

Can someone “believe” and not be saved? Those passages that give a quick, affirmative answer (e.g. Matthew 7:21–23; Luke 8:1–15; 2 Corinthians 13:5, and 1 John 2:19) do not necessarily help us understand nor examine our own hearts. The events of Palm Sunday 2000 years ago may help understand better and help avoid being satisfied with an inadequate faith.

I. There had been a sufficient presentation of the person of Jesus Christ to believe.

A. Events preceding the triumphal entry pointed to the person of Jesus Christ.

1. The testimony of the miracles (Luke 19:37)
2. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:4; 12:9–11, 18)
3. The healing and words of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)
4. The conversion of Zachaeus (Luke 19:1–11)

B. Preparation for and the manner of the triumphal entry pointed to the person of Jesus Christ (Mark 11:1–7).

Jesus purposefully arranged to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey’s colt to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The timing that had not been right before (John 7:8), was now right to identify with being the Messiah for those who could see.

II. The people rightly responded to this presentation of Jesus.

A. Their action of spreading their garments honored Him as king (Mark 11:5; cf. 2 Kings 9:13).

B. Their words, though typically used for Passover blessings, were directed to Jesus (Matthew 21:15; Luke 19:39–40) and thereby acknowledged Him as Messiah-King.

1. "Hosanna!" See Psalm 118:25, “save now.”
2. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" See Psalm 118:26. Applying this to Jesus implied that Jesus was the divinely empowered, promised King.
3. "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" Cf. Matthew 21:9; Luke 19:38. By association the people are identifying Jesus with the coming of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus is the promised Seed of David.
4. "Hosanna in the highest!" “Save now, O God who lives in heaven.” Jesus was God’s Servant to bring salvation.

C. Jesus accepted these words as true and rightfully directed to Him. Cf. Luke 19:39–40; Matthew 21:15–16. These words of praise had to be spoken and they were true.

The people had rightly responded, honoring Jesus as King and praising God for providing the Messiah in their midst.

III. The “belief” of the people was inadequate.

A. Events surrounding and following the triumphal entry reveal it.

1. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, even as people were praising God (Luke 19:41–44). Their belief was inadequate because they failed to understand who was there.
2. Jesus cleansed the Temple and cursed a fig tree. The former pointed to a spiritual problem, the latter pictured the judgment upon a nation that failed to produce fruit (cf. Luke 13:1–9).
3. Less than a week later the Jews crucified Jesus.

B. Further Scripture as well testifies to the inadequacy of their belief.

1. In John 6 the people wanted a king to feed them, without consideration what the miracle meant.
2. After the Pharisees questioned the authority of Jesus (Mark 11:27–33), Jesus told the parable of the wicked tenants against them (Mark 12:1–12). Cf. Psalm 118:22–23; Mark 12:10–11. Their belief was inadequate, neither submitting to the authority of God nor the Son of God in their midst.

Jesus had given adequate testimony to His person, which the Twelve had already seen (Mark 8:29). But the people missed who Jesus really was, and only “believed” in the material gain they thought might come from Him. But they missed the most important point. The disciples, however, eventually comprehended the whole picture. Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, who came as the Suffering Servant to pay the penalty of our sin.

The gospel calls upon people to believe in a crucified, divine Savior. Jesus died in order that our sin might be forgiven. Don’t fall short of that and “believe” only in supposed temporal blessings. Trust in Him and you will not be disappointed.