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Palm Sunday

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For the Kurt Vonnegut book, see [Palm Sunday \(book\)](#).



Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey, early 1900's Bible card illustration

Palm Sunday is a [Christian moveable feast](#) which always falls on the [Sunday](#) before [Easter Sunday](#). The feast commemorates an event mentioned by all four [Canonical Gospels](#) [Mark 11:1-11](#), [Matthew 21:1-11](#), [Luke 19:28-44](#), and [John 12:12-19](#): the triumphant entry of [Jesus](#) into [Jerusalem](#) in the days before his [Passion](#). It is also called [Passion Sunday](#) or [Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion](#).



In many Christian churches, Palm Sunday is marked by the distribution of palm leaves (often tied into crosses) to the assembled worshipers. The difficulty of procuring [palms](#) for that day's ceremonies in unfavorable climates for palms led to the substitution of boughs of [box](#), [yew](#), [willow](#) or other native trees. The Sunday was often designated by the names of these trees, as **Yew Sunday** or by the general term **Branch Sunday**.

According to the Gospels, before entering Jerusalem, Jesus was staying at [Bethany](#) and [Bethphage](#), and the Gospel of John adds that he had dinner with [Lazarus](#), and his sisters Mary and Martha. While there, Jesus sent two disciples to *the village over against* them, in order to retrieve a donkey that had been tied up but never been ridden, and to say, if questioned, that the donkey was needed by the Lord but would be returned.

Jesus then rode the donkey into Jerusalem, with the Synoptics adding that the disciples had first put their [cloaks](#) on it, so as to make it more comfortable. The Gospels go on to recount how Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and how the people there lay down their cloaks in front of him, and also lay down small branches of trees. The people sang part of [Psalm 118](#) - ...*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David.* ... ([Psalms 118:25-26](#)).

Where this entry is supposed to have taken place is unspecified; some scholars argue that [the Golden Gate](#) is the likely location, since that was where it was believed the [Jewish messiah](#) would enter Jerusalem; other scholars think that an entrance to the south, which had stairs leading directly to the Temple, would be more likely (Kilgallen 210).

It is a common custom in many lands in the ancient [Near East](#) to cover, in some way, the path of someone thought worthy of the highest honour. The [Hebrew Bible](#) (2Kings 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. However, in the synoptics they are only reported as laying their garments and cut [rushes](#) on the street, whereas John more specifically mentions [palm fronds](#). The palm branch was a symbol of triumph and of victory, in Jewish tradition, and is treated in other parts of the Bible as such (e.g. [Leviticus 23:40](#) and [Revelation 7:9](#)). Because of this, the scene of the crowd greeting Jesus by waving palms and carpeting his path with them has given the Christian festival its name. (CONTINUED AT: [Wikipedia](#))



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