

# FESTIVAL INFO

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## PALM SUNDAY

**Palm Sunday** is a Christian [moveable feast](#) that falls on the [Sunday](#) before [Easter](#). The feast commemorates Jesus' [triumphal entry into Jerusalem](#), an event mentioned in each of the four [canonical Gospels](#).<sup>[3]</sup> Palm Sunday marks the first day of [Holy Week](#). For adherents of [Nicene Christianity](#), it is the last week of the Christian solemn season of [Lent](#) that precedes the arrival of [Eastertide](#).<sup>[4][5]</sup>

In most liturgical churches, Palm Sunday is celebrated by the blessing and distribution of [palm branches](#) (or the branches of other native trees), representing the palm branches which the crowd scattered in front of Christ as he rode into [Jerusalem](#). The difficulty of procuring palms in unfavorable climates led to their substitution with branches of native trees, including [box](#), [olive](#), [willow](#), and [yew](#). The Sunday was often named after these substitute trees, as in **Yew Sunday**, or by the general term **Branch Sunday**.

Many churches of mainstream [Christian denominations](#), including the Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Moravian and Reformed traditions, distribute palm branches to their congregations during their Palm Sunday liturgies. Christians take these palms, which are often blessed by clergy, to their homes where they hang them alongside [Christian art](#) (especially [crosses](#) and [crucifixes](#)) or keep them in their Bibles or devotionals.<sup>[6]</sup> In the period preceding the next year's Lent, known as [Shrovetide](#), churches often place a basket in their [narthex](#) to collect these palms, which are then ritually burned on [Shrove Tuesday](#) to make the ashes to be used on the following day, [Ash Wednesday](#), which is the first day of Lent.

In the accounts of the four [canonical Gospels](#), Christ's [triumphal entry into Jerusalem](#) takes place a week before his [resurrection](#).<sup>[9][10][11][12]</sup> Only the Gospel<sup>[13]</sup> of John shows a timeline of the event, dated six days before the [Passover](#) ([John 12:1](#)).

Before this, Jesus talked to two of his [disciples](#), taking to himself the [ancient Greek](#) word of Lord (Κύριος (translated [Kýrios](#)), [Mark 11:3–4](#); [Luke 19:3](#); [19:34](#); [Matthew 21:3](#)) written with a [capital letter](#) in the original text, as a [proper noun](#).<sup>[14]</sup>

The [raising of Lazarus](#) is mentioned only by the Gospel of John, in the previous chapter. The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) and the [Eastern Catholic Churches](#) which follows the [Byzantine Rite](#), commemorate it on [Lazarus Saturday](#), following the text of the Gospel. In fact, the Jewish calendar dates begin at [sundown](#) of the night beforehand, and conclude at [nightfall](#).<sup>[15]</sup>

The [Gospel of Matthew](#) claims that this happened that the prophecy might be fulfilled of: [Zechariah 9:9](#) "The Coming of Zion's King – See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey".<sup>[16]</sup> It suggests that Jesus was declaring he was the [King of Israel](#).

According to the Gospels, Jesus Christ rode on a donkey into Jerusalem, and the celebrating people there laid down their cloaks and small branches of trees in front of him, singing part of [Psalm 118: 25–26](#) – Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.<sup>[12][9][10][11]</sup>

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The symbolism of the donkey may refer to the Eastern tradition that it is an animal of peace, unlike the horse which is the animal of war.<sup>[1]</sup> A king would have ridden a horse when he was bent on war and ridden a donkey to symbolize his arrival in peace. Jesus' entry to Jerusalem would have thus symbolized his entry as the [Prince of Peace](#), not as a war-waging king.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Thus there have been two different meanings (or more levels of [biblical hermeneutics](#)): an historical meaning, truly happening according to the Gospels, and a secondary meaning in the symbolism.

In [Luke 19:41](#) as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he looks at the city and weeps over it (an event known as *Flevit super illam* in [Latin](#)), foretelling his coming Passion and the suffering that awaits the city in the events of the destruction of the [Second Temple](#).

In many lands in the ancient [Near East](#), it was customary to cover in some way the path of someone thought worthy of the highest honour. The [Hebrew Bible](#) ([2 Kings 9:13](#)) reports that [Jehu](#), son of [Jehoshaphat](#), was treated this way. Both the [Synoptic Gospels](#) and the [Gospel of John](#) report that people gave Jesus this form of honour. In the synoptics the people are described as laying their garments and cut [rushes](#) on the street, whereas John specifies fronds of palm (Greek *phoinix*). In Jewish tradition, the palm is one of the [Four Species](#) carried for [Sukkot](#), as prescribed for rejoicing at [Leviticus 23:40](#).

In the [Greco-Roman culture](#) of the [Roman Empire](#), which strongly influenced Christian tradition, the [palm branch was a symbol](#) of triumph and victory. It became the most common attribute of the [goddess Nike](#) or [Victoria](#).<sup>[17][18][19]</sup> For contemporary Roman observers, the procession would have evoked the [Roman triumph](#),<sup>[20]</sup> when the *triumphator* laid down his arms and wore the [toga](#), the civilian garment of peace that might be ornamented with emblems of the palm.<sup>[21]</sup> Although the [Epistles of Paul](#) refer to Jesus as "triumphing", the entry into Jerusalem may not have been regularly pictured as a triumphal procession in this sense before the 13th century.<sup>[22]</sup> In [ancient Egyptian religion](#), the palm was carried in funeral processions and represented eternal life. The [martyr's palm](#) was later used as a symbol of Christian martyrs and their spiritual victory or triumph over death.<sup>[23]</sup> In [Revelation 7:9](#), the white-clad multitude stand before the throne and [Lamb](#) holding palm branches.