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Palm Sunday - What is the Real Story?

John 3:17: (NASB) *For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

In just seven days, the Christian world will be enraptured in the celebration of Resurrection Sunday - the celebration of the day - the event that actually changed the course of human history. What sometimes gets overlooked are the striking events of the week before and the significant part they play in tying Old Testament events in with New Testament fulfillments. Once understood, these connections give life to God's plan through Jesus in a way that solidifies our faith in salvation. Stay with us!

First the timing of the matter: (The 9th of the Hebrew month called Nisan) John 12:1-8: Jesus was at the home of Lazarus the day before entering Jerusalem when he was anointed by Mary to prepare for his death. No one told her to do this, yet it was the most appropriate thing to do. Mary was unknowingly preparing him for his death. How did Jesus know his time was near? Because he knew the Old Testament prophecies that timed the events. John 12:9-13

Observations:

- Lazarus was a dramatic spectacle to the public;
- The chief priests and Pharisees were waiting for Jesus - and now Lazarus as well - because he was living proof of the power of God through Jesus;
- Word traveled through the multitudes and they also waited for Jesus;
- Jesus entered Jerusalem and the hearts of the people on the 10th of Nisan. (Note this corresponds to when the lamb was brought into the household for Passover.)

To get a sense of the story, we will begin to work with a compilation from the four Gospel accounts of Palm Sunday (Nisan 10): A compilation of Mark 11:1-11, Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44 and John 12:12-19

- Mark 11:1-3: (NRSV) ¹*When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, Why are you doing this? just say this, The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately. Matthew 21:4-5: ⁴*This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. John 12:16: *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.***

Second, the Old Testament Passover and its timing: are they related to Palm Sunday?

Exodus 12:14: Celebrating Passover was similar to our Independence Day. It was all about God providing national deliverance from slavery, with a peculiar focus on the firstborn.

Mark 11:4: *They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, Luke 19:33: *its owners asked them, What are you doing, untying the colt?* Mark 11:6: *They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Matthew 21:6-7: ⁶*The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.***

It happened just as Jesus said it would.

Let's go back to the Old Testament to see how God explained to Moses how the Passover was to unfold: Exodus 12:3 Taking in the lamb was in preparation for the imminent threat of death to the firstborn. All of Israel participated. It was later prophesied that on the 10th of Nisan - many years later - Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and a colt. Zechariah 9:9: Jesus was obedient to Zechariah's prophecy.



In a pen for four days, Lamb Selection Day, *maranthachapelTV*

- *So after Lamb Selection Day, you've got four more days. They would put that little lamb in a special pen and watch it to be sure there was no infection or blemish or rash...they were literally inspecting that lamb every day. By the fourth day when the sun began to set, tomorrow is Passover; finally after the fourth day of inspection on the eve of the 15th of Nisan, which is Passover, they see it has no spots or blemishes. (They think) My sins for the year are going to be washed and cleansed and forgiven by God.*

Exodus 12:5-6: The lamb would be in the house, living with the family like a beloved pet.

Luke 19:37: *As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, Mark 11:8: Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields... (among them was) the whole multitude of the disciples, John 12:17-18: ¹⁷the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead. ¹⁸It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.*

So if the people called for Jesus to save them, why didn't he?

Luke 19:37: *...(they) began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying, Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven! Matthew 21:9: Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven! Mark 11:9-10: ⁹Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!*

The crowd shouts "Hosanna!" What does that mean?

Hosanna: Strongs #5614 (ho-san-nah'); oh save!; an exclamation of adoration:

When we look at the use of the Hebrew words, in every instance the thought is not only "Oh save!" but "Save us now!" So, why didn't Jesus save them then?

So, the crowd was proclaiming that Jesus was the son of David, a prophet and healer, and that they were immediately looking for deliverance from Roman rule. Many of these people probably had witnessed his miracles and the crowd had great momentum. Based on all they had seen and heard, they believed Jesus was the one who could deliver them. So, why didn't he?

Exodus 12:12: Interestingly, the deliverance from Egypt was the escape from certain death *for the firstborn* and not deliverance for the nation...not yet. The Passover was not about delivering the nation; it was only about delivering the firstborn.

firstborn were a key in God's plan - they played a special role: Exodus 13:1-2

What is the relationship of the firstborn in the New Testament? Galatians 3:29: What promise are you inheriting and how do Christians become a child of Abraham? Hebrews 12:22-23: The true followers of Christ are called the *church of the firstborn*. Is it a coincidence that they are called the firstborn in the New Testament and it was the firstborn who were the ones delivered in the Old Testament? We think not and can build more evidence...

1 Corinthians 5:7: Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. For whom was the Passover lamb sacrificed in the Old Testament? Only the firstborn were saved as a result. ***The rest of the people of Israel were not in danger of death that night.***

Genesis 22:16-18: (KJV) ¹⁶...By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: ¹⁷That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore... ¹⁸And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...

Let's walk through this carefully:

1. This is the promise given to Abraham, who sacrificed his son, Isaac. (An obvious picture of God giving His only son in sacrifice.)
2. Through Abraham came Isaac, the promised seed to *bless all the nations of the earth*.



3. Through Isaac came Jacob and all the nation of Israel.
4. If we are Christ's, we become inheritors of Abraham's promise.
5. At the original Passover, the firstborn was subject to death and had to be protected by the blood. The blood of the lamb saved the lives of those firstborn so that *afterwards* the entire nation (everybody else) could be saved by deliverance.
6. So why didn't Jesus save those in the crowd? He did! But the result just wasn't visible yet. (And we are still waiting patiently!) The *price* for deliverance was paid, but only to the firstborn initially. The nation, symbolized by the rest of the world, would come later.

What does the path to deliverance look like?

Luke 19:39-44: ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, Teacher, order your disciples to stop. ⁴⁰He answered, I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out. ⁴¹As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.

For Israel, the path to deliverance came through terrible destruction and dispersion for centuries.

Jesus tested for four days, Lamb Selection Day, maranthachapelTV

- After Palm Sunday (which was also) "Lamb Selection Day," for the next four days Jesus spent every waking moment in the Temple being tested, challenged and inspected by the religious leaders to trap him...to find some fault with him, to get him to say something against the Law. They tested him to find a blemish in him. In the end of the four days, all of them said, even Pilate, "I find no fault in this man."

Exodus 12:8-10 Hebrews 5:7-9

Loud cries and tears + reverent submission + learned obedience = The source of our eternal salvation

The path of deliverance comes through great suffering.

The Old Testament pictures continue to be fulfilled: Numbers 9:12 John 19:32-33:

The path for the deliverer was one of pain, burden, humiliation and treachery: Isaiah 53:3-5:

So, is there New Testament support for the firstborn/nation - true church/world picture?

Matthew 21:10-11: ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, Who is this? ¹¹The crowds were saying, This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. John 12:19: The Pharisees then said to one another, You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!



What did Jesus do with all of this power? He laid it down in sacrifice along with everything else.

Exodus 12:11: The nation was prepared with sandals on and staff in hand to be delivered *after* the firstborn were delivered.



More on the Firstborn in the New Testament: Romans 8:14-17: True followers of Christ have a special relationship with God as children and heirs - fellow inheritors with Christ in the promise to Abraham for the ability to bless the world. Exodus 13:1-2 1 Corinthians 5:7: The Passover was given for the deliverance of the firstborn from death. Same with the blood of Jesus - to first deliver the firstborn, his followers. That is the first step...but it does not end there! There is more to the Old Testament picture and New Testament promises!

What happens to the rest of the world, pictured by the rest of the nation of Israel that awaited their deliverance? Romans 8:18-21: Can you imagine the anticipation on the part of Israel that night to see if the firstborn in their household will still be alive by morning? They were waiting to see if the firstborn had been delivered! The Romans passage above uses the term *slavery*, directly linking back to the Old Testament picture of the Passover. This gives us

a glimpse at the magnitude of deliverance. The whole of creation will be set free from slavery. Exodus 12:12 Romans 8:22-23: In that one night of Passover, the literal fulfillment actually takes a few thousand years. Romans 8:24-25: There is hope, but that hope is shrouded in mystery, and the story is not yet complete. But we can see through prophecy that there IS real hope!

So the Pharisees were actually prophetic in their exasperation: John 12:19: This will be an actual fulfillment! The whole world will be delivered as a result of the true followers of Christ, the firstborn, being delivered by him.

It seems that Jesus had won over the people; did he try and win over the Pharisees?

A few other Passover/Crucifixion observations:

- The angel of death came at midnight/ Jesus' enemies came for him in Gethsemane late at night, likely midnight
- The priest would sprinkle blood and water on the altar/blood and water came from Jesus' side
- As a father would tear his robes at the death of his son/the curtain was torn in the most holy place inside the temple

Jesus went on to create havoc in the Temple. Is this how you win over your enemies...? Mark 11:15-17: Jesus takes over! And what does he do with his pre-eminence in the Temple? Matthew 21:14-17: Jesus started healing and teaching after restoring the Temple to its rightful purpose - service to the people to bring them to God. **So, what was the reaction of his enemies?** Mark 11:18: They began in earnest to find a way to end this. They had enough! They had been putting up with this since the raising of Lazarus.

Romans 8:31-39: The point of Palm Sunday was that Jesus rode in victoriously and was proclaimed as the King, as Messiah. He was given all honor and respect, but it eventually turned to his death. God delivered His son over to the enemy so that he could be saved for us all. We ought to be walking in Jesus' footsteps. Because we know the plan, have the hope and know Jesus already paid the price, we can now continue to give our lives in sacrifice as Jesus did. We can be faithful, and by God's grace, be delivered. And then once all of the true church is delivered, the deliverance of the rest of the nation - the rest of the world - will follow. How do we know? Because the Scriptures tell us so.

**So what is the real story about Palm Sunday...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

