

# JESUS, ISRAEL'S MESSIAH

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*Luke 19:28-40*

## Introduction

Today is Palm Sunday. We are all familiar with the story. Jesus confiscated a young donkey and rode it into Jerusalem from Bethany up on the Mount of Olives, amid the cheers and excitement of crowds of people. We envision in our minds scores of children waving palm branches and singing songs of praise as they watch Jesus making his way down the mount, through the Kidron Valley and into Jerusalem through the eastern gate. It is a wonderful picture of joy and celebration. But I wonder if we are missing some of the truth about what was really going on that day.

This morning I want to take you through some passages of Scripture to try to shed some light on the significance of that Palm Sunday, and then to bring it home with some application for us today.

There is an interesting phrase that is used a number of times in the book of John. None of the other gospel writers use this phrase, but it is something that is significant to our understanding of Palm Sunday.

Turn to John 2. Read vv. 1-4 – “My hour has not yet come.” See also John 7:30 and 8:20. Now look at John 12:23, 27. What hour is he talking about? There is a very specific timeline given in Scripture, which Jesus knew had to be fulfilled, and which led him to a very specific point in time in his life.

This morning you are going to get a short lesson in Messianic Prophecy. We are going to look at a couple of the OT prophetic passages about the Messiah and see how they were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ on the day that we call Palm Sunday.

## The Prophecy

Turn with me for a few moments to the prophecy of Zechariah (second last book of the OT). Go to chapter 9. Zechariah is one of the most Messianic of the OT prophets. There are many references and allusions

to the Messiah, as well as direct, obvious prophecies about the One who was to come, the Anointed One.

The Lord promised his people that a king would come who one day would sit on the throne of David and rule over an everlasting kingdom. He made that promise to David himself, as well as through the prophets who came later. Isaiah 9:6-7 tell us that, “... to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” (ESV)

An important prophecy regarding that king is found in Zech. 9:9 – read it. This verse is a clear reference to the king who is to come. I don’t think I need to explain the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is quite clear to you, I’m sure, that it was this very prophecy that Jesus was thinking of when he sent his disciples to get a donkey that Sunday in Bethany. But we will come back to that later.

Meanwhile I would like you to turn to another passage in the book of Daniel. Turn to Dan. 9:24-27. In order to truly appreciate the remarkable significance of this prophecy you need to understand that it was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. There are those who would say that it had to be written later, because no one could have predicted these events so accurately. But the book of Daniel was well known and it was translated into Greek about 300 years before Christ.

I have to acknowledge a well-written article by Chuck Missler for some valuable insights into this passage of prophetic Scripture. We often refer to this prophecy as Daniel’s 70 weeks.

Daniel, originally deported as a teenager (now near the end of the Babylonian captivity), was reading in the Book of Jeremiah. He understood that the seventy years of servitude were almost over and he began to pray for his people.

The Angel Gabriel interrupted Daniel's prayer and gave him a four-verse prophecy that is unquestionably the most remarkable passage in the entire Bible: Daniel 9:24-27.

These four verses include the following segments:

- 9:24 The Scope of the Entire Prophecy;
- 9:25 The 69 Weeks;
- 9:26 An Interval between the 69th and 70th Week;
- 9:27 The 70th Week.

The Scope of the Prophecy – read v. 24

The idiom of a "week" of years was common in Israel as a "sabbath for the land," in which the land was to lie fallow every seventh year. It was their failure to obey these laws that led to God sending them into captivity under the Babylonians.

Note that the focus of this passage is upon "your people and your holy city," that is, upon Israel and Jerusalem. It is not directed to the Church. The scope of the prophecy includes a list of 6 things, some of which have been completed in the Messiah's first coming, and some which have yet to be accomplished.

The first 69 weeks – v. 25 - "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens', and sixty-two 'sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble." (NIV)

This includes a mathematical prophecy. The Jewish (and Babylonian) calendars used a 360-day year; 69 weeks of 360-day years totals 173,880 days. In effect, Gabriel told Daniel that the interval between the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem until the presentation of the Messiah as King would be 173,880 days.

The "Anointed One, the ruler" in the NIV is actually the Meshiach Nagid, "The Messiah the King."

## The Fulfillment

I will try not to bore you with the mathematics of this prophecy, but it is important to see the precision with which this was fulfilled.

The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes on March 14, 445 B.C. The emphasis in the verse on "the street" and "the trench (or walls)" was to avoid confusion with other earlier mandates confined to rebuilding the Temple.

Now fast-forward almost 500 years. During the ministry of Jesus Christ there were several occasions in which the people attempted to promote Him as king, but He carefully avoided it: "My hour is not yet come".

But then, one day, He meticulously arranges the fulfillment of the prophecy. Turn back now to the book of Luke, chapter 19. In the verses just prior to what we read earlier, Jesus told a parable. He told this parable for a very specific reason. *Read verse 11.* Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem because the prophecies required him to be there. But he wanted his followers to understand something about the kingdom that he was to receive and to rule over. We'll get back to that later.

But now let us go to the account in vv. 28-40. It is just a few days before Passover is to begin. Jesus and his disciples have just travelled from Jericho and are approaching Jerusalem. They are in the vicinity of Bethany, just on the east side of the Mount of Olives. *Go through the story briefly:*

- Sending the disciples to fetch a young donkey
- They set Jesus on the donkey
- The ride down the mount of Olives toward Jerusalem
- The worship and adulation of the crowd of followers

On this particular day, as he entered into the city of Jerusalem riding on a donkey, he was deliberately fulfilling the prophecy by Zechariah that the Messiah would present Himself as king in just that way:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9 ESV)

Chuck Missler says in his article, "Whenever we might easily miss the significance of what was going on, the Pharisees come to our rescue. They felt that the overzealous crowd was blaspheming, proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah the King. However, Jesus endorsed it!"

“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:40)

This is the only occasion that Jesus presented Himself as King. According to scholars, it occurred on April 6, 32 A.D.

Again, according to Chuck Missler, and other scholars far smarter than I am, when we examine the period between March 14, 445 B.C. and April 6, 32 A.D., and correct for leap years, we discover that it is 173,880 days exactly, to the very day!

How could Daniel have known this in advance? How could anyone have contrived to have this detailed prediction documented over three centuries in advance?

### **Conclusion:**

So, having looked at the prophecy and the perfect fulfillment of it in the person of Jesus Christ, how do we make the bridge from that truth to our lives? What difference does any of this make to us? Well there are a couple of things I want to mention or bring to your attention.

**First**, there is the reality of the 70<sup>th</sup> week in Daniel’s prophecy. Go back to Dan. 9. In v. 26 we read, “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.” (NKJV) There are a couple of things mentioned there that will happen after the 69 weeks and the presentation of the King. One is the cutting off of the Messiah, which happened just days later, when Jesus was arrested and crucified, but not for himself. The other is the destruction of the city and the sanctuary (temple). This occurred just a few years later in 70 AD when the Romans under Titus ransacked Jerusalem and the temple.

There is an obvious gap here, an undetermined period of time, which the prophecy indicates will be characterized by war and desolations. But that will be followed by another week of years, seven years which are described in v. 27. I am not going to go into the details of that time, but the important thing to remember is that it will happen. The seven years will culminate with the Messiah’s return to make right all of the desecration and destruction.

**Second**, there is our responsibility as we wait for the Messiah’s return. I mentioned that we would come back to the parable that Jesus told in Luke 19. Let’s go back there. Read vv. 11-15 – the remainder of the parable speaks of the outcomes of each of those servants. I am not going to go through all of that. But there are a couple of things that are important to note about what Jesus said. He obviously was speaking about himself in this parable, and he was seeking to correct some misconceptions that his followers had about his rule and his kingdom. So what did he say?

1. Clearly he wanted them to know that his kingdom was not to be established right now. He would be leaving them to go “to a far country” to receive a kingdom.
2. He left his servants with responsibility to carry on his business until he returned.
3. There were many of his citizens who were not happy about having him rule over them.
4. When he returned, he called his servants to account for what they had done with what he had left them.

Now, there are many applications we could make. But what I want to leave you with this morning is these two challenges.

One, Jesus is coming back. When he came the first time it was to be “cut off.” He came to give himself as a sacrifice for sin, to offer us salvation. But when he comes again he will come as king. “Every knee will bow... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Two, when he comes he will ask us to give account of ourselves, what we have done with what he has entrusted to us. He has left us with responsibilities – our time, our money, our talents and abilities.

Today we remember how Jesus presented himself as the King. Yet he knew that first he had to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. But one day He will return, as king, to establish his kingdom, and he will call each one of us to account for our work for him in his absence.

Are you ready for that day? Are you preparing for it?

Do you know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord?