

Roads of Passion

#1 - The Jerusalem Road

Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-15

Introduction: There was a biography of Winston Churchill, where the author gave nearly equal attention to each part of his life: childhood, struggles as a student, military college, years as a war correspondent, service in World War I, Member of Parliament, the war years, and after he left office. In this author's telling, no one section of Churchill's life stood out.

In the Bible, there are four "biographies" of Jesus, written by four different people with four different perspectives, and each one of them mostly ignore the first 30 years of Jesus' life.

Instead, they all focus on Jesus' last three years. And they save about 35 percent of their biographies for His final week. The people who knew Jesus felt you could not understand him unless you understand the last week in His life.

The final week of Christ's life is captured for us in the Bible across 28 chapters out of a total of 89 chapters that make up the Four Gospels.

Just for perspective: out of the 89 total chapters:

- Christ's entire 42-month (or 168 weeks of) ministry is covered in 61 chapters.
- Christ's Final Week fills another 28 chapters.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all tell how Jesus enters the royal city of Jerusalem as king.

In Matthew's account (Matthew 21), as soon as Jesus enters Jerusalem, he clears out the money changers in the Temple. Nobody saw that coming. People expected him to clear out the Romans, not Jewish temple workers.

In Mark's account (Mark 11), the donkey takes up half the Palm Sunday story.

Luke (in Luke 19) contrasts the reactions to Jesus by all the people.

John (chapter 12) connects Jesus' entry to his raising of Lazarus, "almost like a Preview of Coming Attractions for His own resurrection. "

Today is Palm Sunday. It marks the day that Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday is the doorway into Jesus' final week; or what we would call Holy Week, and the Passion of the Christ.

Today I'm beginning a series of messages I'm calling, "**Roads of Passion.**" Our message today is **The Jerusalem Road.**

Jesus knew the road well. He'd traveled before. Mary and Joseph brought him to Jerusalem for the feast every year. It was especially breathtaking, when, after not seeing the city for the whole journey, you came around that mountain, and there it was! You would see the temple glistening in the afternoon sunlight, and you'd see the magnificent, towering gates; you'd remember the great history of it all: how King David first took that parcel of land as God's city, and how Solomon built a glorious temple there. Then you'd recall years of sorrow, when it lay in ruin during seventy years of captivity, until Nehemiah rebuilt its walls.

History has preserved for us an interesting fact. When pilgrims came to Jerusalem for great celebrations, each region had an area around Jerusalem where they traditionally camped. People from the Galilee camped on the south end of the mountain ridge known as the Mount of Olives. To get from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus would have to move through the camp of the Galileans. These were the people from the territory where He spent most of His earthly life, and where He was known best.

Luke 9:51 reads in the NIV... 51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

The KJV reads that Jesus "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem..."

AND The NASB puts it this way "He was determined to go to Jerusalem..."

The road was familiar. The road did not change; but this journey was unique. The disciples knew the road; Jesus knew the journey. Matthew 21:1-11 speaks of this Road of Passion that led Jesus to Jerusalem.

“As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”4This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”

6The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. 8A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

10When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” 11The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” [NIV] **Let’s Pray**

The Jerusalem Road represents, The Passion of the Christ.

The term passion of Christ refers to the time from Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane to His death on the cross—the time of His greatest suffering.

The word passion is from the Latin *p^atⁱ*, which simply means **“to endure” or “to suffer.”**

The crucifixion of Christ is the apex of human history and the grand theme of the apostles’ teaching: **“I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”** (1 Corinthians 2:2). It is through the passion of Christ that we are made right with God.

It is important to note that He actually suffered and died. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me” (Matthew 26:39), He was in genuine anguish over what He was to suffer (cf. Luke 22:44). When He was beaten and mocked, when the crown of thorns was pressed on His head, when He was nailed to a cross, when He hung there and struggled to

breathe, He was experiencing genuine, excruciating pain and suffering to pay for our sins.

Isaiah 53:4–12 foretold the passion of Christ and revealed its meaning:

“Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. 9He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

10Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. 11After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

12Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” [NIV]

People today can have “fits of passion” and do rash things that they later regret, but that is not the passion of Christ. Jesus came to earth for the purpose of laying down His life for us, and He never wavered. In Revelation 13:8, ***Jesus is described as the Lamb slain from the creation of the world.***

I. The Jerusalem Road was a road of HUMILITY.

Notice verses 1-3; ***“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”***

The Kings of Kings does not come riding into town on white stallion, but on the back of the borrowed colt of a donkey.

Mark 11:2 records one important fact - this animal had never been ridden. This is in line with Old Testament Law. Anything offered to God for a sacred purpose was to be new, never used for labor.

When Jesus spoke of his kingdom, he spoke in terms of it being one of service and servanthood, and one of humility.

Philippians 2:8 (NIV) ***“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!”***

In Matthew 23:12 Jesus says, ***“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”***

He’s talking about a choice that we must make everyday: exalt yourself or humble yourself. In every conversation I’m facing the test. In every relationship I’m facing the test –exalt myself or humble myself? In everyday decisions I’m facing the test – am I going to exalt myself or humble myself?

Exalt yourself – Be demanding. Humble yourself and be depending. Demanding or depending.

The incredible thing about a person who lives this way is they’re secure, they know God loves them, they know God has a plan for their life. They don’t have to demand their way through life. They can live in the security that Jesus knows the way.

Here's the humility test: Am I going to make my relationship with God work on my own terms, or will I humble myself and trust God.

Humility is not putting myself down. It's lifting God up. Humility is being honest about who I am, and about who God is, and His plan for my life.

Key Factor: HUMILITY PREPARES US TO BE SPIRIT FILLED AND SPIRIT LED.

To follow Jesus means going down the road of the cross. It means giving up our selfish desires, it means denying ourselves, it means picking up our cross and following Him. It involves putting God first in our lives and putting others first as well. The road of humility is the road that says I will be a Christ-follower.

II. The Jerusalem Road was also a road of FULFILLMENT.

Notice what verse 4-5 say; ***"All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'"***

The fact that Jesus enters Jerusalem on a colt of a donkey is not just by chance. Zech 9:9, ***"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."***

This is just one of the many prophecies that we see in the Old Testament concerning Jesus. In fact, there are some 332 prophecies in the OT which are fulfilled in Christ. The mathematical odds of all those prophecies being fulfilled by one man are one in 84 to the 123rd power. That is 84 with 123 zeros.

SPEAKING OF DONKEYS

Donkeys hold the distinction as being one of the earliest and most frequently mentioned animals in the BIBLE.

Abraham got up early in the morning to saddle his donkey, a small act, yet one of obedience to the Lord to offer Isaac up to God.

Jacob sent twenty female donkeys and ten donkey foals as a portion of his large and costly gift to appease his brother Esau.

The sons of Jacob traveled to Egypt with donkeys to purchase grain during a great famine.

Moses, in his return to Egypt to be God's representative to cause Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery, placed his wife and children on a donkey.

Abigail, a virtuous woman, made haste to prepare food for David and his army, who were preparing to fight her wicked husband, Nabal. Abigail instructed that a caravan of donkeys be loaded with 200 loaves of bread, 2 bottles of wine, 5 carcasses of prepared sheep meat, 5 measures of parched corn, 100 clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs. Abigail herself made haste as she rode a donkey out to meet David and his army. It is through her humble actions that she was able to soften the warrior David's heart.

And who can forget Balaam's talking donkey?

Donkeys are very strong and intelligent, and a donkey is stronger than a horse of the same size. Donkeys have an incredible memory - they can recognize areas and other donkeys they were with up to 25 years ago. A donkey will not do something it considers to be unsafe.

Donkeys are not easily startled and have a keen sense of curiosity. Donkeys have a reputation for stubbornness, but this is due to their highly developed sense of self preservation.

There was a time in our life when Jesus found us, and we were much like this donkey. We were wild, unbroken, and unusable due to our sinfulness. Once the Lord found us, He tamed us and made us useful in service for Him.

The Jews were looking for a mighty conqueror to come riding in on a mighty stallion of war, but Jesus came in riding upon the donkey of peace. In the Old Testament riding upon a donkey was a show of royalty, power, and peace.

Key Factor - Jesus is indeed the Messiah foretold of in the OT.

Jesus did not come to set us free from the bondage of tyrants; He came to set men free from the bondage of Sin. This donkey was the symbol of Christ being not only the "King of Kings" but also the "Prince of Peace."

III. The road to Jerusalem was a road of SUBMISSION.

Notice verses 6-8: ***"So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road."***

Jesus lived His life in submission to the Father. John 3:38; ***"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."***

A few days after His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus finds Himself in the garden of Gethsemane praying to the Father; "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ***"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."***

In 2 Kings chapter 9 when Jehu was proclaimed as king, the captains of Jehu laid down their garments before him as a sign of submission to his kingship. The people in Jesus' time do the same thing. They lay down their garments as a sign of submission to Christ as King. They also lay down their garments as a way of welcoming Christ.

Key Factor - Jesus sought God's approval, not the crowds' applause. We all must make this choice because the crowds' applause is rarely the same as God's approval.

IV. Finally, the road to Jerusalem is a road of DESTINY.

Since His birth, Christ was on a road of destiny. In Luke 2:34, Simeon speaks to Mary, Jesus' mother, and says, ***"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel..."***

In Revelation we read of the ***"... lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world."***

John 18:36-37; ***“Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. “***

During the original Passover in Exodus chapter 12, God instructed each family in Egypt to get a lamb and keep it close-by for the week. Then on Passover, to kill that lamb, catch its blood, and apply the lamb's blood to the doorway at the entrance of their home.

We know that for Passover to be celebrated on Saturday, the people had to pick a lamb the Sunday before Passover (Palm Sunday) so they could keep that lamb with them the days as detailed in Exodus 12.

God designed Passover to become a component in the annual life of a Jew. Each year, the idea of an innocent lamb, chosen as a substitute, and slain in place of each person was meant to be a picture of the coming Lamb of God.

So, the Palm Sunday event of Christ's final week, was also exactly the day that Passover observing Jews in Jerusalem had to pick their Passover lamb.

Jesus came as THE Lamb of God, passing by the Sheep Gate at exactly the time the Passover lambs were being chosen and prepared by thousands of families, on that Palm Sunday.

Conclusion: Coming to Christ is a radical life change. You cannot approach God on your own terms; you must come through Jesus. No man comes to Jesus unless the Father draws them. When you come to Him you must accept His claims; Jesus is the Son of God, the sacrifice for sin, our Lord and Savior.

At the Crossroad

“I encountered a man on the Road of life, so sure of himself – so convinced he was right.

He had (his) religion, but he didn't know God,
And though he had eyes, I thought that rather odd:
He only could see what he wanted to see.

So, blind to the truth that could set his soul free;
the man charged ahead – unaware he was lost, until he encountered a Man on a
cross at a fork in the road, where the path became two
and the man who'd always been sure of himself had to choose.
Between broad and narrow, between left and right,
Between things he could see, and things still out of sight.
And I'm sure that the man would have gone the wrong way,
Had he not encountered the Savior that day.
But love rescued him! Truth set him free!
Grace opened his eyes – he could finally see...
That the Man on the cross made the difference.
Now listen, as this once-proud skeptic proclaims:
"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Source unknown)

Illustration: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration was founded in 1970 and was charged with the tasks of reducing deaths, injuries and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle accidents. There have been all kinds of traffic studies contradicting one another regarding causes and reasons for traffic accidents. Many reasons have been cited such as speeding, driver inattention, cell phones, poor weather conditions, improper design and putting on your make-up! Remarkably, one statistic has held true for every study ever performed. You are about 12 times less likely to be involved in a traffic accident when you are driving on a one-way street.

The Jerusalem Road is a one-way street. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life...no one comes to the Father except through Him. **The application of Palm Sunday is clear. - If you do not choose Jesus as THE Lamb of God for sinners slain, then you're on the wrong road.** Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mt (Matt 7:13-14) that there are two main roads which man will travel, one wide that leads to destruction, the other narrow, that leads to eternal life. Which road are you travelling on?