

# Two parades entered Jerusalem for Passover

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There was an uproar inside the walled city of Jerusalem in the days before Passover. Through the city's main gate on the west, Roman Governor Pontius Pilate came into view having traveled 100 miles from his palace at Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast. At first, the drums and trumpets were heard, then came the thunder of horse's hooves and the cadence of foot soldiers.

Finally, the main event. Pilate rode into the city on a chariot pulled by magnificent stallions. The show of strength was important. The atmosphere was combustible. According to Matthew "the whole city was in turmoil."

Pilate always came to Jerusalem during Passover to ensure his job security. He had to keep the Jewish rabble from a violent uprising as they celebrated a pivotal time in their history; the escape from slavery in Egypt 400 years earlier. God, through Moses, had thrown ten plagues at Pharaoh and his people; the last was the angel of death killing Egypt's first-born sons. The Hebrews, however, were spared death when they spread the blood of lambs on their doorframes so that the angel of death "passed over" their homes – thus Passover.

As Jerusalem swelled to ten times its normal population from 250,000 to two and a half million for the remembrance of this sacred event, the tension was palpable. Every Jew was required to make the pilgrimage to the Temple. If people were too old, too sick or lame to make the journey, they stood by the roadsides offering food and water while cheering on the pilgrims walking up to Jerusalem from their small towns.

We don't know if it was the same day, but another deafening parade entered Jerusalem through a gate on the eastern side of the city for Passover. As Jesus paraded in, John writes that throngs of people yelled, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!"

Hosanna was more than a shout of praise. In the Hebrew language, it also meant “Save Us, God! Rescue Us!” And the branches they took were from palm trees, the symbol of Israel’s identity as a nation. Waving them and calling Jesus their king was rebellious. Also, to take off your outer cloak and lay it on the pavement was a sign that Jesus, not Caesar, was your king.

Some Hebrew people understood who Jesus was and cheered for the arrival of God coming to Earth – the long-awaited Messiah. But others were desperate to overthrow their oppressors pleading with Jesus to free them from Rome as Moses had done in Egypt.

At first it looked promising. Jesus went to the Temple, took out a whip, and violently drove out the money changers, shouting, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers!”

Maybe this man will bring change through force some hoped and become the incarnation of King David who united and ruled over Israel generations earlier. But Jesus wasn’t whipping Rome in the Temple that day. His violence was directed at the corruption of his own people and religious leaders who desecrated the holiest site in their pursuit of wealth.

Some became disillusioned that Jesus did not come to lead the expected insurrection against Rome, and the shouts of Hosanna became cries of Crucify Him a few days later.

What do we learn? It’s two millennia later and people continue to gather to worship, acknowledging Jesus to be the Lord of their lives and attempt to live like him. As St. Paul wrote, “with love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” They study Sacred Scripture together, confess their sins, seek redemption at the foot of the bloody cross, and receive the promise of life eternal at the resurrection on Easter morning.

On the other hand, no one today worships Pilate or erects buildings to honor him in displays of earthly power and wealth. Or, do we?