

Palm Sunday Anachronism: Putting the Crown before the Cross: 2d Advent, vv. 24–26: The Waving of Branches, Lev 23:40–43; Palm Sunday’s Triumphal Entry: the Roman Triumph; Jesus’ Request for a Donkey, Mark 11:1–3; Disciples Comply, vv. 4–6; Jesus Mounts Up & Branches Waved, vv. 7–8; Accompanying Entourage Pleas for Deliverance & Prosperity of 2d Advent; Peter’s Testimony & Response to the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:10–12; Prayer for Divine Protection to Speak with Confidence, vv. 24–31

Palm Sunday Anachronism

Putting the Crown before the Cross

Sunday, 08 April 2012 – Second Session

Verses 24–26 prophesy the Second Advent:

Psalm 118:24 - This is the day [2d Advent] which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

v. 25 - O Lord, do save [הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (*hoshi’ah na’*): Hosanna: Help now!], we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity [צַלְחָה (*saleach*)]!

Psalm 118:26 - Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you from the house of the Lord [**millennial temple**]. (NASB)

These three verses point toward the fulfillment of the unconditional covenants to Israel at the Second Advent: “the day which the Lord has made” refers to the Second Advent while the rejoicing looks toward celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles.

In verse 25 we find the Hiphil imperative, הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (*hoshi’ah na’*): Hosanna: “Do save!”

This was exclaimed each year while celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles during which the great Hallel (Hallelujah Psalms) was recited in connection with the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The latter was accompanied by the waving of palm and willow branches which themselves were called “hosannas.”

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated annually as a reminder of the divine provision that God supplied the Exodus generation during their wanderings in the Jornada.

At the Israelites' first encampment after leaving Ramses, the Lord commanded them to build booths:

Leviticus 23:40 - 'On the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in those days.

v. 41 - 'You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month [**September/October**].

v. 42 - 'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths,

v. 43 - so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'

This feast celebrates the grace of God in the areas of divine protection and the provision of bountiful crops.

This explains the second Hiphil imperative of the verse, "send prosperity, **שָׂלַח** (*saleach*). This prosperity is directed to those who remain loyal to the Word of God, function with a grace mental attitude with regard to divine provision, and who maintain the spiritual advance.

Those that do not fulfill these objectives find themselves in dire straits and recipients of the limited options associated with the law of volitional responsibility.

Both of these concepts are addressed in this excerpt:

שָׂלַח (*saleach*). The root means to accomplish satisfactorily what is intended. Real prosperity results from the work of God in the life of one who seeks God with all his heart.

God expresses his purposes through his work. Therefore his word will not prove empty, but it will prosper in its fulfillment (Isaiah 55:11[†]).

[†] "So will My Word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." (NASB)

In the last days those who are opposed to God shall prosper for a time through cunning and deceit (Daniel 8:12, 24f.). But their success will be only temporary, for God is preparing a time of judgment against all evil to accomplish his indignation (Daniel 11:36). It must be clearly affirmed that transgression of God's law will never finally succeed (Numbers 14:41; cf. the argument in Psalm 37:7–11 and Psalm 73:12–20).²

PRINCIPLE: God honors those who honor His Word. He will put up with “cunning and deceit” for a season, but such behavior will come into ultimate judgment.

Verse 26 denotes the blessings of prosperity and the joyous celebration of the millennial saints who approach the temple singing the great Hallel.

Although the millennial temple will be the perennial place of worship for those who enter the kingdom; it is ritual without reality for those in the first century who expected Jesus to put the crown before the cross. This was exactly the circumstance when the crowd gathered around our Lord on Palm Sunday in A.D. 33.

Palm Sunday's Triumphal Entry:

The triumphal entry was a procession in the city of Rome during the times of the Republic:

Triumph, Latin TRIUMPHUS, a ritual procession that was the highest honour bestowed upon a victorious general in the ancient Roman Republic. To triumph in republican times a man was required to have been a magistrate (holding supreme and independent command) who had won a major land or sea battle, killing at least 5,000 of the enemy. The ceremony began with a solemn procession from the Campus Martius to the Capitol, passing through the forum and the Via Sacra (“Sacred Way”) along streets adorned with garlands and lined with people shouting, “*io triumphe!*”³

² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, “תְּצַחֵם,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 766.

³ “Hail, god of Triumph! (the shout of the Roman soldiers and populace on the occasion of a triumphal procession in honor of a victorious general)” (C. O. Sylvester Mawson, *The Harper Dictionary of Foreign Terms*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Eugene Ehrlich [Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1987], 170).

The magistrates and members of the Senate came first in the processions followed by musicians, the sacrificial animals, the spoils of war, and the captured prisoners in chains. Riding in a chariot festooned with laurel, the victorious general (*triumphator*) wore the royal purple and gold tunic and toga, holding a laurel branch in his right hand and an ivory sceptre in his left. A slave held a golden crown over the general's head while repeatedly reminding him in the midst of his glory that he was a mortal man.⁴

On reaching the Capitoline temple the general presented his laurel along with thank-offerings, to the image of Jupiter. The prisoners were usually slain, and the ceremony concluded with a feast for the magistrates and Senate.⁵

The Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, recorded by all of the Gospel writers, was not as flamboyant as that of the Romans. Nevertheless, it took on the imagery of a conquering general who was presenting Himself as the Victor over the enemy.

His procession anticipated the upcoming victory over sin on the cross and the simultaneous defeat of Lucifer and his angelic armies.

He did not ride in a chariot but on a donkey colt. His procession was accompanied by singing but there were no prisoners, sacrificial animals, or spoils of war.

There were no political dignitaries, but there were disciples.

There was no ivory sceptre but the septre of iron would come later at the Second Advent. There was no need for a slave to whisper axioms in His ear about remaining humble.

The Lord is about to publically demonstrate that He is the promised Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world, and the rightful Heir to the throne of David.

Mark 11 describes the preliminaries for the entry and the triumph along with a gross misinterpretation of the event by His followers.

⁴ "Sic transit gloria mundi: so passes away the glory of the world" (Ibid., 285).

⁵ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010), 11:934.

Mark 11:1 - As they [Jesus, His disciples, and entourage (v. 46)] approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage \beth'-fa-jē\ and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples,

v. 2 - and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.

v. 3 - “If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.”

Bethphage and Bethany were very close together on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives and were about two miles from the walls of Jerusalem.

The Mount of Olives rises 26-hundred feet to the east of the city and provides a panoramic view of the city and the temple mount.

The colt is that of a donkey and because of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, the Lord would be exemplifying His claim to be the Messiah.

Mark 11:4 - They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it.

v. 5 - Some of the bystanders⁶ were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

v. 6 - They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.

Apparently, the owners of the donkey colt were familiar with the Lord and were more than happy to allow Him the use of it. The phrases “the Lord has need of it,” and “he will send it back here” were sufficient to gain the loan of the colt.

The donkey was young, had never been ridden, and thus had never been strapped with a saddle. Some of the disciples took their coats and placed them on the colt to make an impromptu saddle for the Lord.

Mark 11:7 - They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it.

⁶ Luke’s account identifies the bystanders as the colt’s “owners” in Luke 19:33.

v. 8 - And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

The “leafy branches” are not identified by Mark but are by John in his Gospel as the date palm:

John 12:12 - On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

v. 13 - took the branches of the palm trees [φοῖνῖξ (*phoínix*): **date palm**] and went out to meet Him ...

The waving of the branches was an indication that many recognized Him as Messiah since one of the titles of Messiah is “the Branch”:

Isaiah 11:1 - Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

Jeremiah 23:5 - “Behold the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.

The throwing of coats in His path was a custom provided for the arrival of kings.

The problem that all these people had was that they were out of sync with the plan of God. They were celebrating the arrival of the King Who would achieve political victory and therefore were emphasizing the crown before the cross.

This miscalculation is evident in the next two verses:

Mark 11:9 - Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord;

v. 10 - Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!”

These verses are quoted from the Psalm 118 passage that we studied today and is part of the Hallel liturgy that accompanies the celebration of the major feast days on the Jewish calendar:

Hallel (“hymns of praise”). Consists of Psalms 113–118, which were sung by the Levites in the Temple in Jerusalem on Sukkot [Tabernacles], Passover, Shavuot [Pentecost], and Hanukkah. During the chanting of Hallel on Sukkot [Tabernacles] the palm branch is waved.⁷

By emphasizing Psalm 118:26, the crowd indicates it is emphasizing the Second Advent, not the First, which is further amplified by the referring to the “coming kingdom of our father David.”

The waving of palm branches is common to the Feast of Tabernacles and is the prominent feast celebrated in the millennial kingdom:

Zechariah 14:16–19 envisions all nations coming up to Jerusalem year by year to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Josephus calls it the holiest and greatest of the Hebrew feasts (Antiquities of the Jews, bk. 8, chap. 4, par. 1).⁸

The singing of Hosannas is an appeal to be saved, but the emphasis on the Second Advent indicates that what the people wanted was to be delivered from the specter of the Roman Empire.

Thus began what is referred to as the Passion Week of our Lord. The misapplication of those celebrating Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem signaled the beginning of the fateful events that would follow.

The Jews who recognized Jesus as Messiah were expecting Him to set up the kingdom and deliver them from the Tiberius.

Those who did not recognize Him as Messiah but rather as a blasphemer, wanted to remove Him from the scene. Also, since He had built a large following, those at the Sanhedrin feared He could rob them of their authority, position, and prestige.

For the next week the attackers from all sides would pursue him and ultimately start in motion a sequence of illegal trials that would culminate in His crucifixion.

⁷ Naomi Ben-Asher and Haim Leaf, eds., “Hallel,” in *The Junior Jewish Encyclopedia*, 14th ed. (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 118.

⁸ J. P. Lewis, “Feasts,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 2:524.

Although successful in their efforts they were simply doing what the decree perceived they would do: be complicit in the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about events that would culminate in His substitutionary sacrifice for the human race.

His victory over the Dark Side was manifest on the morning of what we refer to as Easter Sunday. It is better referred to as Eternal Life Day because the Lord's absence from the tomb made certain our eternal future in a resurrection body just like His.

Acts 4:10 - "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—

v. 11 - "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.

v. 12 - "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Hearing this, the Sanhedrin dismissed Peter and John from the Council in order to determine what to do with these men. It was apparent that a true miracle had occurred healing the lame man.

It was determined let them go but on the condition that they would not speak further about the healing among the people or to speak about the name of Jesus. To this requirement Peter and John responded:

Acts 4:19 - "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

v. 20 - for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.

With this they were released and after departing the Council they sought out their companions and reported what had taken place. Knowing that the name of Jesus and the message of His truth would be under constant scrutiny, they chose to utilize the divine provision of prayer:

Acts 4:24 - ... they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, ...

v. 27 - “Truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

v. 28 - to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

v. 29 - “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

v. 30 - while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

v. 31 - And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

As we celebrate Eternal Life Day we, too, are entering into a period of our client nation’s history when the name of Jesus and the communication of His word is under assault from those among the population and those in high places of power and influence.

This prayer lifted by Peter and John is one that we should also make a practice of addressing to the Father with great confidence after having done so, that we are to boldly tell the story of the resurrected Christ to all who would give it a hearing.