



### UNIT DESCRIPTION

“Of the biographies I have read, few devote more than ten percent of their pages to the subject’s death—including biographies of men like Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, who died violent and politically significant deaths. The Gospels, though, devote nearly a third of their length to the climactic last week of Jesus’ life. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John saw death as the central mystery of Jesus.

“Only two of the Gospels mention the event of his birth, and all four offer only a few pages on his resurrection, but each chronicler gives a detailed account of the events leading to Jesus’ death. Nothing remotely like it had happened before. Celestial beings had slipped in and out of our dimension prior to the Incarnation (remember Jacob’s wrestler and Abraham’s visitors), and a few humans had even waked from the dead. But when the Son of God died on planet earth—how could it be that a Messiah should face defeat, a God get crucified? Nature itself convulsed at the deed: the ground shook, rocks cracked open, the sky went black.

“For several years, as Holy Week approaches, I have read all the gospel accounts together, sometimes back-to-back, sometimes interwoven in a ‘harmony of the Gospels’. Each time I feel swept away by the sheer drama. The simple, unadorned rendering has a grinding power, and I can almost hear a bass drum beating dolefully in the background. No miracles break in, no supernatural rescue attempts. This is tragedy beyond Sophocles or Shakespeare.

“The might of the world, the most sophisticated religious system of its time allied with the most powerful political empire, arrays itself against a solitary figure, the only perfect man who has ever lived. Though he is mocked by the powers and abandoned by his friends, yet the Gospels give the strong, ironic sense that he himself is overseeing the whole long process. He has resolutely set his face for Jerusalem, knowing the fate that awaits him. The cross has been his goal all along. No, as death nears, he calls the shots.”[1]

[1] Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, © 1995 by Philip Yancey, Zondervan Publishing House, pp. 187-188.



# TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U8 #1 1st-3rd Grade • Feb. 25, 2024

## Concept

Jesus is God's promised Messiah.

## Goal

Students will learn that Jews expected an earthly king to save them from the Roman rule. Jesus was God's promised Messiah who came to give them something far greater, eternal life.

## Passage

Matthew 21:1-22

Key Verse: "... See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey..." Matthew 21:5 (NIV)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b>Activity Stations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adventure Bible Handbook, Zondervan Publishing</i></li> <li>• <i>The Baker Bible Dictionary for Kids</i></li> <li>• <i>International Children's Bible Dictionary</i></li> <li>• <i>The Awesome Book of Bible Facts, Sandy Silverthorne</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Learning Activity #1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>3 sets of letters (M-E-S-S-I-A-H) with questions on back for "Messiah Relay"</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity Stations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strips of thin, green paper ½" wide and 11" long, 1/student</li> <li>• Strips of thin, green paper ½" wide and 14" long, 1/student</li> <li>• Palm leaf craft instructions [1]</li> <li>• Rulers</li> <li>• "What's the Significance?" worksheet, 1/student</li> <li>• Pencils</li> </ul> <p>[1]<a href="http://www.kidssundayschool.com/Gradeschool/Crafts/1craft08.php">http://www.kidssundayschool.com/Gradeschool/Crafts/1craft08.php</a></p>

### \*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

# Background Information/Teacher Helps

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It is the Passover week, a few brief days before the crucifixion. Coming to Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of His disciples to bring a donkey and colt to Him for a long-prophesied entry into Jerusalem. Zechariah 9:9 had spoken of it: Your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Matthew 21:5

The King humbly rode into Jerusalem on a common donkey. He could have ridden into Jerusalem as a mighty conqueror on a stallion, a symbol of power and triumph, as most monarchs would have done. But He chose a donkey, which symbolized His coming in gentleness and peace. What a fitting symbol in light of Jesus' entire ministry, for we know that He came as a gentle, obedient Servant who was willing to lay down His life for our sins. "We have a tendency today to see gentleness as weakness...The fact of the matter is that only in Christ's kind of servanthood do we find true spiritual strength. Gentleness is not weakness. Compassion is becoming to the King." [1]

On this day the crowds, in anticipation of Jesus reigning as their King, honored Him with their shouts of praise. They cried, "Hosanna," a Hebrew greeting meaning "Save now, we beseech you." It was as if they were shouting, "Hail to the King; save us, O King." From what did the Jews expect Jesus to save them? Their expectation of the Messiah was a political leader, visible and powerful, who would reign here and now. He would be a national Messiah, one who would appear as a man and assume the kingship over Judah to deliver it from its oppressors. Excited by Jesus' ministry, miracles and the fact that He had just raised Lazarus from the dead a short time before, they were ready to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

Things didn't happen as they expected, though. When Jesus was arrested and the Jewish leaders announced they would punish Him for blasphemy, the people turned against Him. They just didn't understand the purpose and plan of God's redemption.

Christ teaches here what God is really like. He came, not to conquer His enemies, but to die for them. He didn't come to supply all material needs, but to give eternal life.

[1] Richards, Lawrence O. The Teacher's Commentary, Commentary on Matthew 21, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books, 1987, p. 578.

## Incorporation Lg. Group

### Activity Stations

- **Research – “What’s the Significance?”**
  - **Instructions:** Give each student a worksheet and the provided reference books. Follow the directions on the worksheet.
- **Craft – Cross**
  - **Instructions:** Out of green paper cut 1 strip 11"x ½" and 1 strip 14"x ½." Using the shorter strip, make a mark at the ½," 1," 1½," 4," and 9" points. Fold the paper neatly at each point (as shown in the diagram provided in your supply bag). Flatten the paper to make the crossbeam but make sure there is a gap through the middle of the little folds. Take the second strip of paper and tuck one end into this gap. Don't let it come through the other side. Take the other end of the long strip and loop it over the crossbeam. Push the end through the gap behind the first end and pull tightly. Measure about 2½" along the strip from the gap and make a fold. Push the long end back through the gap leaving the card up to the fold above the crossbeam. Your cross is now complete. A diagram will be provided in your supplies.  
<https://www.kidssundayschool.com/132/gradeschool/palm-leaf-cross.php>

## Introduction Lg. Group

Life was very hard for the Jewish people. The Roman government made them pay heavy taxes to support the Roman army and to build their cities and roads. Not only were they heavily taxed, but they were also oppressed. The Romans treated the Jews unjustly and persecuted them with excessive force. Because of the extreme cruelty they endured, the Jews were barely able to survive. They cried out to God to deliver them from their oppressors the way He had delivered their ancestors from Egyptian oppression hundreds of years earlier.

So what do you think the Jews expected God to do? (Send the Messiah to defeat the Romans, rescue them from their oppression, and triumph over the world.)

Let's get into our lesson.

Jesus and His disciples went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Thousands of Jews from all over Israel were in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem is recorded in all four gospels. Let's read Matthew 21:1-5.

Matthew 21:5, "... See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey..." is our key verse. It is a quote from Zechariah 9:9 which was written hundreds of years before Jesus lived.

## Transition

## Lesson Lg. Group

Kings on donkeys symbolized peace. This fulfilled prophecy symbolized Jesus' coming in gentleness and peace. The Jews weren't expecting a gentle, peace-loving King. What were they expecting? (They were expecting a conquering King to save them and to give the Romans what they deserved.)

(Ask a student to read Matthew 21:6-11.) This is called the Triumphal Entry. On that day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, someone yelled out, "Hosanna!" Then another person shouted out, and soon a whole crowd of people became very excited. Hosanna means "save us." Many of these people had not seen the miracles Jesus performed, but had heard about them. They also heard that He raised Lazarus from the dead. He had to be the Messiah that God had sent to rescue them from the cruel Romans. Could He be the promised King? Surely He must be—He just raised a man from the dead! They thanked and praised God that the King for whom they had waited for hundreds of years was finally here. As more and more people shouted these shouts of praise, the excitement grew.

What a way for Jesus to enter Jerusalem! The people shouted, "Hosanna" and laid their coats on the ground. In those days the people had parades to celebrate victory at war and to honor the people who won the war. Kings rode on horses to symbolize wealth, power and triumph. The people showed honor by waving palm branches while they shouted "Hosanna." And they laid their coats on the road to make a carpet on which to ride.

Why did the crowds respond with such rejoicing when they saw Jesus? They had heard about Jesus and believed He was a prophet and/or a miracle-worker. From childhood, the Jews were taught God's Word, so they knew about God's promised Messiah. A messiah is someone who comes to save somebody from something. The Jews were waiting for their Messiah to come save them from the cruel Romans. They expected the Messiah to take over as King of Israel. Many people believed that Jesus was the Messiah and would take over. As Jesus went toward Jerusalem, many people heard that He was on His way. So they went to meet Him. They were looking for a "god" to fit their own ideas of the kind of Messiah they wanted. Remember the key verse, "... See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey..." (Matthew 21:5). He knew that even though He rode in on a donkey, they still did not understand that He was a suffering servant rather than a reigning king.

Does it surprise you that the same people who worshipped Jesus as the Messiah were the same ones who yelled "Crucify Him" only a few days later? What happened? Why did they change their minds?

## Lesson Continued

Maybe they thought that Jesus was not going to be powerful and defeat the Romans, so they figured He must not be the Messiah they were waiting for. Maybe the Pharisees who feared a revolt persuaded them to turn against Him. Maybe looking at Him in His weakness made them question that He could be their Messiah. Does that mean that Jesus wasn't really the Messiah, the one God sent to save them? (No.) The Bible tells us He was the Messiah. So why didn't He save the people from the Romans?

### Good News

The problem was that the people did not understand what Jesus came to save them from. They expected Him to save them from cruel people. But He came to save them from something far worse. He came to save them from the judgment of God by dying on the cross to pay for their sins. Jesus died to save them from their sin and to bring them into a relationship with God. And He did that not only for the people in Jerusalem at that time, but for all people for all time. That means He also died for each one of you and for me. You, too, can have a relationship with God now and be saved from God's judgment when you die. You can pray silently to God or out loud and tell God that you want Jesus' death to pay for your sins. When you do this, you can be certain that you will become God's child (John 1:12) and that you will live in heaven with Jesus someday. It is a wonderful gift that you will never be sorry you received! If you tell God you believe that Jesus died to pay for all your sins and you want His death to count for you, He will instantly forgive you and you will be His child forever. Pretty awesome!

### Transition

Let's play a game to see how much you learned today.

### Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

#### Game - Messiah Relay

**Instructions:** Divide students into teams. Each team forms a group at one end of the room and is given the 7 letters that spell MESSIAH. On each letter is a question which the team, as a whole, must answer correctly to a teacher before a player can run to the other end of the room and put it on the wall. The team to complete the word first is the winner.

### Transition

Let's get into our small groups.

### Learning Activity#2 Sm. Groups

The Jews' expectation of Jesus was wrong. We also have wrong expectations of Him. Even today we have our own ideas of what God should be like and how He should treat others and us.

- Do you think that if you had been in Jerusalem at that time, you would or wouldn't have made the same mistake the Jews made?
- Don't we want God to save us from all our problems and give us whatever we want? Why doesn't He?

## **Learning Activity# 2 Continued**

Let's pray. Jesus didn't come to tell us that we are such good people that we deserve to go to heaven, but to tell us that we are evil sinners who need to ask God for forgiveness. Let's ask Him to show us more and more what He is really like and how He is different from what we think.