

# Palm Sunday and the Old Testament Story of Jesus – Matt 21:1-11

**Introduction** – Many times when reading the Bible, especially the first few (dozen) times, we find ourselves asking why Jesus said certain things, why certain things are emphasized, why they are important, and so on. In this passage, we wonder why Jesus sends His disciples ahead to get a colt from a donkey, why branches are cut down, and why the people cry, “*Hosanna*,” among many other things. An important lesson to learn in your Bible reading and study is to never assume that something stated in the scripture is superfluous or unimportant. Another important lesson to learn from the New Testament is that the Old Testament is not only a collection of biographies, but also and maybe primarily, it is a single biography. The Old Testament should be thought of as the biography of Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus taught His disciples (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). This gives us great insight into understanding the Old Testament and in understanding what is going on in the New Testament stories and words.

**Understanding Jesus** – In order to understand who Jesus is and why Jesus did so many of the things He did, you have to know the Old Testament. The gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy of the Old Testament; like a good novel, the main character is introduced by connecting him to generations before. But more than this, throughout the New Testament, we are explicitly shown how the Old was speaking of Jesus.

**Snapshots** – Jesus taught his disciples to see Him in the stories of the Old Testament, and the writers of the gospels and the epistles do this. Jesus is the better Adam (Rom 5). He is the greater Abel (Heb 12) whose blood speaks better things. He is declared to be the better Moses, the greater Solomon-Son-of-David, and the better Isaac-seed-of-Abraham.

**Sometimes Implicitly** – There are times that these connections are brought out explicitly (as in our passage in Matt 21:5) and sometimes they are more subtle and implicit. Why does Luke write “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Luke 2:52). Jesus is being identified as the greater Samuel (1 Sam 2:26). When Jesus calls His disciples away from their vocation of fishing, He is the new Elijah who called his disciple, Elisha, away from his plowing. Elisha was promised a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, and the disciples received the blessing of the Spirit of Jesus after His ascension.

**Inanimate Examples** – The biography of Jesus is not limited to the saints of the Old Testament. Jesus was the rock in the wilderness that brought forth water (1 Cor 10). John tells us that Jesus, the Word of God, became flesh and “tabernacled” among men (John 1), and Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the New Temple (John 2). Institutions and rituals also foreshadowed Christ, His sacrifice, His atonement, and His fellowship with His people, and so He is the Lamb of God, the sacrificial offering and Peace-meal.

**Places and Movements** – “*Out of Egypt, I called my Son*” Hosea proclaimed, of Israel’s deliverance from Pharaoh and then Matthew tells us this was a prophecy of Jesus (Matt 2). If we understand this, it isn’t hard to see how the temptations of Christ (Matt 4) in the wilderness for 40 days parallel the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness by Israel. When Jesus departs the city, traveling over the Brook Kidron on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18), He is following the same path as David when he was driven out of Jerusalem because of his apostate son Absalom (2 Sam 15).

**Reading the Bible** – Jesus teaches this. The writers of the New Testament give us countless explicit and implicit examples. It would seem that reading the Bible typologically is not optional, but rather, it is foundational and fundamental to reading and understanding both the Old Testament and the New. This is how we let the Scriptures teach us how to interpret the Scriptures, and what we learn from them is that the Christology of the NT does not make sense without a typological reading of the OT.

**Christology** – The idea, “Son of God” used throughout the Old Testament prophesies of the “anointed one” and this is the name “Christ.” The term, “Son of Man” prophesies of a descendant of Adam, a last Adam, who will reign over all the nations. This Son, who comes in the order of Melchizedek, is both priest and king, Jesus, who is our High Priest and our High King.

**A Greater King Jehu** (Matt 21:1-11) – Having brought the colt of a donkey, Matthew tells us that the people greeting Jesus know that He is coming as a king into the City (v5). They shout and sing Psalm 118, for this is the Son of David, the blessed One who is coming in the name of the Lord (v9). Following Psalm 118 as well, they cut cords, or branches, waving them before Him, possibly also alluding to the Branch who would come (Zech 6:12-13). He is the King come to rule and the Priest re-building the temple of the LORD.

**Throwing their Garments Before Him** (Matt 21:8) – This is what the men of Israel did after Jehu was secretly anointed king by Elisha’s servants (2 Kings 9-10). Along with the blowing of trumpets, they shouted, “Jehu is king!” After overseeing the violent death of the wicked Jezebel and the seventy sons of Ahab, Jehu went and condemned the temple of Baal, killing all of the priests and tearing down the pillars. Jesus, like Jehu, was irregularly anointed (by John the Baptist). He entered into the city of the king and His Kingship was declared while His followers laid down their garments for Him. He immediately went to cleanse the temple (vv12ff) as the new Priest, and proclaimed a judgment upon what had become a “den of thieves.” This temple would be destroyed as well.

**Conclusion** – Palm Sunday was a day and an event prepared by the hand of God since before the foundations of the world. The day of Jesus’ entrance into the city of Jerusalem and into the week of His passion would bring about a cataclysmic change in the way of the world; for Jews and Gentiles. A new King had arrived; a new Priest had come. Sin and rebellion were about to be dealt a crushing blow. But this coming week would see some of the most famous twists and turns in the most important story ever told, culminating in what looked like the defeat of the Son of Man. But unlike the first Adam, the first Moses, the first David, the first Solomon, and the first Jehu, Jesus the Anointed would triumph perfectly over all His foes. But more on that next week...