

Lesson 2

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week – a celebration of the final week of Jesus' life on earth. On Palm Sunday, Christians remember the time when Jesus went into Jerusalem, Israel's capital city, riding on the back of a donkey. This occasion is sometimes known as the Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem.

What happened on the first Palm Sunday?

Watch this clip and then read the account below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-39h0xYqdE>

Like many Jews, Jesus was going to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Jewish feast of Passover, the time when the people remembered the story of Moses. On this occasion, the people welcomed Jesus like a king and threw coats and palm leaves on the ground for the donkey to walk over – just as a red carpet would be put on the ground for a King or Queen today. The people also shouted:

'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

This was a line from an old Jewish song of praise. Hosanna means 'help' or 'save.' The people were calling out to Jesus to help or save them.

The leaders of the Jewish nation wanted Jesus killed. Jesus had not made a public appearance in a while. News of Lazarus' resurrection was spreading and many were believing on Jesus because of it. The question of whether Jesus would dare come to Jerusalem for the Passover was part of everyone's conversation. Not only did he come - he came as a King!

Answer these questions.

1. What do Christians remember on Palm Sunday?
2. What does the term Hosanna mean?
3. Why do you think the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead?

Read these two accounts from the Bible of Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem.

Luke 19:29-40

When he had come near Bethpage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."' So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They said, 'The Lord needs it.' Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,



'Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

John 12:12-19

" The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord— the King of Israel!'

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!'

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!'

Answer these questions.



1. What did Jesus ride into Jerusalem upon?
2. What event inspired many people to come see Jesus enter Jerusalem?
3. What had the Jewish leaders planned to do upon seeing Jesus?
4. What do you think it meant to wave palm leaves and lay cloaks on the road before Jesus?

Jesus normally walked everywhere he went. He did not own an animal to ride. For this occasion, he borrowed a donkey's colt. Even his ability to tell the disciples where a colt would be and what the owners would say was a small but powerful reminder of who Jesus was and the power he possessed.

The Old Testament prophets wrote about a king that would ride upon a donkey. One prophet called Zechariah wrote: *"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"* (Zech 9:9). So in riding on a donkey Jesus was showing people that he was like the King that Zechariah had written about.

Also, the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. Jesus was a king – but he was not riding a war-horse. He was coming in peace to bring about his mission not through violence but through love and sacrifice.

Answer these questions.

1. If Jesus had such power, why didn't he own a riding animal?
2. Why did Jesus avoid all physical trappings of power?
3. How did Jesus fulfil the Old Testament prophecy?

How do Christians celebrate Palm Sunday?

In some churches palm branches or palm crosses, made from palm leaves, are given out to everyone. In some other churches the children will make crosses from strips of paper. Many churches will have a procession in or around the church while people sing songs of praise and wave palm leaves. This is to help them imagine what Jesus' entry into Jerusalem might have been like.



Answer these questions.

1. How do Christians celebrate this event today?
2. How is this like the actual event that took place thousands of years ago?