



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 12:12-19: The Lord's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

"The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: " Hosanna! ` Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!"

¹⁴ Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; 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 were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

¹⁷ Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. ¹⁸ For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. ¹⁹ The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

Background Notes

Verse 12 says that the events associated with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem took place on "the next day." This was not the next day after the anointing of the Lord by Mary (v2-8), but the next day after "the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus"(v10-11). As a matter of fact, Mary's anointing of Jesus actually took place **after** the triumphal entry. The Holy Spirit had John place the account of the anointing before the triumphal entry because, in the John 12 context, we have the different reactions to the great sign miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Throughout the Bible we find this -- God does not always put the biblical material in chronological order. Sometimes the material is in a topical arrangement that is in line with a particular purpose of the Holy Spirit for that book or portion of Scripture. However, when the Bible **says** it is chronological, you can be sure that it **is** chronological! So when we read "The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.." (v12), we can be sure that it was the next day after what the events of verses 10-11, the plotting of the religious leaders. The Lord was in and out of Bethany for the whole week leading up to the crucifixion, as we see from verse 1, but the supper at Bethany (v2-8) took place sometime during the middle of that week.

The "triumphal entry" is, of course, the event that we celebrate on "Palm Sunday." The palm branches used were likely branches from date palm trees (not coconut palm trees!). These branches were symbols of victory, which showed that the people were hoping for a political Messiah, one who would lead the people out from under the Roman occupation and oppression. In fact, that is what most of the people in the crowd meant when they cried out "Hosanna!" Hosanna means "saved" or "save now." They were saying, in effect, "Save now, we pray -- from the Roman oppression!"

The people were quoting Psalm 118:25-26, which says: *"Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD."*

Psalm 118 is a Messianic psalm and worshipers coming up to Jerusalem for the Passover season sang this psalm. These people were applying Psalm 118 to the right person -- the Lord Himself -- even though, for most of them, it was applied to Him for the wrong reason. The Lord was not coming into Jerusalem as a conquering military hero.

Another background note: the people mentioned in verse 17 are distinct from the triumphal entry crowd. Verse 17 once again: *"Therefore the people who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness."* The people in verse 17 were those who had been privileged to see the Lord raise Lazarus from the dead. Now they were sharing the news of the great sign miracle with the crowds from Galilee who had come into Jerusalem for the Passover. These are the people mentioned in verse 18: *"For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign."* These folks from Galilee already knew of Jesus and His miracles. They knew that, up to this point, Jesus had refused to be recognized as a political Messiah. But when they heard He was coming to Jerusalem, maybe they thought that He had changed His mind. Or maybe they thought the right time had finally come, and they were welcoming Jesus as a political Messiah making His triumphal entry as a conquering military hero. Verse 19 indicates that the crowds were quite large: *"The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"* Certainly this is an indication of great crowds.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

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

Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt."(v14-15).

Here John was quoting the Messianic prophecy from Zechariah 9:9: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."* The phrase "Daughter of Zion" was a figurative expression for the Jewish people. Zechariah wrote this prophecy more than five hundred years before the coming of Christ, and it was fulfilled exactly as it was predicted!

Now if you share this fulfilled prophecy with your non-Christian friends to show them how accurate the Bible's fulfilled prophecies are, what do you think your non-Christian friends will say? If they are skeptics, they will say "That's not a fulfillment of Bible prophecy! Jesus **artificially** fulfilled it -- He knew of the prophecy and He made sure He fulfilled it to the very last detail." Now what would we say in response to that? We would say, "Well, of course the Lord knew about this prophecy." (In contrast to the disciples, by the way, who didn't seem to know of Zechariah 9:9. *"His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him."*

So it was only when the Holy Spirit came upon the church that the disciples remembered and put it all together!) However, just because the Lord knew of this prophecy doesn't mean that He **artificially** fulfilled it, any more than He artificially fulfilled any of the other Messianic prophecies. Of course He knew all of the Messianic prophecies -- and He fulfilled every one of the prophecies about His first coming.

I always tell my students that when using fulfilled prophecy as evidence for the Christian faith, it is better to use prophecies that the skeptic can't escape from. There are plenty of those in the Bible! For example, in reference to the life of Christ there are a number of prophecies dealing with His lineage and birth. Now how can you artificially fulfill a prophecy about your lineage and your birth? Take a look at Micah 5:2, for example, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me, The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.*" This passage predicts that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and that is exactly where Jesus was born -- and it is pretty difficult to somehow "artificially" control the place of your birth! In addition, we have copies of that prophecy in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written down well before the birth of Christ. So the birthplace of Jesus is definitely a prophecy that was made long **before** Jesus was born -- not a later insertion put into the manuscript by early followers of Christ!

All the prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled in detail, right on schedule. There are prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ, and they will be fulfilled in detail as well. Look again at Zechariah 9:9, and also verse 10: "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.'*"

The prophecy in verse 10 refers to Jesus Christ's second coming. When the Lord returns to this earth, war will come to an end, peace will spread to the ends of the earth, and Jesus Christ will reign as King. Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled literally at Christ's triumphal entry. Zechariah 9:10 will be fulfilled literally at the Christ's second coming.

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

Not only was the triumphal entry a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, it was a foretaste of the Lord's "New Testament program." The fact that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and not on a warhorse was very significant, and very symbolic. The donkey was a sign of peace and an indication that the Lord was not coming as a political Messiah or a military hero. That was not His program.

The contrast is quite striking in the prophecy in Zechariah 9. In Zechariah 9:1-8, predictions are made of the future victories of the famous Greek military leader, Alexander the Great. Zechariah's prophecy was made a couple of hundred years before the coming of Alexander the Great! Zechariah prophesied in the sixth century B.C., during the days of the Persian Empire. Now here is the point: in contrast to the great military victories and accomplishments by Alexander the Great, the Messiah would come as a Man of peace, lowly, riding on a donkey. He was bringing **salvation from sin**, not victory over Rome -- **that** was the Lord's program! The crowds were hoping that He would deliver them from the Roman occupation and oppression, but that was not His program. He had come to deliver them from **their sins** -- "*just and having salvation*" --

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

Practical Application

Let's get on with the program!

I'm sure you've heard this expression spoken to you when you are "out of phase," or doing your own thing: "You're not with the program!" or "Get with the program!" Very few people were in tune with the Lord's program when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The crowds wanted a political king and a conquering military hero -- they were not with the **Lord's** program. Yes, He had announced that His prophesied kingdom was at hand, and there was an earthly political aspect to that kingdom, but the setting up of His kingdom hinged on the nation repenting of their sins and accepting Him as their Savior and God. Sadly, the nation rejected Him as their Messiah; they didn't get with His program. Even the triumphal entry crowds faded away when they realized that the Lord's program didn't line up with their program.

The same is true today. The Lord's program is for us to receive Him as Savior and then join Him in living "*outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*" Hebrew 13:13 says, "*Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*"

Lots of people celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter and Christmas, but they don't want to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. What about you? Are you "with the program"? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior?

Some Christians have gone only part way with the Lord's program. Yes, they have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, but they are unwilling to "bear His reproach." They want **their own** program for their lives. They want to be successful and popular -- they're unwilling to suffer any kind of loss for the sake of living out the Lord's program.

Are we with the Lord's program? Let's get with the program!