

## Cause and Effect of Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday form a three-legged stool upon which the Christian faith rests, the other days of the last week Jesus' life on earth are like spindles running from one leg to another, supporting and reinforcing them. Remove any one of the three legs and the whole affair collapses. They stand together, or fall apart alone.

Nothing happens in a vacuum. Every effect has a cause. Good Friday was the effect for which Palm Sunday was the cause. Palm Sunday set up the action for the remaining days – for Good Friday and Easter. It was Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, saying by His actions, "*This is what God is all about!*"

Luke 9:51 tells us that Jesus had "*Set His face toward Jerusalem,*" meaning Jesus had made up His mind to go because He had important business there. Jesus allowed nothing to stop Him, although He paused here and there on His way to Jerusalem.

One such pause was in Bethany, a sleepy village about two miles east of Jerusalem. Now, He joined the crowds heading for Jerusalem. Others gathered along the road, when they heard that the Galilean prophet was coming, began to praise Him. Many people had turned their backs on Jesus by that time, but many others still followed Him and believed He was special.

At the beginning of His ministry, He avoided recognition – what we would today call "*publicity.*" But, by the time He rode into Jerusalem, He was ready to be known for His genuine identity. The people shouted at His approach, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,*" and "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David,*" and "*Hosanna in the highest*" (Mark 11:9-10). Those who lined the road felt that finally someone was going to do something besides just talk. Of course, there were those who had already tried to do something. There has been plenty of insurrection and revolt leaders before. One such leader, Barabbas, was in prison in Jerusalem. We waited in a Roman prison, while Jesus rode into town to proclaim His coming Kingdom.

Jesus was God's representative and could never be hemmed in by national boundaries and geographical limits. All the earth was His, Rome as well as Galilee. The sight of Jerusalem, with its centuries of history and tradition had reached into Christ very heart. Deeply moved, He could not hold back the tears. And why shouldn't He? Crying isn't unmanly. He wept for the people because they were so blind. The crowd wanted a military leader, a conquering hero, but Jesus brought no swinging sword or charging cavalry. He brought only Himself and His authoritative Word. His Kingdom to come could have to be enough.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was the responsible thing for Him to do. That one fact stands out so clearly in the Gospels. He knew what was in store for Him in the city, but He went anyway. An arrest warrant had already been issued for Him.

The Talmud, a commentary on the Jewish Law, was written over a seven-century period, from about 200 B.C. to 500 A.D. It spells out an indictment against one, "*Heshu Hannosri.*" Some scholars believe this was the Hebrew name for Jesus of Nazareth.

It read: *“Wanted: Heshu Hannosri. He shall be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf. Anyone who knows where he is, let him declare it to the great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.”* Even with this indictment hanging over Him, Jesus acted responsibly. That fact should cause us to draw nearer to Him and admire Him even more

At the age of 12, Jesus was responsible to active questioning and probing in His own mind. On a trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, Jesus got so involved with the discussion of religious matters, His parents left without Him, and He didn't seem to notice – because there were other pressing matters that were above the claims of even His family. Why? Because He was responsible to these matters at even a very young age. Luke 2:52 tells us. *“He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”*

Jesus was responsible in telling the truth, and living the truth. His entry into Jerusalem was an *“acted parable.”* It was a sign, but only those with open minds could understand the symbolism of Jesus riding on the donkey – rather than a charging stallion. His conquering would be done on the battlefields of the mind, not in the streets of Jerusalem. His victory would last for eternity, instead of falling with the century.

On the surface Jesus' journey into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday appeared as disastrous. Oh, the week began with adoration, but the exaltation was followed by rejection, humiliation and finally crucifixion.

It makes little sense in the normal meaning of the word *“victory,”* but, looking at it from God's perspective, it was absolutely necessary.

The Civil War ended on a Palm Sunday, on 1856, April 9, Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. On the Palm Sunday, war ended and peace began to reign. A few skirmishes flared up here and there, until everyone finally got the word – but the war was really over that Palm Sunday.

That first Palm Sunday, Christ proclaimed His victory over the hostile forces that opposed Him. He faced these forces armed only with the power of self-giving love, but that was enough! God is still seeking to let everyone know the battle is over and that Christ won. His life itself was the treaty.

Why don't you sign on the dotted line this morning?