

“The World Has Gone After Him” – *John 12:12-19*

Introduction – This event, the “Triumphal Entry” marks a strange departure from Jesus’ ministry. He more often would withdraw from public confrontation, such as when He did after raising Lazarus from the dead (11:53-54). Many think (as many in the crowds that day thought) that Jesus came to garner public support to reign in Jerusalem and overthrow the Romans (or the Pharisees and chief priests, or all of them). But His acts and intentions were far higher and far wider than that, and the means by which He intended to accomplish the plans of His Father and Himself, while laid out by the prophets of old, remained hidden from the crowd (both friends and enemies - 12:16). These actions would mean that the events of the arrest, condemnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, would be events that could be attested to by many (Acts 26:26, 1 Cor 15:3-8). “...because the time had finally come, He was goading the leaders of the Jewish Sanhedrin into acting on their wicked plans” – Phillips.

John’s Telling of the Triumphal Entry – John emphasizes different aspects of this event than the Synoptics and so we will stick with those emphases. Word got out: A great multitude of those who had come to Passover heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem (v12). They took palm branches and went out of the city as He approached singing from Psalm 118 and proclaiming Jesus “*The King of Israel*” (v13). At some point, Jesus seated Himself on a donkey, fulfilling prophecies from Zechariah 9:9 and Isaiah 40:9 (v15). These connections were not completely understood by His disciples until after Jesus ascended to heaven (v16). The crowd who had seen Jesus raise Lazarus bore witness to and with those who had come out of the city that Jesus had done this sign (vv17-18), and the Pharisees realized that they were accomplishing nothing in trying to stop this growing following of Jesus and His threat to their place of authority and prominence over the people (v19).

Palms and Hosannas (vv12-13) – Passover is approaching, and with the feasts the Hallel Psalms are sung (Psalm 113-118). Sung feast after feast, these Messianic Psalms had become the fight songs of the Jewish independence party. Palm branches had been spread out when Simon the Maccabee drove the Syrian forces out of Jerusalem in 141 BC and in the rededication of the temple in 164 BC. The cry “*Hosanna*” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word translated “*Give salvation now!*” (Ps 118:25). **Psalm 118** – This psalm sings of Jesus, and the crowds knew it. The promised mercy of the Lord had come (118:1-4). Jesus was entering trusting in His Father and not in men (118:5-9). Jew and Gentile alike would crucify the Lord, but Jesus knew He came in triumph (118:10-14). The Psalm speaks triumphantly of life (118:15-18), and of the Way of Salvation (118:19-21). This is followed by the irony of God’s intentions through the wicked plans of sinners (118:22-24). Then comes the verses that John says the crowd lingered upon – Hosanna means, “Save us!” (118:25) and then v26 is quoted. The word “*cords*” in v27 can be translated “*branches*.” The palm was the emblem for a conqueror and the song was for the promised Messiah, “The King of Israel!”

Donkeys and Prophecies (vv14-16) – The images and prophecies are coming fast and furious, such that “*His disciples did not understand these things at first*”(v16). It’s not that they didn’t know the Messianic passages of Isaiah 40:9 and Zech 9:9. Donkeys and mules are comical animals to us, but they served as royal transport in ancient Israel. David’s sons rode mules (2 Sam 13:29) and Solomon particularly rode to his coronation on a mule that belonged to David (1 Kings 1:33-44). A donkey is brought to Jesus and rides in, not on a warhorse with armies, but in an image of lowliness and peace.

Lowliness that Leads to Victory – Zech 9:9 would have been so hard to understand at that moment. Why this picture of “*He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey*”? But it would only be through His humiliation that Jesus would be given His exaltation (Phil 2:5-11), a mindset we are to imitate (and will be brought up over and over again in the coming passages). This humility does not diminish His glory, for the work of this humble Servant-King will be peace “*from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*” (Zech 9:10). This is a quotation from Psalm 72, a Psalm of the reign of the Son of David, of whom Solomon was only a type. Jesus is coming in such humility by faith, for He knows that the blood of His covenant will “*set your prisoners free from the waterless pit*” (Zech 9:11-12). Jesus was willing to endure the cross because of the joy that was set before Him (Heb 12:2). He knew what was to be accomplished in the coming week. His own Word had spoke to it and now the Word made flesh was doing it.

“The World Has Gone After Him!” (vv17-19) – Psalm 118 spoke of the triumphant King of Israel coming to save His people. Zechariah 9 spoke of the blood of this covenant which would be spilled for the prisoners to be set free even from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. Just as Caiaphas spoke prophetically of what he did not comprehend (11:49-51), so now, with the swelling crowds and shouts of deliverance by a Savior, the Pharisees worriedly prophesied more than they knew. They could see that they were accomplishing nothing in terms of stopping this Man and would need to stop Him in clandestine fashion. Once again, see how Jesus threatens human political powers. The root of this was their envy of His power and following (Mark 15:10).

Assurance and Humility - Just as the Pharisees spoke far above what they knew, so we can be tempted to speak far under what we know. *God did not send the Son to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him* (John 3:17). We must join with Jesus in the assurance of faith even now, before the full manifestation of what has been declared. He knew what was going to happen in the coming week. We are to join with Him in the proclamation of His glory and kingdom, and we are to join with Him in humble service to the nations. In so doing, God’s Spirit will be poured out upon the nations, and the peoples will flow to the mountain of the Lord (Mic 4:1-2).

“Jesus comes as the conqueror of the nations, but He does not come to conquer Jerusalem, except through His own self offering. He comes as a conqueror, but one who is meek and lowly and seated upon a donkey” – Leithart. But let’s be clear, He has come to conquer, and conquer He will. Those who attempt to oppose Christ will find in the end that they are *“accomplishing nothing.”*

“...and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the LORD of hosts.” (Haggai 2:7).