

The Chronology of Yeshua's Last Week of Life **Part 1**

Nisan 8-9 – The journey toward Jerusalem

The 11th chapter of the Gospel of John tells about the period of time leading up to the final week of Yeshua's life. We are told that after raising Lazarus from the dead, Yeshua took His disciples to a place named Ephraim in the Judean hills, about 13 miles northeast of Jerusalem. After staying there for an unspecified period of time, people began traveling to Jerusalem for Passover.

Yeshua and His disciples joined in the pilgrimage. Their route from Ephraim took them into the Jordan River Valley until they reached Jericho. Because their total journey was 28 miles, it is likely that they spent the night somewhere before reaching Jericho. Once they reached that city, they went to the home of a tax collector named Zaccheus who needed to hear the Good News of salvation (Luke 19:1-10). The text states that they resumed their journey that same day. But instead of going directly to Jerusalem, they travelled 15 miles to the village of Bethany where they would stay at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus during the days leading up to Passover. That village was on the south side of the Mt of Olives, just under two miles from the temple in Jerusalem.

According to John 12:1, they arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover. Since Passover takes place on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, that would make this arrival day the ninth of Nisan.¹ That, then, establishes an anchor point for the chronology of the final week of His life.

That also means that his arrival in Bethany could not be on the Sabbath, for you could not travel more than a short distance on that day of the week.² So Yeshua and His disciples would have waited for the Sabbath to be over, and then they headed out in the morning on the first day of the week, (Sunday) during the daytime, passing through Jericho on the way to Bethany, where they arrived before sundown that same day. Putting this all together, their arrival in Bethany was on the ninth of Nisan, which was the first day of the week that year.

What is significant about the ninth of Nisan and this location of Bethany? Each year, lambs for Passover were raised in what are called the Shepherds Fields adjacent to Bethlehem. On the ninth of Nisan, those lambs were brought closer to Jerusalem to a staging area next to the village of Bethany on the southern side of the Mt of Olives. That move placed them strategically for their final transfer to Jerusalem the next day. The connection to Yeshua is profound. Not only was He born at the same location as the Passover lambs, at the end of His life, both He and the lambs arrived at the same location on the very same day in preparation for their imminent deaths. Everything about these details emphasizes the identity of Yeshua as the ultimate Passover Lamb of God.

That night, which marked the beginning of the tenth of Nisan and the second day of the week, Yeshua shared a meal with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and then slept at their home.

¹ According to the concept of inclusive reckoning of time employed in the Hebraic culture, any part of a day was considered the same as a whole day, and counting backward would include the first day in question (the 14th).

² During the second temple period, the limit of a Sabbath day's journey was 2,000 cubits, or about 2/3 of a mile (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 16:29*).

Nisan 10 (Sunday night/Monday daytime) – Yeshua’s entry into Jerusalem

The next morning, still on the tenth, was the day when both the Passover lambs and Yeshua entered Jerusalem. On this day, each year, the high priest would leave the temple and to travel to Bethany in order to select a lamb for himself from the enclosures where lambs were kept. He would then return to Jerusalem, carrying his lamb. Behind him would be the remainder of the flocks, guided by shepherds.

The High Priest would lead this procession around to the north side of the city and enter through Damascus Gate. As the procession entered the city, throngs of people would come to meet the High Priest and the lambs that were in his wake. They would wave palm branches, while singing the Hallel (Ps. 113-118), most notably Psalm 118:26—“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” Finally, they would reach the area just outside of the Temple.

According to Matthew 21:1-9, on this day, Yeshua and the disciples went to a place called Bethphage (“fig house”). It was likely near the top of the Mount of Olives, which Acts 1:12 shows as being the exact distance of a Sabbath day’s journey to the temple in Jerusalem. Yeshua sent His disciples to retrieve a donkey and a colt for Him to ride from Bethphage on the Mt of Olives. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy in Zech. 9:9 regarding the way that the King Messiah would come to Zion. Yeshua then got on the donkey and began riding to Jerusalem.

On that day, there were people who had come for both the arrival of the Passover lambs and Yeshua. They brought palm branches on this day as they always did for the parade of the High Priest and the lambs. Scripture does not state whether the High Priest or Yeshua came first on this day. Regardless, that meant that the Passover lambs and the Lamb of God entered Jerusalem essentially at the same time. The people understood the imagery of the Messiah arriving on the colt of a donkey, meaning that He was proclaiming His right to be King of Israel. Thus, the people responded with words acknowledging Him as the Son of David. They also quoted from Psalm 118:25-26. Hosana (Heb. *hoshanah*) is the plea used by the Psalmist meaning “Do save,” which is an acknowledgment reserved for God as Savior. And the words, “*Baruch haba b’shem Adonai* – Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD” was the greeting for the High Priest. That served as an acknowledgment of Yeshua’s high priestly role, even if they didn’t fully understand the implications at the time.

Yeshua didn’t do anything else of significance when He got to Jerusalem that day, and they returned to Bethany for the night.

Nisan 11 (Monday night/Tuesday daytime)

According to Mark 11:11-19, Yeshua went to the temple where He disrupted the actions of merchants and moneychangers who were operating within the courts of the temple instead of outside. He literally cleansed the temple of these commercial activities.

Nisan 12 (Tuesday night/Wednesday daytime)

Mark 11:20 shows that Yeshua and the disciples returned the next day. The religious authorities began examining Yeshua intensely. This was in accordance with the way that Passover lambs were to be examined prior to Passover (Ex 12:5-6) and were required to be *tawmim*, meaning “unblemished or perfect.” The first examination was conducted by the chief priests and the elders (Mat 21:23-32). Not only did they fail in finding a flaw with Yeshua, He pointed out a pronounced flaw in their thinking.