

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 4 – A Song of Hope**  
**Psalms 118 and Palm Sunday**

**Introduction**

The book of Psalms was Israel’s hymnbook, containing both personal and corporate songs that were used in the worship life of the Jewish people. There are various kinds of Psalms: Laments, Thanksgivings, Confessions, Praises, Songs of Trust/Hope, Cries for Deliverance and Royal songs. These varied songs were composed by different authors over many centuries, with King David being the chief contributor: David (73 Psalms); Anonymous (50); Asaph, David’s choir director (12); Sons of Korah, a Levite family of worship leaders (11); Jeduthun (3); Solomon (2); Moses, Ethan, Heman, the Ezrahite (1 each). The Psalms demonstrate how central God was to the life of the people of Israel. The Psalms are the cries of the human soul reaching out to God amid the ups and downs of life in this broken world. This may well be the most “real” part of the Bible, as *feelings* about life and God often override proper *thoughts* about God. We can use these Psalms to help us express what *we are feeling* in the various seasons of life. Additionally, many Psalms contain allusions to, or prophecies of the Messiah, Jesus. These are often referred to as “Messianic Psalms.” For this reason, the Psalms are quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. (See the end of this section for more on the Messianic Psalms.)

**Psalm 118 among the Hallel Songs: Psalms 113-118**

**Psalms 113-118** form a miniature subgrouping of songs that were used at the 3 major Jewish feasts: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. They are called the “Hallel” songs because of the repeated call to “praise” (hallel) God. This grouping of songs was especially important at the annual *Passover meal*, with Psalms 113-114 being sung before the meal and 115-118 after the meal. When we read that Jesus and His disciples “sang a hymn” after the Last Supper (Matt.26:30), this likely refers to the singing of Psalms

115-118. This grouping of Psalms is often called “the Egyptian Hallel” because they are based on the recollection of God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egypt in the time of Moses (Exodus 1-15). As Jewish worshippers sang the Hallel at Passover, they were not only recalling a past deliverance, but crying out in hope for a future deliverance. Thus, the Hallel is really an extended song of hope that God, because of His unique love for Israel, would bring about a future exodus of Israel from under the hand of foreign oppressors. In Jesus’ day, that foreign oppressor was the Romans.

### **Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem: Psalm 118:22-29**

The last portion of Psalm 118 has taken on special significance for Christians because this portion of the Hallel was on the lips of the multitudes that went out to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life.

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. 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. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Psalm 118:22-29).*

The account from the gospel of Matthew reads as follows (with the portion in caps reflecting the words of Psalm 118):

*A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted **“HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN!”** When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (Matthew 21:8-11).*

The word “hosanna” means “save us now.” Thus, the crowds were hailing Jesus as their hoped-for deliverer Who, they supposed, was coming to Jerusalem to bring about a new “exodus.” They hoped

that He would deliver them from the heavy yoke of Roman oppression. Jesus would be their new Moses Who would defeat the Romans and usher in a new age of peace, joy and prosperity for God's chosen people.

With this background in mind, let us take a closer look at this key passage from Psalm 118:22-29. There are messianic undertones here that are much deeper than the people realized on the day of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

### **- The Rejected Stone**

***“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad” (Psalm 118:22-24).***

Originally, the ‘rejected stone’ was the nation of Israel, as it had been continuously tossed aside as a worthless, powerless nation among the more powerful nations of the world. Many centuries had passed from the time of Moses (1440 BC), during which Israel had suffered severe oppression at the hands of successive foreign powers (Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, etc.). Tiny little Israel might have seemed like nothing more than a worthless stone tossed aside by those constructing the kingdoms of the world. Yet, the people knew that they *were* God's *chosen people*. Thus, their hope was that God (the ultimate builder) would take the “rejected stone” (Israel) and make it once again the center of His kingdom project in this world.

Jesus Himself was the first to reinterpret the ‘rejected stone’ passage. He used it during Holy Week in a discussion with the Jewish leaders who were at that moment *rejecting Him* from being their Messiah and Savior.

***Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Matthew 21:42)?***

In the book of Acts, the apostles Peter and John used this same passage to confront the Jewish leaders over their rejection of Jesus:

***Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:11,12; see also 1Peter 2:7,8).***

Jesus Himself became the stone rejected by the builders (the leaders of Israel). Yet, because of His sacrificial death He was chosen by God to be the prized cornerstone of the new “building” God was building – the body of Christ, or, the Church.

### **- The Hosanna Cry**

***“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. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us” (118:25-27).***

At the time of Jesus’ triumphal entry, the people were hoping for some sort of political/national revolution. Jesus had performed so many miracles over His 3 years of public ministry. Surely, they thought, He was now coming to Jerusalem to miraculously throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and to reestablish Israel as an independent, sovereign state.

Jesus had indeed come to Jerusalem to perform a mighty work of ‘rescue’ and ‘deliverance;’ yet not from the oppression of Rome. He was coming to save people from the oppression of sin and death, through His cross and the empty tomb. He had come to bring the ‘kingdom of God’ into the hearts of redeemed people. This had been prophesied at the time of His birth when He was given the name “Jesus.”

***“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).***

This helps us to understand why Jesus stopped and WEPT during His “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem. We read this in Luke’s account:

***As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (Luke 19:41-44).***

Jesus wept because the people were blinded to their real need, and to God's plan to meet their need. They wanted a political solution; but they needed a spiritual Savior. They wanted freedom from Rome; but they needed freedom from the power of sin. They wanted Jesus to crush Caesar; but they needed Him to crush Satan. They wanted life to change; but they needed new life within, bringing change from the inside-out. They wanted Jesus to sit on a throne; but they needed the Lamb of God to die on a cross.

Jesus wept because they were blind to their own needs, and blind to God's plan to meet their needs. He also wept because He looked ahead and saw God's judgment coming upon the Jewish nation. In 70 AD the very Romans they hoped to be freed from would come and destroy their city. Why? ***"They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (Luke 19:44).*** Because the vast majority of Jews, including the rulers, did *not* welcome Jesus as their God-sent Messiah and Savior.

#### **- The Palm Branches**

***"With boughs in hand\*, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (118:27-29).***

\*There is debate as to the correct translation here. The New American Standard Bible makes no mention of "boughs," reading instead: *"Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar."*

As Jesus came into town, the people waved palm branches and spread them on the ground as a 'carpet' for Him to ride on. The use of palm branches was originally associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. As per God's command in Leviticus 23:33-36, the people were to make leafy booths and live in them for one week, to commemorate their long sojourn in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. Later in Israel's history, palm branches were widely used by the people of Israel to honor great leaders and heroes when they came to town. This is the meaning of the palm branches on "Palm Sunday." The people were "rolling out the red carpet" for their new leader/hero Jesus who, they hoped, would lead them to a great victory over the Roman oppressors.

## - The Festival Sacrifice

***“With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar” (118:27).***

At the major Jewish feasts it was typical for the High Priest to lead a sacred processional up to the main altar at the Temple. There, he would offer the required sacrifice for the sins of the nation. Jesus did things differently. When He entered Jerusalem, He went to the Temple and cleansed it from the moneychangers. During the week of Passover, He had repeated confrontations with the Jewish leaders who saw Him as a threat and a false teacher. By the end of the week, they would conspire to turn Him over to Pilate, the Roman governor, for crucifixion. By that same Friday, when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, Jesus Himself would be hanging on a Roman cross, dying for the sins of the world. Thus, Jesus DID lead a festival procession up to the “altar;” but not in the way that the multitudes expected. He Himself became the festival sacrifice, dying for the sins of the world on God’s appointed altar – a Roman cross.

### **Key lessons from Psalm 118 and Palm Sunday**

#### **1. Our real problem is within**

People today are not much different from the crowds that sang Hosanna (save us now) on the day of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. We want life to be better and we think the solutions are external structural changes. So, we look to government leaders, to economists, to military leaders, to doctors, to educators or business leaders to make structural changes, set things right and bring back happier days. In effect, we are doing the same thing that the crowds did: looking for salvation in all the wrong (external) places.

The problem is that our problem is *not* external; it is internal. Jesus put it like this:

***“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside***

***you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matthew 23:25-28).***

The real problem is the sinful human heart. Until the heart is changed, no amount of external change will bring about the kind of peace and contentment we all really desire. We will always be striving in vain (and continually disappointed) as we try to put bandages on an internal cancer. We need new hearts!

## **2. Hope is found in Jesus**

There is only one solution to our heart problem: a new heart! The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Savior gives us the opportunity to have a new heart. Through His death He offers us forgiveness of sins. Our debt can be cancelled and we can be reconciled to a right relationship with God. Through His resurrection, He has defeated death. Thus, we can live forever in the presence of God. But there is another thing His resurrection provides: Because He lives, He can live inside of us, through the Person of the Holy Spirit. He can apply His resurrection life and power right where we need it most: to our hearts. He can give us new hearts and change us from the inside-out.

***“But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:10-11).***

## **3. The rejected stone**

Jesus IS the cornerstone of God’s building. He IS the key to our salvation, and the key to God’s kingdom work in this world. Yet, He will always be the rejected stone as people continue to mock Him, marginalize Him and reject Him.

***“He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God” (John 1:10-13).***

Jesus knocks at the door of our hearts, seeking entrance (Rev.3:20) but He never forces His way in. He waits to be invited in. Have

you invited Jesus to be your Savior and Lord? On this Palm Sunday we should remember: The real “triumphal entry” is when the door is opened and Jesus enters a human heart to sit as King on that throne.

### **Messianic Psalms**

For a good short article with a list of 70 references to Jesus in the Psalms, see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Psalms-Jesus-Christ.html>

Perhaps the most significant Messianic Psalms are 2,22 and 110. These Psalms contain major prophecies and/or allusions to Christ.

**Psalm 2** shows the exaltation of the Son as the one chosen by the Father to rule the nations. All the rulers of the world are exhorted to worship the Son before it is too late. It is futile to resist His kingship, for this will only lead to God’s judgment. This Psalm is quoted in: Acts 4:25, 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, 5:5.

**Psalm 22** is a Psalm of lament in which David was describing his own suffering. Yet, his description of his suffering and torment became a prophetic picture of the suffering and torment of Jesus as He died on the cross for our sins. Most significant is the fact that Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 as He was dying on the cross: *“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”* This Psalm is quoted in: Matthew 27:46; 27:39; 27:43; 27:35; John 20:25; 19:24; Hebrews 2:12; 5:7.

**Psalm 110** is the song of the exalted King. While it was a song of David, it has obvious references beyond David to the Lord. Jesus used this Psalm to confound the Jewish leaders concerning His own status as “Lord” (see Matthew 22:44 and 26:64). It is also quoted in: Acts 2:34,35; Hebrews 1:13; 5:5,6; 7:17,21.