

## THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL! – Matthew 21:1-22

The title of this message may bring to mind the movie by the same name – *not the 2008 remake, but the 1951 black and white sci-fi thriller*. It was about a humanoid alien who lands his spacecraft in Washington D.C., accompanied by an 8ft-tall robot; he gives the world a choice: **“pursue peace or maintain your course and face obliteration!”** Palm Sunday is about another “visitor” from beyond our galaxy, but the story is **not science fiction**; it’s an **inescapable reality!** As Christ entered Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago, *on the day now commonly known as Palm Sunday, He was giving mankind a choice: peace with God, through faith in Christ, or face obliteration!*

**Yet, many would rather believe in science fiction than in Jesus Christ, embracing fiction over faith.** Some have even gone as far as to deny Jesus ever existed, *even though there is far greater evidence of the historicity of Jesus than there is of aliens!* Thus, if Jesus never existed, then Palm Sunday never occurred, and consequently there is no offering for our sins! **Louis Farrakhan**, leader of the “Nation of Islam,” recently blasphemed the name of Jesus, by mocking **John 3:16** – **“God does not love this world. God never sent Jesus to die for this world. Jesus died because He was 2,000 years too soon to bring about the end of the civilization of the Jews. He never was on a cross, there was no Calvary for that Jesus.”** (Louis Farrakhan Fox News 4/4/19)

But the fact is, *despite Farrakhan, atheists, and others*, there are **several** lines of evidences that **firmly** establish the historical reality of Christ: **1. the New Testament documents 2. ancient Jewish sources 3. Roman writings 4. early antagonists of Christianity 5. the testimony of the patristic (early church fathers) writings 6. the art of the Roman catacombs 7. the impact of Christianity in history.**

German historian Adolf Harnack (1851-1930) declared that: **Jesus was so imposing that he was “far beyond the power of men to invent” and that those who treat him as a myth are bereft of “the capacity to distinguish between fiction and the documentary evidence.”** **Adolf Harnack** (as quoted in Harrison 1968, 3). **Joseph Klausner**, the famous Jewish scholar of Hebrew University (who did not accept Christ as the Son of God)

conceded that Jesus lived and exerted a powerful influence, both in the first century and subsequent thereto (1989, 17-62). <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/26-historicity-of-jesus-christ-the>

Thus, we can be certain, *historically*, Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday nearly 2000 years ago, in the same way we are certain a *historical* George Washington crossed the Delaware, on December 25, 1776! But, unlike George, Jesus is God! **Thus, on Palm Sunday He entered Jerusalem according to prophecy, authority, and power!**

**Prophecy** - Read: (v.1-9) – The Lord’s instruction to the two disciples, was according to prophecy! (v.4, 5). In (v.5) Matthew quotes a portion of **Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9** – Zechariah declared that ***the Messiah would enter the city riding on the foal of a donkey.***

People riding on donkeys was not an unusual thing, but in this case, the *circumstances* and *timing* of Christ’s entrance was a *clear* fulfillment of prophecy! **Daniel** prophesied that ***the Messiah, Savior of the world, would enter the city 483 years after the Persian King, Artaxerxes, issues a decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, (Nehemiah) in 444 B.C. (483 years according to the Jewish prophetic year of 360 days).***

Thus, Jesus entered Jerusalem not only in the 483<sup>rd</sup> year, but also, *in relationship to Passover*, on “**lamb selection day.**” According to **Exodus 12, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Abib)**, Israelite (Jewish) families, *in preparation of the Passover celebration*, were to select a lamb, *without blemish*, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month and sacrifice it on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month!

The *ancient* Jewish historian, Josephus, estimated the population of Jerusalem grew from 600,000 to around 2,700,200 people, during

Passover. He also estimated the number of lambs selected for sacrifice during Passover was around 256,500. (Josephus, Jewish Wars 6,9,3). *Yet, there was only one lamb found worthy enough to take away the sins of the earth forever!* **Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! (1 John 2:2) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Propitiation: extinguish the guilt occurred by. In Christ's prophetic entrance, is our everlasting hope and salvation!**

**Secondly**, His “triumphal entry” was according to Authority - Read: (v.6-13). When the Jews shouted “hosanna,” they were saying to Jesus, “save us now!” from Roman oppression. Biblical historian Ray Vander Laan writes: “For the Jewish people, Passover was more than a religious observance. It was the time of year when they celebrated liberation from Egyptian bondage. During Jesus’ time, they also used this opportunity to express their longing for political freedom from Rome. Jews who claimed to be messiahs had so often caused riots during Passover that the Romans brought extra troops into Jerusalem during the Passover season. The Roman soldiers did not hesitate to shed blood to keep the peace.” (Ray Vander Laan – Biblical Historian).

Thus, they saw Jesus as a political leader, *to deliver them from Roman oppression!* They missed the true meaning of Christ’s entrance. **Luke 19:41-44** - Jesus wept as He approached the city. *Given the state of many churches today, I wonder if the Lord is still weeping as He intercedes for His Church!*

**Read: (v.10-11)** There was never any question in Christ’s mind *who He was*, but the people wondered – Who is this? The people responded (v.11) – **Nazareth was a town of about 1800 people in Jesus’ day.** The Jews *despised* Nazareth, because it *housed* a Roman garrison there. **Jesus came from the south side of the tracks!**

That's why, when Philip told Nathaniel, "*We have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth...*" Nathaniel replied, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" Philip's response was, "*come and see!*" **Why?** Because to know Christ we must know Him for ourselves. **(Psalm 34:8-9) Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.** ([carm.org/did-ot-prophecy-Jesus-coming-Nazareth](http://carm.org/did-ot-prophecy-Jesus-coming-Nazareth))

People were offended, *not only by where He came from*, but also by the **authority** He exercised! Just as they are offended by Him today! **(Matthew 11:6) "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."** Yet, His authority back then, *as well as today*, is never diminished by the ignorance of others!

**The Lord demonstrates His authority, in that after entering the city He makes a *beeline* to the temple! (v.12, 13) – He did not go to Pilate's house, the seat of regional Roman authority; because He was about a higher authority! If He was here today, Jesus wouldn't run to the White House, but to His House – to the church, *the present-day temple of God, on earth!***

**(2 Chronicles 7:14) "...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."** This is God's "urban renewal" program for society: to clean up His house, to align it with His word, God's description of what we should be: "*My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer!*" We (the church) ought to be a living example to the world of what unity and peace look like!

**Lastly**, Christ's entrance was triumphant according to **Power** - Read: (v.14-17) **Notice: Jesus cleansing the temple enabled the blind and lame to be healed! (v.14). Christ's power will not be manifested in a church, a believer's life, apart from recognizing His authority! His authority and power are synonymous!**

The chief priest and scribes (religious leaders), *were indignant over the fact that the people in the temple were declaring Christ to be "The Son of David!"* This was a title reserved only for the Messiah. These religious leaders, like the world today, cared nothing about the *power* of Christ, or His benefit to the people; they just wanted the exaltation of Christ to **stop!** (Luke 19:39-40) **And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."**

**Don't let the stones steal your praise! Where the power of God is manifested you'll find perfected praise! (v.16b).** In March, State Rep. Stephanie Borowicz was invited to deliver a prayer at the beginning of the legislative day. Mrs. Borowicz, a freshman lawmaker and the wife of a Christian minister, gladly accepted the invitation. By chance, the state's first female Muslim lawmaker was scheduled to be sworn into office on the same day. There were many Muslim visitors in attendance. Also on the agenda was a prayer that was delivered by a Muslim cleric.

But it was Mrs. Borowicz's prayer that made national headlines when she invoked the name of Jesus Christ numerous times. Her prayer was called by many of her constituents and the media, as being demeaning, degrading, and Islamophobic. An Arab cleric prayed during the same ceremony, and quoted from the Koran, but no outrage was expressed toward the cleric. Mrs. Borowicz responded: ***"I don't apologize for it because that's how I pray almost every day," she said. "It doesn't matter who I'm standing in front of – I'm standing for Jesus no matter what."*** (Pennsylvania State House Representative Stephanie Borowicz)

This is perfected praise; *it's not the denigration of other religions, but rather an unapologetic declaration of who Christ is, to an indignant world!* In (v.16) Jesus was *quoting* a portion of Psalm 8:2; the entire verse reads: **(Psalm 8:2) Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.**

To You, *that is Christ*, God has ordained strength. **“Because of Your enemies.”** This is a Messianic reference. By quoting this verse, Jesus was pointing the religious leaders to the word of God, as *validation* of His Messiahship. ***But like many today, they were blinded by rage and jealousy and could not see the truth standing before them!***

***Out of the mouth of “babes” – a suckling, young child.*** Out of the mouth of the most *vulnerable, the weakest, the unlearned*, God will perfect praise! The Greek word (v.16) for **“perfected” – *katartizo* – meaning: *complete, to repair, mend, perfectly joined together.*** When we cry out to Him, *praise* Him, a mending of the soul takes place, as our hearts are aligned with the heart of God! **Psalm 22:3** *God is enthroned in the praises of His people!*

**CONCLUSION: *The day the earth stood still* – was the day God offered mankind a choice: eternal peace, or obliteration – *an eternal hell!* **(Psalm 68:24) They have seen Your procession, O God, The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.** His procession on Palm Sunday opened the way to everlasting forgiveness and life!**