

Jesus Rides into Jerusalem on a Donkey

Here's the **Full Breakdown** of the Triumphal Entry — Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey :



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Passages:

- Matthew 21:1–11 Mark 11:1–11 Luke 19:28–40 John 12:12–19

◆ STRUCTURE & FLOW OF EVENTS

Event	Matthew 21	Mark 11	Luke 19	John 12
Approach to Jerusalem	Bethphage & Mount of Olives	Same	Same	Not detailed
Instructions to get colt	Yes, 2 animals (donkey + colt)	Yes, 1 colt	Yes, 1 colt	No mention
Response to owner	"The Lord needs them"	Same	Same	Not mentioned
Disciples fetch the animal(s)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not stated
Cloaks on donkey & road	Yes	Yes	Yes	Palm branches
Shouts of Praise	"Hosanna... Son of David!"	"Hosanna!"	"Peace in heaven..."	"Hosanna! King of Israel!"
Quotation of OT	Zech 9:9 (implied) + Ps 118:26	Implied	Implied	Zech 9:9 quoted directly
Pharisees object	No	No	Yes – rebuked by Jesus	Yes – say, "Look, the world has gone after Him!"
Reaction of city / people	"Who is this?"	No reaction noted	No reaction noted	Crowd explains resurrection of Lazarus drew people



HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT



Mount of Olives & Bethphage

- Both villages are east of Jerusalem.
- The **Mount of Olives** overlooks the temple and is **rich with messianic symbolism** (cf. Zech 14:4).



The Colt (Donkey's Foal)

- **Zechariah 9:9** prophesied Messiah would come "**humble and riding on a donkey.**"
The mother donkey was likely brought alongside to keep the colt calm (since it had never been ridden — Luke 19:30).
- This contrasts with warhorses — Jesus enters **not as a warrior king**, but as the **Prince of Peace**.



Hosanna & Palms

- "**Hosanna**" = "Save us now!" (from Hebrew *hosha na*) — a plea turned praise.
- **Waving palm branches** was a nationalistic symbol of **Jewish victory and freedom** (cf. Maccabean Revolt).
- The crowd is treating Jesus as a **Davidic King** entering the capital to claim the throne.

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GREEK WORD STUDY

Word	Greek	Meaning
Hosanna	ώσαννά (hōsanna)	"Save, we pray!" – used in Psalm 118:25–26
Colt	πῶλος (pōlos)	A young donkey or foal
Blessed	εὐλογημένος (eulogēmenos)	"Praised, favored by God"



OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

OT Prophecy	Fulfilled in Event
Zechariah 9:9	"See, your king comes to you... gentle and riding on a donkey"
Psalm 118:25–26	"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" – sung at Passover
Genesis 49:10–11	Judah's ruler ties his donkey to a vine – possible messianic allusion
2 Kings 9:13	Cloaks spread before Jehu as he's declared king – symbolic of royal welcome



THEOLOGICAL THEMES



Jesus as Messianic King

- He intentionally fulfills Zechariah's prophecy to **declare Himself King**, but on a donkey — a symbol of humility and peace.



Timing: Passover Week

- Thousands of pilgrims are in Jerusalem.
- Jesus is presenting Himself as the Lamb of God, **entering Jerusalem days before His sacrifice**.



Tension with Religious Leaders

- The crowd's acclamation threatens the religious status quo.
- Pharisees fear Roman reaction (see  John 12:19).

NARRATIVE INSIGHTS & UNIQUE GOSPEL FEATURES

Gospel	Unique Insight
 Matthew	Mentions two animals : donkey and colt — possibly reflects Hebraic parallelism.
 Mark	Ends the scene quietly — Jesus enters the temple, looks around , and leaves — suspense builds.
 Luke	Emphasizes Pharisees' rebuke and Jesus' response: "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!"
 John	Connects the event to the raising of Lazarus , noting that many came because of that miracle. Also quotes Zechariah 9:9 directly.

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COMPARISON CHART: EMPHASIS BY GOSPEL

Focus	 Matthew	 Mark	 Luke	 John
Messianic King	Strong (Son of David)	Present	Implied	Strong (King of Israel)
Fulfillment of Prophecy	Strong	Implied	Implied	Direct quote
Pharisaic Response	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Highlighted	Highlighted
Public Reaction	“Who is this?”	Not emphasized	Not emphasized	“Went to meet Him because of Lazarus”
Symbolic Actions	2 animals	Simpler	Joyful disciples	Palm branches emphasized

MESSIANIC IMPLICATIONS

- This is Jesus' **formal presentation as Israel's King**, yet not in the way they expected.
- His entry on a donkey aligns with **peace and humility**, not military conquest.
- He is fulfilling prophecy but also **subverting expectations** — heading not to a throne, but to a cross.

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The **day** Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) carries **deep prophetic, symbolic, and calendar-based significance**. Let's break it down clearly:

*July
17

What Day Did Jesus Ride In?

Jesus likely rode into Jerusalem on the **10th of Nisan**, just **4 days before Passover**, which falls on **Nisan 14**.

- According to John 12:1 and 12:12, Jesus arrived in Bethany **six days before Passover**, and the triumphal entry occurred the **next day**, which places it at **Nisan 10**.



Why Is Nisan 10 Significant?

1. Lamb Selection Day (Exodus 12:3)

"On the **tenth day of this month** every man shall take a lamb... a lamb for each household." (Exodus 12:3)

- Nisan 10 was the day the **Passover lambs** were chosen by each household in Israel.
- The lamb would be examined over the next few days to ensure it was **without blemish**.

🔔 **Jesus enters Jerusalem on this very day**, presenting Himself as **God's chosen Lamb**, fulfilling the prophetic picture:

"Behold, the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

2. Jesus Is Publicly "Selected" by the People

- The people shout "**Hosanna!**", wave palm branches, and welcome Him as **King and Savior**.
- Just as the Israelites inspected their lambs, the religious leaders and crowds would **scrutinize** Jesus all week — questioning Him in the Temple (MT 22–23) — and ultimately **rejecting** Him.

3. Fulfills Messianic Prophecies

"Rejoice greatly... your King comes to you... lowly and riding on a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9)

- The public entry on a donkey **forces the nation to reckon with Jesus' identity**.
- Messianic expectation** was at a peak due to:
 - Passover (deliverance theme)
 - His recent raising of Lazarus (John 11)
 - Political tension under Rome

4. Sets the Prophetic Clock in Motion

Daniel 9:25 speaks of "**the anointed one**" coming **after 69 weeks of years** from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem.

- Some scholars (e.g., Sir Robert Anderson) calculate that the **69 weeks of years (483 years)** culminate **precisely on the day of the Triumphal Entry** — fulfilling the prophecy **to the day**.
"If you had known on **this day**, even you, the conditions for peace!"
(Luke 19:42, Jesus weeping over Jerusalem)
➤ Jesus **holds them accountable** for not recognizing the **prophetic timing**.



Application & Reflection

- Jesus didn't just ride into Jerusalem randomly — He fulfilled **God's calendar, prophecies, and symbols** with precision.
- He presented Himself as both **King and Sacrificial Lamb**.
- The crowds shouted "**Save us!**", but **many wanted political salvation**, not atonement.

Are we welcoming **Jesus as He truly is** — humble, sacrificial, and sovereign — or the version we prefer?

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The fact that the donkeys (or the colt) were found in **Bethphage** is **very significant**—both **geographically, theologically, and prophetically**.

Let's unpack the layers of meaning behind this:

📍 **What is Bethphage?**

➤ **Hebrew Meaning:**

- **Bethphage** (Hebrew: *Beit Paggē*) = “**House of Unripe Figs**” or “House of Early Figs”

This links directly to **fig tree imagery** used often in Scripture (especially around Jesus' final week — more on this below).

➤ **Location:**

- Small village on the **Mount of Olives**, just **east of Jerusalem**.
- Between **Bethany** (where Jesus stayed) and **Jerusalem**.
On the **road** **pilgrims took** entering Jerusalem from the east.

🌐 **Why is Bethphage Important?**

♦ **1. It's on the Messianic Route (Zechariah 14)**

“*On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem...*” (Zechariah 14:4)

- The **Mount of Olives** was associated with the **coming of the Messiah and judgment**.
- **Bethphage**, located on the **eastern slope**, was the **first step into Jerusalem** on this prophetic route.

- Jewish tradition held that the **Messiah would come from the east**, through the **Golden Gate**.

🔔 So, Jesus choosing to begin His public royal entry from **Bethphage** is **symbolically declaring**:
“I am the Messiah entering in fulfillment of Zechariah.”

♦ **2. Associated with Temple Proximity and Purity**

- According to the **Mishnah**, Bethphage marked the **outer limit of the city of Jerusalem** for certain Temple-related laws.
- For example, a **Passover lamb** could be brought from Bethphage because it was close enough to Jerusalem to still qualify.

🎯 That means Jesus:

- **Obtained the colt from a place already “set apart”** in Jewish tradition
- Was symbolically starting His **sacrificial journey** within the boundaries allowed for Passover lambs.

♦ **3. “House of Unripe Figs” — Foreshadowing Judgment**

Remember what Jesus does right after His triumphal entry?

He **curses a fig tree** for having no fruit (Matthew 21:18–19, Mark 11:12–14).

That fig tree becomes a symbol of **unfruitful Israel** — full of leaves, but bearing no spiritual fruit.

🌿 So “Bethphage” — “House of Unripe Figs” — becomes a **living metaphor**:

- Jesus begins His entry in a place symbolizing **spiritual immaturity or fruitlessness**
- He rides into Jerusalem and finds the **religious leaders just as barren** — leading to **cleansing the temple and weeping over the city**

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There are intriguing thematic and symbolic connections between Bethphage and the Garden of Eden, especially when viewed through a biblical-theological lens rather than a direct historical or geographical link.

Let's explore the connections in terms of imagery, geography, and theological symbolism:



1. Thematic Link: Fig Trees and Covering

Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:7):

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

- The fig tree is the first tree mentioned by name after the fall.
- Adam and Eve's response to sin was to cover themselves with fig leaves.
- This becomes a symbol of human attempts to cover sin without God's help.



Bethphage = "House of Unripe Figs"

- The name itself echoes the fig tree motif.
- Jesus begins His final redemptive week in a place named for immature figs — spiritually echoing immature, self-covered humanity in Eden.
- Later, He curses a fig tree for bearing no fruit (Mark 11:13) — a symbolic act of judgment on outward religion with no spiritual fruit.

Connection: Bethphage symbolically brings us back to Eden, but this time Jesus is the Second Adam, and He's about to offer true atonement, not fig leaves.



2. Geographical Typology: Eastward Movement

In Genesis:

- After the fall, Adam and Eve were expelled eastward from the Garden (Genesis 3:24).
- The cherubim guarded the eastern entrance to Eden.

In Ezekiel's vision:

- The glory of the LORD departed the temple and went east to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:23).
- Later, it returns to Jerusalem from the east (Ezekiel 43:1–2).

In the Gospels:

- Jesus approaches Jerusalem from the east, starting in Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives.
- His entry signifies the return of God's glory to His city — undoing the Eden exile symbolically.

Connection: Just as man was cast out toward the east from Eden, Jesus returns from the east to reclaim God's dwelling place — the temple, the city, the people.



3. Jesus as the Reversal of Eden

In Eden	In Jesus' Entry
Man sins and hides under fig leaves	Jesus exposes the fruitlessness of fig leaves (Bethphage, fig tree cursing)
Banished eastward	Jesus returns from the east to reclaim Eden (Jerusalem as God's dwelling)
Adam failed to obey	Jesus obeys perfectly, even to death
Cherubim block the way back	Jesus opens the way back to God (veil torn at crucifixion)

Bethphage is the symbolic gateway to this new Edenic reversal — the First Adam failed, but the Second Adam rides in humbly on a donkey to restore what was lost.

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Let's **expound on Jesus' response in Luke 19:40**, when the Pharisees told Him to silence His disciples: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." (Luke 19:40, ESV)



Immediate Context:

In Luke 19:37–40, as Jesus descends the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem, the **crowds of disciples** begin to joyfully shout praise, quoting **Psalm 118:26**:

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

This joyful outcry causes some **Pharisees** to **object**. They tell Jesus to **rebuke His followers** for calling Him "King."

Jesus replies with this powerful and poetic statement:

"If they were silent, the stones would cry out."



Greek Word Insight:

"Cry out" = *krazousin* (κραζουσιν) — this isn't a soft whisper; it's a **shouting, urgent, or piercing cry** used elsewhere in Scripture for:

- Demons shrieking (e.g., Mk 1:26)
- Crowds crying out at Jesus' crucifixion
- Bartimaeus begging for mercy

This heightens the drama: Jesus is saying the stones themselves would **shout with force** if His followers were silenced.



SYMBOLIC & PROPHETIC LAYERS

1. Creation Itself Bears Witness to the Messiah

- This echoes the idea in **Psalm 19:1**:
"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."
- Nature is not neutral. When the **Creator enters His city**, it's impossible for **all of creation not to respond**.

2. Stone Imagery in Scripture

- **Habakkuk 2:11**:
"The stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork will answer it."
 - A cry of **judgment** against injustice and sin.
- **Joshua 24:27**:
"This stone has heard all the words the Lord has spoken to us."
 - A stone is set up as a **witness** to Israel's covenant.
- **Luke 3:8** (John the Baptist):
"God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones."
 - God doesn't need the religious elite — even the **unliving** can respond to Him.

So, when Jesus says "*the stones will cry out*", He's likely doing **more than using a metaphor**. He's saying:

! Creation itself **testifies to who He is** — and if people try to suppress the truth, **God will find a witness elsewhere**.