

The Day The Messiah Comes

Matthew 21:1-13

A. Introduction

- It is said that all actions & interactions in our lives form a person to be who they are.
- Most biographies therefore, outline a person's entire life.
- It has been said that in the Bible, there are four "biographies" of Jesus.
- Written by 4 people with different perspectives, each ignore the first 30 years of life.
- Instead, they all focus on Jesus' last three years.
- Over 1/3 (about 35 percent) of their biographies focus on one week. His final week.
- What happens in these eight days is central to His life.
- Palm Sunday is the doorway into the most important week in Jesus' life.
- Therefore, it is the most important week of the year for Christians.
- So, Palm Sunday is a day of triumph & the start of his suffering.
- So, we have these two themes - triumph, and suffering.
- Palm Sunday opens believers to the greatest week and greatest work of Jesus Christ.

B. The Prophetic Entry (Matthew 21:1-5)

- All 4 Gospels tell how Jesus enters the royal city of Jerusalem as king.
- They give us jarring comparisons and clashing contrasts from Triumph to tragedy.
- We hear the cheering of crowds & the weeping of Christ.
- From singing, "Hosanna!" to shouting "Crucify him! Crucify him!"
- From Joy and judgment. From the waving of palm branches, to the waving of a whip.
- Do we worship Jesus genuinely or only when it is convenient?
- Some saw Jesus as the promised Messiah, others only as "the prophet from Nazareth."
- Who is Jesus to you? A good teacher or the Lord of your life?
- Matthew sees Jesus clear out the buyers and sellers in the Temple.
- Why does Mark have the donkey take up half the story in such an unusual way?
- Luke contrasts reactions to Jesus from His disciples' praise to Pharisees objection.
- John connects Jesus' entry to His raising of Lazarus.
- What a week. No wonder the Gospel "biographers" focussed on it.

C. There Was A Desperate Need For A Messiah

- When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, everyone knew a regime change was taking place.
- This was the day that God's people had been praying for.
- Reduced to merely a puppet state, the ceremonial robes were kept locked up
- Despite the crippling political power of the Romans, the Jews had not given up hope.
- Ancient prophecies said a Savior would come, riding into town to deliver the people from the ungodly. (Zechariah 9:8-9). Isaiah (Ch 62) confirmed this prophecy.

D. Imagine What It Was Like The Day The Messiah Finally Came

- The rabbis had said it would happen on Passover. Finally, it was happening.
- Thousands of Jews from all over the world had come to Jerusalem for Passover.
- The streets of Jerusalem were filled with a victory parade.
- Jesus isn't coming like the arrogant Roman generals on their war horses.
- He's coming in humility like Solomon did in 1Kings 1
- Overwhelmed with joy, the people begin to cry out.
- Praise God! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
- The crowd can't wait to see what happens when he rides into Jerusalem.
- They think the Messiah will judge the ungodly & remove the Romans from power.

E. A Surprising Turn Of Events

- But then something completely unexpected happens!
- Jesus doesn't go to the Roman fortress, or to the barracks to drive out the ungodly.
- He goes to the temple, the heart of the Jewish religion.
- The Law of Moses commands that every male of Israel must pay a temple tax.
- Roman or Greek coins were not allowed because of blasphemous images on them.
- A currency exchange was set up for a fee to benefit the local bankers & the priests.
- The law also required the people to offer animal sacrifices.
- Those travelling a long way, weren't going to bring their animal with them.
- They would just bring buy an animal for their offering after they got to Jerusalem.
- Prices were a little high, but they could get whatever was needed.
- The money changers & the animal sacrifice sellers used to be outside the temple.
- But Caiaphas let them move into the temple courtyard for convenience.
- After all, how would they pay for the temple without such business?
- In fact, the religious leaders felt it was the most important business in the city.
- As the people had prayed, the Messiah *did* come at Passover to judge the ungodly.
- But to their shock, he confronted them and not the Romans.
- He asked: Who's violating the Holy Place more?
- The Roman soldiers with the high priest's garments locked up in the tower?
- Or the temple bankers making money off of every poor person who comes to pray?
- They were undercutting the very reason the temple existed.
- But the reality is that they were keeping poor people from worshiping.
- It's like Amos said: You're interested in religion, but I'm interested in people.

F. What Does This All Mean For Today?

- When the Messiah arrives, are you sure where he might go or what he might do.
- We think he's got to be for us and against "those evil people."
- But in reality, he's against sin, wherever he finds it.
- He's out to destroy anything that separates people from God, to remove any evil.
- Especially the evil we explain away as a part of our religion, the way we do things.

- When the Messiah rides into town, he finds evil things right in the heart of his people.
- He finds it in the things we accept, in the things we don't think a thing about.
- He wants *daily* worship of a changed life, lifting & welcoming others as God would.
- When Jesus returns in triumph to judge the ungodly, he will start with us.
- Peter says clearly, "Judgment begins with the family of God."
- And today we know that the temple, the place where God's presence is, is his people.
- What would Jesus cleanse from God's people today?
- Maybe He would cleanse some things that we accept as important to worship.
- Like the currency-exchange folks in the temple.
- I think Jesus would go after any practice/ attitude that somehow keeps out "outsiders."
- Remember that when Jesus cleared out the temple, he quoted from Isaiah 56.
- This is a passage about God welcoming the Gentile outsiders
- I think Jesus would also cleanse us of our dark greed and our selfishness.
- Jesus quotes the prophet Jeremiah: "You have made my temple 'a den of thieves.'"
- The whole point is that Jesus would go after what *we* assume and accept.
- So, what are those things?
- Maybe the sin of loving our liturgy or tradition more than people.
- It's also common than we admit, because we all have this whether we realise it or not!
- We love our tradition, so it's painfully easy for us to focus on it.
- Do we put the same time & energy into opening ourselves to people outside our Body
- To people in pain, people who are without hope and without God?
- Would we ever change anything we like in order to help them connect with God?
- Or do they have to do all the awkward and uncomfortable work of coming our way?
- How would it be if reaching out to others means we have to change our worship time?
- How would we go having to embrace a new service that isn't exactly like the old?
- Will we turn inward and grasp what we want, or will we stay open and flexible so that we can become a house of prayer for people of all nations?
- We often don't want to think about what we are giving.
- What about here? Are we robbing God?
- And maybe we should take up a special offering on Good Friday. It seems fitting.
- They took thirty pieces of silver out of the temple treasury—which they'd gotten from the tax on worshipers—and used it to hire an informant, a betrayer.

G. Conclusion:

- When Jesus comes to town, He often challenges the things that are most dear to us.
- Accept Jesus as King in your life today.
- He's going to judge the ungodly! It just might not be who we think.
- Palm Sunday reminds us Jesus is a different kind of King—one of peace & sacrifice.
- Will we welcome Him into our hearts not just with words, but with true faith?
- Worship Him not just with words but with obedience.
- Prepare your heart for the Passion Week, reflecting on His love and sacrifice.