

“Who is this?”

March 29, 2026

Matthew 21:1-11

I. Introduction

For 3 years Jesus had ministered throughout Judea. He had spent a lot of time in Galilee teaching, healing, and performing other miracles, but He had, also, spent time in Jerusalem. Many people followed Him—some for selfish reasons, some for political reasons, and some for religious reasons. But now His time had come—[Galatians 4:4-5](#) says, **“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”** It was time for the Son of God to pay the price of redemption for the world.

It was also time for Passover—the 3rd or 4th Passover Jesus would celebrate with His disciples. Passover was one of the most important Jewish festivals and it was less than a week away. Passover commemorated the time when God brought the tenth and final plague on Egypt which led to the Jewish Exodus. In this plague, God destroyed the firstborn of the Egyptians but spared (or passed over) those who had followed the command to place the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. Turn to the record of that night, [turn to Exodus 12:21-23, 29-33](#). Passover was a time to remember Moses and the Exodus.

Because of Passover’s importance, every Jewish male from 12 years old and up was required, if it was at all possible, to gather in Jerusalem for Passover. [Numbers 9:13](#) commands, **“But if a man who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, that person must be cut off from his people because he did not present the LORD's offering at the appointed time. That man will bear the consequences of his sin.”** For this reason, Jesus and His disciples were going to Jerusalem. This also meant that the number of people gathered in Jerusalem would be huge—probably 3 to 4 times the normal population—some estimate that the city of 800,000 was increased to around 2.5 million people.

Passover was a time to look back; a time to remember and celebrate God’s raising up of Moses and of the Exodus as the Israelites were led out of captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land. Passover was, also, a time to look ahead to the promised Messiah, the son of David, who would establish a mighty

kingdom—the new kingdom of Israel. The Passover meal, called the Seder, which was filled with symbolism, closed with a wish that during the next year, the Messiah would come.

The multitude that gathered in Jerusalem some 2000 years ago would have been enthusiastic and expectant—*“Maybe this year the warrior, the conquering Messiah would come and free Israel forever!”* Every year emotions would be running high in anticipation. The Roman government knew the volatility of the crowd during Passover. So, for safety’s sake, during this time, they would increase the number of soldiers in and around Jerusalem.

II. The Preparations for Jesus’ Entry

This was the scene Jesus was about to enter. His time had come. It was time for Him to be sacrificed as the perfect Passover lamb for all mankind. This had been God’s plan since before the beginning of time. **Turn to Genesis 3:14-15.** This is why, in **John 1:29** when John the Baptist saw Jesus at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, John said, **“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** It was time for the serpent’s head, Satan’s head, to be crushed.

Jesus knew why He had come and what He was doing. He had even made preparations for His entry into Jerusalem. So, He sent 2 of His disciples ahead to get a colt and its mother. He knew where to send them and even what they should say—**turn to Mark 11:4-6.** Mark also wrote that the colt hadn’t been ridden before, but it accepted Jesus in spite of all the commotion around it. This shouldn’t surprise anyone—as God, Jesus is the Lord of creation.

Jesus had always kept a low profile during His ministry in Galilee and in Jerusalem, but, this time, things were different. Jesus’ grand entrance as King was to be witnessed by all of Jerusalem. This had been prophesied some 500 years earlier in **Zechariah 9:9**, **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** As prophesied, this special king—Jesus—wasn’t going to ride in on a beautiful and powerful horse. He wasn’t coming with military might to slay Israel’s enemies and establish a kingdom greater than David’s. He was going to enter Jerusalem riding a colt of a donkey, a

symbol of peace not war. Instead of coming in power and majesty and glory, [Philippians 2:6-8](#) says that Jesus came in meekness and humility; He laid aside His godly attributes; “**He humbled Himself and He became obedient to death—even death on a cross.**” Jesus wasn’t coming to bring war but peace; peace between God and mankind. [Romans 5:1](#) says, “**Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Another reason for this grand entry was to force the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, to act. They had already decided not to do anything extreme about Jesus during Passover because they were afraid of what the crowd might do. They were only going to arrest Him. [Turn to John 11:55-57](#). But when the leadership saw how the people cheered for Him, they knew they couldn’t wait. Just after Jesus’ triumphal entry, [John 12:19](#) says, “**So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’**” This was part of God’s plan, too. Jesus had to die as the Passover lamb at the right time in the right place. .

III. The Grand Procession

Following the preparations there was the Grand Procession. As Jesus rode into the city, “**a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.**” [John 12:13](#) says that they were “**palm branches.**” As they had done in the past for other kings and conquerors, they were showing respect and submission to a king’s authority. In their joy and excitement, they lay their tribute in the form of cloaks and branches before “**the Son of David.**”

As He rode into Jerusalem, the Lord must have been surrounded by a mass of humanity, perhaps several hundred thousand people, some going in front and others behind Him. The expectations and hope that Jesus, as the Messiah, would bring deliverance from Roman rule was so great that the crowd became totally caught up in a frenzy of mob hysteria. They didn’t know it, but Jesus **had** come to bring deliverance—not from Roman rule as they expected, but from the rule of sin in their lives.

They were crying out, “**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**” Although it was used as an exclamation of praise, “*hosanna*” really

means “*save now*.” But the crowd on that day wasn’t interested in Jesus saving their souls but in saving their nation. Many had seen His miracles; others had heard about them. Lazarus, whom Jesus had brought back from the dead just months earlier ([John 11:1-45](#)), may have even entered Jerusalem along with Jesus and His disciples. Many probably wondered what had taken so long for Jesus to use His supernatural powers against the Romans. They were crying out for the Messiah’s deliverance, almost pleading, “*Save us now, great Messiah! Save us now!*” Now, at last, they thought, He had come to be the Conqueror—to be their Liberator. What better occasion or time could there possibly be for God’s Anointed, the Messiah—the Christ—to make the ultimate and final deliverance of His people from the tyranny of Rome than at Passover, just like Moses had done almost 2000 years earlier. Just like the Passover meal had promised every year.

Sadly, the people wanted Jesus on their own terms. They would not bow to a King who was not of their liking, even though He was the Son of God. They wanted Jesus to destroy Rome, not their cherished sins or the hypocritical and superficial religion of the Pharisees. But Jesus would not deliver them on their terms, and they would not be delivered on His. The words of the crowd were right—“*Save us now*,” but their hearts were not. Jesus hadn’t come to be crowned but to be crucified. As [1 Tim. 1:15](#) says, “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*”

IV. The Question: Who is this?

Matthew closed his account of Jesus’ triumphal entry with a question that was being asked throughout the city, “*Who is this?*” The crowds answered, “*This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee*” Obviously, many of them had paid little attention to what they had just been shouting so loudly. They had just finished proclaiming Jesus as “*the Messiah, the Son of David, who came in the name of the Lord.*” But when the mass emotions calmed down, they were hard pressed to say who Jesus really was, other than “*a prophet from Nazareth.*” They no longer called Him the Son of David or praised Him as the great Deliverer. Now He was no more than just a prophet.

Many of them had heard Jesus' messages; they had seen or heard about His miracles. Some had even acknowledged that He must be from God. [John 3:1-2](#) says that "Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to Jesus and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.'" But, like the Pharisees, most of the crowd's hearts were totally earthbound, materialistic, and self-centered. They were interested only in the kingdom of this world, not the kingdom of heaven. They would have accepted Jesus as an earthly king, but they would not have Him as their heavenly King.

"Who is this?" As we look at the account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, we see 3 different responses or attitudes to this question. The first attitude was the crowd's attitude: indifference or apathy. Jesus was a good man, a good teacher, a prophet from God. He was able to entertain them, even feed them, by doing miracles, but they didn't really need this prophet from Nazareth. Everyone knew that, as Nathaniel had said in [John 1:46](#), "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Some of these were the same people who 5 days later were going to scream, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" ([Luke 23:21](#)) But as long as He was entertaining, they could take Him or leave Him.

The second attitude is seen in the Pharisees. [Turn to Luke's account in Luke 19:37-40, 47-48.](#) The Pharisees didn't even try to hide their disapproval of this so-called prophet. In their eyes, He had started out as a contemptible person. But this contempt grew into a hatred of Jesus and all that He stood for. Finally, this hatred had grown into a murderous rage. The only thing they wanted to do with Jesus was to kill Him! This second attitude started with contempt which grew into a murderous hatred of Jesus.

Finally, there were His disciples—not just the Apostles—but all of those who believed what Jesus said. They believed Him when He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" ([John 14:6](#)). They loved Him because He loved them. But even more than that, as Peter said in [Matthew 16:16](#) and Andrew said in [John 1:41](#) and Martha said in [John 11:27](#), they knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. He was the Messiah. They loved Him and accepted Him as their Lord and Savior.

V. Your Response

So, on this day celebrating Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, what do you say? Who is Jesus? Indifference toward Him really isn't a choice. In [Matthew 12:30](#) Jesus said, "If you aren't for Me, you are against Me." Do you remember what those who cried "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday did on Good Friday? They cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Their indifference had changed to a murderous hatred.

[John 3:36](#) says "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." If, like the mob in Jerusalem, you don't make a choice or if, like the Jewish leaders, you refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for your sins, then God says you are condemned. You will spend eternity in hell.

If someone could get into heaven by doing good works or having good intentions, would there be any reason for Jesus to leave all the glories of heaven and come to earth to die on the cross? I don't think so. But there is no other way to be saved from an eternity in hell—Jesus is the only Way. [Acts 4:12](#) says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." It's your choice—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ or be condemned. Where do you want to spend eternity—heaven or hell?

On a day of celebration like Palm Sunday, it doesn't seem right to end here. In [Acts 1:10-11](#) the disciples who watched Jesus ascend into heaven were told by 2 angels, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." The Book of Revelation says that He will return riding a charger. This time He will come as a warrior King with majesty and power. As Paul wrote in [Philippians 2](#), then "every knee will bow before Him." If you are one of His children, you will join heaven and earth in the greatest coronation of all time. [Turn to Revelation 5:11-14](#). What a grand and glorious day that will be. Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer, our Lord and Savior will be crowned, and we will be with Him to celebrate His victory. Let's rejoice today and every day and, as Solomon wrote in [Psalm 72:19](#), let us "praise His glorious Name forever. May the whole earth be filled with His glory!"