

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Triumphal Entry John 12:12-19

Intro: As noted in our last study, **ch12** begins John's narrative of the most momentous week in all of world history, the last week in earthly the life of Jesus Christ. This week began with a "Thank You" dinner in Bethany to celebrate the raising of Lazarus from the dead and it will end with the resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself from the dead. In between these two events are a host of other events well known to believers and Bible students, not the least of which is the one we've come to today. Other than the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, no incident from His life is better known than His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on what has come to be known as Palm Sunday. Yet, it's also true that few events in the life of Jesus Christ are more widely misunderstood as this one is.

For whatever reason (spectacle, liturgical, misreading) this entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is assumed by many as His last public offering of Himself as King to the people of Jerusalem. The premise for this says that up to this point, He had avoided allowing Himself to be thought of as a King. But now, with the hostility of the religious leaders building up against Him and with the moment of His destiny rapidly closing in, Jesus makes one last attempt here to gain a following. Those that hold this belief say that it is only when the Hosannas of the crowd turn to demands for His crucifixion that Jesus abandons this plan and resigns Himself to go to Calvary.

The first problem with this faulty view is the clear teaching of Scripture. The Gospels tell us that Jesus had already offered Himself to Israel as King once, early in His ministry. In fact, this was the theme of His teaching from the very beginning (**Matt 4:17**). The problem is Jesus had been rejected by Israel as her king. Now He's entering Jerusalem with an entirely different purpose. Our study today is not only going to look at what His purpose was but we will also take note of how Jesus conveys this purpose to us in the text.

12-15- At first glance, it's easy to see how so many well meaning believers could take this as a last ditch effort by Jesus to gain a substantial following,

thereby establishing Himself as Israel long awaited, true Messiah. The crowd certainly seems to think this is the case as they say as much in their quoting of [Ps 118:25](#) in [vs13](#). But, a cursory reading of Scripture is not usually sufficient to discover the true meaning or accurate teaching of a text. Let's look at what's going on in these verses before we establish the true purpose of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

next day- John is careful to provide us with a time stamp for this event. It is the day after the supper in Bethany. This tells us that the chief priests plotted Lazarus' death that very night. Now, John shifts the scene from a quiet dinner in Bethany to a noisy public parade in Jerusalem. This would be the second day of this very momentous week.

great multitude- people from other parts of Israel coming up to Jerusalem for the Passover feast; it's likely many were from Galilee. These would have been the folks who had witnessed the greater part of Jesus' public ministry since the majority of it was spent in the region of Galilee. This might explain their enthusiasm at Jesus' arrival. No doubt many of them had felt for some time that both the teaching and miracles of Jesus showed Him to be the Messiah but He never made this claim of Himself, at least not overtly. He never would set Himself up as King. Now, on this occasion, when He doesn't reject their acclamation, their enthusiasm for Jesus was boundless. It was their belief that Jesus was now doing what they had always wanted Him to do. John even tells us that these people didn't just happen to be out on the street when Jesus arrived; they heard He was coming and went out to meet Him with a set purpose.

palm- these branches were traditionally used only during the feast of tabernacles as prescribed by the Law ([Lev 23:40](#)) but later they began to be used on other festive occasions. They began to be seen as an emblem of victory and a symbol of Jewish nationalism. Their appearance here in this parade indicates that this crowd was expecting the imminent liberation of their nation from Roman rule and they fully expected Jesus to accomplish this. This idea is clearly supported by the words with which they greeted Jesus upon His arrival.

Hosanna- this is an elaboration of [Ps 118:25-26](#). This is a Psalm of thanksgiving to the God of Israel for a victory granted to His people. Hosanna is simply an English transliteration of the Hebrew phrase "save

now” or “give salvation now” which is how **vs25** begins. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” is a Jewish idiom for welcome; literally: “Welcome in the Lord’s name.” But, in our text, the person who is welcomed is hailed as the King of Israel. **Ps 118** may well have been a victory congratulation offered to a prince of the house of David but it doesn’t explicitly say that. This crowd, however, spelt out plainly what they meant by referring to it. They had their own clear ideas of what the King of Israel would do. They were looking for another victory; a political and, if necessary, a military victory over the Roman occupiers who’ve taken away their right of autonomous rule and effectively placed them in bondage. This crowd now looked to Jesus as a political and national savior; they were receiving him as a triumphant Messiah.

Was the crowd correct in their assessment of the arrival of Jesus? I know, how could a crowd that large be wrong? If you’ve been with us any length of time through our study of John’s Gospel, you should realize by now that when it comes to the person of Jesus and His teaching and miracles, the crowd is almost never right – if ever. It never fails that when Jesus would perform a miracle, the people would misunderstand it. When He would then offer a teaching to clarify the miracle, they would misunderstand that. Of course, we can’t dog the great unwashed masses too much; His own disciples were often completely in the dark about who Jesus truly was and what He was actually saying. The truth is, this crowd was completely wrong as to why Jesus was entering Jerusalem on this particular day. Does Jesus attempt to correct their miscalculation? Not verbally, but His actions are a clear rejection of their misguided acclaim.

Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem on this particular day? What was His purpose for coming? There are a few answers to that question but the first and most important reason is: He came to die! Last week we read Mark’s account of Jesus explaining His upcoming death to the disciples while on the road back to Bethany. This same conversation is recorded by both **Matthew** (almost verbatim) and **Luke**. This was just a mere 2 days earlier. With this as our context, it’s clear that Jesus didn’t enter Jerusalem to win over the people because the time for that had long passed. No, the fact is that He entered the city this way in order to goad the Pharisees and the chief priests into action against Him. He was forcing them to execute their wicked plot against Him on the father’s timetable instead of their own.

Another reason why Jesus entered the city as He did was so that He might fulfill Scripture. This may seem like a backwards way of doing things. We tend to think that Jesus, being God, could not be bound by anything. But Jesus always considered Himself bound by Scripture as the infallible expression of the Father's will. Thus, both Matthew and John refer to the prophecy of [Zechariah \(9:9\)](#) and find its fulfillment in this particular incident. John doesn't see the need to elaborate on how Jesus acquired this foal of a donkey as the other Gospel writers do. For him, it was only important that the will of the Father was accomplished as it was, so completely, by Jesus here.

Did Jesus reject the expectation and acclaim of the crowd? Yes, not verbally but in this specific action of riding in on a donkey. This crowd had in mind a political salvation from the oppression of Rome. They're looking for a conquering King, a victorious Messiah. But, Jesus rode in on the back of a donkey not just to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy but also to demonstrate the character of His kingdom. The use of a donkey as a royal mount highlights the peaceful policy of this King. If Jesus had shown up to "kick Roman butt and take Latin names," He would have rode into town on a war-horse or marched in on foot at the head of His armies. The donkey was not normally used to mount warriors. It's the animal of a man of peace, a priest or a merchant. It could be used by an important person but in connection with peaceful purposes. Jesus shows the character of His kingdom is spiritual, not military. He came in peace, not war.

Again, the people were hoping that Jesus would bring them the kind of peace they wanted. But He actually arrived in Jerusalem to bring them the kind of peace they needed. They wanted Him to bring them peace from tyranny but He came to make it possible for them to have peace with God. They wanted to be delivered from the Empire of Rome but He came to deliver them from the god of this world. They wanted to be freed from the bondage of oppression but He came to free them from the bondage of sin. He came to offer them a policy of quiet and patient submission to the Father's will but the city failed to recognize the things that made for real peace, with disastrous consequences. They hailed Him as the Messianic King of Israel but Jesus came as the Prince of peace.

The crowd's idea of Jesus was clearly wrong. This is sad because they were so close. They quoted [Ps 118:25](#) but if they had just stopped to

consider the significance of vs24, it would have benefitted them greatly. Many theologians hold that the day spoken of in vs24 is the very day we are considering in our text, the day of the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. They see the timing of His arrival here as a specific fulfillment of OT prophecy (Dan 9:25-26). This means that this was Jerusalem's day! This was the crowd's day. This was the Pharisee's and chief priest's day! This was the day that was prophesied and this was the day they should have been expecting. But they weren't. They missed it completely. The crowd's idea of Jesus was completely wrong so their expectation of Him was also wrong. Of course, the disciples didn't even understand this at the time but they did come to understand it later.

16- Jesus will say later that when the Holy Spirit comes, He'll lead believers into all truth. John gives an example of this in vs16. At first, the disciples didn't understand what these things meant. It was only after Jesus was glorified that they recalled these prophecies and saw how they had been fulfilled. We must not think that His being glorified is limited to His resurrection. The glorification of Jesus Christ was one continuous movement which includes His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit could not be given until He was off the scene. The crowd thought of Jesus as King in a wrong sense but after the Holy Spirit was given, the disciples thought of Him as King in the correct sense.

What this teaches us is that the events in the life of Jesus are not open for every unregenerate person to see and comprehend. They are only revealed by the Holy Spirit of God to the born-again children of God (1 Cor 2:14). This explains why the crowd was wrong but it doesn't excuse their confusion. It's interesting that in the 4 Gospels, any time there is a dispute concerning the proper interpretation of Scripture, Jesus never says, "Oh, that passage is a little ambiguous. I can see how it can be confusing." On the contrary, when there's any discrepancy in interpretation Jesus never lays the blame on Scripture but on the reader. He usually says something to the effect of, "You're wrong because you don't know your Bible." Jesus not only assumes we'll discover the clear intent of Scripture – He expects us to. In fact, on Judgment Day, it's from Scripture that the lost will be judged and ignorance will not be an excuse.

You might say this sounds kind of unfair. The unregenerate person cannot

properly understand the Bible without help from the Holy Spirit but will be judged from the Bible in the end. How is that fair? It's fair because everyone has access to the Holy Spirit. All you have to do is invite Jesus Christ into your heart and life and the Holy Spirit gets added into the mix automatically. He will indwell you as the earnest (down payment) of your salvation and He will come upon you to lead you into all truth and empower you to faithfully serve Jesus. But, you must surrender all hope of earning heaven by your own efforts and throw yourself at Jesus feet and ask Him to forgive you and save you. The alternative to this is being strictly judged by a Book that you don't even understand.

There's one other reason why Jesus entered Jerusalem the way He did, particularly when He did – it was to show Himself to be our Passover Lamb. More specifically, He wanted to exhibit Himself as our Passover Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world. How Jesus accomplished this is not directly revealed in our text; it requires the use of some scholarly research and some extra-biblical resources. Through the use of computer models, scholars have determined that this first Palm Sunday would have fallen on the tenth of Nisan on the Jewish calendar. This date is important because it was on this day that thousands of Passover lambs that were to be sacrificed for the feast were taken up to Jerusalem and kept for 3 days in the homes of those who were going to eat them.

Not everyone is aware of how many lambs were actually involved. Needless to say, there were a great number of them. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that one year a census was taken of the number of lambs sacrificed for Passover and that the figure came up to be 256,500. With a number that large, lambs must literally have been driven up to Jerusalem throughout the whole day. So, whenever Jesus entered the city He must have done so surrounded by thousands of lambs, Himself being the greatest of lambs. 4 days later, at the exact time the lambs were killed for the Passover feast, Jesus Himself was killed, becoming the ultimate Passover lamb. Furthermore, it's on the basis of the shed blood of this Lamb of God that the angel of spiritual death passes over all who place their trust in Him.

17-19- Now John tells us that a second group of people, those who had been present at the raising of Lazarus began to bear witness of the amazing miracle they had seen. Their open and honest witness of Jesus and His power caused still more people to come out to see Jesus. I mean, if a man

has the power to raise the dead, surely He has the power necessary to rid them of the Romans once and for all. let's go check out this miracle man!

All of this seemed to have provoked the Pharisees into a blue funk. Their assessment of the situation is pessimistic. Their statement points to a complete lack of success on their part. They'd made no progress at all in what they were doing against Jesus, they were quite sure Jesus had won the day. They now anticipated some kind of general revolt during Passover and were dreading it. What they didn't realize that in all of this, Jesus was merely forcing their hand to act against Him during Passover, not after it as they had planned. The Lamb of God would give His life when the Passover lambs were being slain.

The second part of their statement was nothing more than exaggerated hyperbole; or was it? It's ironic that they could be so wrong and so right at the same time. They were concerned that a few Judeans were being influenced by Jesus but their words, like Caiaphas' in [ch11](#), were an unintentional prophecy that clearly expresses John's belief that Jesus was conquering the world. We won't have to wait until after Pentecost to see the evidence of this; it will appear in the very next passage!

The crowd's idea of Jesus was wrong. What about yours? Is it accurate? How do you know? The crowd saw Him as a conquering King but they were completely wrong. When they finally realized this; their "Hosannas" turned into "Crucify Him!" pretty quickly. Many people today have the wrong idea about Jesus: They consider Him a fire escape (only in emergency) or as Satan Clause (I want...) or Monty Hall (Let's Make a Deal). Jesus is none of these things; He's so much more. If you find your life is constantly in turmoil, maybe you have the wrong view of Jesus. Jesus never promises life will be all roses and clover but if you see Him in a proper biblical light, everything other aspect of your life will be seen in the proper perspective. It doesn't mean it will be easy, but His presence in it will be clearer.

Jesus went to Jerusalem to present Himself as the Lamb of God. Is He your Passover Lamb? Have you received Him as your Savior? The Jews missed their day, the day that the Lord had made. Today is your day, your day to believe on Jesus and accept Him into your heart. Do not let your day pass you by. It may not come around again. 😊