

The Prophetic Significance of Palm Branches This Sunday

It's Palm Sunday, and you enter the church doors, dressed for the occasion. With a smile, a cheerful greeter hands you a palm branch before you enter the sanctuary.

If you are like me, you have probably wondered what the actual significance is behind the palm branch for this particular celebration day. While we all may be aware of the role that palm branches played in Jesus' crucifixion, there are a lot of historical truths surrounding this important topic: the palm branch. So, why the palm branches? I would like to help answer that question and explain how it can be applied to our lives today.

The book of Zechariah describes how the King of the Jews would come onto the scene as the triumphant, victorious leader.

"Rejoice greatly, o daughter of Zion! And cry aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king is coming comes to you; he is righteous and able to deliver; he is humble and riding on a donkey, a colt, the offspring of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

It is no secret how the Jewish people would see their newly revealed king one day. As Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem, the Jewish people were looking for the one who would deliver them from the Roman Empire. They no longer wanted the corrupt Roman rulers to dictate their Jewish lives; they were looking for the coming Messiah.

When you connect Zechariah 9:9 to the Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (Sukkoth), which normally happens sometime in late September or October, we discover an even greater reason for some to wave and throw branches before Jesus while riding the colt. It was common practice during the Festival of Tabernacles/Booths (Sukkoth) for Jewish people to celebrate by

living in temporary booths, performing animal sacrifice and rejoicing with leafy branches (palm branches). This specific festival was a reminder of God's faithfulness in the wilderness and also God's soon promise for the Messiah to come. It was during this celebration (Feast of Tabernacles) that they would declare aloud the following verses from Psalm 118: "Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you" (Ps. 118: 25-26, NIV).

"Lord Save us" translates to "Hosanna." When you apply this to the passage below, you get a greater picture of what was really happening that triumphant day Jesus arrived in Jerusalem.

They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments on it. And He sat upon it. Many spread their garments on the street. And others cut down branches off the trees and scattered them on the street. Those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: