

THE PROCLAMATION OF JESUS AS KING
(John 12:12-19)

¹² On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. ¹⁴ And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, ¹⁵ Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. ¹⁶ These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him. ¹⁷ The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. ¹⁸ For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. ¹⁹ The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

John 12:12-19

Parallel passages are Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44

Last week we saw the ceremonial anointing of Jesus in preparation of his burial. You remember that Jesus was reclining at supper at the home of Simon the leper and Mary came in with her alabaster box of very expensive perfume. And she broke open the container and poured out a small fortune of precious ointment over the head and feet of Jesus. And this signified his death and burial which was only a few days away.

But this morning we will witness another ceremony of significance which just preceded the death of Christ. It is an important ceremony because it signifies just who this man Jesus is. He is the king. And so, it is appropriate that when he comes to Jerusalem for the last time, the people should come out to greet him and he should be honored as a king and a conqueror.

Now you probably know the story. The next day, after being anointed with perfume, Jesus left out to observe the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. And as he was approaching Jerusalem a great crowd came out of the city to meet him.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

John 12:12, 13

This shows the great fame of Jesus at this time. He was the most famous man in and around Jerusalem. He was the talk of the town. He certainly was the talk of the sick and the lame because he had healed them. He was the talk of the blind and the deaf

who had been healed. And he was the talk of all the people who wondered whether he was the Christ or not. And he was the talk of the Pharisees and the religious leaders, because they were planning to kill him. So the whole city was electric with the anticipation of his coming to the feast.

Now notice in verse twelve that they “heard” that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. Perhaps they heard it from travelers who were coming into town who had passed through Bethany. Perhaps they heard it from spies who were keeping an eye on Jesus. There was no privacy for Jesus anymore. He was in the public eye. When he came out of the house where he was staying there were people gawking at him and watching him. And so it says they heard that he was coming to Jerusalem. And when they heard it, they went out to meet him. They left Jerusalem and they walked down the road toward Bethany.

The Royal Ceremony Performed by Jesus’ Disciples

Now Jesus, before he met the masses on the road, sent his disciples into a village. And he told them,

Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? Thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, the Lord hath need of him. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

Luke 19:30-36

Now when the disciples returned with the donkey, they threw pieces of their own clothing over the donkey and they lifted Jesus up and sat him on the back of the donkey. And as the donkey walked down the path, the disciples kept casting their garments in the roadway. It appears that they would run back and forth picking up garments from behind and placing them in front of Jesus. And the donkey carrying Jesus walked on a royal carpet made of the disciples’ garments.

Remember that the Gospel of John is written to convince us that Jesus is the Son of God; that he is the Messiah; that he is the King of Israel. And I want you to see several aspects of this account, which prove that Jesus is the Son of God.

I. The Testimony of the Donkey that Jesus was King

You will notice from Luke's account (Luke 19:30) that this donkey had never been sat upon by a man before. He was unbroken. And yet, when they brought him to Jesus, they sat Jesus upon this untamed donkey, and the donkey was as mild as could be. He never bucked. He never resisted. And when the multitudes from the city met Jesus waving palm branches and shouting and causing a great stir, this donkey calmly carried the King of Kings into the city.

Is this not evidence itself that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus had healed thousands of people from all kinds of infirmities. And now it appears he is even able to cure an unbroken, anxious animal from his anxiety. And this little colt, who had never had a man on his back before, rode Jesus through the throngs of people into Jerusalem and so testified that this man Jesus was King.

We should also note that in biblical times the donkey was a symbol. First of all, It was a symbol of humility. The donkey was a beast of burden. It was made for lowly work. It was used in the fields for hard labor. And as such, the donkey was a symbol of the humility of our Lord Jesus. Jesus could have ridden into town in a caravan, carried by slaves or even princes. Instead, he came riding on the back of a young donkey. Jesus was the most humble King ever known to man. The Scriptures say, "He humbled himself and became a man," and his whole life was characterized by humility.

But the donkey is also a symbol of peace. One might think that a King would ride into town on a horse. A horse was made for war. A horse was majestic and speedy and strong. And other kings would come on horses with a great army. But Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and his army was a few poor fisherman and a crowd of unarmed peasants.

II. The Testimony of the Disciples that Jesus is King

There was clearly something prophetic and historic going on here because when the disciples returned they spread their own garments over the back of the donkey for a royal saddle. And it says they placed Jesus on the colt. What an honor it must have been to lift their king into the home-made saddle. And not only this, but as is the custom for kings, a carpet was laid out in the king's path. And the disciples laid their garments in the roadway to make the way straight and to soften the ride and to honor the king who was riding into his capital city. (Luke 19:35)

It seems to me that this act of the disciples in casting their garments in the way was an act of formality which was not their everyday practice. Up until this time, they had typically followed Jesus. They had walked with him. They had talked with him. They were his friends. And being with him on a daily basis, I am sure there were many casual

times together. But this occasion was different. They mounted Jesus on a royal vehicle and they marked out his way with their own garments in a very formal display of respect, submission and servitude. And off went the royal parade toward the city of the King.

III. The Testimony of Scripture that Jesus is King

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Zechariah 9:9

The Testimony of the Multitude

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

John 12:13

As Jesus came to the Mount of Olives and began to descend toward the city below, the multitudes of people which came out to meet him suddenly saw him.

“Look, there he is,” they said. And they began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice. And they remembered all the mighty works which they had seen. (Luke 19:37) And they, waved palm branches.

Palm trees were common in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Especially, Jericho was called the city of palms. (Deut. 34:3) And by this time, palm branches had become a national Jewish symbol. Just as an eagle is an American symbol, the palm branch was a Jewish symbol. And the Jewish people came up the Mt. of Olives waving these palm branches which was a national symbol. And I suppose that many of them believed that Jesus was their new king and that he was about to overthrow the Roman government and set up his kingdom and he was about to set them free from the Romans. And they waved their palm branches with great excitement.

And they cried, “Hosanna.” Hosanna means “Save us.” (John 12:13) I am not sure if they meant, “Save us from our sins,” or “Save us from the Romans,” but they cried, “Save us.” And how appropriate that was, because the primary mission of Jesus was to save his people from their sins. And so, prophetically, they cried, “Hosanna.”

It is interesting that God not only used righteous men to proclaim his word, but also often he used the unrighteous to proclaim it. You remember in the eleventh chapter of John that Caiaphas, that old wicked high priest of Israel, unknowingly uttered a prophetic word when he said,

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

John 12:50

And so, this multitude came out of the city and they cried, "Hosanna."

And they said, "*Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord.*"

Now, not only were they shouting royal acclamations to Jesus, but also they took their palm branches and laid them on the road in front of the king. And so, the king rode his donkey on the royal carpet of garments and palm branches. And it was a welcome befitting a king.

You would have thought that this would have been a most joyous moment in the life of Jesus. Finally, he was getting his due. Finally, he was being treated like a king. By all appearances, the people were now accepting him. They had come to their senses and they were bowing down to him as king. Israel had finally seen the light. The multitudes would now finally serve God. That's what you would have thought!

But, when Jesus came near to the city he looked down on it. He must have thought of its long and storied history. I sure he thought back to its' roots in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He must have remembered Moses leading them out of Egypt. He remembered Joshua conquering the land of Canaan. He must have thought back over the long history of the prophets. And then there was David, a man after his own heart. He must have thought of all the things he would have done for Israel had they only obeyed him. And then, he contemplated the near future of this glorious city. In his mind's eye, he saw the Roman Emperor Titus coming into the city laying siege. And he foresaw the people being slaughtered one by one. And he saw the city being leveled so that no stone would lie upon another. And he foresaw the utter destruction was lay in wait for the city and the people of Israel. And seeing all these things, he looked over the city of Jerusalem and his emotion got the best of him. And tears began to come to his eyes. And then they rolled down his cheeks. And the Bible says that he wept over the city. That is, he sobbed in great emotional distress. Let's read what Jesus said.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, they things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Luke 19:41-44

Jesus was not deceived by the multitudes hailing him as king, for he knew what was in the heart of man. (John 2:23-25) Many of these same people, when they saw that Jesus was not the earthly king that they supposed, may have been the very ones shouting, "Crucify him," a few days later.

And so, this whole series of events that we call the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, can be viewed as a grand, prophetic ceremony. It is an open proclamation that Jesus is a king. It was an announcement by God himself, that his Son Jesus was King.

Now the Pharisees didn't like all of this acclamation of the people. They didn't care for this announcement that Jesus was King. (Luke 19:39) But Jesus told the Pharisees,

I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Luke 19:40

What does this tell us? It tells us that the people shouting "Blessed be the King of Israel" were merely the mouthpiece of God. God was using the people to announce the kingship of Jesus. If the people had not done it, the rocks would have cried out. In fact, they would have immediately cried out, because it was the moment when Jesus should be announced as King.

Now the open declaration of his kingship had been largely kept in secret until now. But now his hour had come. Before, Jesus told those whom he healed, "Tell no man, for my hour is not yet come." But now his hour is come. So it is time to shout it from the housetops, "Jesus is the King!" There is no reason to whisper it any longer. His hour is come. So, shout it in the streets. "Hosanna. Blessed be the King of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord."

The Kind of King He Could Have Been

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like for you to consider what kind of king Jesus could have been if he had so willed. If it had been his will, he could have ridden into the city with the multitude at his side and they would have crowned him then and there as king. He could have only said the word and they would have rushed into Pilate's palace and taken Pilate by force. And Pilate would have been put on trial for his life. And the Roman army would have been no match for the great power of Jesus.

You remember in the Garden of Gethsemane how the whole band of Roman officers fell backward to the ground when Jesus spoke. And the same power could have paralyzed the entire Roman army. And the people of Israel could have taken swords

and slaughtered them all. And Jesus could have sat down in the king's palace and been the King of the nation of Israel. And Jesus could have led the Israeli army from country to country conquering all the nations, until the whole world was subdued, if only that had been his will.

If his kingdom had been of this world, Jesus could have assumed the throne then and there. He could have dashed Rome to pieces. And he could have ruled the world from Jerusalem. And his earthly kingdom could have endured forever. Such was the great power of Jesus Christ. And they were ready to make him king then and there.

But such was not the will of Christ. Jesus would later tell Pilate,

My kingdom is not of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

John 18:36

So that is the kind of king that he could have been, but it wasn't his will to be such a king. And now let me show you,

The Kind of Church He Could Have Had

Just as Jesus could have had a rich and powerful kingdom on the earth, so he could have had a rich and powerful church on the earth if he so desired. Jesus could have made every one of his saints a prince in this world. He might have made each and every one of us rich and powerful and famous. He might have made Christianity the one supreme religion and he could have stomped out all opposition. He could have forced all people everywhere to bow the knee to Christianity. And there would have been no other religion on the face of the earth. If it had been his will, all people everywhere would have brought their taxes to the doorstep of his church and his church would have been revered above all in this world.

It was not his will that the church should be respected and revered in the world. It was not his will that the church should be vested with great worldly riches. It wasn't his will for his church that it should be admired of the world for its magnificent architecture or its beautiful vestments. It was not his will that his church would be honored with great possessions. It was not his will that the pastors and deacons of the church would be magnificent lords and rulers. If Christ cared for such worldly things, then his church would rule the world today and the world would seek counsel from the church on matters of law and morality. You and I, along with all believers everywhere, would be the world's kings and presidents. Christ's church would be seated in the halls of congress and his church would make the laws and interpret the laws and enforce the

laws. And the church would be the highest authority and the only authority in all the world.

But, Christ's kingdom is not of this world! Christ is not interested in the least in large cathedrals or majestic architecture here on earth. He is preparing a place for his church elsewhere.

In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go and prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also. (John 14:2, 3)

It is not Christ's will that his church should be engaged in glory and pomp and circumstance and splendor here in this world. If that were his will, then his church would rule the world today. But Christ will have none of that and his people should not seek after it. This world is a crumbling, fallen, cursed place and Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Jesus' church has always been beaten and persecuted by the world. Christians are maligned and persecuted the world over. The churches pastors have been killed. All believers everywhere are counted as foolish and worthy of scorn and even death. All sorts of false religions are given the preeminence in this world. Why is that? It is because Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Christ's kingdom is in another world and in that world Christ's people will have all things put in subjection under their feet! (Hebrews 2:8)

Now we have seen what kind of king Jesus might have been. He could have taken up an army and conquered the Romans and set up his own earthly kingdom. But he didn't. And we have seen what kind of church he could have had. He could have set up an earthly church which would be bestowed with all power and riches and authority in this world. But he didn't. And so now, we consider,

The Kind of King He Really Is

Jesus came to set up a kingdom that is different than any other kingdom ever known to man. Man has had his kingdoms, but each one has fallen in due time. If there is an earthly kingdom, you can be sure that it will fall. But there is a kingdom that will replace all other kingdoms. And it will last forever. Let me just point out a few characteristics of this kingdom.

- I. It is a kingdom where mere believers are nobility.

In all other kingdoms, it is the rich and powerful who hold the high positions. It is those who are born into privilege who rank high in those kingdoms. But in Christ's kingdom, it is believers who will occupy the highest places of authority. And for the most part it is the poor and the humble of this world who will be noble in the next. Christ's

earthly disciples were mostly poor fishermen. And in his church, it is the humble who are most honored. Honor in his kingdom is gained by lowly service in this world. On one occasion, the disciples asked Jesus, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of God?" And Jesus answered,

Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:4

Learn then that to be great in the kingdom of Christ, one must be humble in this world. It is the poor in spirit here that will be great there. Those who sit at Christ's feet here and learn of him and obey him and serve Him shall be great there. The poorest man here that loves Christ and accepts his teaching and serves him shall be nobility in his heavenly kingdom.

But there is another characteristic of his kingdom.

- II. It is a kingdom where the laws of the kingdom will be written in the hearts of the subjects.

In most kingdoms, the subjects obey the king out of compulsion. But in Christ's kingdom, his subjects will obey because they want to obey. There won't be any laws written on paper, they will be written in the hearts of the people. And it will be such a lovely kingdom where everyone serves out of love to the king.

- III. It is a kingdom that is not gained by riches.

The King of this kingdom was the poorest of all men. The Scriptures teach that the King had nowhere to lay his head. He was the poorest of the poor. There is no evidence that Jesus ever owned anything. He wore simple clothing. When he came into Jerusalem he had to borrow another man's donkey. Of all men, he was the One who had the least and gave the most. He was the most humble of all men. And this humble man is now the King over his kingdom.

And then look at his subjects. His disciples were fishermen. They were poor too. When it came time to pave the way for the King, they had no purple cloth to lay down for Him. So, they threw their garments in His path and they brought palm branches to lay in the road. This kingdom is not entered with worldly riches, but by the riches of faith.

- IV. It is a kingdom that is not gained by the sword.

Every other kingdom known to man was won and preserved by armed force. That is the way it works in this world. He that is strongest will prevail. It is the survival of the fittest among nations. But Jesus won his kingdom without ever picking up a sword.

There is not one account of Jesus ever engaging in a physical confrontation. And when Peter struck off the ear of a soldier, Jesus told him to put his sword away. You see this kingdom is not won by force but by love. No one should be compelled to join the church. No one should be required to adopt the ways of Christ. The church is and must always be a willing organization.

That is why it is not a good thing to unite the church and the state. The state should never have control over the church. And it is not God's will that the church should have control of the state.

V. It is a heavenly kingdom.

Christ said of his kingdom, "My kingdom is not of this world." It is not like Greece. It is not like Rome. It is not like the United States of America. It is not even like Israel. These are all worldly kingdoms. But Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

In addition, Jesus called his kingdom, "The kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 13) It was not the kingdom of earth. It wasn't called the kingdom of the world. But it is the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is the place where this kingdom is found and the qualities of the kingdom are heavenly qualities.

If we belong to Christ, then we are all destined to live in a most wonderful kingdom. But that kingdom is not here. That kingdom is found in a place called heaven. It is a place suited for Jesus Christ himself. It is a place suited for the righteous. It is a place suited for glorified bodies. It is a kingdom which is quite different that any kingdom ever known on earth. And that is because it is a kingdom where Jesus Christ is King. There will be no injustice. There will be no unrighteousness in government because the government shall be upon his shoulder. There will be no sin. There will be no more pain. There will be no more tears, because this is the kingdom of our great King Jesus Christ.