

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

AD TE LEVAVI

To You I Lift Up

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Roberto E. Rojas, Jr.



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Matthew 21:1-9 ESV

Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle around AD 50. This is the Triumphal Entry of Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19).

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

- This text is recorded by all four Evangelists and is read twice in the course of a year: Advent 1 and Palm Sunday. Note also that the text for Trinity 10 takes place immediately after this.
- Bethphage was a village on the Mount of Olives around 1 mile from the temple in Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives was named in the prophecy of the Lord's advent (Zechariah 14:4).
- The two disciples are unidentified (see Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1).
- This all took place on the first day of the week, Sunday, on the 10th of Nisan (see John 12:1, 12). On this day, the paschal lamb was selected for the Passover (Exodus 12:3).
- "As the time for Christ's passion grew ever more closer, He also wanted to draw closer to the place of His suffering; accordingly, on Palm Sunday He left Bethany (where He shortly before had raised Lazarus)..." (Johann Gerhard, *Postilla* 1:2).

² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

- Jesus is intentionally fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.
- While fulfilling the prophecy, Jesus, in His omniscience, makes a prophecy regarding the location of the donkey, her colt, and any opposition they would face in retrieving them.

³ "If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."

- The Lord's need of them is also recorded in Mark 11:3 and Luke 19:34.
- God commands the disciples to speak His Word (see Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Isaiah 8:20; Jeremiah 28:9; Amos 3:7).
- Israelites typically rode donkeys; horses were for military use (Joshua 11:4, 6).

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

- The Holy Spirit caused these words to be written through His prophet, Zechariah. Jesus fulfills this direct Messianic prophecy (Zechariah 9:9).
- "To fulfill" can also mean "to complete." This is one of the nine times that Matthew speaks of the events in Christ's life "fulfilling/completing" the Old Testament (1:22; 2:15; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 27:35).

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⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

- “Daughter of Zion” refers to the Church, the believers who yearn for redemption, not the citizens of Jerusalem in general.
- “Behold, your king is coming to you,” is the heart of the Gospel also confessed in the Nicene Creed: “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate,” etc. (see Philippians 2:6-8).
- Christ’s Humiliation – Christ voluntarily refrains from the glory that belonged to Him. This does not lie in the act of incarnation. It lies in the act of becoming a *lowly* man enduring what was far beneath His majesty by exposing Himself to all kinds of ill treatment and the discomfort of a lowly life.
- “That means this King does not come in order to condemn the people and throw them into hell. Moses comes to judge and accuse (John 5:45). The devil comes, too, in order to accuse, judge, and kill... But this King does not come to condemn but to help, to redeem from sin, to pardon and forgive. That is the way we should perceive him, and it is to such a King that we are called. God grant that we embrace and hold tightly to him. Amen.” (Martin Luther, *Luther’s House Postils: First Sunday in Advent: First Sermon*–1532)

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.

- The disciples learned to submit to His Word (see Matthew 4:18-22; John 2:5; John 21:6).

⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

- “He sat on them”–This refers to Jesus sitting on their clothing, not both donkey and colt at once.
- Christ sits on the colt, not on its mother. It is to be a colt “on which no one has ever yet sat.” (Luke 19:30) For sacred purposes, animals were always selected which had never been used (Numbers 19:2; Deuteronomy 21:3; 1 Samuel 6:7). Even more, the cart on which the Ark of the Covenant was brought forward was pulled by “two cows which had never been yoked.” (see John 19:41)

⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

- The crowds laid their cloaks on the road just as it was done at the inauguration of Jehu (2 Kings 9:12-13).
- Branches and palms were used for religious processions (see 1 Macc. 13:51; 2 Macc. 10:6-7).

⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

- “Hosanna” literally means, “help” or “save, I pray.” It is most prominent in the *Hallel*: Psalms 113-118. The *Hallel* was a collection of Psalms for morning prayer. The crowds sang out Psalm 118:25-26, specifically. This part of the *Hallel* was sung during the feasts of the Passover and of the tabernacles, Israel’s great Jubilee, when the people walked around the altar with the branches of the palm and trees (Leviticus 23:40). These were also the words of the Great Hosanna, the song of praise used in the time of the second temple when the people passed around the altar of the sacrifice, during the feast of the tabernacles.
- “Name of the Lord” – See the 2nd Commandment, the 1st Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, the Sanctus (LSB 195), and the hymn “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (LSB 334).
- “[Hosanna] is like saying, ‘Ah, dear God, grant success and salvation to the Son of David for His new kingdom! Let Him ride in the name of God, that it may be blessed and have prosperity. Let Him alone be our King. Let Him alone reign in us by His holy Gospel, and let us be His foal, and go with Him into the heavenly Jerusalem, into eternal life! Amen.’” (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 18)



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