

**The Park Church**  
**Adult Study Group**  
**“Understanding Holy Week”**  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Movie “The Passion of the Christ equated the meanings of “passion” and “suffering”. This course and the book on which it is based considers Jesus’ passion instead to be whatever motivated him to engage in a ministry that inevitably resulted in his execution by the Romans

While the Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus, it is not a news report – it is a literary work. When Mark gets to the last week, he is careful to identify and deal with the events of each day and he uses his literary structure to emphasize the underlying meaning of his Gospel. You will find that Mark’s point is quite different from the generally accepted understanding of Christian theology.

## PALM SUNDAY – Mark 11: 1 – 11

### ***Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem***

*When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.” ’ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,*

*‘Hosanna!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*

*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!*

*Hosanna in the highest heaven!’*

*Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

### Two Processions

Pilate enters from the West into Jerusalem in a military procession demonstrating both Roman imperial power and Roman imperial theology. The Emperor was the “son of God”, the “lord”, and the “savior,” who had brought “peace on Earth” (of course, through military domination).

Domination Systems include:

1. Political oppression
2. Economic exploitation
3. Religious legitimization

Domination systems represent what is normal.

Jesus enters from the East, humbly riding a donkey, cheered by his followers as he enters the city where his message of justice and love will come into direct conflict with Rome. Jesus' message of the Realm of God is abnormal! See Matthew 21: 5, and Zechariah 9: 10

He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations;

Why does Jesus go immediately to the temple?

The temple had become the center of collaboration with Rome, adding a second layer of domination. They were the intermediaries between a local domination system and an imperial one. But, in practice, The High Priests ultimately represented the wealthy class, of which they were a part.

Background: Jewish law protected everyone's right to own a plot of land, but over the years, land was lost to the king, who then redistributed it to the wealthy, making the inhabitants into tenants. The wealthy kept getting wealthier. People could no longer produce the basics of life, so they had to buy them from the wealthy. Peasant life was no longer sustainable.

The High Priest's stated purpose was to protect the people from Roman domination, but they benefited economically from the role they played Roman system. They shaped it, enforced it, and benefited from it at the expense of the poor.

Jesus (and John the Baptist, too) took an anti-temple stance, largely because of its role in collaborating with and legitimizing the domination system.

The area of direct conflict was around the authority to forgive. The temple held that right and benefited economically from it.

Jesus calls for trust in and commitment to the Realm of God over the temple.

Jesus refers to the necessity to take up one's cross – which means risking retribution from the temple and from imperial Rome by affirming other sources of authority.

Jesus refers to the path, or "the way," which means following Jesus to "Jerusalem" (and to confrontation).

The underlying question has to do with what loyalty to "the God of Jerusalem" means.

The material for this class comes from:

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem.* HarperOne. ISBN978-0-06-087260-1