

CHRONOLOGY
OF
THE PASSION WEEK

INTRO: The week we are entering is called the Passion week. The calculations of the date when we commemorate the crucifixion and resurrection are based on rather shaky principles. I read that the church decided Easter would be celebrated on the first Sunday after a full moon that falls either on or after the Spring equinox. So the date varies quite a bit from year to year. And furthermore, what we call Easter week should be called Passover week. I will share some of that later.

This year, I am to preach today, Palm Sunday; and on the day we call 'Good Friday' and resurrection Sunday. In these three messages I want to give you the chronology of the Passion week. The ministry of the Lord Jesus was a brief 2 years and a few months at most, as I see it. As I study the Gospels, Jesus made eight trips to Jerusalem. The last took place after His resurrection when He came from Galilee to Jerusalem and then ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. I want to trace the events leading to Palm Sunday from the time He began to go to Jerusalem from northern Israel, the Galilee area. This was His seventh recorded trip to Jerusalem. It also makes up part of the Passion week. By the passion we mean His suffering. When Jesus made this trip to Jerusalem, He knew He was going to die on the cross.

On the Jewish calendar, the month of Nisan is the first month of the religious year but it is the seventh month of the creation year. God gave that change when the Passover was first commemorated. So this morning we plan to go from Nisan 7, to Nisan 10, the day we know as Palm Sunday. On Good Friday we want to go from Monday to Wednesday evening, the time I believe He was crucified. Resurrection Sunday we want to go from Thursday to Sunday evening.

Now let me give you a picture of the time as it seems to me it would have been. The time is just before Passover. Passover is one of the three feasts on which all male Jews were required to go to Jerusalem. Passover is a very important feast. It is on this day the Passover lamb is

eaten. This feast began in Exodus 12 and is commemorated to this very day, although in a different manner because the Jews do not have their temple. It was destroyed almost 2000 years ago, in 70 AD.

At the time Jesus set out for Jerusalem for the Passover, people from all over Israel would have done the same. The roads would have been full of travelers. Some may have come a little later but they could not start too much later or they would not have been there on time. I imagine that many Jews not only went to the Passover, but they started out a little early and made a visit to many of their relatives who lived either on the way somewhere on the way or in Jerusalem itself. I have no doubt there were family gatherings all over Jerusalem at Passover, and not much was more special to many of them than to spend Passover with friends and relatives. One week

Go to the book of Luke (read 13:31-35). It seems to me that from this time until Jesus gets to Jerusalem will be three days travel. Go to Luke 17:11 for another interesting verse (read). There is a difficulty raised here. You don't go to Jerusalem through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. You would go from Galilee through the midst of Samaria. As I see it, Jesus is on the west side of the Jericho River. Jerusalem is south of where He is. But to go to Jerusalem, He will go north, then cross to the east side of the Jordan River and go south to Jericho and then up to Jerusalem. (Map)

When He arrives at Jericho, we are in my estimation at Wednesday, Nisan 7, and He is to die Wednesday, Nisan 14, the day of Passover. And so we begin at Wednesday Nisan 7 on the solar calendar according to my reckoning.

I. WEDNESDAY NISAN 7

Let me just say at the outset of our journey that all the dates I give, I give from my own studies. Other preachers and teachers may see it differently. But we begin our chronological journey on Nisan 7th. On Nisan the 14th Jesus will be crucified. He knows that. So let us begin our journey by going to Matthew 19 (read 1-2). Now notice in 19:1 that the route they are taking to Jerusalem is beyond the Jordan. The Jordan River flows from the Sea of Galilee, which is 685 feet below sea level, to the Dead Sea which is some

1300 feet below sea level. So the journey is downhill for a long way.

We go now to Luke 18 (read 31-34). We are told that Jesus took His disciples aside on the road. I suppose that they are traveling in a crowd, and He does not want the crowd to overhear what He is saying. From here they keep traveling down and Jesus will cross the Jordon River to enter Jericho, where He will stay for the night so let us read Luke 18:35-19:10 (read).

II. THURSDAY NISAN 8

Well, He stayed night there and the next day, Wednesday, Nisan 8, Jesus continued His trip to Jerusalem. From Jericho to Jerusalem is a distance of about 24 kilometers as the crow flies. According to Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary it lies about 7 miles north and 5 miles west of the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is about 53 miles north. Jerusalem, where Jesus is going on this day, is 2500 feet above sea level and so the path was up hill all the way. That is why the NT speaks about going UP to Jerusalem. I would guess that it is a day's journey and they would have arrived at Bethany, later in the day. Now it was a custom for the Jews traveling to the feasts to sing from the Jewish song book, the Psalms. And as they traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, they would sing Psalms 113-118.

So let us go to John 11 (read 11:55-12:1). We are now 6 days before the Passover. Now I recommend that the day they arrived at Bethany was Thursday evening, almost a week before His crucifixion. If that is so, the next day is Friday, Nisan 9, and I expect Jesus spent Friday at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Alfred Eedersheim thinks Jesus arrived on Friday and they had made this meal the same day. I think He arrived Thursday because when the people find out that Jesus has arrived, many want to see Him and so a plan is made to have the Sabbath meal together with Jesus. I think this would have taken more time than Eedersheim allows.

III. FRIDAY NISAN 9

However that may be, that is not so important. When we come to this meal, we are on Friday, Nisan 9. And what is important is that Eedersheim too thinks that the meal they had together was the special Sabbath meal which would have taken place sunset Friday evening and it will have been a very special Sabbath meal. Eedersheim says, "The day after was the Sabbath, and 'they made Him a supper.' It was the special festive meal of the Sabbath. The words of St. John seem to indicate that the meal was a public one, as if the people of Bethany had combined to do Him this honour, and so share the privilege of attending the feast." Well, we find this in John 12:2 (read).

Now it is further interesting where this meal took place. Turn to Matthew 26 (read 6-7). Now let me insert something here. This event is recorded out of its chronological order in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Only John gives it in its chronological order. It is given out of order in the other three Gospels to explain why Judas betrayed Jesus. This event had taken place earlier and it was earlier that Judas fell into Satan's snare.

But nevertheless, several important pieces of information are given to us here. First, this special Sabbath meal took place in the home of 'Simon the Leper' as Matthew 26:6 told us. Now, what I expect is that the story is that Simon was not now a leper. Simon had been a leper and Jesus had healed him. And Simon, out of his gratitude wants the honor of having the Sabbath meal in his home. It may also have been that Simon's house was one of the bigger ones in Bethany. It may even be that Simon is that one leper of 10 that was healed and came to Jesus and thanked Him, we do not know. But I am convinced that Simon was healed of his leprosy by Jesus.

It is further of interest, that here, in this place, the woman with the alabaster box of ointment anointed Jesus with it and He said it was for His burial. So let us read what happened (Matt. 26:8-16). So you see, that from this meal onward Judas set about to destroy Jesus.

IV. SATURDAY NISAN 10

Well, as I see it, this meal began the Sabbath and so the next day Jesus would have rested in Bethany. If that is so, the events of this day are unrecorded. So these are some of the events leading up to the day we commemorate today as Palm Sunday. We go now to the events of Palm Sunday.

What I have to do at this point is to introduce a very great difficulty in the Gospel accounts and give a brief explanation of it. Here is the difficulty: Jesus had the Passover meal with His disciples one day. We believe He died when the Passover lambs died and the Passover was kept, but that did not happen until the next day. How could He commemorate the Passover one day, when the Passover was not until the next day?

Now, you may never have pondered that apparent contradiction, but it is enough to cause one to question the inspiration of Scripture, and numerous explanations have been given. In the harmony of the Gospels I have done, I say that the New International Bible Dictionary gives this possible explanation of the Passover in volume IV page 953: "Many consider this equation a secondary development. Others believe that the Last Supper was an anticipated Passover in view of the impossibility of Jesus' celebration with His disciples on the proper day. But with the discovery that the Qumran community followed a solar calendar (IQS 10:1-8), the old theory of two ways of reckoning the Passover has been revived. On the basis of a solar reckoning, 14 Nisan always fell on the Jewish day that corresponds to our Tuesday at sunset to Wednesday at sunset. We know that it was highly respected in some quarters (Jub. 6:29-38; 1 En. 82:4-6; IQS 10:1-7). What we do not have is explicit evidence from the Gospels of Jesus' or the disciples attitude to it."

I believe that due to this difference among the Jews, the leaders have decided to let both groups commemorate the Passover according to their view of which calendar was right, thus Jesus could commemorate the Passover with His disciples one day and die on the Passover the next day. All of that is a very, very complicated study. But we can conclude that it is not a contradiction.

Now, we have been following the solar calendar, and on Saturday we were on Nisan 10. We will now switch to the solar calendar. It appears Jesus followed the lunar calendar, but the majority followed the solar calendar. So His crucifixion took place on Wednesday evening, of that calendar.

V. PALM SUNDAY (Sat. Nisan 10 on Solar Calendar)

So, we have come to Palm Sunday as we call it. I want to read to you what happened, by putting together all the information given in the Gospels of this account from the harmony of the Gospels I have done. You may just sit back and listen to the whole account as recorded in the four Gospels. I have changed the KJV English to modern English by taking out the 'thees' and the 'thous' and here it is:

⁴And ⁵it came to pass, ⁶on the next day ⁷when they ⁸drew ⁹near to Jerusalem, ¹⁰when he ¹¹was come ¹²near to ¹³Bethphage ¹⁴and Bethany, ¹⁵at ¹⁶the mount called ¹⁷the mount of Olives, ¹⁸then ¹⁹he sent ²²two ²³of his ²⁴disciples, ²⁵And ²⁶said ²⁷to them, ²⁸Go ³⁰your way ³¹into the village over against you: ³²and, ³³in which at your entering ³⁵as soon as you have entered into it, ³⁶you shall find a donkey tied, and a colt ³⁷tied, ³⁸with her: on which no man has ever sat. ⁴Loose ⁵him, ⁶and bring ⁷him ⁸here ⁹to me.

¹⁰And if any man ¹¹say to you, ¹²Why do ye loose him? ¹³this is what you shall say to him, "It is because ¹⁷the Lord has need of ¹⁸them; ¹⁹and immediately he will send ²⁰them here. ²²All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Tell the daughter of Sion, 'Behold, your King comes to you, meek, and sitting upon a donkey, a colt the foal of a donkey.

²³And ²⁴they that were sent ²⁵went ²⁶their way, ²⁷and did as Jesus commanded them; ²⁸and found ²⁹the colt tied by the door outside, in a place where two ways met, ³⁰even as he had said to them, ³¹and they untied him.

³²And ³³as they were loosing the colt, ³⁴certain of them that stood there, ³⁵the owners thereof, ³⁶said to them, "Why are you untying ³⁸the colt?" ³⁹And they said ⁴⁰to them even as Jesus had commanded: "The Lord has need of him", ⁴²and they let them go. ⁴³And ⁴⁴they ⁴⁵brought ⁴⁶the donkey, and ⁴⁷the colt ⁴⁸to Jesus, ⁴⁹and

⁵⁰they ⁵¹cast ⁵²their garments upon the ⁵³colt, ⁵⁴and they set ⁵⁵Jesus ⁵⁶on it ⁵⁷and he sat upon him. ⁵⁸And ⁵⁹as he went, ⁶⁰a very great multitude ⁶¹spread their ⁶²clothes ⁶³in the way.

⁶⁴And ⁶⁵when he was come near, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, ⁶⁶many people ⁶⁷that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ⁶⁸cut down branches ⁷⁰from ⁷¹the ⁷²palm ⁷³trees, ⁷⁴and strawed them in the ⁷⁵way ⁷⁶and went forth to meet him. ⁷⁷And ⁷⁸the ⁷⁹whole ⁸⁰multitude ⁸¹of the disciples, ⁸²they ⁸³that went before, and ⁸⁴they ⁸⁵that followed, ⁸⁶began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ⁸⁷cried, ⁸⁸saying, ⁸⁹Hosanna ⁹⁰to the Son of David: ⁹¹Blessed ⁹²is he ⁹³that cometh in the name ⁹⁴of the Lord; ⁹⁵Blessed ⁹⁶be ⁹⁷the kingdom of our ⁹⁸father David, ⁹⁹the King ¹⁰⁰of Israel ¹⁰¹that comes in the name ¹⁰²of the Lord. ¹⁰³Hosanna ¹⁰⁴peace in heaven, and glory ¹⁰⁵in the highest. ¹⁰⁶And Jesus, when he had found the young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, your King comes, sitting on a donkey's colt.

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things to him. The people therefore that were with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Do you not perceive how you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said to him, Master, rebuke your disciples. And he answered and said to them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong to your peace! but now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and encompass round about, and keep you in on every side, and shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation.

Zechariah 9:

Now I would like to give you a number of prophecies that were fulfilled on this day. Exodus 12, the first Passover had the instructions to take in the lambs that would be slain on the 10th of Nisan, which we have as Palm Sunday. I would like to give you Psalm 118, of which we read in the Palm Sunday account a moment ago. We could go to Daniel 9, where according to Sir Robert Anderson, the 69th of the 70 weeks was fulfilled on this very day we know as Palm Sunday.

But, what I want to do is take you to Zechariah 9, to a most incredible prophecy. We go to chapter 9 (read 9). To get the context of Zechariah 9:9 we need to consider the ninth chapter. In this chapter, verses 1-7 is a prophecy of the destruction of Israel's enemies. Now the fulfillment of these prophecies took place by a man named Alexander the Great. In 333 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered a Persian army under Darius the III at the Battle of Issus. From there he came down the Mediterranean coast and then went into fulfillment Zechariah 9:1-8 (read).

This prophecy was given in about 518 BC. Verses 1-8 speaking of Alexander the Great were fulfilled 285 years later. The fulfillment of verse 9 took place about 608 years after the prophecy was given. That is over 100 years more than it is from the time of Menno Simons to us.

Alexander first destroyed Hadrach and Damascus, cities of Syria (1-2a). Damascus today is the capital of Syria and still harbors a deep hatred for Israel. Then Alexander moved down to Tirus and Sidon, cities of Phoenicia (2b-4). When the Philistines to the south of Phoenicia heard what Alexander did to the Phoenicians they were petrified. Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron and Ashdod mentioned in verses 5-7, are cities of the Philistines.

Now I want you to notice a very significant verse. You see Alexander the Great has conquered around Jerusalem and will now move inland towards Jerusalem. It is here that we read of God's protection of Jerusalem in verse 8a. Here this prophecy says, "I will camp around My house (the temple in Jerusalem), Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns." Fred Hartman, of the magazine *Israel My Glory*, comments like this in his commentary on Zechariah,

"Alexander, with his massive armies, had passed by Jerusalem on the way south to make war against the Philistine cities. He had demanded that tribute be paid, which Israel's high priest refused to do. With the Philistines on his mind, Alexander and his conquering armies bypassed Jerusalem. Once the Philistine area had been secured, the thought of taking the city of Jerusalem returned to the general's mind. His swift-moving military machine would now go up to Jerusalem-so he thought" end quote (Zechariah: Messenger of the Messiah's Triumph, 89).

But God has something to say about that in verse 8 in these words, "I will camp around My house..." Alexander, when he had defeated Gaza headed for Jerusalem for he was angry with the High Priest's disobedience to him. I have given you some of this history before, but I thought it would be good for me to give you more of what Josephus said about this prophecy in his history of the Jews. Let me read to you from Josephus, who wrote about 2000 years ago. I have put Josephus' words into modern English, so my quote is not precisely following his words. So, here we go:

"When Alexander the Great had conquered Gaza, that place we hear so much about today, he hurried to get to Jerusalem. When Jadaa, the High Priest in Jerusalem heard that, agony and terror fell over him. He did not know how he should meet this formidable army or what he was to do. Alexander was angry with him because of his disobedience to him. So he called on the people to pray to God and to offer sacrifices and offerings to Him in order that God might save the nation of Israel and deliver them from this great peril.

"After the prayers and sacrifices, God appeared to the High Priest in a dream. He was instructed to take courage and beautify the city and open its gates. That is not exactly what is usually done, but God so ordered it. The people were to dress in white garments, and the priests would wear their normal priestly clothing. They were not to be afraid of something going wrong, because God would protect them. That is what we read earlier in Zechariah 9. When the High Priest woke up from his sleep he greatly rejoiced and told the people everything God had told him. And so they did what God had instructed and they waited for the army of Alexander the Great.

"When the High Priest heard that Alexander was not far off, he went out in procession with the priests and all the people dressed in white. Josephus says, "The procession was venerable and different from that of

other nations. And when they reached a high point from which they could both see Jerusalem and the temple, and Alexander's army advancing, they waited at a place called Sapha.

"The Phoenicians and the Chaldeans could hardly wait with anticipation, because they thought they would have liberty to plunder the city and torment the High Priest to death. Josephus says Alexander's anger against the High Priest 'fairly promised' them this. But when they got close, the reverse happened. Josephus writes, "...for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereupon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest."

"And all the Jews saluted Alexander and crowded around him. And the kings of Syria and the rest were amazed at what Alexander had done. Josephus says, "They thought him disordered in his mind." Only one man dared to approach Alexander about this. His name was Parmenio. And he said, "How come you adore the High Priest when everybody else adores you?" And according to Josephus, Alexander said, "I did not adore him, but that God who had honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream in this very clothing, when I was at Dos in Macedonia. When I was there I was considering how I might obtain the dominion of Asia. And this man exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea, for he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion of the Persians. And since I have seen no other in that clothing, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in the dream, I believe that I bring this army under divine conduct. And I believe I shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what was in my own mind."

And Josephus says, "And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest's direction and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests" (Josephus 244).

Now, it is amazing that God had prophesied all that in these brief words in Zechariah 9:8, "I will camp

around My house!" But, in comparison and in great contrast, because of that visit by Alexander the Great, the Lord then prophesied what would happen on Palm Sunday, and here is the significance of all this. In Zechariah 9:9 the Bible declares, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey."

I do not know on what color horse Alexander the great approached Jerusalem, whether it was a white charger or his black Beucepholous. You see, Alexander's dad had a black beauty which they could not break. Finally he wanted to kill the horse. But young Alexander figured out that the horse was afraid of its own shadow. And one day Alexander set out to break this beautiful horse. He faced it into the sun so it would not see its shadow and Alexander the great broke this black beauty. But he did not call it Black Beauty; he called it Beucepholous. I understand that Alexander the Great rode this horse for 11 years. However, Hartman in his commentary says this, "From the days of Solomon on, no dignitary rode on anything but a strong, well-built white charger" (91).

But listen to the Lord's prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey." What a contrast! And that is what we read before happened on Palm Sunday.

The story goes on like this in John 12:12, "On the next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was come to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him." And on this day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, in contrast to Alexander the Great who rode on his great charger.

And as Jesus came close to Jerusalem, He said in Luke 19: "41-44 "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not

leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."
And what day was this day that Jesus called, 'especially this your day', the day of their visitation? Sir Robert Anderson has calculated many years ago, that this day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, is the very day the 69 weeks of Daniel's 70 weeks run out! If they had only known!

Now let me read a little more for you from Josephus, when Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem. When Alexander had come into the city of Jerusalem, Josephus says, "And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, supposed that he Himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favours they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh years" (Josephus 244).

Alexander the Great interpreted the prophecy of Daniel right, but the Jews of Jesus day missed Daniel's; the Psalmist's prophecy and Zechariah's prophecy!

CONCL: Well, we started our message in Northern Israel, in the Galilee area. We followed Christ on the other side of the Jordan from Galilee to Jericho where He crossed the Jordan River to go into Jericho. Here He stayed night at the home of Zacchaeus. Then the next day He made His way up to Jerusalem, traveling upwards in altitude some 3000 feet. Here, just before arriving at Jerusalem He stayed with Mary and Martha. The next day He had a special Sabbath meal at Simon's house, and then spent a restful Sabbath at Bethany.

The next day before He entered Jerusalem He sent His disciples for a donkey and then He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. It is an incredible day. People are spreading the red carpet for Him as He comes off the slopes of the Mount of Olives and enters Jerusalem through the sheep gate. Once in Jerusalem, He heads for the temple and there He heals and teaches while the children chant, "Hosanna to the Son of David" and the religious leaders look on, green with envy. They are the ones that should have center stage, but here it is that prophet from Nazareth that holds the attention of all.

Well, on the day we call Good Friday, we want to cover Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the passion week. Then on Resurrection Sunday, Lord willing, we will follow the chronology of the Passion week from Thursday sundown until Sunday evening. If you would like an assignment, find all the information the Gospels give from Thursday sundown until Sunday evening.