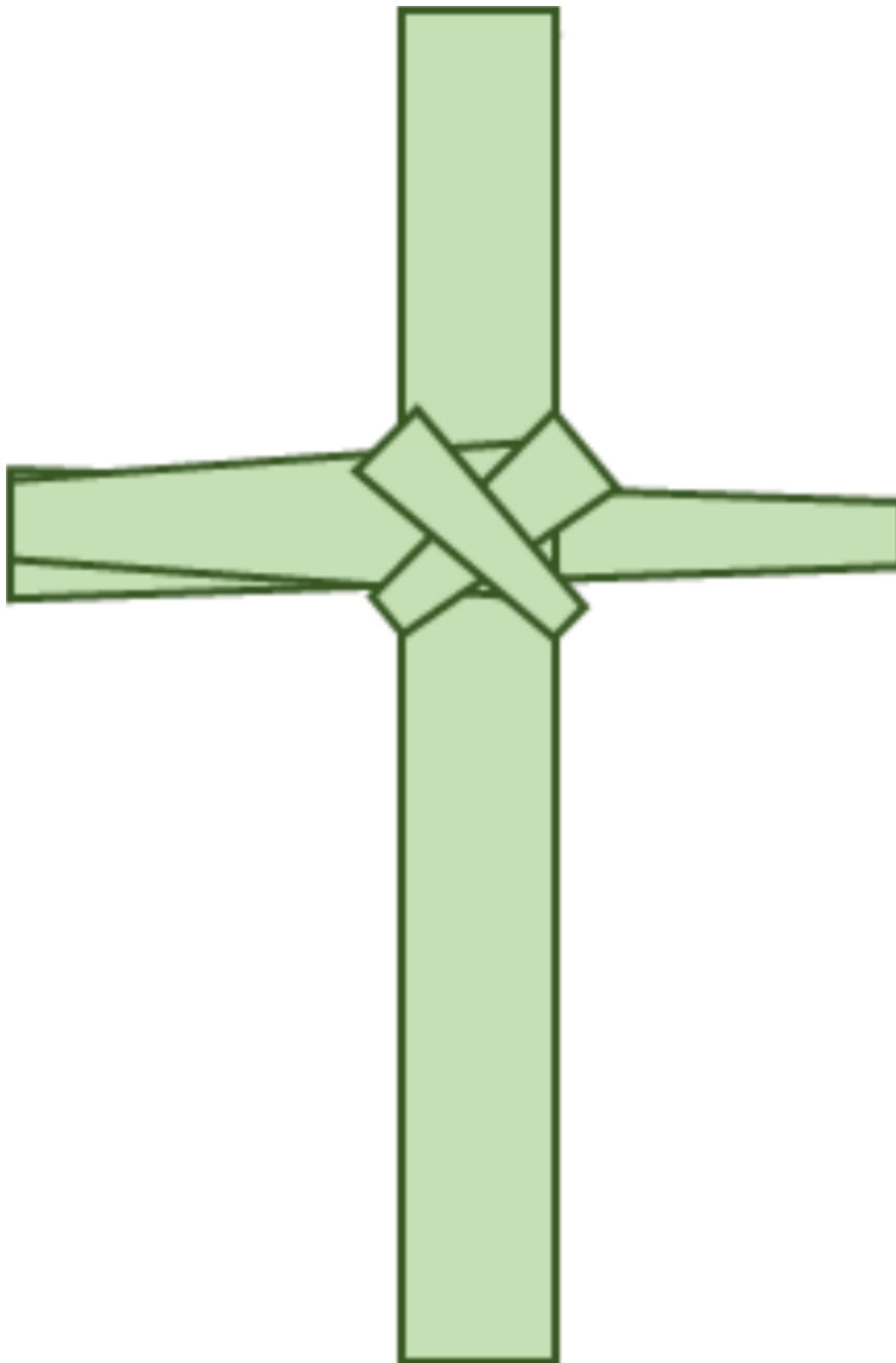


Palm Sunday – why it matters

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Today is Palm Sunday, when we remember Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Why does that matter today? Because it's the start of the Main Event to which His entire ministry built up: His own death, not for things *He* did, but for things *we* did.

Why Palm Sunday?

Palm Sunday takes its name from the palms that the crowd in Jerusalem strewed before the donkey that Jesus rode into the city. But that name doesn't do this day justice.

Have a look at how He entered the city. This was *not* a "triumphal" entry. It was not even a Roman ovation, when a general celebrating a lesser victory rides in on his war charger. Nor was it a takeover of the city, as when Julius Caesar rode into Rome after crossing the Rubicon.

A donkey is one of the most humble animals in the ancient world. It is a beast of burden, not of war and certainly not of command. So by riding in on a donkey, Jesus was humbling himself, emphasizing His service role. In fact He once tellingly said,

I did not come here to be waited on, but to wait on you.

Matthew 20:28

And He was about to "wait on" us in the most personal and expensive way He ever could have. In fact, He was coming to Jerusalem to die, and He knew it. That's how much He loved us all, as His Father did.

But is this even real?

Some say Jesus entered Jerusalem as He did only because someone else had written, hundreds of years ago, that He would do it this way. But that does not tell more than a fraction of the story. For that, let's ask Dr. Peter Stoner, a former professor at Westmont College. He examined only *eight* of the many prophecies about Jesus Christ, including the Palm Sunday prophecy. From this he worked out the resultant probability that Jesus would have fulfilled all eight. Then, to make sure, he asked 600 students in twelve classes to check his work. Medical researchers should check things as thoroughly as he did.

Probability of fulfilling all eight prophecies: ten to the minus seventeen. That's the numeral one, *seventeen decimal places to the right*. Make that one in one hundred quadrillion.

But Dr. Stoner didn't stop there. He then crunched the numbers for *forty-eight* prophecies. Probability of fulfilling all forty-eight: ten to the minus *one hundred fifty-seven*. Now you have to draw a decimal point, add *one hundred fifty-six zeroes*, then add a numeral one. In case you're wondering, that's one in ten thousand quinquagintillion – but who counts that high?

Physicists count that high. They count ten to the *eighty* electrons in all the universe. Now *square* that and divide by a thousand. *That's* ten thousand quinquagintillion.

Bottom line: He wasn't cheating

So staging the Palm Sunday event is only *one* "cheat" Jesus would have had to make if you want to call Him fake. Then we have the little matter of arranging to go to the most humiliating and painful execution anyone has ever devised – and *come out alive three days later*.

For all these reasons, we can, indeed must, accept Jesus as Real, and Palm Sunday as the Real Deal. It also means we have to take the Bible as the Real Deal. That has implications beyond the Main Event – like for the First Event.

But today begins the Main Event, and that's more important than any other. Why? Because it gives us hope. God gave us certain laws to obey, He knew we were going to screw up, so He sent His son to atone for the screwing-up. Now *that's* something to give thanks for.