

Jesus Didn't Come To Earth So That We Could Celebrate "Holy Week"

Before my words are cast aside as heresy and before the reader refers to me as blasphemous, let me explain. I am not anti-holiday, nor is this article intended to push some religious law to restrict anyone from celebrating a holiday. Don't get me wrong, there are definitely some so-called holidays, in which, my family and I have chosen not to participate. There is freedom in Christ to celebrate. This article is intended to make us re-think "why" we celebrate a certain day over another. We are not going to be able to cover everything pertaining to the so-called Holy Week in this article, so feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Around this time of year "Holy Week" is referring to the days leading up to Christ's resurrection. Palm Sunday is one of the days of the so-called Holy Week. It is known as the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The gospel of Matthew records the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 as having been fulfilled, "Now this took place so that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: "SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, HUMBLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A DONKEY.'"" (Matthew 21:4-5 NASB). Mark's account points out that the people considered Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as the prophesied kingdom coming, "Blessed *is* the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:10 NASB). While the Apostle John writes that the people recognized Jesus as King, "...Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, indeed, the King of Israel!" (John 12:13 NASB). All three of these accounts are accurate and neither contradict each other. The question is then, are we missing something?

Luke brings out something, that is rarely taught, especially on what the religious world calls Palm Sunday. In Luke chapter 19, we read, that as Christ approached Jerusalem, He "wept over it" (Luke 19:41 NASB). Jesus goes on to explain why, "...If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace..." (Luke 19:42 NASB). He continues to say that they will be destroyed in verse 43 & 44. Why? "...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44 NASB). They didn't recognize what type of King Jesus is, nor what type of kingdom He would rule. They thought Him to be a king that would deliver them from the power of the Romans. We could apply to the Jewish people, what the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians, "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even as I weep, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who have their minds on earthly things." (Philippians 3:18-19 NASB). The Jews thought Jesus to be an earthly king, a king of their own appetite. Jesus says that His "...kingdom is not of this world.." (John 18:36 NASB). Do we recognize this to be true?

Good Friday is another day that is observed in the so-called Holy Week. Matthew chapter 12 has some interesting facts about Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. While answering the scribes and Pharisees when they requested a sign, Jesus said that the sign of Jonah would be

given (Matthew 12:39). He continues, "...for just as JONAH WAS IN THE STOMACH OF THE SEA MONSTER FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:40 NASB). We read in the book of Luke, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 24:1-3 NASB). My question is, how is it possible for Christ to be in the tomb 3 days and 3 nights, if He died on Friday and rose on Sunday? The answer is it isn't possible. Yet, there are religious leaders and people who have created a holiday based on incorrect facts. My biggest problem with this isn't necessarily that they celebrate it on the wrong day, but that fact that their focus is completely opposite to what Christ wants. We will mention this again at the end of the article.

Easter Sunday is the last day of the so-called Holy Week that we will look at in this article. I'm not going to address the pagan roots of the name Easter, but the focus, or rather the incorrect focus.

In John's gospel, after Jesus had resurrected from the grave, we read about His conversation with Mary Magdalene. He said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" (John 20:17 NASB). Why did Jesus tell her to stop clinging to Him? Was it because she could defile Him? The answer is no. First of all, if she couldn't defile Him by touching Him prior to His death, why do we think that she could, after His resurrection? Second, we have recorded later in the chapter, "Then He said to Thomas, "Place your finger here, and see My hands; and take your hand and put it into My side; and do not continue in disbelief, but *be* a believer." (John 20:27 NASB) We see that Jesus had no problem with them touching Him. Why then, does He tell Mary to stop touching Him? The answer is, He didn't want her to cling to the physical Jesus. He wanted her to cling to the glorified Christ, ascended to heaven and sitting on His throne.

We must understand, that even though the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were physically different events, the Bible views them as one major event. Consider this, Jesus dying on the cross said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30 NASB). Did that mean that He could have stayed dead? Was there no need for Him to resurrect? No! In order to complete God's plan, He had to resurrect. He simply is stating the fact that, when He died, there was no one who could stop God's plan now. Not even the devil could stop Him. Because He died, He was going to be buried. Because He was buried, He was going to rise again. Because He rose again, He was going to ascend to heaven and sit on His throne. The Bible views them as one major event.

We know that God had promised David, that He would seat, one of his (David's) descendants on his throne forever. Peter, in the first gospel sermon in Acts chapter 2, quotes Psalm 16:8-11, when he talks about Christ's, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Peter points out that, David, wasn't speaking about himself because his grave was still there. Peter speaking of David says, "So because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to

seat *one* of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.” (Acts 2:30-31 NASB). Jesus taking His seat on David’s throne forever was in connection with His resurrection, not His second coming. When He ascended 40 days after He rose from the grave, He took His seat on the throne. Why isn’t the day that Christ ascended to heaven and sat on His throne, a holiday in the United States? To be fair, there are some who observe Ascension Day, but it doesn’t receive the publicity that other so-called holidays receive. Paul writes, “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display *of them*, having triumphed over them through Him.” (Colossians 2:15 NASB). No wonder the world wants us to focus on things other than Christ on the throne. Christ on His throne is a threat to the world and its rulers. Both political and religious leaders lose control when we turn our focus to serve the one true King. When we focus on physical things, we are easier to control, because our treasure can perish. When we focus on eternal things, an eternal kingdom and we choose to serve the King above all kings, we are secure when things get difficult physically, because we have a lasting possession. (Hebrews 10:32-34, Matthew 6:19-21)

There is freedom in Christ to celebrate, but what is our reason to celebrate? Do we focus on Jesus simply riding into Jerusalem, or do we recognize Him as the King He truly is? Is it more important to us that we celebrate the day that He died, or the day He ascended? Is the physical Jesus easier for us to cling to, than the glorified Christ on His throne? Do we prefer traditions of men, over God’s way of setting our minds on eternal things?

The choice is ours. What will you choose?

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