



Part 26: Palm Sunday

Word ALIVE



Hosanna!



Background Notes -

PURPOSE: To present Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the continuing controversy that would eventually lead to his arrest.

AUTHOR: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the Evangelists. We now turn from John's pre-Jerusalem entry to the Synoptic accounts of the events in Jerusalem leading up to the Passion.

DATE: Possibly towards the Passover of the year 29 or 30.

STYLE: Continuing to speak in parables and direct confrontational address, Jesus' authoritative and shrewd style of speaking comes out as his enemies attempt to trap him with his words. He uses such occasions to teach them the truth about himself and the kingdom he came to establish.



Opening Quotes -

“Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone...” Mk 11:24

“Render therefore to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.” Mk 22:21

“[The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob] is not God of the dead, but of the living.” Mk 22:32

“How is it that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls [his son] Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord...?'” Mt 22:43

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice.” Mt 23:2

“O Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” Mt 23:37

“This generation will not pass away till all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” Lk 21:32

“Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” Mt 25:13

“As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.” Mt 25:42

the BIG PICTURE		LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods	Plot	Other books related to period		stories in each period	
BC	THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov,	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles)	
538	THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 26: Palm Sunday



Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, “Behold your king riding humbly on a donkey,” as he rode in to the shouts and praises of his followers. The Pharisees admonished him to keep the crowd quiet. Jesus told them if they were silenced, even the stones would cry out!

Jesus then wept over Jerusalem. “If only you knew the way to peace,” he mourned, and foretold that the city would be overthrown by her enemies, visualizing his prophecy by cursing a fig tree that had not grown fruit. After turning the tables at the Temple (which John had described earlier), the apostles remarked that the fig tree had withered! Jesus responded that with faith and forgiveness towards others, any prayer would be heard.

The confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees continued. “By what authority do you do these things?” they demanded. Jesus responded, “First tell me by what authority John baptized – God or men?” They were stuck, because if they said “God,” they condemned themselves for not following him. If they said “men,” the people who considered him a prophet would revolt. “We don’t know,” they said. “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” But he didn’t stop there: “Which son does the will of the Father? The one who says ‘I will’ but doesn’t go to the field to work, or the one who says ‘I won’t’ but then changes his mind and does it? Obviously the latter. Likewise, whores and tax collectors will enter the kingdom before you! You should have listened to John, for he spoke the truth.”

He then extended a parable of Isaiah’s in which the owner of a vineyard sent servants to collect its fruit. The tenants beat and kill the servants, so this time the owner sent his very own son, whom they would surely respect. But they even kill him, foolishly hoping for his inheritance! The moral of the story? God’s own Son will be killed by those who thought they could claim the inheritance, which would end up going to the other nations who would truly bear fruit. The Pharisees knew he meant them and the Gentiles.

Calling himself the “stone the builders rejected which would become the cornerstone,” he then told another parable similar to reinforce his point: There once was a king who sent out invitations to his son’s wedding feast. But the ones originally invited (ie, the Hebrews) blew off the invitation and killed the messenger. The king destroyed the murderers, burned down their houses, went out and invited anyone off the streets who would come (ie, the Gentiles and sinners). This not only prophesied the opening up of God’s People to include all the nations, but also foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. (Matthew adds that one guest is kicked out for improper attire. After all, the feast was free, but a proper response was expected. The sinners invited were not being given license to keep sinning!).

Trying to trap him again, they asked him whether it was lawful to pay taxes. Yes would imply an authority of

the state, questioning God’s. No would imply God’s, while illegally refusing the state’s authority. “Bring me a coin,” he said. “Whose face is on it?” “Caesar’s,” they responded. “Then pay to Caesar what is Caesar’s but to God what is God’s.” He again evaded their trap, teaching that to recognize God is not to disrespect human authority, but to keep it in perspective.

The Saducees, whom we haven’t really heard from, then joined in on trying to trap Jesus. (The Saducees did not believe in the resurrection.) “If a man died and passed his wife to his brother (as was the custom), and then the brother died, and passed the wife to the next brother, and so on, whose wife would she be in heaven?” He corrected their made up “issue with the resurrection” by simply explaining that in heaven we are like angels. (In heaven God himself will espouse his people, an espousal of which even the most intense marital relation on earth is a pale reflection!)

Since they were in the mood for theological speculation, Jesus decided to turn the tables on them and at the same time teach them that he was the Son of God. “Whose son would the Messiah be?” he asked. “David,” was the response. “Then how could a Son of David be his Lord? And why did David, inspired by the spirit of God, once say ‘The Lord said to my Lord...’?” They were at a complete loss.

“Woe to you blind guides!” He blasted. “You block the way to heaven and won’t even enter it yourselves! You yourselves are the murderers of the prophets! How can you escape hell with your double standards and self-sufficient attitudes?!” (We Christians today are no less immune to this question!) Jesus knew they were about to murder the greatest of all prophets.

Jesus then foretold again the destruction of the Temple, this time mixing it in with a prophecy of the end of the world. As they gazed in awe at the Temple, he told them not one stone would be left (which would happen in 70 AD), but also not to be fooled by earthquakes or false messiahs. Jesus told them it was not even for him to reveal the end of the world, but he did tell them that the Kingdom of God would be established before their generation died. (We understand this today as the Church, the New Israel, born out of ashes of the old Temple.)

After a couple more parables about people not being ready for the Son of man, he told one about himself as a Good Shepherd who at the Judgment will separate the good sheep from the bad goats. The criteria? Whoever clothed the naked, fed the poor, visited the sick and the imprisoned, were good sheep, for when they did these things, they were really doing it to him. Likewise, to neglect one’s neighbor was to neglect him. Already Jesus was teaching them that they were all a part of his body. As the Passover approached, he prepared himself for betrayal.



Defending the Faith: Riches and Pomp

“Shouldn’t the Vatican sell everything and give it to the poor? I know a priest who drives a fancy car. And what about the little shop in the parish Church? Don’t you remember what Jesus’ outrage at the Temple?”

When Jesus told a rich young man to give away his riches if he wished to be perfect, the young man went away sad. But many men and women since have voluntarily taken the vow of poverty in order to follow Jesus in this unique way. Some are monks, others are priests of religious orders, others are brothers, or nuns, or ministers from other Churches. But this is only one type of vocation in the vast body of Christ called the Church. Christ did not expect material poverty from all of his followers, but expects *spiritual* poverty from us all. We must be good stewards of our possessions, making sure we do not selfishly hold on to what we should be contributing.

But suppose the Vatican were to sell all of its riches and give the proceeds to the poor. Would poverty disappear? In fact, even if one meal were given to every starving person (which is even unlikely), poverty would resurface immediately. World starvation will never be solved with money. It is a matter of distribution and ongoing social service to the poor, which the Church contributes to head and shoulders above any other institution in the world.

Remember Christ told Judas when he objected to expensive perfume being poured on him that the poor would always be with us, and commended the woman for her generosity gesture to him. How can we conclude that the Church is wrong in preserving the cultural treasures given to her through the centuries in honor of Christ? No one in the Vatican owns these treasures.

Christ also didn’t seem as bothered as some of us are by pomp. He rode in humbly, but royally, on a donkey to kingly praises. When asked to silence the crowds, he said that the stones would cry out in their place!

But let’s also keep riches in perspective. Riches and pomp are not evil in and of themselves, but are dangerous if not kept in check. Remember Jesus’ harsh saying about the rich man, the camel, and the eye of the needle.

As for the priest with the fancy car, given the average salary of a priest, one wonders what sacrifices he had to make to drive it. Do you see the same priest with a mansion, a yacht, or a sports team? The priest has the right to buy whatever we do, with his modest salary, and we judge him the instant we accuse him for this.

As for the “big, fancy buildings,” are Catholics (rich *and* poor) wrong for building God such glorious cathedrals? Perhaps they are the very stones which are crying out “Hosanna in the highest!” Other Churches, smaller than the Catholic Church, tend to complain about her big buildings until they themselves grow large enough to have their own. Episcopalians and Orthodox know better than to complain about Catholic cathedrals, because they themselves have built these magnificent tributes to God.

As for the little shops in the parish Church, see where the proceeds go, and what it being sold. Christ was outraged by the money changers for cheating, and for selling the actual sacrifices used for worship. The Catholic shop sells Bibles, rosaries, and various religious articles, not the bread and wine used for worship! This would be akin to the den of thieves Jesus rioted against. The day you see the Host for sale, call the bishop, and tell him to bring his whipcord!



Expressing the Faith: Hosanna

Jesus Christ Superstar captures the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on a road that will turn dark.

*Hosanna, hey sanna, sanna sanna ho,
Sanna, hey, sanna, Hosanna!
Hey JC, JC, won’t you smile at me?
Sanna ho, sanna, hey Superstar*

(Caiaphas:)

*Tell this rabble to be quiet
We anticipate a riot*

*This common crowd is much too loud
Tell the mob who sing their song
That they are fools and they are wrong
They are a curse – they should disperse*

Hosanna, hey sanna...

*Hey JC, JC, you’re alright by me
Sanna ho, sanna, hey Superstar*

(Jesus:)

*Why waste your breath moaning at the crowd?
Nothing can be done to stop the shouting
If every tongue was still the noise would still continue
The rocks and stones themselves would start to sing!*

*Hosanna, hey sanna...
Hey JC, JC, won’t you fight for me?*

*Hosanna, hey sanna...
Hey JC, JC, would you die for me?*



Next time: “The Last Supper – for Now”

