

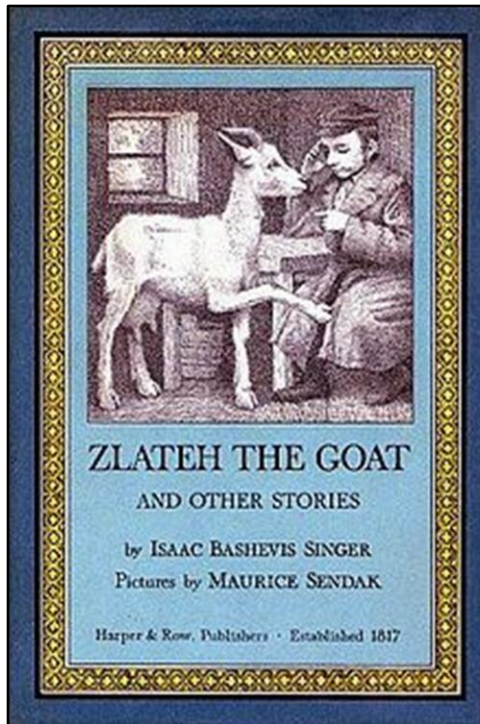


Palm Sunday

The Story Behind the Story

Luke 19:29-42,
Daniel 9:24-25

The last time that I spoke, I talked about my favorite resurrection story. I thought that this time, I should tell you about Palm Sunday and how it relates to one of my favorite prophecies.



CHILDREN are as puzzled by passing time as grown-ups. What happens to a day once it is gone? Where are all our yesterdays with their joys and sorrows? Literature helps us remember the past with its many moods. To the storyteller yesterday is still here as are the years and the decades gone by.

However, before we get into the scripture, I want to read to you part of the forward to a book I acquired recently. The book is called, "Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories." It was written by Isaac Bashevis Singer.

"CHILDREN are as puzzled by passing time as grown-ups. What happens to a day once it is gone? Where are all our yesterdays with their joys and sorrows? Literature helps us remember the past with its many moods. To the storyteller yesterday is still here as are the years and the decades gone by.

In stories time does not vanish. Neither do men and animals. For the writer and his readers all creatures go on living forever. What happened long ago is still present.

It is in this spirit that I wrote these tales. In real life many of the people that I describe no longer exist, but to me they remain alive and I hope they will amuse the reader with their wisdom, their strange beliefs, and sometimes with their foolishness."

Reading this foreword made me wonder if this is how many people see the stories in the Bible. Are the people and events that we read about real to us, or do we think of them as fables?

Peter, in 2 Peter 1:16 says:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

I for one am very touched by the absolute feeling of reality of the Biblical accounts. When I am reading Exodus, I am always struck by the realization that somewhere in that group of murmuring Jews was my ancestor. When God led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He was starting a journey for my family that would lead from Sinai to this pulpit.

As we go through this study today please think about the incredible journey God used to bring you here today. And realize what a mighty God we serve.



Now, let's start our study by reading the Palm Sunday story as told in the Gospel of Luke chapter 19 verses 29 to 42. This is the familiar story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. I am reading from the ESV translation, Luke chapter 19:29-42:

29 When he drew near to Bethphage (bayth-fag-ay') and Bethany (bay-than-ee'-ah), at the mount that is called

Olivet, he sent two of the disciples,

30 saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever

yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.

31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'"

32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.

33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

34 And they said, "The Lord has need of it."



35 And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

36 And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.

37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives— the whole multitude of his disciples

began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen,

38 saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”

40 He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”



41 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,
42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for
peace! But now they are
hidden from your eyes."



Before the events of Palm Sunday, Jesus told His disciples not to tell people that He was the Christ (that is the Messiah). You may remember in Matthew 16:13, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

The disciples answered, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Then Jesus asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus tells Peter he is blessed because the Father had revealed who Jesus was to Peter. And then, after speaking about the church and the kingdom, Jesus in Matt 16:20 “...strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.”

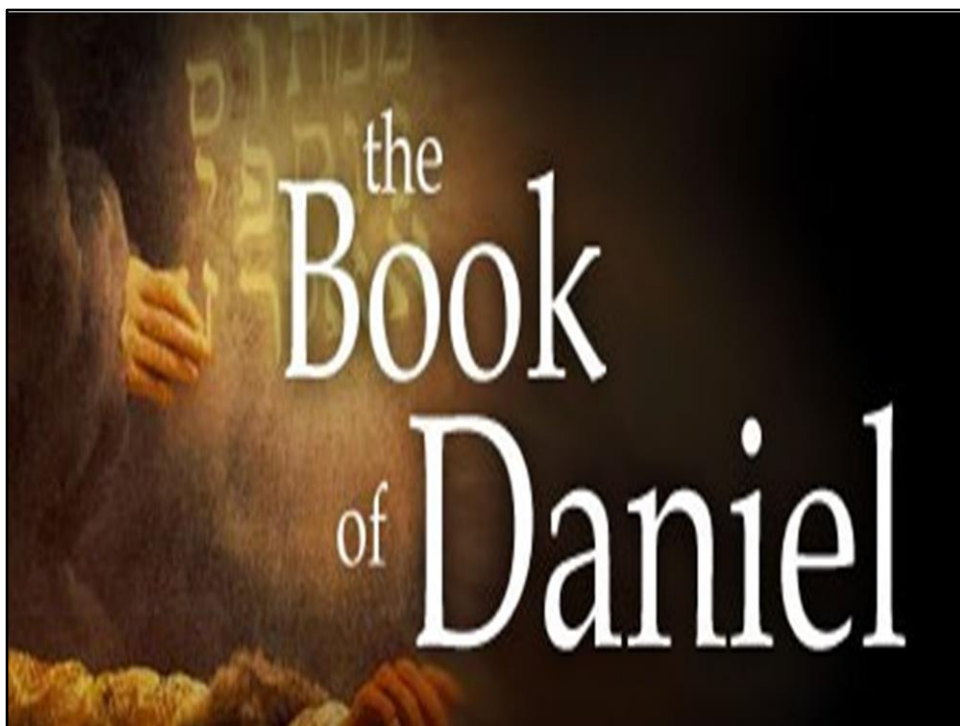
Why didn’t Jesus, who we know is the Messiah, want His followers to tell this to other people? That is the significance of the Palm Sunday story. Because, on that day, Jesus not only accepted the praise and worship of Him as the Messiah; He orchestrated it!

Apparently, Jesus was only willing to be recognized on that particular day. Even how Jesus was revealed was significant. He rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey, fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

In Mark 11:9, it says, “And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” This comes from Psalm 118:26. Hosanna or **yasha**’ (yaw-shah’) **’anna**’ (awn-naw’) in Hebrew means “Save now!”

So, why was that day so special? What was it about that particular day that caused Jesus to single it out? And why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem?

That, as Paul Harvey used to say, is the rest of the story!



To find the answer to our Palm Sunday questions we need to turn back the clock almost 500 years from Palm Sunday to the Old Testament book of Daniel.

Daniel is one of the great books of the Bible. The prophecies in Daniel are fundamental to the understanding of God's plan, and they show the incredible accuracy of biblical prophecies.

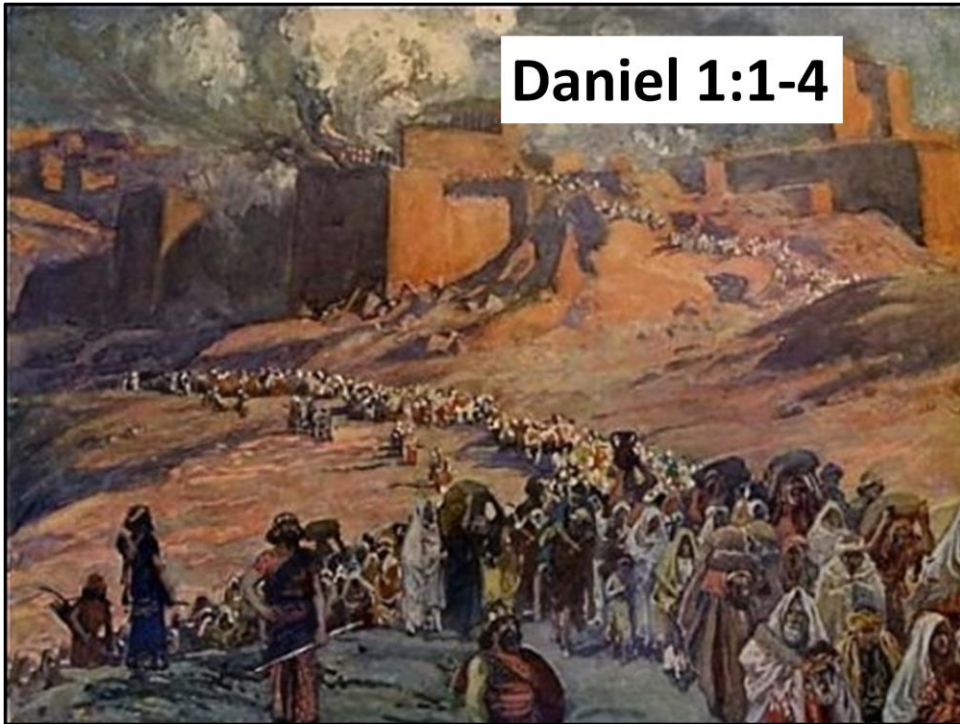
The prophecies in the book of Daniel are so accurate that some have said the book was actually written after the life of Jesus. However, the book of Daniel appears in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is a translation into Greek of the Jewish scriptures that was done by 70 to 72 Jewish scholars approximately 300 years before Jesus Christ. So it would be a pretty significant miracle to have a book, which was written after Christ, appear in a translation 300 years before Christ.

Prophecy is one of the aspects of the Bible that sets it apart from other religious texts. In fact, approximately, 27 to 33 percent of the Bible is prophecy. Jesus actually fulfilled over 300 prophecies at his first coming.

The Apostle Peter, defending the truth of God's Word, in his second epistle Chapter 1 verse 19 says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"

Of all of the prophecies in Daniel, I have always been amazed by Daniel 9: 24 – 27. This is commonly referred to as the "Seventy Weeks" prophecy. For **this** message I will only present the first part of this prophecy (i.e. Dan 9:24-25).

On occasion, when I have had the opportunity to witness to a Jewish person, I have asked them if they know that the scriptures tell exactly the day the Messiah (or mashiyach in Hebrew) will come. Invariably, they do not know that the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-25 gives this information.



Let's start with a little background.

Daniel was a young man who was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jerusalem in 605 B.C. While in Babylon, Daniel interpreted dreams and was given prophecies from God, which resulted in Daniel being an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar and subsequent kings.

As we begin chapter 9, Daniel is living in the first year of the reign of Darius (daw-reh-yaw-vaysh' in Hebrew) of the Medo-Persians (about 537 B.C.). Daniel is reading the prophet Jeremiah and comes to the understanding that the "desolations of Jerusalem" will take 70 years (Jer 29:10-14). Daniel also realizes that 68 to 69 years have now passed. Hence, Daniel begins to confess the sins of the Jewish people to the LORD and to ask the LORD to restore Jerusalem.



Daniel 9:21

**while I was
speaking in
prayer, the
man Gabriel,
... came to me**

In response to Daniel's prayer, the LORD sends the angel Gabriel to relate to Daniel the prophecy found in chapter 9 verses 24 to 27. The overview of the prophecy is given in verse 24:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

This prophecy is directed at the Jewish people, "thy people", and to Jerusalem, "thy city". Gabriel gives six amazing purposes that God intends to accomplish:

- (1) **To finish the transgression** – in Hebrew the word "transgression" is עֲשָׂה (peh'-shah), which means to revolt or rebel
- (2) **To make an end of sins** – in Hebrew the word for sin here is חַטָּא (khat-taw-aw'), which means an offence and its penalty
- (3) **To make reconciliation for iniquity** – the word used here for iniquity in Hebrew is אֲוֵן (aw-vone'), which means moral evil
- (4) **To bring in everlasting righteousness** – here the Hebrew word used is צֶדֶק (tseh'-dek), which means the right: naturally, morally, or legally
- (5) **To seal up the vision and prophecy** – in Hebrew this means to make an end, חֶתֶם (khaw-tham'), of the prophetic revelation יִצְוֶה (khaw-zone')
- (6) **To anoint the most Holy** – the Hebrew for holy is קֹדֶשׁ (ko'-desh), which means a sacred place or thing.

God will complete all of these incredible purposes in a total of 70 "weeks".

“SEVENTY WEEKS”

- ✗ to finish the transgression, and
- ✗ to make an end of sins, and
- ✗ to make reconciliation for iniquity, and
- ✗ to bring in everlasting righteousness, and
- ✗ to seal up the vision and prophecy, and
- ✗ to *anoint the most Holy* [Jesus Christ].

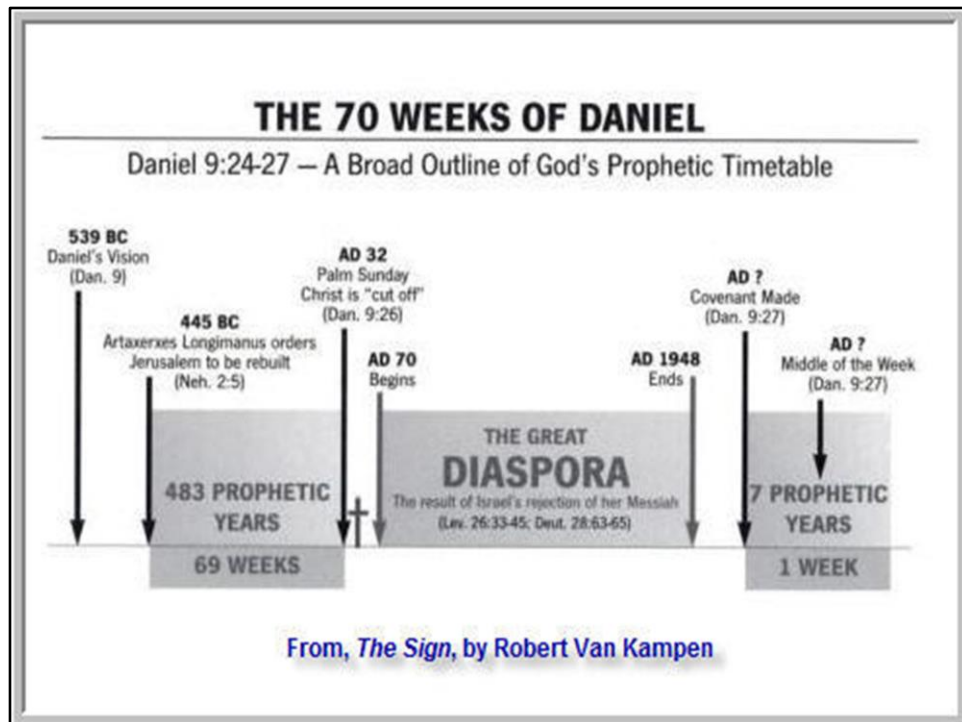
Daniel 9:24

The term “weeks” used in verse 24 is the Hebrew word “shav-**oo**’-ah”, which literally means “sevens” or “sevened”. In this usage, the term refers to weeks of years or seventy seven-year periods. Hence, 490 total years are required to complete this prophecy. The years refer to 360-day years, which were the length of years used in that time period.

Verses 25 through 27 give more detail about the seventy weeks. Verse 25 is our focus for the rest of this study:

“Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

This verse directly states that the Messiah will come after 69 weeks or 483 years (i.e. $7 * 69$)! (As Christians we recognize that this is referring to the Messiah, Jesus’, **first** appearance.) 483 years equates to 173,880 days using the 360-day year. Therefore, if we can determine the start date, then we can establish the date when the Messiah will come!



Sir Robert Anderson in "The Coming Prince" gives a detailed explanation and calculation for verse 25 starting with the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was the cup bearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus in the palace in Babylon.

Nehemiah speaks with one of his brethren from Judah, who had recently come to Babylon, regarding the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah is very distressed to hear that the remnant that was left was greatly afflicted, and the walls were broken down and the gates were burned.

Nehemiah then appears before king Artaxerxes, and the king notices that Nehemiah has a sad expression, which was not permitted. Nehemiah was the wine-taster for Artaxerxes. So, having a bad or sad face might be unnerving for the king who would drink the wine next.

Artaxerxes then asks Nehemiah what is wrong, and Nehemiah, after a quick prayer, explains about Jerusalem. Artaxerxes then asks what Nehemiah wants the king to do. And Nehemiah petitions to have the king let Nehemiah and a group go to restore Jerusalem.

In response, Artaxerxes gives the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah further describes the troublous times in which the streets and walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt.

Using the dates given in Nehemiah, Sir Robert Anderson fixes the start date for the prophecy as March 14th, 445 B.C. Counting forward 173,880 days results in April 6th, 32 A.D. as the end date.

This is the day, a Sunday, that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. In fact, this is the **only** day that Jesus allowed His followers to proclaim Him the Messiah! There was no line of would-be Messiahs riding on donkeys into Jerusalem that day ... only Jesus.



Jesus then wept over Jerusalem in Luke 19:42 "Saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." Remember that the religious leaders told Jesus to rebuke His disciples who were in fact the witnesses of the fulfilling of God's prophecy to Daniel.

Jesus held the people, in particular the religious leadership, responsible for knowing that day that had been foretold! There are several examples in the Bible where the Lord punished the nation of Israel for the sins of their leadership. The most famous example is where God brought a plague on the nation when King David numbered the people.

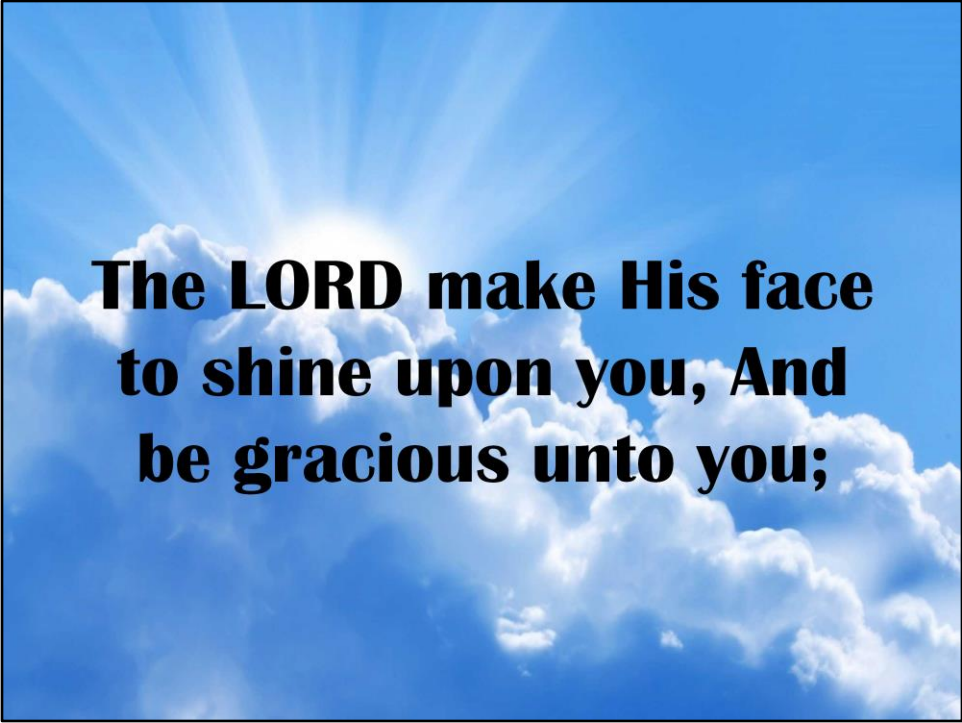
Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He knew the tribulation that would come to Israel and the Jewish people for their unbelief. And history records the Jewish diaspora and all of the evil that befell them, including the Holocaust.

And yet, the Word makes it clear that the LORD has not abandoned Israel. The prophecies in Ezekiel and elsewhere in scripture foretold the return of the Jewish people to the land. Today, we are witnesses that the prophecies of the LORD are true as He has fulfilled His promises to restore the people to the land.

At this point you may be asking yourself, "What happened to the 70th seven-year period?" That is a great question! But, that will have to wait until another time.

Let's pray.





**The LORD make His face
to shine upon you, And
be gracious unto you;**



**The LORD lift up His
countenance upon you,
And give you peace.**

