

Palm Sunday



(1) Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 84.

(2) John 12.13-15; Zechariah 9. 9.

(3) Luke 9.39-40.

(4) Matthew 21.8.

(5) John 12.27-29.

The day following Lazarus' Shabbat, known as Rishon or the first day of the Jewish week (commonly referred to as Sunday), Jesus and his followers journeyed to Jerusalem. Noted historian Joachim Jeremias estimates that while Jerusalem's usual population ranged from 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants, the arrival of Passover brought an additional influx of approximately 150,000 visitors from across the Roman Empire.(1) The gathering crowd heard that Jesus was coming. John's gospel records how they praised him, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."(2)

Some Pharisees in the crowd asked Jesus to correct his disciples, thinking their praise was inappropriate. In response, Jesus might have recalled the words spoken by God through the prophet Habakkuk, where God condemned those who built houses with unjust profits, saying that even the stones in the walls and the beams in the woodwork would testify against them. In a similar manner, Jesus explained to the Pharisees that if people did not offer him praise, even the stones would do so. This illustrated that all of creation recognized the spiritual importance of the event, whereas the Pharisees, motivated by greed and ambition, failed to perceive it.(3)

The crowd spread their cloaks on the road. Others spread branches cut from the trees on the road to honor him.(4) Today, we call this event "Jesus' triumphal entry". Jesus was entering Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey. But he remembered his destiny in this moment of adulation. Peter may have heard him predict his death again. Jesus prayed, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" God weighed in from heaven, endorsing the glorification of Jesus. John's gospel explains, "Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him."(5)

This account is an excerpt from
Solid Saint: How Peter Became a Rock