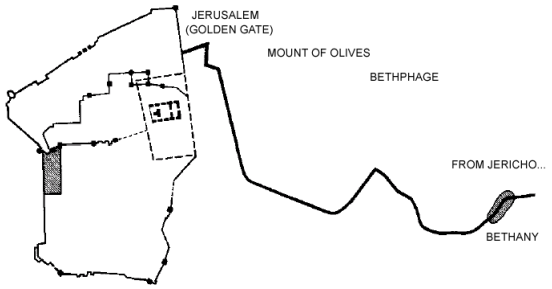
THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY



1. Scriptural Data

1.1. **Four Accounts:** Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12.

2. Geographic and Chronological Context

The account takes place in the Spring, during the time of the great Passover feast in Jerusalem, during the Jewish month of Nisan (early April on our calendar). The Passover feast was to be held on the 14th of Nisan, which fell on a Friday that year. Jesus and his disciples were making their way from Jericho to Jerusalem (17 mi west) along the Roman Road. They would travel to the top of the Mount of Olives and down through the Kidron Valley into the temple precincts in eastern Jerusalem.

2.1. **When was the triumphal entry?** In Jn 12:1, we are told that Jesus came to Bethany 6 days before Passover, which John dates as Friday[1]. In Jn 12:1-2 records that Jesus spent the night in Bethany after he had set out from Jericho, as this was the home of Mary and Martha (whose brother Lazarus, Jesus had raised)[2]. Thus, it seems that Jesus did not enter Jerusalem on the same day that he left from Jericho. From Jewish tradition, we know that the slaughter of the Passover lambs was to take place on 3pm on the 14th of Nisan, in time for the evening meal. According to John, when Jesus died on the cross at 3pm (Jn. 19:14), it was at the *same time* that the temple priests had begun sacrificing the Passover lambs (cf. 1 Cor 5:7). But, Mark and the other Gospel writers record that Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples on Thursday, the night *before* his crucifixion (e.g. Mk 14:12)[3].

One likely explanation is that due to the competing calendars in first century Palestine, Passover sacrifices were made on both Thursday and Friday. The Pharisees and Galileans reckoned days from sunrise (6am) to sunrise, while the Sadducees and Judeans reckoned days from sunset (6pm) to sunset. Therefore, if the lambs were to be sacrificed at 3pm on the 14th of Nisan, that would be *Thursday* for the Galileans, but *Friday* for the Judeans. And it would be natural for Jesus, being a Galilean (and knowing of his coming arrest) to celebrate on Thursday. Moreover, since the population of Jerusalem swelled to around 125,000 people during Passover, it would be virtually impossible for the temple priests to

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[1]He says that the Jewish leaders wanted to eliminate Jesus *before* Passover (e.g. Jn 18:28; 19:14

[2]Mark also records this meeting, albeit in a different context, in Mk 11:11-12.

[3]John also agrees that Jesus shared a "last supper" with the disciples (Jn. 13:2)

sacrifice enough lambs in the allocated 3-hour window to accommodate everyone. Thus, although there is no explicit evidence for this conclusion, it it quite plausible.

NT scholar Dr. Knox Chamblin offers the following reconstruction of Jesus' last week:

F (8th of Nisan)	Jesus comes to Bethany "six days before Passover"	Jn 12:1
S (9th of Nisan)	The anointing at Bethany	Jn 12:2-8
S (10th of Nisan)	The Triumphal Entry	Mt 21:1-11
M (11th of Nisan)	Cursing of the fig tree; cleansing the Temple	Mt 11:15-19;20-26
T (12th of Nisan)	Jesus debates in the Temple; gives Olivet Discourse	Mt 21:23-23:39; 24:1-26:1
W (13th of Nisan)	Jesus predicts his Passion	Mt 26:2; Mk 14:1
T (14th of Nisan)	Slaying Passover victims; preparations for Last Supper	Mt 26:14-16
F (15th of Nisan)	Last Supper; arrest and trial; Crucifixion; Burial	Mt 26:20-30,36-27:66
S (16th of Nisan)	Guarding the tomb	Mt 27:62-66
S (17th of Nisan)	The Resurrection	Mt 28:1-15

2.2. **The Sovereignty of Christ.** In the account, Jesus instructs his disciples to acquire a colt from what is likely Bethphage. Important is the explanation Jesus instructs the disciples to give in Mk 11:3. Along with Mk 14:12-16, this demonstrates Jesus' sovereignty over his fate. He explicitly displays the credentials of a true prophet (cf. 1 Sam 10:2)[4]. Jesus is not taken by surprise with regards to his last days (e.g. Mk 10:33-34), rather he goes so far as to provoke these events.

2.3. **The Reaction of the Crowd.** To understand the reaction of the crowd, one must consider the Jewish feelings towards Rome. In 63 BC, Roman legions under Pompey invaded Palestine and put an end to the independent Jewish state. Thus, although the Jews were long freed from their captivity under the Babylonians, the golden age foretold by the prophets never came to pass, and they were subject to the oppressive military dictatorship of the secular Roman empire. Thus, they longed for the messianic deliverer to restore the throne of David in Jerusalem, and to overthrow the Roman yoke and establish God's kingdom.

In his public ministry, Jesus shunned the pronouncement that he was Messiah (cf. Mk 18:29). However, in Mk 11, that changes. In Mk. 14:27, he applies to himself the prophecy of Zch 13 concerning the Shepherd who would be struck down. Thus, in his descent into Jerusalem on the donkey's colt, Jesus was deliberately fulfilling the prophecy of Zch 9:9-10, and provocatively claiming to be the King of Israel[5]. The *Messianic secret* was then open news, and the claim was not lost on the crowd. They greeted him in a manner reminiscent of OT accounts (c.f. 2 Kng 9:13), and the chant from Ps 118:25-26[6] demonstrated their acknowledgment that God's anointed King had come at last.

3. Practical Lessons

3.1. **Jesus is Lord.** This study demonstrates that Jesus' crucifixion was not an accident. Rather, he understood and even provoked the events that eventually lead to his death. He is not a hapless victim of circumstance but directs events towards a purposeful end (c.f. "Openness of God Theology").

3.2. **Jesus does not always meet our expectations.** The Jews expected a King (military leader) like David. But Jesus, choosing not a horse (the symbol of warfare and conquerors) or even a mule (the steed of Jewish Kings such as David himself), but rather a donkey, a lowly beast of burden, as his royal mount. He would not come to institute an earthly kingdom, but the rule of God in the hearts of men who would accept him.

[4]In 1 Sam 10:7, these predictions are described as signs that God is with Saul; similarly, these signs give the disciples reassurance that Jesus is not the hapless victim of chance.

[5]In fact, this is the only account where Jesus rides rather than walks.

[6]*Hosanna* = "God Saves"