

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW – THE LAST WEEK OF JESUS’ LIFE ON EARTH
Week 5 – Jesus’ Triumphal Entry/”Lamb Selection Day”
February 21, 2023

Jesus was focused on His last visit to Jerusalem during His first coming! At this visit, Jesus did not just “enter Jerusalem” – He paraded. He paraded like the King of Israel. And, what a perfect time to do so. Jerusalem was crowded with Jewish people (Deut. 16:16).

This was Jesus’ appointed time! The triumphal entry was preparation for Passover week and for Jesus’ death and resurrection!

In Deut. 16:16 God told ALL Jewish men in the known world to appear before Him in Jerusalem three times each year. The Feast of Passover was one of these “pilgrim feasts”. Jewish men often traveled to Jerusalem for these feasts with their families (Luke 2:41-42). The roads were full of Jewish pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem before Passover. The Jewish population in Jerusalem at Passover swelled to over 2.5M!

The day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey was the day that Jewish people called “Lamb Selection Day” – 10th day of the month of Nisan. The families selected the lambs to be sacrificed on the day of Passover (the 14th day of Nisan). They either brought lambs from their homes or purchased lambs from the Temple at an exorbitant cost.

All the lambs selected needed to be scrutinized to ensure that they were spotless, without blemish. Exodus 12:3-5 tells us that at the first Passover in Egypt, God had commanded the Jewish people to inspect each lamb. If the lamb was without blemish, it was slain on the 14th day of Nisan.

Josephus recorded 256,500 lambs were needed to feed the 2.5 million Jewish people in Jerusalem for Passover! (256,500 lambs – 10 people per lamb; 256,500 X 10 people = 2,565,000) 256,500 lambs were selected on this day – the 10th of Nisan – when THE Lamb of God entered!

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the 10th of Nisan – on “Lamb Selection Day”! Jesus rode into His family to be scrutinized by them for 4 days. AND, they found Him to be blameless – without blemish (Herod, Pilate, the Sanhedrin, the thief on the cross, Judas). And so, Jesus, being found blameless, on the 14th of Nisan, at 9 a.m. in the morning, as the animal Passover lambs were being brought into the Temple to be slain, our perfect Passover Lamb Jesus was nailed to a wooden cross. At 3 p.m., as the last animal Passover lamb was killed in the Temple, Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished” - and He gave up His spirit.

On that “Lamb Selection Day” 4 days prior to Passover, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the day that the Jewish families were selecting what they hoped would be a spotless

lamb – ready for sacrifice in the Temple on Passover!! On that very day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem! WHY? **GOD HAD SELECTED THE PERFECT PASSOVER LAMB!!!** All eyes were on Jesus. And He, on this most significant day, was, without words, proclaiming THE message for all eternity!

2

How did the people respond to Jesus at His arrival on this day? John 12:12 tells us that the people took palm branches and went out to meet Him. Is that how Jewish people celebrated Passover?

Can you recall reading about a feast that God gave to the children of Israel where He instructed them to gather palm branches (along with willow and myrtle branches) to make booths for the purpose of looking forward to the time when God would dwell with His people? (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:15) The Feast of Tabernacles. “To tabernacle” means “to dwell.” The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom – the Messianic Kingdom – when God will dwell with man – when the Messiah will reign from the throne of David in Jerusalem (Ex. 25:8; Lev. 23:40)

(NOTE: Approximately 200 years earlier in Israel’s history the waving of palm branches had become a national symbol signaling the hope that a Messianic liberator was on the scene) Spreading their garments on the street was an ancient act of homage reserved for high royalty (II Kings 9:13).

Jesus rode into Jerusalem being hailed as the King of Israel by the masses. Jesus, in His journey to Jerusalem, was sending a message to the people. When we realize that the palm branches intended to praise Him as the Messianic King of Israel - the One Who would dwell with them in the Messianic Kingdom – we realize that they were hoping that time would be then and there! Jesus knew their hearts. Israel as a nation had not received the Kingdom of God with Jesus as their King. Jesus rode into Jerusalem...to be scrutinized and sacrificed! Are you picturing the dramatic scene?

There’s more! On this “Lamb Selection Day”, Jesus linked Himself historically and geographically to a particular event and place in Israel’s past that would resonate with the people.

In II Sam. 7:16 we read that God made a promise to King David about a king from his lineage Who would occupy the throne. This King would be the Messiah. Jews in Jesus’ day were longing for the Messiah to come. The Jewish people were so desirous of the restoration of the physical, earthly kingdom (Isa. 2; Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 11; Matt. 5:5; Matt. 6:9-10) that would be established by the Messiah (Dan. 2:44-45; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 19:11-27 – the nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return; Acts 1:6-8; Rev. 19:11-16 – and cross reference!).

Let's go back to approx. 975 BC – approx. four years before King Solomon took the throne (971 BC). King David was rejected by Israel and driven into exile by his own son, Absalom. Absalom plotted and enticed David's most trusted adviser, Ahithophel (II Sam. 15:12), to join him and together they led a rebellion against the King. David fled Jerusalem. II Samuel 15:13-14, 23 - David and his weeping entourage left Jerusalem, crossing Kidron Valley. They then traveled EAST of Jerusalem and ASCENDED the rocky road to the **Mount of Olives** to begin their exile **across the Jordan River** (II Sam. 17:22 – David and all the people with him traveled “beyond the Jordan.” (Refer to map rec'd last week)

3

An ally of David's met them “a little past the top of the mountain” (Mt. of Olives) with saddled donkeys for David's household to ride to the place of exile. READ II Sam. 16:1-2. OBSERVATIONS!

We need to know that David's escape from Jerusalem into the wilderness most likely took him to Jericho. The ancient road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a narrow, treacherous path along a deep gorge in the Judean wilderness – the Wadi Kelt which is known as “The Valley of the Shadow” – bleak, barren, perilously steep landscape. The Holy Spirit inspired David to write from this journey, or so it seems, Psalm 23 which is a Psalm of eternal hope!

Here we see in this account of the rejection of King David by his son, that Israel was torn by civil war. Eventually, however, the rebels were defeated, and Absalom was killed in battle. We remember David's great grief over Absalom's death. He was left nearly inconsolable, “O my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom. If only I had died in your place! O, Absalom, my son, my son!” (II Sam. 18:33)

God kept His promise to David. David returned to reign on his throne in Jerusalem. Solomon came to the throne in 971 BC and vastly expanded the borders, influence, and wealth of Israel. Solomon built the first Temple and reigned during a time of prosperity and peace. In the centuries that followed, Israel was taken captive to Assyria and Babylon, and then lived under the domination of the pagan Greeks and Romans. And, there was no heir of David on the throne. There was no throne in Israel! The Jewish people cried out for the golden age of Solomon – which, for them, became the type of the Messianic age that would come one day. This is what the Jewish people longed for – for God to restore their nation to what it had been in Solomon's day. This is the setting for Jesus' triumphal entry.

Fast forward to a spring day in 29 AD (some say 30 AD). The people continued to yearn for a Messiah. It was 1,000 years since Solomon had been crowned king. And, it was nearly Passover which speaks to God's deliverance!

For Jesus, the time had come. Now it was time! It was the 10th of Nisan (Exodus 12:1ff), “Lamb Selection Day” in Israel. It was time for Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb, to enter Jerusalem. Jesus not only chose the day to enter Jerusalem – the day that would proclaim Who He is as the King of Israel Who would be sacrificed as the Lamb of God - He also chose the route to Jerusalem. And that route was King David’s path of retreat up the Mt. of Olives and over the Jordan River – “beyond the Jordan.” Jesus communicated to the people at that triumphal entry – that the King came to die as a sacrificial lamb (Isa. 53:7) but would one day sit on David’s throne and dwell with His people and rule and reign from Jerusalem.

Jesus and his entourage, including the disciples, began their journey to Jerusalem from “beyond the Jordan,” Jesus had been ministering in Galilee. In Matt. 19:1 we’re told that when Jesus departed from Galilee, He traveled with His disciples to the region “beyond the Jordan” to which King David had fled in exile.

4

CONSIDER: Jesus could’ve traveled due south from Galilee to Jerusalem. But, He took a “left” and crossed the Jordan River to get “beyond the Jordan” only to recross the Jordan River on His way to Jerusalem for His last Passover during His first coming. Jesus orchestrated His route to communicate that the Messiah had come...the One Promised from the lineage of King David!

After crossing the Jordan River on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed through Jericho which was the first city to be conquered by the children of Israel in Joshua’s day... when they were fighting for a kingdom. In Mark 10:46 we read that a gathering throng joined Jesus near Jericho (as they began the 3,750-foot ascent to Jerusalem – along a steep escarpment). Word had gotten out that Jesus was coming and the expectations were clearly Messianic! There were cries of, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47). “Son of David” is a title for the Messiah!

Luke 19:11 - when they neared Jerusalem, the people thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately. It’s here that Jesus shared a parable with a kingdom theme – the parable of the ten minas (Lk. 19:12ff). Jesus told them of a nobleman who went into a “far country” to receive a Kingdom and told them that this nobleman would return. Who is the “nobleman”? Jesus! Jesus would soon depart into heaven (far country) to receive His Kingdom and then would return. Included in the parable, Jesus speaks of the rejection of the nobleman.

Matt. 21:1-2 - *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives (on the SE slope), then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.*

Jesus didn't need the donkeys for transportation. He had already walked across miles of steep uphill terrain. The two donkeys were props! David had received two donkeys (II. Sam. 16:1-2) on the SE slope of the Mount of Olives as he was going into exile! Jesus was on the SE slope of the Mt. of Olives when the donkeys were brought to Him by the disciples.

Hebrew definitions of the two donkeys:

Female donkey - "athown" which means "to continue, permanence, chieftain, hard, mighty, rough, strength, and strong". These are words for a leader and a king.

Male colt - "chamor". It comes from the root word, "chamar". Chamar means, "foul, be red, and trouble".

Both animals represent Jesus as the Messiah - Jesus could have ridden on either of the animals, but Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on the colt instead of the mother donkey. This colt represented "foul and trouble" which awaited Jesus. The colt also represented red, indicating the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God. The adult donkey represented a future event foretelling the second coming of the Messiah - "to continue, permanence, chieftain, hard, mighty, rough, strength, strong".

5

David's flight on this section of the road had been marked by weeping and heads covered in sorrow. David's people tore their robes and cloaks in grief (II Sam. 15:20). Jesus' followers were exuberant. They were lining the roadway with their cloaks and palm branches and making a smooth path so unlike the one the barefoot David walked as he fled Jerusalem.

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Blessed is the King of Israel! Hosanna in the highest." "Hosanna" - hosha'na in Hebrew - means, "Save now!" Who alone can save?

The cheering crowd distressed some of the Pharisees who called out to Jesus and said, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." (Luke 19:39) Jesus refused and told the Pharisees that if His followers were silenced, the stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). Why did Jesus mention the "stones"? What "stones"? What day did Jesus ride into Jerusalem? 10th of Nisan. Jesus had started His final trek to Jerusalem east of the Jordan River. He most likely crossed the Jordan River on that day - the 10th of Nisan.

In Joshua 4:19 we read that Joshua and the children of Israel - after Moses died - crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land -- on the 10th of Nisan! And, the 10th of Nisan connected to the First Passover and the release from bondage to slavery and the exodus from Egypt. The 10th of Nisan was "Lamb Selection Day."

In crossing the Jordan on the 10th of Nisan, Joshua was instructed by God to set up memorial stones...stones of remembrance! WHY? GOD gives us the answer in Joshua 4:6-7 – these stones are to be *...a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’* ⁷ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”

The ark of the covenant (depicting the presence of God) with the mercy seat on top where blood was always sprinkled from sacrifices points to Jesus and His merciful sacrifice for us! That ark crossed the Jordan with Joshua and the people on the 10th of Nisan! A foreshadowing!

Was Jesus declaring Himself to the people when He rode into Jerusalem before His crucifixion? Who is **the** STONE that the builders rejected Who has become the chief cornerstone? (Psalm 118:22) JESUS!

Jesus cried out to His people, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not* (Matt. 23:37) Perhaps this cry of Jesus mirrored David’s cry for Absalom. “O Absalom, my son, my son. . . .” God called Israel – “My son, My firstborn” in Ex. 4:22 – Moses carried a message to Pharaoh from God – “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go. . . .” (Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15.) Why is Israel called “My son” by God? Israel is God’s unique possession, His inheritance (Isa. 19:25). God entered into unconditional covenants with Israel. God chose the nation of Israel to be an instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18). And Israel’s destiny is wrapped up in the Messiah – God’s Son!

6

During passion week we see Judas. Here is another link to David’s story. David’s most trusted counselor, Ahithophel, had advised Absalom on how best to find David to capture and kill the king. Ahithophel was a traitor. *Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself.* (II Sam. 17:23).

Judas told Jesus’ enemies where Jesus could be found. Judas hanged himself (Matt. 27:5).

Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem was triumphal...for the moment. Then the masses who followed Him scattered. Some joined the crowd that called for His crucifixion (Matt. 27:20-25; John 18:28; John 19:1-4). Peter denied Him. The disciples fled. John alone was at the foot of the cross on the 14th of Nisan, on the day of Passover when Jesus was crucified.

This was the KING? This was RESTORATION?
Where was the kingdom that had been promised to Israel? (II Sam. 7:12-16)

In His death, Jesus had succeeded beyond anyone's imagination. He (as the nobleman in the parable [Lk 19:12-19]) left to reclaim a kingdom...His *Father's* kingdom. He *had conquered* sin and death, the greatest oppressor. Jesus destroyed Satan's power over death – the believers' death (Heb. 2:14; I Cor. 15:54-55 – *O death where is your sting? O grave where is your victory?*) And Jesus released the captives! (Eph. 4:8-9; Isa. 61:1)

Jesus' death means victory for us. Through His death and resurrection, He gives us, those who receive Him, His gift of forgiveness, life, eternal life!

As we are in this season of Resurrection, let's pray that we don't miss God's glory!

QUESTIONS:

How did this impact you? V8 moment?

Will you look at "Palm Sunday" differently? If so – How...Why?

How does Jesus' triumphal entry fit into God's plan of redemption?

Is this worth sharing with others?

What are you taking away from this lesson?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread Week 5's handout with cross references.

Jot down observations and questions and begin to find answers from the text.

Share what you've learned with at least one person.

Prepare for Week 6.