



HAIL HIM or NAIL HIM!

The Gospel of Saint Matthew 21:1-9, “Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the

donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.

8 Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" May the Lord add His Blessing to the Reading and the Hearing of His Word; Amen!

According to this text, Jesus is making His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem being hailed as Messiah. Leading up to this point in Scripture, Christ had been withdrawing himself as much as possible from public notice, had voluntarily gone into the wilderness, was deflecting rather than courting attention, and was avoiding anything that hinted of publicity.

But in Matthew 21, Jesus is making a public entry into Jerusalem. A huge crowd of people who have come out to welcome Jesus and it was this response from the people why the Pharisees would say "Behold the world is gone after him." in John 12:19.

But on this day, it is suggested by some Theologians and Historians alike that there was another parade that likely took place around this time as well. But this other parade wasn't centralized upon Christ but rather on Pontius Pilate himself.

Here we have Messianic Prophecy coming to pass with Christ coming into Jerusalem but then the political posturing of the Roman Empire through Pilate as a show of force to ensure that the Passover Festival didn't become a rallying cry of rebellion against the Romans.

One was a military parade with Pilate flexing his political and military might as he rides in upon his chariot surrounded by his military entourage. The other parade was one filled with fishermen, women, and other rag tag folks whose leader was riding a donkey!

- Pilate rode in from the west – Jesus rode in from the east...
- Pilate would be honored – Jesus would be dishonored...
- Pilate would be celebrated – Jesus would be falsely accused...
- Pilate would be consulted – Jesus would be assaulted...
- Pilate would enjoy the pleasure – Jesus would experience bitterness...
- Pilate would live on in infamy while Jesus would live on in eternity...

Make no mistake about it – there were two crowds in the city. There was the Hail Him crowd and the Nail Him crowd! These two crowds are in every circle of life. I would dare to assert that both crowds are here today... Firstly there is the “Hail Him” Crowd...

On Passover week, Jesus approached Jerusalem riding on the foal of a dokey and the city whose normal population was in the thousands now is host to hundreds of thousands. Jesus and His followers descended the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives which was prophetically symbolic of the Messiah approaching the Eastern gate.

Because of all the miracles Jesus had performed, particularly because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, people were beginning to think of Jesus as a conqueror. And so they grabbed palm branches, which are always the sign of a conqueror and began to throw them into the oncoming path of Jesus and His donkey.

It is very important to note that they were not hailing Him as a spiritual Messiah, but as a political savior - a political and governmental deliverer. The very idea of Passover was the desire of being freed from the boot of Roman oppression. Because Passover celebrated God delivering the children of Israel from Egypt, the people surrounding Jesus that day were stating that they were ready for another deliverer who would drive the Roman empire out of business in Israel.

They wanted somebody to lead them into a fight for liberation against the Roman Empire. And when the people heard what Jesus had done with Lazarus, it created all the more motivation to push him.

The crowd cried, "Hosanna." The word "Hosanna" means "save now." It is not so much a praise as much as it is a prayer. They were declaring, "Jesus, great Conqueror, King of Israel, save US now." They were not considering spiritual salvation; they wanted a political revolution! The people in our text may have been praying but they were crying "hosanna!" They were pleading, "Save us now! Save us now!"

They wanted to be saved in the physical sense but Jesus was about to do much more than that by offering them salvation in the spiritual sense. But it wasn't going to be enough for this crowd! They would go from Hail Him, to Nail Him in less than a week.

The Bible says that they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" These people appear to be praising Him.

We must understand that when we Hail (Praise) Him, not everyone will be happy about it! As the people were voicing their praise, some of the Pharisees called to Jesus from the crowd and said, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

But when Jesus is rebuked and told to silence His disciples, He said, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Hear me clearly today, the Lord is going to get praise whether He gets it from us or not.

The Bible says, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing...and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." I refuse to let a rock, tree, mountain or an inanimate object take my place in praising Him so excuse me while I take a praise break and thank Him for what He has already done and thank Him in advance for all that He is going to do! (PREACH)

The Bible says, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord - Praise ye the Lord." Folks who praise are part of the Hail Him crowd!

But separate from the "Hail Him" Crowd is the "Nail Him" Crowd... There was a festering problem in Jerusalem on this Passover. We would like to think the problem was on the western side of the city, entrenched in the crowd that surrounded Pilate and the political/religious system.

To be sure, it was there but it was also on the Eastern side of the city with the folks who were throwing palm branches and clothes in the streets in front of Jesus and His donkey!

These people appear to be engaged in worship but they are far more interested in a political solution rather than a spiritual renewal! Jesus knew their hearts. Now they were shouting, "Hail him, hail him, hail him!" But Jesus knew that in five days they would be shouting, "Nail him, nail him, nail him!"

In the parallel passage in Luke, we are told that when Jesus looked over the city “He wept over it.” (Luke 19:41) He wept because He knew that behind the facade of their praise and worship they would be the same ones crying” Crucify Him! Give us Barabbas!”

In conclusion, if Jesus were here this morning, He would weep over the spiritual condition of many of us. We have all worshipped this morning - We have definitely been a part of the Hail Him crowd - But some of us already have plans to be a part of the Nail Him crowd by committing intentional sin over the next few days.

They were hypocrites. They were shouting "crown him" one day and "crucify him" the next. While we are astounded by their actions, we do much the same by the way we live! With our mouths are we saying Hail Him but with our Hearts are we seeking to Nail Him? Which crowd are you a part of? Our heart tells the truth of the matter; some of us, our words are for Him but our hearts are far from Him! It's time to Get Right with God!