

John 12:12-19

The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors ¹³took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!”

¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said:

¹⁵“Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.”

¹⁶His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him.

¹⁷Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. ¹⁸That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. ¹⁹Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!”

Background

This event is referred to as Jesus’ “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem, and it’s celebrated on Palm Sunday. The crowd waved palm branches as symbols of victory, hoping for a political Messiah to free them from Roman rule. Their cry of “Hosanna” reflected this desire. Hosanna originally meant ‘save now,’ but by Jesus’ day it was often used as an exclamation of praise. They quoted Psalm 118:25–26, a Messianic psalm traditionally sung during Passover. Though they rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah, most misunderstood His mission as a spiritual Savior, not a political/military hero.

Teaching Points

1. The triumphal entry was a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

Verses 14–15 cite Zechariah 9:9. This prophecy was written over 500 years before Christ, foretelling that the Messiah would come “*humble, riding on a donkey.*” Jesus fulfilled this during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Skeptics might claim Jesus deliberately fulfilled the prophecy, but that doesn’t diminish its significance as fulfilled prophecy. He fulfilled other prophecies, including those beyond human control, like being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), which is verified by the Dead Sea Scrolls,

which include manuscripts copied before the birth of Christ. Interestingly, the disciples didn't recognize the fulfillment at the time; they only understood it later through the Holy Spirit.

2. The triumphal entry was a foretaste of the New Testament program.

The triumphal entry was not only a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, but also a preview of Jesus' New Testament mission. Riding a donkey, not a warhorse, was significant. Jesus was not a political or military Messiah, but a Savior bringing spiritual salvation. This stood in sharp contrast to Zechariah 9:1–8, which describes Alexander the Great's conquests. Though the crowds hoped for freedom from Roman rule, Jesus came to deliver them from sin. His triumphal entry was a preview of His true mission: spiritual salvation.

Application

1. Let's get with the program!

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, most people weren't "with His program." They expected a political king, not a Savior from sin. His kingdom required repentance and faith, but the nation rejected Him. Even today, many celebrate Christian holidays but don't truly follow Christ. Some believers trust Him for salvation but seek comfort and success over sacrifice. Are you truly with the Lord's program?