **prophet** who would be even greater than Moses himself (**Deuteronomy 18:18-19**).

The excitement about **Lazarus' resurrection** is undoubtedly an explanation for the unprecedented enthusiasm that **the large crowd of people** displayed on Palm Sunday when they greeted **Jesus as King Messiah**. **They took palm branches and went out to meet Him (John 12:13a)**. These are things you would say at the festival of Sukkot, not **Pesach**. In the four gospels, there are a total of seven greetings. They were **shouting**:

**Hosanna (John 12:13b)**, which means *Please, save (Psalm 118:25a)*. It is significant to note the play on words in Hebrew - the root word for *save, or hoshia*, has the same root as the name of the one entering **Jerusalem**.

With cries of joy, **the crowd welcomed Yeshua as the Son of David!**

**Hosanna in the highest heaven**, means *save us now, O God who lives in the heavens*,

**Peace in heaven and glory in the highest**,

**Blessed is the King of Isra'el**, focusing on **His kingship (John 12:13d)**, and

**Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David (Second Samuel 7:11-14)**.

With cries of joy, **the crowd welcomed Jesus** with the famous greeting: **Blessed is He who comes in the name of ADONAI (John 12:13c)** is the official messianic greeting. **The rabbis taught that whenever the Messiah comes, He must be welcomed with these very words**. This comes from **the messianic Psalm 118:26**. This phrase was used often as the priests addressed each other in their **Temple** service. Here it is has larger messianic implications as the crowds acknowledge **Yeshua as ha-Meshiach** able to bring about the ultimate deliverance of **Isra'el**.<sup>1248</sup>

Every Jew longed for the coming of **the Messiah**. They believed that when **He** came, Rome would be defeated and **Jews** would be free from taxation and want. Roman soldiers would no longer be allowed to corral them like cattle, then stab and beat them until the gutters of their **Holy City** choked with Jewish blood. For these **people**, this hope was like a lifeline, giving them courage to face Rome's unyielding cruelty. Only **the Meshiach** could lead **them**. The prophets promised that such **a man** would come and **they** believed with all **their** hearts that **Yeshua** was **the Anointed One**.<sup>1249</sup> But **some of the Pharisees in the crowd** said to Jesus, "Rabbi, rebuke Your disciples!" **I tell you**, He replied: **if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out (Luke 19:39-40)**. He accepted the praise of **the people** because **He** was and is **the Messiah**.

**The blind and the lame came to Him and He healed them (Matthew 21:14)**. **Messiah's** majestic display of divine compassion was accompanied by a mighty expression of divine power. No sooner had **the blind and the lame** approached **Him** for help than **He** **healed them**. Only **God** can restore sight to eyes totally destroyed by disease, as many **blind** eyes were in that day. And only **God** can replace shattered limbs shattered beyond repair.

But instead of joining in the worship of the Anointed One, when the Pharisees and the Torah-teachers saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the Temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. The word indignant carries with it the idea of fury and wrath. To those men, Jesus' healing power was only accomplished through the power of Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons and was repugnant. Instead of recognizing authority of the phony Pharisees, Christ condemned their self-righteousness. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him. He simply replied, "Yes." He was fully aware of what was being said, and He was fully aware of its meaning and significance. But, He went on to ask the learned men, have you never read, "From the lips of infants and nursing babes you, Lord, have called forth your praise" (Matthew 21:15-16)? Jesus was quoting from Psalm 8:2, and the two Hebrew words infants and nursing babes refer to children under three years, the age at which most were weaned. The Master Teacher's point was that even if tiny infants and nursing babes would be prepared to give praise to Himself, how much more could they praise Him?<sup>1250</sup>

Jesus went into the Temple courts. He looked around at everything. But since it was already late He and His talmidim retraced their steps back out of Jerusalem, past the tent camps on the Mount of Olives, where trampled palm leaves and olive branches still littered the dirt road, back to the city to Bethany where they spent the night (Mattityahu 21:17; Mark 11:11). Even though the crowd made it clear that they wanted Him to be their king and treated His arrival as a prelude to His coronation, Yeshua neither said nor did anything to encourage that sentiment.<sup>1251</sup>

Often times God surprises us or disappoints us because our expectations of Him do not correspond with His will or with ultimate reality. We may have strong ideas (and wrong ideas) about how life should unfold. But then we crash head-on into God's purposes and confusion sets in. The solution to this common dilemma is to surrender our opinions and hopes about what God's perfect plan should be and concentrate on what is. Spend time getting to know the Lord firsthand. When we do this, and when we then approach the situations of life with an open mind and a yielded spirit, we are able to avoid needless disappointments. Remember ADONAI isn't whatever we want Him to be. He is who He is. And He will do what He will do.

*Lord, so many people were right there. They stood near You and watched You, yet they missed You! They allowed false expectations and the reports of others to keep them from a personal relationship with You. Don't let me make this same mistake. Stir me up so that I will pursue You with passion and come to know You as You truly are.*<sup>1252</sup>