

Pilgrims with Palms

Revelation 7:9-10

Palm Sunday is a traditional celebration with Scriptural foundations. What is the meaning of this day? Why is it important? What should catch our attention as we think about this special day, one week before Resurrection Sunday? Is it enough to merely enjoy the greening of the grasses with the anticipation of the coming growing season? Should we be content with new Easter clothes or eggs or candy?

About our Lord's Table (which we will celebrate together this week), we are told: **"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show [or proclaim] the Lord's death 'til He come!"** (1 Corinthians 11:26). The title "Palm Sunday" springs from a celebration called *"The Triumphal Entry"* (John 12:12-19). As Jesus entered into Jerusalem, the people **"took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord"** (John 12:13). On Palm Sunday, we remember this earthly celebration. But wait! There's more! According to our text in Revelation 7:9-10, this celebration with palms will be carried on, right into Heaven!

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-10)

Unto God and unto the Lamb

In our recent studies, we discovered the astounding prophecy recorded in Revelation 5:13, **"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever"** (Revelation 5:13)

In that passage, all creation will join to praise the Lord upon His heavenly throne and to praise the Lamb. So, in Revelation 7:9-10, this praise is also directed to the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb. As we have studied in recent messages, it would be a horrible sin to worship any other than God Himself. This passage, along with many proclamations in the Gospels and Epistles, is a powerful proof of the deity of Jesus Christ. He is the Second Person of the Godhead. Even pagan peoples – far from God – will come to recognize Him along with God the Father (Revelation 6:16). About the coming new heaven and new earth, John wrote, **"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it"** (Revelation 21:22). So repeatedly and emphatically, we are shown that both the Father and the Lamb are equal Persons within the Godhead. And one day, believers will rejoice in Their Presence for all eternity! This is why Jesus Christ comforted His disciples in the way He did in John 14:1, **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."** Jesus explained it this way, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him"** (John 14:6-7). If you have a personal

relationship with God, the Son, then you have a personal relationship with God the Father. (John later declared this joyously in 1 John 1:1-4).

Why Wave Palm Branches?

Palm branches were a significant part of a celebration that occurred after the seasonal harvest. In Leviticus 23, Moses instructed the people about their special feast days, including pilgrimages to Jerusalem. During the Feast of Tabernacles (sometimes called "The Feast of Booths") the people were to camp out to rejoice over the recent harvest (Leviticus 23:33-43). As part of that celebration, Moses commanded them, **"And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days"** (Leviticus 23:40). When Solomon constructed the Temple in Jerusalem, he had the artisans engrave depictions of palm trees on the walls of the Temple: **"And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, within and without"** (1 Kings 6:29). So it would have been perfectly natural for the people to take up palm branches as part of another celebration as Jesus entered into Jerusalem. According to several verses in the Gospels, the people cried, "Hosanna" (a Hebrew expression meaning, "save now").ⁱ Note that connection in our text: the redeemed saints of God in Heaven are portrayed, **"...before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb"** (Revelation 7:10). At the Triumphal Entry, the people carrying palm branches cried, "Save now!" In Heaven they will praise God saying, "Salvation to our God!" Have you every cried out to the Lord to save you?

Pilgrims with Palms

The term (and later the name) "Palmer" was used in the Middle Ages to describe a pilgrim who had been to the Holy Land. Those returning from their pilgrimage often brought back palm fronds. That term reminds us of an important question that each of us ought to ask himself. Hebrews 11:13 frames the issue for us perfectly. Referring to those who had true Biblical faith, it says: **"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"** (Hebrews 11:13). Those Old Testament saints had not lived to see the Messiah who would die for their sins and rise again; they had not received that fulfillment of God's promises. But they believed that God's promises were substantial: they received them, were persuaded by them and embraced them. And what was the evidence that they had done so? They **"confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth!"** So here is the question: Are you a stranger and pilgrim on this earth, or do you love the evil of this world as a tourist and partaker? Those who have true Biblical faith are transformed into strangers and pilgrims; as citizens of heaven, they look for the new heaven and the new earth. Our text in Revelation 7 illustrates this beautifully.

What Kind of a King?

On a Palm Sunday during the pandemic, we studied Matthew 21:1-11, including the events that led up to the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.ⁱⁱ ([Click here for that message.](#)) If you wish to be

among those who worship the Lord in Heaven, then you must decide now: *What kind of a King are you seeking?* In that passage, we saw 7 characteristics of God's promised King:

- ✚ Jesus is the King who obeyed His Father's will, at all costs, knowing full well what it would cost Him.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who assumes that you will follow Him as He obeys His Father's will.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who expects that you will obey Him even if what His commands seem unusual.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who assumes that He has the right to use any of your possessions at any time.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who has already fulfilled many of the Biblical prophecies about Him.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who controls nature itself – even the nature of the most obstinate beasts.
- ✚ Jesus is the King who was rightly praised by the Scriptures, even when those using those Scriptures did not honor Him as Lord and God.

When you embrace Him as your King, He will transform you into a stranger to this earth – a pilgrim and “palmer” longing for Heaven.

Pilgrims from All Nations

In a recent message entitled, [“The Meek and Mighty Lamb”](#)ⁱⁱⁱ we noted how Charles Darwin's “Origin of the Species” laid the foundation for much of modern racism. His original volume, published in London in 1859 included the subtitle, *“Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.”* Darwin believed that some races were more highly evolved than other races.^{iv} Woodrow Wilson institutionalized this false teaching during his presidency. Yet the Bible teaches that God created man. Even the *Preamble* to our *Declaration of Independence* includes the words: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”* All human beings were created equal, endowed by their Creator. Writing in Acts, Dr. Luke recorded the words of the Apostle Paul speaking at Mars Hill in Athens. Paul proclaimed the Creator who, **“...gives to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth ...”** (Acts 17:25-26). As you can see, this teaching is a rebuke to all racists. For an excellent statement rejecting racism and the racial supremacism in some sectors of our society, please see the statement below from the Foundation Baptist Fellowship International (the publishers of Frontline magazine).

And now, on this Palm Sunday, we rejoice in what we might call, “The Rest of the Story!”

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-10)

In Heaven, there will be a magnificent multitude – more than any human being can count – from every nation, every tribe, every people group and every language! Here is the great objective of our missions program at Calvary. We love to support missionaries who are ministering all over the world.

And one day, clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness and with palms in our hands, we will praise the Lord who has redeemed men and women, boys and girls from every race and every language. Together we will proclaim, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" Cry out to Him today to ask Him to save you from your sinful condition. Jesus lived the righteous life that you and I should have lived; then, in our place, He died the cruel sinner's death that every one of us deserved. He rose again to demonstrate that He will save all that come unto God by Him.

Position Statement of the Foundation Baptist Fellowship International

21:02: REGARDING CHRISTIANS, RACE AND ETHNICITY

"The FBFI believes that all people, whatever their skin color or physical characteristics, are equally the offspring of God's first created humans, Adam and Eve, and are thus made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). We recognize that providentially God has allowed for great human diversity relating to individuals and ethnicities, establishing language groups (Genesis 11:1-9) and the "bounds" of men's "habitation" that they might seek Him (Acts 17:26-27). He has also provided for social relationships between persons, setting "the solitary in families" (Psalms 68:6) and allowing the development of many "kindreds," "tongues," "tribes," and "nations" (Revelation 7:9).

The FBFI rejects ethnic discrimination both past and present, affirming that while there is but one human family, race has historically been used inappropriately to create division and to abuse individuals from various ethnicities. The FBFI condemns any use of the Scriptures to justify discrimination and rejects any racial theory that elevates one ethnicity above all others or denigrates any ethnicity below another, recognizing that the sin of partiality (Leviticus 19:15; James 2:1-13) is rooted in man's sinful pride.

As descendants of Adam, all humans are born in sin and alienated from God (Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22). Therefore, the FBFI rejects as unbiblical any social theory that denies universal, inherent human sinfulness, that views racism or ethnocentrism as the root of all social and personal evil or that denies that every person needs redemption from sin regardless of their perceived race or ethnic background.

Believing that man's standing before God is solely on the basis of his relationship with Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the FBFI affirms that the only biblical divide between humans relates directly to their standing before God (Galatians 3:28)."

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ⁱ Henry George Liddell et al., A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 2040. This cry, "Hosanna" was directed to Jesus repeatedly, Matthew 21:9,15, Mark 11:9-10, John 12:13.

ⁱⁱ See "What Kind of a King?" accessed at <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/what-kind-of-a-king/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See "The Meek and Mighty Lamb" accessed at <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/the-meek-and-mighty-lamb/>

^{iv} See Steven Rose, "Darwin, Race and Gender" National Library of Medicine, EMBO Rep. 2009 Apr; 10(4): 297-298.

Accessed at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672903/> "[Darwin] was also convinced that evolution was progressive, and that the white races—especially the Europeans—were evolutionarily more advanced than the black races ..."