

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem—Part A

John 12:12-26

July 12, 2009

I. Outline of this section:

A. Events during the Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)

1. The parade (12:12): The people line the roadside to welcome Jesus.
2. The praise (12:13): "Hail to the King of Israel!"
3. The prophecy (12:14-16): This event was predicted by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah (Zech 9:9).
4. The popularity (12:17-18): Again, people flock to Jesus because of the Lazarus miracle.
5. The protest (12:19): The Pharisees are furious over Jesus' popularity.

B. Events following the Triumphal Entry (12:20-50)

1. Jesus and the disciples (12:20-26)
 - a. The request (12:20-22): Philip and Andrew tell Jesus that some Greeks desire to see him.
 - b. The response (12:23-26): The Savior speaks of his impending death.
2. Jesus and the Father (12:27-29)
 - a. The request (12:27-28a): Jesus asks the Father to "bring glory to your name!"
 - b. The response (12:28b-29): The Father reassures the Son with a loud voice from heaven that is heard by the crowd that this indeed will be done.
3. Jesus and the Passover crowd (12:30-50)
 - a. The first session (12:30-36)
 - (1) Jesus tells them both the world and Satan will soon be judged (12:30-31).
 - (2) He will save men by way of the cross (12:32-34).
 - (3) They need to accept him before it is too late (12:35-36).
 - b. The second session (12:37-50)
 - (1) The prophecy (12:37-41): Jesus tells the Jewish crowd their unbelief was predicted centuries before by Isaiah (Isa. 53:1; 6:10).
 - (2) The praise seekers (12:42-43): Some Jewish leaders believe Jesus is the Messiah but will not confess him, for they love men's praise more than God's praise.
 - (3) The promise (12:44-50): To accept Christ is to accept the Father, which leads to life everlasting.

II. Review

In John 12, the Lord Jesus Christ as He relates to 4 different groups of people, and there are lessons that we can learn as we study this section.

A. Jesus and His Friends (John 12:1-11)

Our Lord knew that the Jewish leaders were out to arrest Him and kill Him (John 11:53, 57), but He still returned to Bethany, only two miles from the very citadel of His enemies.

Why? So that He might spend a quiet time with His dear friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

True to their personalities, Martha busily served and Mary worshiped at the feet of Jesus (see Luke 10:38-42).

B. Now we will look at how Jesus responds to the other three groups of people.

1. Jesus and the Passover Pilgrims (John 12:12-19)
2. Jesus and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)
3. Jesus and Unbelieving Jews (John 12:37-49)

III. Events during the Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)

John 12:12-19 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written; "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

A. Jesus and the Passover Pilgrims

1. John shifted the scene from a quiet dinner in Bethany (the first group of people in this chapter are His friends (12:1-11) to the second group of people; a noisy public parade (this is the second group of people, the Passover Pilgrims; who participate in his triumphal entry) in Jerusalem.

All four Gospels record this event and their accounts should be compared.

This was the only "public demonstration" that our Lord allowed while He was ministering on earth.

His purpose was to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy (Zech. 9:9).

The result was a growing animosity on the part of the religious leaders, leading eventually to the crucifixion of the Savior.

2. There were three different groups in the crowd that day:
 - a. The Passover visitors from outside Judea (John 12:12, 18)
 - b. The local people who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus (John 12:17)
 - c. The religious leaders who were greatly concerned about what Jesus might do at the feast (John 12:19).
3. At each of the different feasts, the people were in keen expectation, wondering if Jesus would be there and what He would do. It looked as though Jesus was actually seeking to incite a revolution and establish Himself as King, but that was not what He had in mind.
4. Jesus was such a controversial Person that it was impossible for Him to be near Jerusalem and remain unnoticed. From all over the country, people came to the Passover feast. Many sought out Jesus (cf. 11:56) and also . . . Lazarus. Because Lazarus had been restored, many . . . Jews believed in Jesus. So the chief priests planned to kill two men-Jesus and Lazarus!

B. Notes of the events during the Triumphal Entry (12:12-19)

1. A crisis:

The stir created by raising Lazarus brought fresh crowds to Jesus. His renewed popularity created a panic among His enemies and convinced them that a crisis existed. How

significant. The gift of life given to Lazarus moved Jesus' enemies to act against Him and to take Jesus' life! The eternal life Jesus gives also comes at the cost of His own.

2. The parade (12:12):

a. The people line the roadside to welcome Jesus.

Things seem to be looking up: many hearing of the Lazarus miracle are openly expressing allegiance to Jesus.

A wild enthusiasm over Jesus broke out. Thousands of Galilean pilgrims had come to the Passover, and they had seen many of His mighty works. Previously He had rejected the role of a political Messiah (6:15) but, they thought, perhaps now was the right moment. Jerusalem was the city of the great King and He was coming to it. Waving their palm branches, symbols of victory, the people were shouting (ekraugazon; cf. comments on 11:43)

b. The praise (12:13): "Hail to the King of Israel!"

The crowd welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem with the cry of "Hosanna" (Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9, 10; Jn 12:13).

c. Hosanna!

"Hosanna" in Hebrew means "Please save" or "Save now" (cf. Ps. 118:25). It came to be a shout of praise. Quoting Psalm 118:26, they ascribed messianic titles to Him: He who comes (lit., "the Coming One"; cf. John 11:27) and the King of Israel.

Psalm 118 is a declaration of confidence in the Lord's salvation, made in a time of need. The psalm as a whole was part of a longer hymn (the Hallel) which was sung on great occasions. Verse 25 in particular was used in the Jewish feast of tabernacles. At the point in the worship when this verse was read, the people would wave branches of myrtle, willow, and palm. Branches may have been waved at other times also as a general expression of jubilation.

This happens in 2 Maccabees 10:6, 7, at a ceremony for the rededication of the temple after it had been defiled. But because the people who welcomed Jesus not only waved branches but also sang "Hosanna," and "blessed be he who enters in the name of the Lord" (Ps 118:26) it appears they had the feast of tabernacles in mind.

They ascribed messianic titles to Him: He who comes (lit., "the Coming One"; cf. John 11:27) and the King of Israel.

This means the crowd was greeting Jesus as Messiah. Already before Jesus' time the phrase "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" was taken to refer to the Messiah. And it is possible that the word "Hosanna" by itself had messianic significance. Other expressions in the report of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem support this. In Matthew 21:9 Jesus is called the "Son of David"; in Mark 11:9 there is reference to "the coming kingdom of our father David"; in John 12:13, Jesus is called "the King of Israel." All of these have messianic overtones.

We need not suppose that in shouting "Hosanna" the people had a political deliverance in mind. They probably did not know in what way Jesus would be a deliverer. The most one can say is they believed Jesus was One sent by God for their salvation. Had there not been something in their response to him which Jesus could recognize as proper worship, he would hardly have accepted their praise. It would only appear later, in his cross and resurrection, what his messiahship really meant.

d. Palm branches were used on occasions of festivity (Leviticus 23:40, Nehemiah 8:15).

They were regarded as tokens of joy and triumph. Kings and conquerors were welcomed by having palm branches strewn before them and waved in the air. Thus they were waved before the Messiah on the occasion of His entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13). Conquerors in Grecian games returned to their homes triumphantly waving palm branches in their hands. Thus in the New Jerusalem, John sees the triumphant followers of the Messiah with "palm branches in their hands."

The crowd's excitement reflected their belief that Jesus was about to set up an earthly kingdom and expel the Romans.

3. The prophecy (12:14-15): This event was predicted by the Old Testament prophet Zechariah (Zech 9:9).

Jesus' riding into the city on a young donkey was a sign of peace (cf. comments on Matt. 21:2, which speaks of Jesus riding on a donkey and a colt). He did not ride a war horse or carry a sword or wear a crown. Nor did He ride in a wheeled vehicle, as did many kings. His manner of entry fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy which contrasted Jesus' coming (Zech. 9:9) with the coming of Alexander the Great (Zech. 9:1-8). Daughter of Zion is a poetic way of referring to the people of Jerusalem, the city built on Mount Zion. Here, in quoting Zechariah 9:9, John called Jesus Israel's King.

4. The problem (12:16):

The disciples, though close to Jesus and participants in these events, did not understand them. They lacked the perspective of the Cross and the Resurrection (when He was glorified). They were unaware that Zechariah's prophecy had been written about Him. Their faith was weak and they needed the ministry of the Holy Spirit (16:12-14).

5. The popularity (12:17-18): Again, people flock to Jesus because of the Lazarus miracle.

There appear to be two different crowds mentioned in vs 17-18. One group had seen the miracle of Lazarus's restoration, and the other group had only heard of it. The events caused despair on the part of the Pharisees because they would not so easily be able to carry out their plan. There is despairing exaggeration on their part in claiming the whole world has gone after him (see vs 42-43).

The size of the crowd kept increasing. The news of the great miraculous sign-Lazarus raised from the dead-spread through the city, and other groups surged out to meet Him. It was a day of great popular acclaim, but sadly the people had little spiritual perception.

6. The protest (12:19): The Pharisees are furious over Jesus' popularity.

A crisis (12:9-19): The stir created by raising Lazarus brought fresh crowds to Jesus. His renewed popularity created a panic among His enemies and convinced them that a crisis existed. How significant. The gift of life given to Lazarus moved Jesus' enemies to act against Him and to take Jesus' life! The eternal life Jesus gives also comes at the cost of His own.

The mass reception of Jesus made the plans of the Pharisees impossible. They "were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill Him. But not during the Feast, they said, or the people may riot" (Mark 14:1-2). Pessimistically they acknowledged, the whole world has gone after Him. Irony is again evident, for most of those people did not really believe in Jesus.

C. Application of the events to our lives

1. Miracles and the power of God will have mixed reactions in people. Some will respond and believe in Jesus for eternal life. Others still will not believe, they will remain antagonistic to you and the message of the gospel.
2. We must guard our hearts when people praise and are antagonistic to us.
3. At times true worship will be radical.
4. As we follow the Lord there will be mixed responses in our closest relationships.

IV. Events following the Triumphal Entry (12:20-50)

A. Background:

1. Following His entry into Jerusalem, our Lord cleansed the temple for the second time.

Matt 21:12-13 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."

Mark 11:15-18 Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.

2. Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11

"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer'? But ye have made it a den of thieves." Perhaps these Greeks heard that word and were encouraged by it.

3. One of John's major themes is:

- a. Jesus is the Savior of the world, not simply the Redeemer of Israel.

John 1:29 He is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

John 4:42 The Samaritans rightly identified Him as "the Savior of the world"
"... or we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 6:33 He gave His life for the world and He gives life to the world
"For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

John 8:12 He is the Light of the world
Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

- b. The universal emphasis of John's Gospel is too obvious to miss. Jesus will bring the "other sheep" who are outside the Jewish.

John 10:16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

John 11:51-52 ... but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

B. Jesus the Disciples, and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)

1. Jesus and the disciples: John 12:20-26

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

2. Notes: Now we will look at how Jesus responds to this third group of people (the Gentile visitors).

- a. The request (12:20-22): Philip and Andrew tell Jesus that some Greeks desire to see him.
b. The Greeks at the feast (12:20):

The mention of Greeks is significant. They were the wanderers of the ancient world and the seekers of truth. These Greeks were probably God-fearers who attended Jewish synagogues and feasts. Their coming was symbolic of the coming of Gentiles to worship God through Christ (John 10:16).

These Greeks may have been Greek proselytes; if so they would have been able to join the Jews in the temple worship. But it is not certain that they were so committed. At least they were religious seekers since they had come to worship. Many Gentiles were attracted to Judaism's ideas because of its higher moral emphasis compared with paganism. These men had probably come from the Decapolis and may even have known Philip who came from nearby Bethsaida. It may be assumed that their quest to see Jesus was prompted by a desire to learn from him rather than mere curiosity. Maybe John sees them as examples of the 'world' going after Jesus.

- c. Why did the Greeks approach Philip about seeing Jesus? (21-22)

Perhaps because Philip had a Greek name. Or he may have had some contact with Greeks from the Decapolis area. Philip went to . . . Andrew, and Andrew and Philip . . . told Jesus. Since crowds of people probably wanted to speak with Jesus, the disciples may have tried to do some screening (Luke 18:15-16).

- d. The response (12:23-24): The Savior speaks of his impending death.

Jesus had been moving toward His decisive hour (John 2:4; 4:21, 23; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20).

The coming of the Greeks confirmed that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (cf. 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

For most people death is their humiliation. But for Jesus death was His means of entry into glory. His willingness to die for others' sins in obedience to the Father (Isa. 53:10, 12) brought Him renown (glory; John 12:16; 17:1, 5).

I tell you the truth introduces a solemn affirmation. The analogy of a kernel of wheat "dying" in the ground and producing many seeds teaches that death is necessary for a harvest.

It is difficult to imagine how they would have understood the opening words of Jesus. They would hardly have been so well informed as John's readers about the significance of the hour (23). The Greeks may have thought in terms of the triumphal entry.

e. The wheat analogy (12:25-26):

It illustrates a general paradoxical principle: death is the way to life. In Jesus' case, His death led to glory and life not only for Himself but also for others.

In the case of a disciple of Jesus, the principle is similar. A disciple must hate his life in this world. To "hate his life" means to be so committed to Christ that he has no self-centeredness, no concern for himself. On the other hand the man who loves his life will lose it. Anything in life can become an idol including goals, interests, and loves (Luke 12:16-21; 18:18-30).

A believer should undergo a spiritual death to self (Rom. 6:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 6:14).

Being a servant of Jesus requires following Him. Many of Jesus' original servants did follow Him-in death. According to tradition, the early disciples died as martyrs. Jesus' word was thus a prophecy and also a promise. His true disciples (those who serve Him) follow Him in humiliation and later in honor or glory (Rom. 8:17, 36-39; 2 Tim. 2:11-13).

3. Summary: Jesus is not deceived.

He tells His disciples (vv. 20-28a) and then the crowds that He is about to be killed (vv. 28b-36).

From the context it can be seen that for Jesus his 'hour' was his approaching passion. This is clear from the glorification theme and from the grain of wheat illustration. The formula I tell you the truth (24) points out the importance of the announcement. The principle in nature that death is essential for further life was applied by Jesus to himself by inference. Wheat reproduces its own kind, and Jesus regarded his passion in the same light. His death would produce life for many. The contrast between loving and hating (25) brings out in sharp relief the choice and consequence involved in personal reaction to Jesus. Loving and hating are here relative terms, standing in opposition to each other.

4. Application:

- a. There is a time to ignore personal requests that people ask of us. Good personal boundaries mean that I can say "no" without guilt and without a reason for saying "no."
- b. Many times when we ask God questions it appears that:
 - i. He doesn't hear us or is ignoring us.

- ii. That His answer is puzzling and confusing because it doesn't seem to relate to our questions
- c. To avoid being a middleman in a relationship conflict, find a brother (another person) to help us solve the problem.
- d. Death (to self) is the only way we can be fruitful.
- e. Self-preservation leads to frustration and being unfruitful in life.
- f. Self-denial leads to fruitfulness in this life and in the life to come
- g. The Christian life can only be lived through following the leadership and example of Jesus.
- h. The benefits of serving and following Jesus are:
 - (1) Fruitfulness
 - (2) Eternal life
 - (3) The presence of God with us at all times
 - (4) Receiving honor from the Father

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