

John 12:12-19 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”

¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

John 12:12-19 | Palm Sunday

As we head into Holy Week we’ll take a pause from our time in Genesis. Holy Week marks the week of Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem and culminates in his death on the cross. This first day of Holy Week is called Palm Sunday, on which day Jesus enters Jerusalem. It is a triumphal entry and Jesus’ last Sunday before he is crucified. Christ’s ministry has been marked by secrecy, taking place on the outskirts and fringes of society.

We might expect him to slink in the backdoor of Jerusalem, it would be in keeping with the flavor of his ministry, the maintenance of the messianic secret. But Jesus enters Jerusalem as king.

This story is told in all four gospels. But John’s of course is a bit different. He takes the perspective of the crowd who receives Jesus in praise and celebration. Their praise is a truthful confession, but not in the terms which they understand it to be. The glory with which Jesus enters Jerusalem is far less than his due, and the means by which he will establish his kingdom is more awful than any could imagine. He came not just to establish his kingdom, but to make a people for himself. A king and sacrifice. The king of all nations, the savior of the world.

1. The Danger of Jerusalem

John 12:12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

John places Jesus’s triumphal entry right on the heels of his most powerfully received miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. At the raising of Lazarus many of the Jews

began to follow Jesus and his fame was spreading faster than ever. But at the growth of his fame, so too grew his infamy among those who held authority. The Pharisees and Scribes responded to Christ's fame by plotting to murder Jesus. Jesus had therefore taken refuge in a small town called Ephraim and the Pharisees had given instruction that if anyone knew his whereabouts they ought to report it to them.

There was, however, an inevitable countdown, the feast of Passover when all Jews would take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. As the time approached the city was abuzz concerning Jesus.

John 11:56 They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?"

The hiddenness for Christ was the maintenance of his life. What is it that could possibly stop the movement of Christ's mission but his death? In any earthly consideration it makes sense for Jesus to simply avoid Jerusalem. But this march towards death is the very mission of Christ, so to Jerusalem he goes, not hidden but triumphant. There could perhaps be nothing more dangerous than for Jesus to enter in such a public way, and the celebration which he will rightly receive, enflames his enemies making certain his murder.

2. The Triumphal Entry

John 12:13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

It is Palm Sunday after all, and the crowd who heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem took palm branches to go out to meet him. He was riding into town on a Donkey, and the other gospels report that coats were laid down to create a road for him and palm branches were waved and laid down for him to walk across as he entered the city.

Palms. Peter Leithart makes some excellent connections regarding the meaning of Palms throughout scripture. First, why is it that Palms were associated with the celebration of Kings? In Hebrew the word for Palm is תמר. How convenient for us having just two weeks ago looked at the story of Judah and Tamar. I'll give a quick refresher because if you were with us you might not remember the name but you'll remember the story. Judah is one of the twelve son's of Israel, and Tamar was his widowed daughter-in-law. Judah refused to marry Tamar to his youngest son. She eventually deceives him and Judah in his immorality sleeps with Tamar and she conceives. King David, who receives the covenant of the eternal throne in Israel comes through the line of Tamar. Palms are for kings.

The first instance of Palm trees in scripture is in Exodus after the Exodus. The first well watered place in the wilderness is a place of 12 springs with 70 palm trees. 12 are the

tribes of Israel, and 70 is the number associated with the gentiles. Tamar is a gentile who was brought in to the very line of the Israelite Kings. The integration of the 70 into the 12.

The people cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!” And with their palms they recognize that this king of Israel is the king of all nations tribes and tongues. The King of kings.

Hosanna is a sort of praise and a prayer. It means, pray save! It is a call to the one who can save us! Jesus comes in the name of the Lord the king of Israel and he comes to save!

John 12:14-15 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵“Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

Both John and Matthew make the direct connection the prophetic word written in Zechariah chapter 9. The king who was coming would come sitting on a donkey’s colt. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) each provide a considerable amount of detail regarding how the donkey was acquired.

Luke 19:30-32 saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them.

Why spend so much time talking about the donkey? Well you can see that Jesus is fulfilling by his design the precise prophetic word spoken about him. He knew the donkey, He knew the words to tell the owners. He commanded precisely to the disciples and he mounted up and rode in a triumphal procession.

Make no mistake. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and all that will follow is in precise alignment with his intentions. The disciples should in no way think, that while the triumphal entry went so well and the day was so successful, that of course this was apart of his plan. But all that would follow with a continual descent resulting in death, even death on a cross, shouted down by these same crowds, let us not think this was outside of his intentions.

3. Three Responses

John 12:16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

John uniquely gives us the immediate perspective of the disciples witnessing the triumphal entry of Christ. The disciples did not understand what they were looking at until Jesus was crucified and then raised from the dead. It is then that they realized the triumphal entry of the king into Jerusalem truly was the entry of not a mere political savior, but the savior of the world. That the cries of the crowd, Hosanna! Were being heard and answered well beyond their understanding. John then tells us the perspective on the crowd.

John 12:17-18 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.
¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

The Crowd likewise didn't know what they were doing when they celebrated Jesus' arrival. They wanted to see another raising of Lazarus. It was a thin understanding of what it meant that their king had come. And the Pharisees are only more threatened.

John 12:19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Everyone, however so strangely is saying the right thing. But it is far more right, God you see will not be mocked. And you know there will be another Palm Sunday. One described to us in the heavenly places.

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

People from all nations, and tribes and tongues will shout together with Palm branches in their hands that Jesus is our God and to him belongs salvation. Jesus is our king, and he is the savior king. This is the news that we have to share and celebrate with the world.

When he comes back then, it won't be on a donkey. It will be on a horse.

Revelation 19:11–16 (ESV): The Rider on a White Horse

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.