

**Lesson 40**  
**Time –3/30/30 AD, 10 Nisan -the Last week - Saturday**  
**The Designation of “The Lamb” at the Dinner at Bethany**  
**The Plans for the Betrayal**

In lesson 39 we saw Jesus’ visit to Jericho where He healed the two blind men. One of them was named Bartimaeus. He then publicly singled out the prominent and hated tax collector, Zacchaeus, who was up in a tree. We saw that there were many reasons to believe Jesus already knew Zacchaeus. In front of the whole crowd Jesus invited Zacchaeus to have Him to dinner. After Jesus left Jericho the next day, He proceeded on toward Jerusalem where the early Passover crowds were waiting for Him.

**John 12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.**

Jesus arrived from Jericho. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem runs right through Bethany. John’s is the only account that tells us of the parts that Lazarus, Martha, and Mary played.

**John 12:2a Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor.**

Evidently Jesus had first arrived late Friday afternoon. “Six days before the Passover” in 30 AD was on Friday. The dinner in his honor was given the next day. He couldn’t have travelled that day anyway as it was the Saturday Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> We know from John 12:12 that the next day after the dinner was the day He made His great entry into Jerusalem. That was what we now call “Palm Sunday.”

**John 12:2b Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.**

**Matthew 26:6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper,**

**Mark 14:3a While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper,**

This dinner wasn’t given by Lazarus. This dinner was at the home of a man named Simon the Leper (Matthew 26:6-7, Mark 14:3). Simon could not have hosted this dinner and still have been a leper. This suggests that he must have been healed earlier by Jesus. Since Martha was serving the dinner, some have suggested that Simon the Leper was the husband or father of Martha.

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<sup>1</sup> *Extensive travel was forbidden on the Sabbath. Bethany, on the other side of the Mt. of Olives was more than a Sabbath day’s walk from Jerusalem (Acts 1:11).*

**John 12:3** Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**Matthew 26:7** a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

**Mark 14:3b** a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke (*open*) the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

This anointing occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. According to the Law of Moses in Exodus 12, <sup>2</sup> that was the day the sacrificial lamb was to be separated for the Passover. I believe that this anointing was intended to be the reality of that shadow. This was evidently not done on a moment's impulse. For one thing, it was unusual for that amount of perfume to be readily available. I believe it is probable that Mary was prompted to this act by a revelation from God and had been saving the perfume for this very purpose for some time. A sweet fragrance in Old Testament worship stood for righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

Evidently, as Matthew and Mark recorded,<sup>4</sup> Mary first poured the perfume on Jesus' head. Then, as John remembered, Mary then poured it on His feet and wiped His feet with her hair. The perfume on His head spoke of His righteous thoughts. The perfume on His feet spoke of His righteous walk (deeds). Jesus was thus marked out as God's Lamb without defect or blemish (Exodus 12:5, Leviticus 22:21).

**John 12:4-6** But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages. He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

**Matthew 26:8-9** When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12:2-3 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household." Exodus 12:5-6 "The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month (Passover), when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight."

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 25:3a, These are the offerings you are to receive from them: --- spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense;

<sup>4</sup> Neither of the Gospels of Matthew or Mark give Mary's name here or anywhere else in their Gospels. She is only mentioned by name in the Gospels of Luke and John.

**Mark 14:4-5** Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

Only John, writing sixty years later, told us that it was Judas Iscariot who first objected. Evidently, after Judas Iscariot spoke up some of the other disciples (plural) joined in the criticism. John is also the only one who wrote that Judas was a thief. This makes me think that John had seen Judas steal money from the bag and had kept it from the other disciples. He had probably told Jesus at the time. Jesus would have told him to forget about it.

Their criticism also seems to me to be way out of bounds. Jesus had said nothing to criticize Mary. Where did they get the gall, in His presence, to implicitly correct His silence on the matter?

**John 12:7** But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day <sup>5</sup> of My burial. NRSV <sup>6</sup>

**Matthew 26:10** Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? ~~She has done a beautiful thing to me~~ *She has worked a good (approved) work on me.*<sup>7</sup>

**Mark 14:6** “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? ~~She has done a beautiful thing to me~~ *She has worked a good (approved) work on me.* <sup>8</sup>

I think Jesus was saying this to connect what Mary had done to the prophetic meaning of the scriptures. What she had done marked out the destiny of Jesus to be God’s Lamb for the real Sacrifice to which Passover had only pointed. According to the correct timeline she had done this on the tenth day of Nisan, the day that Exodus had designated as the day that the sacrificial lamb would be marked out.

**John 12:8** You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

**Matthew 26:11** The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.

**Mark 14:7** The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.

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<sup>5</sup> The Greek word translated here in John 12:7 as “day” is ἡμέρα {hā-me'-rā} which can refer to the interval between sunrise and sunset, and a 24-hour day. However, it can also be used to refer to important periods of time in God’s plan such as the “the day of Judgment,” “the day of the Lord,” “the day of salvation,” etc. It is obviously used in this sense here referring to Jesus’ last days.

<sup>6</sup> I have replaced the NIV with the NRSV translation which is the literal one.

<sup>7</sup> Literally in the Greek “she has worked a good (approved) work to me.”

<sup>8</sup> Literally in the Greek “she has worked a good (approved) work to me.”

Every day for the rest of their lives they would have an opportunity to do something for the poor. This day was the one day that had been designated from eternity past for Jesus' anointing.

**Matthew 26:12** **When she poured this perfume on my body,<sup>9</sup> she did it to prepare me for burial.**

**Mark 14:8** ~~She did what she could.~~ **What she had (to do), she has done.<sup>10</sup> She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.**

What Mary had done was something that had been given to her by God. It marked out a sacrificial death as always having been Jesus' destiny.

**Matthew 26:13** **I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."**

**Mark 14:9** **I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."**

Mary was probably taken aback by the criticism of Jesus' disciples. Jesus reassured her that she would be remembered well. It is interesting that only John's gospel, written years later, identified the woman as Mary. Remember, this occurred on the 10th of Nisan, the day the lamb was traditionally selected for the Passover (Exodus 12:3). This was the reality of that shadow.

**John 12:9** **Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.**

This large crowd was probably primarily made up from those pilgrims who had arrived early for Passover and were camped in the prime spot on the Mount of Olives between Bethany and Jerusalem. Although it was the weekly Sabbath, we suspect they would have been within the allowed distance for a Sabbath day's journey to Bethany (Acts 1:12).

**John 12:10-11** **So the *High Priests*<sup>11</sup> made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.**

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<sup>9</sup> *The perfume calls to mind the sweet incense which was to represent the bread in Leviticus 24:7.*

<sup>10</sup> *I have supplied the literal translation. I suggest it means that Mary had an important part to play in fulfilling prophecy, and she had done it.*

<sup>11</sup> *The Greek word here is ἀρχιερεῖς which is the plural of the Greek word ἀρχιερεύς which is the singular form. ἀρχιερεῖς is always translated "High Priest." For some unaccountable reason the translators always translate the plural form as "chief priests." I will substitute the correct translation of "High Priest" in italics.*

This suggests that in the months since Lazarus had been raised from the dead, he had been a powerful and effective witness of the Gospel of Jesus. The hearts of the High Priests were so hardened that they weren't interested in the truth. They just wanted to protect their wealth and position.

**Matthew 26:14** **Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the *High Priests***

**Mark 14:10** **Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the *High Priests* to betray Jesus to them.**

The Gospels indicate that the day that Judas went to the High Priests to betray Him was the day after Palm Sunday. He probably accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem and slipped away to see the High Priests. The “then” in the above verses only marked “what” set in motion Judas’ action, not “when” it was carried out. Jesus’ rebuke of Judas Iscariot’s tirade against Mary seems to have sparked a reaction that eventually led to his visit to the High Priests, Annas and Caiaphas.

**Matthew 26:15-16** **and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.**

**Mark 14:11** **They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.**

Evidently, Annas and Caiaphas first promised to give him an undefined amount of money but finally, before Judas left, he made them pay him thirty pieces of silver. This partially fulfilled the shadow prophecy of Zechariah:

Zechariah 11:12-13 “I (*the LORD as shepherd of the flock of Israel*) told them, ‘If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.’ So, they paid me **thirty pieces of silver**. And the LORD (*the LORD in the person of the father*) said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’ -- the handsome price at which they priced me! So, I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.’”

The thirty pieces of silver would later be returned and thrown into the Temple and then used to buy a potter’s field.<sup>12</sup>

**Mark 14:1-2** **Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the *High Priests* and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.”**

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<sup>12</sup> *Matthew 27:5-8.*

This indicates that the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was just two days away just after twilight. In 30 AD, this twilight occurred on a Wednesday evening. This indicated that this plotting occurred on Monday. It may have been the same day or the day after that they paid Judas. For purposes of the actual timeline, it is important to understand that this conspiracy took place on Monday, two days after the Saturday dinner at Bethany.

**Luke 22:1-2** **Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover,<sup>13</sup> was approaching, and the High Priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people.**

This begins Luke's account of the conspiracy. Luke left out the visit to Bethany and Mary's anointing Jesus with perfume. It doesn't give a specific time frame. It only says that it was before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We know from Matthew, Mark, and John that it was on Monday.

**Luke 22:3-5** **Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the High Priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.<sup>14</sup>**

Luke's account of Judas' decision to betray Jesus additionally tells us that when he had reacted to Jesus' rebuke, Satan took the opportunity to use the vacuum left by Judas' rejection of Christ to enter him.

**Time –3/31/30 AD, 11 Nisan**  
**The Last week – Palm Sunday**  
**The Day after the Feast at Bethany - The Entry into Jerusalem**

In Zechariah 9 there was a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. Below I have copied the part which related to His First Advent. It was to be fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem the day after the dinner at Bethany. It was on a Sunday:

Zechariah 9:9 “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,<sup>15</sup> on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”<sup>1617</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Note that here, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was “called” the Passover. In the Old Testament, the Passover was actually only that moment at twilight of the previous day that the lamb was killed. The next day was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

<sup>14</sup> His best opportunity would be at the upper room on Tuesday night.

<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew word תמור {kham-ōr'} which is literally a he-ass. He-asses were notoriously hard to handle. Their name is derived from תמר {khä-mar'} which is the Hebrew word for trouble or turmoil.

## *The Fulfillment of the Prophecy in Zechariah*

Matthew 21:1a **As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives,**<sup>18</sup>

Mark 11:1a **As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives,**

Luke 19:29a **When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, NRSV**

Bethphage means “House of Unripe Figs.” Bethany means “House of Figs.” Jesus left the faith He found in Bethany going through Bethphage toward Jerusalem where He would be rejected. I can’t help feeling that this name seems to be a comment on the fact that the Jews weren’t yet ready to give the Lord fruit. Evidently, Bethphage was between Bethany and Jerusalem and it was the village to which the disciples were sent to find the donkey.

Matthew 21:1b-2 **Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.”**<sup>19</sup>

Mark 11:1b-2 **Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.**

Luke 19:29b-30 **he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.**

This is almost certainly an allusion to the Messianic passage in Genesis:

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<sup>16</sup> *The Hebrew word יתן {ä-thōn’} which is literally a she-ass. She-asses were much more tractable. Of course, the male colt of a she ass was even more intractable than a full grown he-ass.*

<sup>17</sup> *Quoted in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.*

<sup>18</sup> *It is worth noting that both times the Lord enters Jerusalem as King He begins the procession on the Mt. of Olives. The first occasion was here, and the second will be at His Second Advent - Zechariah 14:4 “On that day **his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.” This was also where the Lord ascended to Heaven after His resurrection – Acts 1:12.*

<sup>19</sup> *Note that both were brought.*

Genesis 49:10-11 “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he (*the Messiah*) comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch”<sup>20</sup>

The disciples brought both the she-ass and her colt. Of course, I expect that by nature, that the she-ass and her colt would refuse to be separated. The Lord rode the naturally intractable colt into Jerusalem that day which went along obediently as if it recognized Who was riding it. The contrast with the obedience of the Jews was stark. I can’t help wondering if the Lord was also painting a picture when the mother followed her offspring. It underlined the fact that Israel, the people, should be following Jesus, who was the promised offspring of Israel (Jacob), the father of their nation).

**Matthew 21:3-7** **If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.**

**Mark 11:3-7** **If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.**

**Luke 19:31-35** **If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “The Lord needs it.” They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.**

**John 12:14-16** **Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, “Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”<sup>21</sup> At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.**

We know from the prior lessons that Jesus had spent the previous day in nearby Bethany and had drawn large crowds. So, everyone in the vicinity knew that it was Jesus who was coming. The fact that Jesus’ disciples were to tell the owners that “the Lord” needed the animals also tells us that the owners were believers who recognized that Jesus was “the Lord.” Hence, their ready release of the two animals.

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<sup>20</sup> *This seems to say that when the Messiah came, who would be descended from Judah, He would only stay for an Israel that was ready to be fruitful.*

<sup>21</sup> *Zechariah 9:9*

Based on the Matthew account it seems likely that the disciples first put their cloaks on the female donkey. It was the logical choice for a mount as it was docile. Evidently, then Jesus told them to put the cloaks on the male colt. To their surprise He sat on the colt and it calmly accepted His presence.

I have lifted John's account of the donkey out of the verses describing His entry into Jerusalem. It seemed more logical to put them alongside the accounts of the colt in the other Gospels. John gives us there the important information that Jesus' disciples didn't understand the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus until after He had died and been risen. Neither did the Jewish leaders. According to Peter, even the prophets who had been given the prophecies didn't fully understand them:

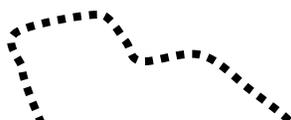
1 Peter 1:10-12a "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven."

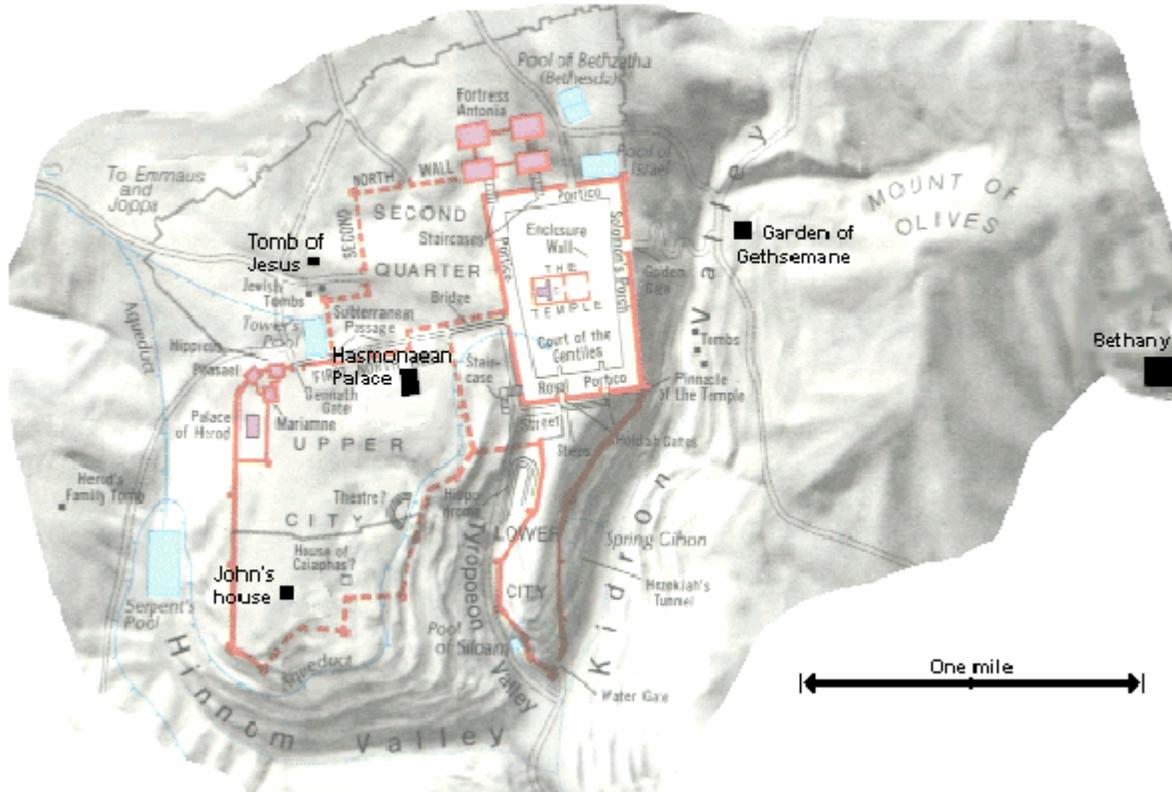
In other words, according to Peter, the details of the coming of the Messiah were meant to be a mystery until after He had come. The Old Testament saints only needed to be fully persuaded that He was coming!

It should be remembered that the previous night, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had anointed Jesus with a whole flask of sweet perfume. As Jesus came down the road to Jerusalem, the fragrance must have been palpable to the crowd along the road. This spoke of the fragrance of Christ who fulfilled the picture of the aroma of the incense in the Temple. It also brings to mind 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

To appreciate the scene, we must have in mind the time and place.

The time was four days before Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A good portion of all the pilgrims attending had already gathered around Jerusalem. According to Josephus, thirty-five years later they numbered two and a half million, so I expect that they numbered at least a million here. Most of them camped on the Mount of Olives which lay just opposite the Temple where they planned to worship. Later, Jesus and His disciples would camp at the Garden of Gethsemane which was also on the Mount of Olives.





### The Entry into Jerusalem

The place was the road into Jerusalem from Bethany, which wound around the Mount of Olives and through the valley in front of the Temple walls. The dashed line on the map above shows the route. As word spread that Jesus was coming down the road, almost every one of those camped there would have had time to come down to see Jesus. It is likely that the High Priests and Sanhedrin looked down on this enormous and noisy procession from the Eastern wall of the Temple as it passed on the road in the valley about 150 feet below.

**John 12:12-13** The next day (*Sunday*) the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that **Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!”<sup>22</sup> “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the King of Israel!”** (*John 12:14-16 were previously listed on page 8*)

**Matthew 21:8-9** A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, **“Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”**

**Mark 11:8-10** Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, **“Hosanna!”**

<sup>22</sup> Taken from Psalms 118:25a

**“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest!”**

**Luke 19:36-38 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”**

In their acclamations they called Jesus: King of Israel, Son of David, and he who comes in the name of the Lord. In Jewish worship, Palm branches were to be taken in the hand during the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40). The Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled at the Lord’s Second Advent. The Jews also understood that the Feast of Tabernacles spoke of the Kingdom to come. Perhaps this is what the people had in mind when they carried palm branches. Also, customarily, the proclamation of a King was made by spreading cloaks or garments under him.<sup>23</sup> But before the Crown, the Cross had to come. The meaning of Passover had to be fulfilled. However although the bearing of palms was premature, what happened here was foretold in Psalms 118 which we will study below.

### **Psalm 118 “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”**

Psalm 118 is about Jesus Christ. Verses 22-23 are obviously speaking of Christ:

Psalms 118:22-23 “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

This passage is quoted five times in the New Testament as speaking of Jesus Christ. Three times it is quoted by Jesus Christ Himself:

Matthew 21:42-44 “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

Mark 12:10 “Haven’t you read this scripture: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

Luke 20:17-18 “Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

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<sup>23</sup> *As in the case of Jehu in 2 Kings 9:12-13.*

These verses were also quoted by Peter as speaking of Christ, once in Acts and once in 1 Peter:

Acts 4:10-11 “Then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’”

1 Peter 2:6-8 “For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,’ and, ‘A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.’”

The Gospel of Matthew records that the crowds chanted verses 25 and 26 when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Matthew 21:9 “The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Also see Mark 11:19, Luke 19:38, and John 12:13. This greeting of the Lord is recorded in all four of the Gospels, a rare occurrence which clearly marks its significance.

Verses 25 and 26 are “O LORD, save us (in the Hebrew “Hosanna”); O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.” You may remember how the Pharisees reacted, and what Jesus replied:

Luke 19:39 “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ ‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’” It is clear that this cry of “Hosanna” had to occur because the Word of the Lord had predicted it.

The Psalm celebrates the love of God, and the victory He has given. The most important question is; in whose voice is the Psalm written? The Psalm is in the first person singular (I, me, and mine) until verse 23. Unlike most of the Messianic Psalms in the first person, the writer is not identified in the superscription as David. The authorship is anonymous. If we read through the first 23 verses, assuming the voice is Jesus Christ, it all fits perfectly as the voice of Christ, so I must assume the voice is the voice of Jesus. From verse 24 through verse 27 the Psalm is written in the first person plural (us, we, ours). Certainly, the thoughts would fit perfectly for the voice of Jesus Christ who is speaking on behalf His Body, the “we” of all believers who are in Him. The last two verses return to the first person singular.

### ***Psalms 118***

You will notice that there is no superscription to this Psalm. The superscription sometimes identifies the author, the occasion, the subject, the recipient, the tune of the Psalm, or the instruments which are to be the accompaniment.

**Psalms 118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

The preeminent purpose of the incarnation, life, and death of the Second Person of the Trinity, was to show all creation the enormity of the love of God. He (the Creator) did this by taking on humanity (the creature) and paying the penalty for their sin.

**Psalms 118:2-4 Let Israel say: “His love endures forever.” Let the house of Aaron say: “His love endures forever.” Let those who fear the LORD say: “His love endures forever.”**

You should notice the progression of Christ’s prayer here. First came “Israel,” which referred to the physical seed of Jacob. They were the ones to whom Christ’s earthly ministry was primarily aimed. Next came the “house of Aaron,” which referred to the priests who had the responsibility of maintaining the Word of God, and the Temple services which spoke of Christ. Finally came all “those that fear the Lord,” which referred to the Gentiles, the rest of mankind.

The message of the Cross to all these groups was just this, “His love endures forever.” Jesus’ prayer was that the meaning of His sacrifice would be understood by all these.

**Psalms 118:5 In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.**

In this verse is focused both the anguish and despair of the cross and the ultimate triumph of Jesus’ Resurrection. That resurrection signified the Father’s acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice.

**Psalms 118:6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?**

This paraphrases the thought of Jesus in His conversation with Pilate recorded in John:

John 19:10-11b “‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?’ Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.’”

**Psalms 118:7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.**

We know that ultimately Jesus will cast Satan into the Lake of Fire forever at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:10). However, I think this is speaking of the earlier triumphal celebration which took place just after His burial and which was described in 1 Peter:

1 Peter 3:19-20 “He (Jesus) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”

**Psalms 118:8-9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.**

We know that this was the attitude of Jesus Christ as recorded in John 2:24-25 “But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.” It is also good advice for any of us who want to imitate Him.

**Psalms 118:10 All the nations surrounded me. ~~but~~<sup>24</sup> In the name of the LORD I ~~cut them off~~ *circumcised* them.**

The word which is translated by the NIV “cut them off” and occurs in verses 10, 11, and 12 is the Hebrew verb מוּלַל {mül} in the Hiphil tense. According to Strong’s this means “to cause to be circumcised.” This verb occurs 36 times in the Old Testament, and 30 times it is translated “circumcised.” The three times it occurs here it is translated “cut them off” which at least is connected to the “cutting” in circumcision. In many Bible translation versions I found the verb in these verses translated as “I will destroy them.” I find it intriguing that this is spoken of “the nations” which in Hebrew is גוֹיִם {go'-eem}. This is usually a word that speaks of the “uncircumcised” Gentiles.

Since we know this is the voice of Christ during His incarnation, we only need to refer to His mission for the Gentiles to come up with the proper translation. Although the “goyim” participated in His crucifixion, Jesus did not come to “cut them off” or “destroy” them. He came to save them.

Isaiah 11:10 “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.”

Isaiah 49:5-6 “And now the LORD says-- he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength-- he says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.’”

Isaiah 52:10 “The LORD will lay bare his holy arm<sup>25</sup> in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.”

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<sup>24</sup> *There is no “and” or “but” here.*

<sup>25</sup> *This bared arm is Jesus Christ. Ezekiel 4:7, Isaiah 53:1, Isaiah 51:5, Isaiah 50:2, Isaiah 40:10. The salvation is the work of Christ.*

I believe this should be translated literally “I circumcised them.” I believe that this was telling us that Jesus was “circumcising the nations” and putting them on the same footing as the Jews. This was a figurative circumcision. Paul told the Gentile Colossians as much:

Colossians 2:11 “In him you (*Gentiles*) were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

**Psalms 118:11 They surrounded me on every side. ~~but~~ <sup>26</sup> In the name of the LORD I ~~cut them off~~ circumcised them.<sup>27</sup>**

The “them” here is still “the nations” or “goyim.” This reinforces the prior statement emphatically.

**Psalms 118:12 They swarmed around me like bees, but they ~~died out~~ were quenched as quickly as burning thorns. In the name of the LORD I ~~cut them off~~ circumcised them.**

The “them” here is still “the nations” or goyim. I think this is referring to the situation where after the Gentile Roman soldiers had scourged Jesus, they mocked Him and then put a Crown of Thorns on Him:

Matthew 27:27-31 “Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head <sup>28</sup> again and again.<sup>29</sup> After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”

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<sup>26</sup> *There is no “and” or “but” here.*

<sup>27</sup> *The word here is the same as above - מוּל {mül} in the Hiphil. Even today, in Judaism, someone who performs circumcisions is called a “moyl.”*

<sup>28</sup> *Micah 5:1 Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.*

<sup>29</sup> *It must be remembered that as far as these Roman soldiers were concerned this was merely a Jew who they had in their hands. They hated all Jews. Jerusalem was considered hard duty for Roman soldiers. They were surrounded by a nearly completely Jewish population which considered them unclean. Furthermore, many of these Roman soldiers were Syrian by birth and their hatred of the Jews went back fifteen centuries.*

In spite of the hatred that these Gentiles poured out on Him, Jesus still put them on the same footing as the people of Israel. He died for their sins as well as those of the Jews.

**Psalms 118:13 I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.**

This reflects the desperation that Jesus felt which is reflected in the other Messianic Psalms. However, He always fell back on trusting in the Father's love and plan.

**Psalms 118:14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.**

As I have noted in my study on the Messianic Psalms, Jesus had to rely on the salvation and deliverance of the Father. It was He who delivered Jesus from the grave "because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:27) Also, in Psalms 89:26 it speaks of the son of David, first born son of the Father, ruler of the earth as addressing God as "my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior." Reliance on that salvation was part of Jesus' armor in the battle:

Isaiah 59:17 "He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak."

**Psalms 118:15a Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:**

If the angels rejoiced to see the birth of Christ, you can imagine what they felt like to see Jesus finish His work and proclaim victory. You may imagine the surprise of Satan, who had helped engineer the crucifixion. He and his demons had gathered around the cross to celebrate the death of Jesus and the supposed frustration of the Father's plan. Instead, they heard the shouts of joy and victory:

1 Corinthians 2:7-8 "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

**Psalms 118:15b-16 "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things! The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"**

The LORD's right hand is Jesus Christ. The right hand is understood to be the hand of power and implementation. The second person of the Trinity is the one who implements the Father's plan. The Lord's right hand is Jesus Christ. This is clarified in Scripture many times.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See *Psalms 110:1, Matthew 26:64, Mark 16:19, Acts 2:32, Acts 5:31, Acts 7:55, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20-21, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22.*

**Psalms 118:17 I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.**

This is the thought also expressed in the Messianic Psalm 16:9-10 “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

**Psalms 118:18a The LORD has chastened me severely,**

Jesus was “chastened” when He bore the judgment for our sins.

**Psalms 118:18b but he has not given me over to death.**

This was not really speaking of His physical death. Jesus did die physically, but that was not really important. This was speaking of His temporary separation from the Father when He said “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>31</sup> That was a spiritual death. It was the death that had fallen on Adam and all his descendants and separated all of us from God. It was the death from which Christ’s resurrection and ascension delivered all who have believed in Him. That deliverance was certified when the Father accepted Christ’s payment for our sin and accepted His righteousness as worthy of eternal fellowship with God. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter touches on that:

1 Peter 3:18b “He (Christ) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.”

**Psalms 118:19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.**

Jesus is qualified to enter those gates because He was righteous:

1 John 2:1b “We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

**Psalms 118:20 This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.**

Jesus Himself became the Gate of Righteousness:

John 10:7-9 “Therefore Jesus said again, ‘I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.’”

Because we are in Him, and He is our shepherd, we can also enter the gate of the righteousness:

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<sup>31</sup> *Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34*

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

John 10:2-4 “The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

**Psalms 118:21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.**

This just intensifies the thankfulness already expressed in verse 14.

**Psalms 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;**

As previously noted these verses are quoted five times in the New Testament. The builders of the physical Temple were the religious establishment of Israel (the Sanhedrin). The “stone” was Jesus. He, who they had rejected, was actually the foundation on which the true Temple was built. Jesus quoted these verses (22-23) in the Temple the next day after he was greeted with the Hosannas (verses 25-26) from this Psalm. I have to believe that He did this purposely to associate the Hosannas with the fulfillment of verses 22 and 23.

**Psalms 118:23 the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.**

The Father would accomplish this by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and accepting His blood and His righteous life. He therefore made him the capstone or cornerstone of the true Temple. In verses 23 through 27 the passage temporarily switches from the first-person singular voice (I, me, my) to the first-person plural voice (we, us, our). Perhaps it is because those who believe become part of the Temple that is the LORD: Revelation 3:12 “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.”

The Psalm changes back to the first-person singular voice in the last verse.

**Psalms 118:24-26a This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, save us now (Hosanna);<sup>32</sup> O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.**

The Jews were shouting this passage from Psalm 118 when they welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in 30 AD:

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<sup>32</sup> *Literally in the Hebrew is הוֹשִׁיעָה {hoshinah} or “Hosanna” as it was rendered in the Gospels. It means “save us now.”*

Matthew 21:9 “The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest!’”

See also Mark 11:9 and John 12:13. Unfortunately, almost all of the Jews in that crowd were looking for the foundation of a new Jewish Kingdom, and a salvation from Roman domination. Instead, Jesus was bringing them an infinitely more important Eternal Salvation.

**Psalms 118:26b-27a From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us.**

Still in the plural, this would be the prayer of rejoicing and praise which would be made by all who were now part of the House of the LORD which is the body of Christ.

**Psalms 118:27b ~~With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar~~ *bind the feast with cords to the horns of the altar.***

Literally in the Hebrew this sentence should read, “Bind the feast with cords to the horns of the altar” (as in the King James). The other various translations differ widely, but they all seem to interpret rather than translate this passage. Since this Psalm was chanted during Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem before the Passover Feast of 30 AD that should tell us that the intended meaning of this Psalm cannot be separated from what the Holy Spirit knew would happen on that Passover. On that Passover the only truly acceptable sacrifice to God would be bound on the Cross, the real altar of sacrifice.

**Psalms 118:28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.**

This verse switches back to the first person singular and reflects Christ’s celebration of the Father.

**Psalms 118:29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

It should also be our response to understand and be thankful that the person and work of Jesus Christ has established and proven that the LORD “is good and his love endures forever.”