

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ♦ Deo ♦ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

John 12:12-19

January 15, 2006

INTRODUCTION

- This is one of the few events in the life of Jesus that was recorded in all four Gospels.
 - Matthew 21:1-11
 - Mark 11:1-11
 - Luke 19:29-38
 - John 12:12-19

Verses 12 – 13

- John states, “On the next day...”
 - Likely, the dinner in which Mary anointed Jesus occurred on Saturday; therefore, “the next day,” is most likely referring to the Sunday of passion week [i.e. the last week in the life of Jesus].
- “the large crowd who had come to the feast...”
 - No doubt the “feast” was the Feast of Passover.
 - Furthermore, John writes that the crowd was large.
 - According to the early Jewish historian Josephus, at one Passover just prior to the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), 2,700,000 Jews participated. This number would not include foreigners or any unclean persons within the city.
 - However, this number was likely inflated. During the life of Jesus, the population of Jerusalem was probably near 100,000. With the estimated number of pilgrims, the “large crowd” most likely totaled around 1,000,000.
- “when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, [they] took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him...”

- The large crowd that had gathered in Jerusalem would have contained many Galileans, most of whom would have been familiar with the works and miracles of Jesus.
- Therefore, they...**went out** to meet and greet Him.
 - This type of greeting was common in the Greek culture for a ruler entering into a city.
 - Josephus mentions a time when the city of Antioch went out to meet Titus.
- Also, they took **palm branches** when they went to Jesus.
 - Palm branches would not have been difficult to find near Jerusalem.
 - Date palm trees grew in the areas around Jerusalem, especially in Jericho, the “City of Palms.”
 - In the Old Testament, the waving of Palm branches was commanded during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40): “Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.”
 - Furthermore, in Psalms, the palm tree was a symbol of righteousness: “The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree...” (Psalm 92:12).
 - During the first century, palm branches had already been a national Jewish symbol in Israel. This was because they were used during the rededication of the temple [the “original” Hanukkah] in 164 B.C. (*2 Maccabees* 10:7); as well as during the celebration of the victory of Simon the Maccabee over the Syrian forces in 141 B.C. (*1 Maccabees* 13:51).
 - In extra-biblical Jewish writings, palm branches also appeared in visions of the end times (*Testament of Naphtali* 5).
 - Palms also appeared on coins created by Jewish rebels fighting against Roman forces during the Jewish Wars of the first century (66-70 A.D.) Further underscoring the significance of palm branches in Judea can be seen in the fact that the Romans used them on their own coins to celebrate their victory over the Jewish people.

Given the broad symbolism of Palm branches in first century Jerusalem, what the crowd is most likely conveying is that they believe Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah according to their definition. That is, He will finally be the great king and liberator of Israel from the yoke and tyranny of the Romans.

- When they went out to greet Jesus, the crowd waved the palm branches, shouting, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.”
 - The term Hosanna! is a transliteration of a Hebrew word, meaning “Give salvation now!” “O save!” By the first century, the title [Hosanna!] was given as a form of high praise.
 - Further, “Hosanna!” was [and it today] a well-known part of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118), being found in Psalm 118:25. The Hallel was sung each morning during the Feast of Tabernacles by the temple choir, as the men waved their *lulabs* [bundle of leaves, including palms] in the air.

During the time of the morning sacrifices on each of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles the High Priest took a golden vessel, known as a *flagon*, and filled it with water from the Pool of Siloam. It was then carried in a procession, headed by the High Priest, to the Temple. As the procession of priests approached the Watergate on the south side of the inner court of the Temple, another priest sounded the *shofar* [a trumpet-like instrument associated with joyous occasions] three times. The procession then followed the High Priest, still carrying the *flagon* of water, around the altar, as the Jewish pilgrims looked on. **As the priests marched around the altar, the temple choir sang the *Hallel*, that is Psalm 113 – 118 [also in the Mishnah *Sukkah* 4:9]. When the temple choir reached Psalm 118 [“...His love endures forever...”], each Jewish male present [pilgrims included] shook a *lulab* [a bundle consisting of three myrtle branches, two willow branches, and one palm branch] in his right hand, as he raised a piece of citrus fruit in his left hand. The *lulab* symbolized the multiple stages of the wilderness wanderings [marked by the different types of vegetation]; while the piece of fruit symbolized the blessing of the ingathered harvest. Further, as the Jewish males waved the *lulabs* and raised the fruit, they each shouted “Give thanks to the LORD!” three times.** The priestly procession then stopped at the altar and offered the water to God, along with the drink offering of wine. The wine and the water were then poured into silver bowls and finally poured out on the altar before the LORD.

- The connection between the *lulabs* and the Hosannas! was so strong that many Jews began referring to their *lulabs* as “hosannas.”
- The words, “BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!” are found also in the Hallel, Psalm 118:26.
- In the body of extra-biblical Jewish writings, known as the Midrash, Psalm 118 is believed to be referring to the Messiah – the “one who comes in the name of the LORD” is none other than the long-awaited Messiah Himself (*Midrash Tehillim* 244a) [albeit, the type of Messiah the **Jews** desired].
- Of course, the very next line reveals that this is EXACTLY what the Jews believed they were saying: “**even the King of Israel.**”
 - Interestingly, this phrase does NOT appear in the Psalms – it is an addition by the crowd.
 - QUESTION: Is the crowd adding to Scripture as the cry out to Jesus in the hopes that He is meeting their expectations for the Messiah?

Verses 14 – 15

- John says that Jesus, “finding a young donkey...”
 - The verb for “finds” can also mean “to find by the help of others.” This would make it consistent with the Synoptic accounts which state that Jesus commanded two of His disciples to bring Him the donkey.
 - Also, Mark informs his readers that the donkey was unbroken, i.e. “on which no one yet has ever sat...” (Mark 11:2)
- John, then, quotes from the Old Testament stating, “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”
 - This quote is, primarily, from Zechariah 9:9. However, “FEAR NOT” does not appear in the Old Testament reference. Some scholars believe that the “FEAR NOT” is taken from Isaiah 40:9: “Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, **do not fear**. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”
 - To further understand the significance of the Zechariah reference, one must examine the original Old Testament context in which the verse is located.
 - **READ Zechariah 9:9-16**
 - There are several points worth noting in the original context that apply to the reference in John:
 - ⇒ Christ is the king who comes...
 - ⇒ He is endowed with salvation...indeed His very name means “Yahweh is my salvation.”
 - ⇒ He does not appease the nationalistic expectations of Israel, for He comes on a donkey as opposed to a war-horse.
 - This further emphasizes the humility of Jesus as the humble King.
 - Matthew describes the King riding on the donkey as “righteous and having salvation, gentle” (Matthew 21:5).
 - A donkey often was used for “a man of peace, a priest, a merchant, or the like.” Andreas Kostebberger
 - One of the first messianic passages in the Old Testament states:

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
“He ties his foal to the vine,
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.
Genesis 49:10

- ⇒ His coming will coincide with the ending of war (“the bow of war will be cut off”)
- ⇒ He will speak peace to the nations
- ⇒ His dominion will be from sea to sea
- ⇒ The coming of the Messiah will be connected with the blood of God’s covenant, which will, in turn, set the prisoners free
 - Such a reference is also closely associated with Jesus Christ as the ultimate Passover Lamb.

QUESTION: WHAT IN ZECHARIAH 9 WAS NOT FULFILLED IN THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST?

Verse 16

- What is clear in this passage is that the crowd viewed Jesus as a King, “in the wrong sense.”
- Furthermore, the disciples, like the crowd of pilgrims, also failed to immediately understand the true identity of Jesus. Even after spending much time with their Master [this was the end of His earthly ministry], the disciples failed to discern what He was saying.
- It was only after His “glorification” that they truly understood what He meant in this scene.
 - Certainly, the *glorification* of Jesus Christ involves His crucifixion...but not only this. Also, it involves His resurrection and ascension. After this point, He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to regenerate and indwell individual believers that they may “see the kingdom of God.”
 - Ultimately, it was at this point that “they [Jesus’ disciples] remembered that these things were written of Him...”
 - In other words, His disciples began to see how “all things which are written about [Christ] in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” [Luke 24:44], and indeed **were** fulfilled.

Verses 17 – 18

- John presents two separate crowds in these verses: (1) the crowd that was with Jesus when He raised Lazarus from the dead [presumably from Bethany]; and (2) the crowd that came out to meet Him from Jerusalem.

- ❑ It seems clear that the reason why the pilgrims came out to hail Jesus was because of the testimony of those from Bethany...those testifying to the truth that Jesus had “performed *this* sign”...i.e. the sign of raising Lazarus from the dead.

Verse 19

- ❑ John tells his readers that the emergence of these two large crowds once again caught the attention of the Pharisees.
- ❑ Such a large crowd hailing Jesus as their earthly King could easily have sparked a riot.
- ❑ “Less accommodating to the Roman overlords than the Sadducees, they nevertheless thought that the path of wisdom was to endure the occupation, and chafe under their perception of Jesus’ rising popularity.
- ❑ As Jesus is continuing to become more and more popular, the potential for a political uprising, and subsequently the Roman suppression, greatly increases as well. Further, the Pharisees were also greatly threatened by Jesus, as they were very popular among the masses...many of whom were following hard after Christ.
- ❑ The Pharisees recognize the futility of their efforts thus far: “You see that you are not doing any good...”
- ❑ “...look, the world has gone after Him.”
 - Although this is a classic use of hyperbole in this Gospel, it is also yet another case of irony in the Gospel of John.
 - In order to fully see this, one must first begin to understand the meaning of the word *world* in the context of this Gospel and this Chapter.
 - “*The world* commonly refers in the Fourth Gospel to people everywhere without racial distinction...who are lost and in rebellion against God.” D.A. Carson
 - Therefore, the statement of the Pharisees is ironically true – notice in the very next Verse ... “there were some Greeks.”
 - No longer was salvation available exclusively to the Jews...It was now available to the “whole world”...i.e. to Jew **and** Gentile.
 - Even more, Luke states in Acts 17:6-7, “When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset **the world** have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”
 - **INDEED THE WHOLE WORLD TRULY HAS GONE AFTER JESUS!**