

I. Holy Week in Biblical Perspective
Eight Days of Grace to Glory
“The Week that Changed the World—Day One, Palm Sunday”
John 12:12–19
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March 28, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

We will start by reading the account of the triumphal entry as it is found in John 12. I will be referring to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke as well which also record this event in this study. I hope you will read these in your own personal study as we celebrate Holy Week. John 12:12–19 says [12] *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. [13] So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” [14] And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, [15] “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!”*

[16] His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him. [17] The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. [18] The reason why the crowd went to meet Him was that they heard He had done this sign. [19] So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him.”

The Pharisees aren't quite accurate here in what they said because He is the One going after the whole world – Praise His Name forever!
The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Bruce, our associate pastor likes to say things in jest about me and I'm about to give you one of them that I know he says. When I became a Christian, I was on a path either seeking to be a professor of history or in law enforcement. I had a double major in criminology and history. I kept telling the Lord that if I could be used in that way I'd love to be used but He kept insisting on a call to the ministry so I left that. With both the external and internal call at work, the Lord allowed me to serve Him and it has been a great blessing to serve you all with Him, but I still have a deep appreciation for law enforcement for I love those who run to problem and not away from it. I understand those who runaway but how I appreciate those who run to it for the safety of others.

I'm also deeply appreciative of the whole discipline of history. I didn't give up history for I have the only inerrant history book that has ever been written. It is the history of God's glorious works of grace in creation, redemption and providence. I'm so grateful for the Word of God – it's historicity, accuracy, inerrancy, trustworthiness and how God uses it so we can know Jesus and therefore to know our Triune God to give Him glory instead of being separated from Him because of our sin. We can not only know Him but we can be guided by the Spirit of God to follow Him and with the Word of God we can be directed as to how to glorify Him and bear witness of Him so that others may be brought to Him.

So the comment that Bruce makes of me is that I am a historian and therefore I'm an incurable romantic. That statement is pretty much true of historians and I confess to this. When I study something I love to get to where it happened and it's amazing the insight that happens when you get onsite. When I get onsite to one of those events I've studied I cannot describe to

you the multiple, varied emotions that come over me but I will tell you one. There is this deep desire in my to talk to someone who saw it happen or one who had participated in it happening. I do Reformation trips and Israel trips called Learning the Bible in the Land of the Bible. The one coming up will either be my 16th or 17th trip. The event we will be looking at in this study is a historical event and I have actually walked this path on numerous occasions.

From Bethany at Bethpage just over the summit on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, you go up and over the Mount of Olives on a well-worn path where today it's paved and it's steep. Then you cross over the Kidron Brook and would go up to the Eastern Gate but that gate today is blocked up in fulfillment of Scripture. It is about a 35 to 40 minute walk. My guess on the day that Jesus did this given the crowds, the confusion and all that is happening it probably took around 50 minutes to an hour. We do know in Scripture that He did pause at least one time while taking this walk and so being able to walk this during my life time I tend to think 'Boy if I could talk with an eye witness' but then I realize I have a record of an eye witness. In fact, I have four of them – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Now Mark is not the eye witness but he is the writer of the Gospel of Mark, but the originator of the Gospel of Mark is Peter. Luke received his witnesses from those who were there and then there is John. Interestingly, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record from the summit down. John records as we just read, coming up from Jerusalem. My theory is that John was probably apart of the time when Jesus asked them to get the donkey and the colt that He was going to use on this pathway. John records coming back from the city identifying with the crowd that is coming back.

The crowd that is coming out is really a crowd that has five streams to it. One stream are the believers in Bethany, a place that Jesus would stay often. It was the home of three very good friends of His – Mary, Martha and Lazarus. It's also where months before He had raised Lazarus from the dead. After Jesus kept Sabbath in Bethany at Bethpage on the first day of the week (Sunday), He now comes into Israel.

The second stream of this crowd is referred to by John and the others as the curious. That is those who had heard about Lazarus being raised from the dead who was quite the curiosity, now says the One who came to raise Him from the dead is there. So they are coming to see Jesus and not just Lazarus.

Thirdly, are His own disciples, not only the 12, but likely some of the 70 that had collected with Him since He had left the Galilee setting His face to Jerusalem which is recorded in Luke 9 on to this point.

The fourth group is the Sanhedrin led by the Pharisees. This is the group that has a plan and that is to stop Jesus and kill Lazarus. They are trying to figure out how to do this.

The fifth group are the pilgrims that have arrived in Jerusalem which would probably triple the size of Jerusalem, at least. These pilgrims have arrived to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur and they hear the One who has raised Lazarus from the dead is coming today and they come out to meet Him. They are thinking this must be the King we have wanted and longed for, the Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King. So they come out with palms led by children singing the Psalm of the Messiah, Psalm 113–118, the Hallel. They turn this into a triumphal entry of a King and do so meeting Jesus at the summit with the other crowds and they are all around Him.

This is taking place at the summit of the Mount of Olives. Jerusalem is a very interesting city for it's a city on three little mountains and say little because it's surrounded by mountains that are bigger. Mount Zion is there as well. Psalm 125:2 says [2] *As the mountains surround*

Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people, from this time forth and forevermore.

Theologically this is a wonderful picture of how all the mountains that surround Jerusalem are taller than the three little ones and the tallest one is the Mount of Olives. It's about 300 feet taller than any of the other ones. It may be a beautiful place in geography and in terms of theology for what we can teach and see but it is a terrible location militarily for because of these high mountains they will be swept through by empire after empire. In this era it's Rome.

So this is all happening on the Mount of Olives and this is sacred real estate in the Bible. This mount is set apart for sacred use by Moses long before there is a Jerusalem – the city of the great King established. Moses in Numbers 19 declares that in the place of worship there will be a hill opposite that points to the Mount of Olives in which there would be the preparation for the sacrifice of the red heifer. It was a substitutionary sacrifice of the red heifer pointing to the sacrifice of a Messiah and the crimson blood by which we are redeemed. That sacrifice could not take place without the rites of purification and baptisms which was to be done on the Mount of Olives. That site that was set aside for holy doesn't stay holy for long.

When Absalom turns on David as he is trying to take the kingdom and kill him, it is over the Mount of Olives that King David makes his escape. Now we have the King greater than David of the seat of David coming the other direction to die in Jerusalem to set us free. In fact, the Mount of Olives became so horrendous that God one day brought a revival to Israel beginning in Jerusalem under King Josiah and he looked at the Mount of Olives which was to be used for the holy purposes of purification of the sacrifice of the red heifer and all he could see were idols. The kings before him had erected these false gods, these idols on the Mount of Olives and this included child sacrifices. Therefore, Josiah called it the hill of corruption and he tore down all the idols on that hill in the day of revival.

Let's fast forward to the coming of Jesus. Jesus came to Jerusalem on a number of occasions. This would have been the pathway He would have taken from Jericho up to Bethany and then over the Mount of Olives. This is an ordinary path that is about to make extraordinary because who is walking with Him and what He is going to do with them when He gets there. The Mount of Olives is not an unusual place for Jesus for it's the place He would go to set Himself apart for prayer and meet with the Lord. In fact, He had a little retreat center that they will use this week to meet on two nights and it's known as the Garden of Gethsemane. There at the Mount of Olives He will deliver His last sermon known as the Olivet Discourse. It will be done on Wednesday of Holy Week in the evening. Matthew 24 and 25 record the Olivet Discourse. Then Jesus will come back there after He has established the Lord's Supper which we will observe on Maundy Thursday which then was the last Passover meal, a bloody meal that is now turned into the bloodless meal of the Lord's Supper meal in anticipation of the marriage supper we will have with Him in all eternity.

After this supper took place He called Peter, James and John back up to the Upper Room and had a prayer meeting in which they displayed their sleepiness for they kept falling asleep. It is there Jesus will be betrayed and arrested. It is also there an interesting thing happens. When they come to arrest Him who has been betrayed by one of His own – Judas – who manifests that he never knew Jesus savingly by his betrayal – Peter just happens to have a sword. Peter knew things were kind of amiss and wanted to be ready. Peter pulls out his sword and cuts off one of the servant's ears. I think he was trying to split his head open but miss aimed and Jesus healed it. John 18:11 then says, *[11] So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"* Jesus was coming with the power of the sword of the Spirit and that's how this Kingdom is advanced.

Jesus will be taken away to trials and He is not through with the Mount of Olives. After He is resurrected and He goes on His Bible teaching tour for 40 days He will come back to the Mount of Olives and He will ascend into the heavens. There is the true triumphal entry as He who descended now ascended, leading captive those whom He has captured by salvation at the cross. Then the same passage in John we read earlier that tells us why He is walking over it during Holy Week also tells us that the Mount of Olives was His port of call for departure and it will also be His port of call when He returns. In Acts 1:10,11 it says [10] *And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood (angels) by them in white robes, [11] and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."* Referring to Him ascending from the Mount of Olives. When He comes back to this same sacred space, instead of the north south valleys of the riff valleys, He will split it the other way – east to west – and bring forth the Judgment and then into the new heavens and the new earth.

Before Jesus arrives at the top of the summit He has already made some preparations as He sends two disciples to get a donkey and a colt. We see this in Matthew 21:1–4 which says [1] *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2] saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. [3] If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."* [4] *This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, [5] "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

The value of a donkey and a colt would be like me showing up and saying ‘Hey, I just found out the Lord has need of your two cars so would you just sign them over to me, please?’ This is a big time resource. The Scripture doesn’t tell us how they responded but as soon as they say ‘the Lord has need of it’ then they are immediately sent. It was freely given and it was taken back. The disciples don’t know Jesus is fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 and the reason they don’t know is because it says in Zechariah the King would come riding on the colt of a donkey. Until Jesus teaches them during the 40 days after His resurrection and He is glorified, they didn’t understand this, but after the resurrection they understood what was done by Him, to Him and through Him. At this time, they didn’t know which animal he was going to get on so they put clothes on both and Jesus got on the right one to fulfill the prophecy. Then He rode it in and it was amazing to think He rode it down that steep path.

We don’t know all that happened as He went down this path but in a few days they are going to be saying ‘crucify Him.’ Here Palm Sunday has many gathered but when resurrection Sunday comes there will only be seven gathered when Jesus assembles them in the Upper Room. Right now though we see these five streams, groups of people with all this celebration, enthusiasm, and all the cacophony of all that is going on but there is One who is not celebrating. He is not celebrative or claim celebrity status for He is contemplative, pensive, focused, thoughtful, emotional and will only stop one time and He will be weeping. It’s there that He weeps over His people Israel because He comes to His own and they reject Him. That’s the King who is coming in.

He goes through the Kidron Brook, through the Eastern Gate up the temple mount, looks in, does His reconnaissance, turns around and goes back up over the Mount of Olive as He will do the next two days. In one of those trips He will curse and fig tree and explain why He cursed it in the Olivet Discourse at the Garden of Gethsemane on that Wednesday night. He will come

back the next day to cleanse the temple. Then will come back and be met by Philip who brings some Gentiles. John 12:20–23, 27–32 records this for us as it says, [20] *Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. [21] So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” [22] Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. [23] And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”*

[27] *“Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. [28] Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” [29] The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.” [30] Jesus answered, “This voice has come for Your sake, not Mine. [31] Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. [32] And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.”*

I’m going to distill some things from what I have just shared where I will give one takeaway that has three subpoints to it. The takeaway is that this is the greatest week in history. As a historian I have no problem defending this and as a Christian I already believe it, it’s in the Bible and the Bible can’t err. I only think there is one other week that comes close to comparing to this week and that’s the week of creation. In creation He speaks and out of nothing He brings everything into existence where in three days He brings all things into existence, then three days He fills it and then He rests on the last day. What a glorious week it is but I don’t see all of His glory in that week, why? It is because we’re going to mess that week up by our sin and God could bring judgment but He doesn’t. He promises to bring a woman through which will come a Seed who will crush the head of the serpent, even though His heel will be bruised. That brings us to this week – holy week.

As the Apostles’ Creed says; *Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; on the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty...*

This week is the greatest week because I not only see God’s glory but I see the glory of His glory because in this week I see His grace. There is no grace yet displayed in Genesis 1 and 2 because there is no sin there. People ask me why God allowed sin and one reason is for His glory because we would never know the patience, mercy, justice and grace of God or any of that without the presence of sin. Now we fast forward from His promise given in Genesis 3 and the unfolding of the work of grace that brings us to this week and Jesus starts a journey as the Lamb of God will be slain to save sinners from their sin – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is on this day that the praise of His glorious grace is being seen in all of its majesty. He directs Himself to that place where on that day we’ll see the wrath of God that is satisfied in the Son of God by the grace of God to save sinners to the glory of God. Here Jesus is my victory! And that is the greatest week – eight days to glory where He makes all things new and changes everything to the glory of God.

Psalms 24:9–10 says [9] *Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. [10] Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!*

I would like for you to think about three things about this King. Here is the first thing that this day tells you about this King – God is sovereign over everything. Numerous times in the Bible we see Jesus do something miraculous and then says to them ‘don’t tell anyone’ and

the very next sentence He says after that is ‘because My time has not yet come.’ On this day when He fulfills Zechariah 9:9 He is telling everyone that He is the Messiah, The Anointed One, The Prophet, Priest and King and that everything is moving forward. Romans 5:6 says *[6] For while we were still weak, **at the right time** Christ died for the ungodly.* God works on His timetable – God is sovereign to accomplish His purposes.

So why doesn’t Jesus just tell them they could tell anyone they wanted because God in sovereignty just turns everyone into robots? No, God accomplishes His sovereign purposes through the moral agency of man. I didn’t say the ‘free moral agency of man’ because we are born dead in our sins for our will is in the bondage and dominion of sin and there is none who seek Him, no not one (Romans 3:11). We have to be born again and when God saves people He doesn’t drop a fate on them for He works in their mind, heart, will, and emotions. When God accomplishes His purposes in this world He draws straight lines with crooked sticks as He works through believers and unbelievers. God knows Proverbs 16:9 which says *[9] The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.* So this was God’s sovereign hand revealing that this was the right time for Jesus to come and die for all the sins of His people from all the nations to bring His glory. He does this by affirming His Word through 60 plus Messianic prophecies fulfilled in the 33 years of Christ. Here is a sovereign God revealing Himself to Jew and Gentile alike that He is the Messiah, the One that has come.

He is not coming on the white horse of war to bring judgment but He is coming on the donkey to bear judgment because this King is a King of righteousness who is coming for your salvation to bring peace, which is why when He does stop on the way down from the Mount of Olives He weeps as He approaches the city. This is seen in Luke 19:41–44 which says *[41] And when He drew near and saw the city, He wept over it, [42] saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that **make for peace!** But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43] For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side [44] and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

There is where peace is. Peace is not, if I have been oppressed then I get to be the oppressor or my political agenda wins or what you buy or your position in this world or celebrity status or everything revolving around you and me. Peace is found in surrender and coming to Christ as Lord and Savior. There are a lot of people coming out to Him at this time but they are not coming out to surrender to Him. They are coming out looking for their own messiah. They are looking for a messiah of political victory of power and might, state military power that will cleanse their land of the Romans and the Gentiles. But they are getting a Messiah that is coming to go to a cross. He will first cleanse the temple and then He’ll go to the cross to cleanse us, to save Jew and Gentile. He is not the Messiah that meets our wants/wish lists but He is the Messiah that comes to meet our needs.

Interestingly to note, the Sanhedrin’s plan (plan A) to kill Lazarus and stop Jesus will end up becoming kill Jesus because the whole world is coming after Him and yet He came to come after the whole world. The deal to betray Jesus will be sealed by Wednesday of this week and what they think is their plan B – to kill Jesus – is actually God’s plan A. It will send Jesus to the cross to save you and me for no man takes His life. Jesus freely gave it and God is sovereignly at work through the hearts, minds, wills and emotions of believers and unbelievers to get to that cross.

Here is the second one – Christ is the committed King of glory. He will not be stopped. He is relentless. Jesus says in John 6:39, [39] *And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day.* He will save all of His people from all of their sins on that cross in order for us to magnify the grace of God because in Christ the wrath of God has been satisfied and now we're clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ.

As you see that, a committed King produces committed disciples. When He sends two of His disciples to get the animals for Him and they don't ask, they just go. They aren't doing this to be saved, they are doing it because they love their Savior. Then those they go to only have to be told that the Savior has need of it and they give it at once. I don't know if the animals were returned back to these people or not but I do know God is a debtor to no one and He gave them the donkey and the colt to begin with and when He calls for it, they are ready to give it. These people were committed. If you are getting a little bit of conviction now, then praise the Lord, but now I want to help you.

At this point the disciples had been with Jesus for three years but this week they are going to fall down/away out of fear. One of them will fall away and that is Judas Iscariot for he never knew Him. I believe those of us who want to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior to do the Great Commission on mission, on message and in ministry and we want to develop a culture here of the Great Commandment – of loving the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself. We are in a time of sifting and shifting and the world is going to try and silence you about being silent about Jesus Christ, so are you committed? Your commitment will falter just like the disciples unless you stay fixed on Jesus. Those who persevere, but are not perfect, are those who everyday are being fed from the Word of God and surrendering to the Spirit of God. You can't stand for Jesus unless you are feasting on Him, His Word and surrendered to His Spirit. You won't find those who do this being divided up by the world for the world's identity markers do not control us.

We are the people of God, united in the Spirit and one in Christ. We are saved by the same blood, dwelt in by the same Spirit. We're not rich Christians or poor Christians because that's not how we identify. We understand those kinds of markers and their place in the world and how they are used but they do not direct us. The love of Christ and the love of others in Christ are who direct us. Adversity has its place but it does not determine our love for one another. If you love Jesus, committed to Him, and surrendered to Him, let's come together to worship Jesus and then let's scatter to bear witness for Jesus. We are a great commitment to a great commandment and a great commission but it will not stand if you're not fixed on Jesus through His Word and by His Spirit. This is also true of every church. Those will be the ones who stand at the end and the rest who want a seat at the table of culture will accommodate the culture.

Thirdly, Christ is the compassionate King of glory. Are you frustrated at all with the way things are going? When you see the people who are frustrating you, how do you see them? I am frustrated with them and not just with things. I get angry at them and I realize sometimes that is not Divine anger through the righteousness of God but it's my own anger and frustration. What does Jesus do? He sees His adversaries and weeps. It's not just a momentary thing for at the cross He will say 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). When you see adversaries, do you see them as one that you want God to take out or do you see a future member of the Kingdom of God? Jesus had been speaking for thousands of years through

Christophanies (to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc) and now the Incarnate Christ is here who speaks the truth in love and what do they do? They crucify Him.

Jesus says this in His lament over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37–39, [37] *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! [38] See, your house is left to you desolate. [39] For I tell you, you will not see Me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”* All they can say is ‘Crucify Him!’ and yet these Romans, Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, etc., is who Jesus came to save from their sins.

Let’s pray, plead and with passion persuade our adversaries. Let’s lament and weep, ‘O God, save them’ and may God use us to reach them. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time spent in Your Word but this text demands so much more, but Lord we have arrived here and I ask that You would over rule all the inadequacies of this preacher. Let Your people see this King of glory, not a Messiah for our worldly and personal wish list, but a Messiah, a Redeemer who saves us from our sins, their penalty, their power, increasingly from their practice and one day from their presence – the King of grace who will take us to glory. Father, those who know You and love You, please refresh, renew, equip and encourage them so that we are in the world but not of the world. We have a King, Jesus, who saved us and who is coming again on His Throne, but on this day came for His cross to save us, hallelujah, what a Savior, Amen!

Power Point

Life Takeaway

This is the greatest week in all of History. It is the week that changes everything, “Eight Days of Grace to Glory.”

I. Christ The Sovereign King of Glory and Grace

II. Christ The Committed King of Glory and Grace

III. Christ The Compassionate King of Glory and Grace