

In my previous post I provided an excerpt from [Jesus Before the Gospels](#) where I summarized the New Testament accounts of Jesus' "Triumphal Entry." Here is the second part of that two-part post, another excerpt, where I call this tradition into question, arguing that it cannot be right historically and that it must, therefore, represent a distorted memory.

It is important to recall that "memory" is not simply a recollection of what we ourselves experienced (what you had for dinner last night; the name of your first-grade teacher; etc.). Memory involves anything that you "call back to mind" (the literal meaning of "remembering"). It can be factual information (what is the capital of France?), even of something you haven't experienced (e.g., if you have never been to Paris); it can be a shared understanding of a person from the past (Einstein; Karl Marx), even if you never met them. And it can be a recollection of a past event even if you were not involved. Such as the Triumphal Entry, to pick one example out of countless trillions.

Christians "remember" the event every Palm Sunday. But is the event itself an accurate memory? Was there really a Triumphal Entry?

The very broadest gist of this memory is no doubt true. Jesus must have come into Jerusalem one way or another. But the Gospels' description of the event is highly implausible, and precisely for the reasons I started with. The Roman authorities were...

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