

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM AS KING

John 12:12-19

Key Verse: 12:15

“Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”

In this passage Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time before his crucifixion. Jesus enters to the shouts of praise from a great crowd. They welcome Jesus as the Christ, God’s anointed Savior King. Jesus accepts their praise. Then Jesus teaches them the true nature of his kingship. Today, let’s accept Jesus as Savior King.

First, “Hosanna, King of Israel!” (12-13).

Look at verse 12. “The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.” Ever since Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, many people had been looking for him. They were wondering where he was and when he would appear. When they heard that he was on his way to Jerusalem they stopped whatever they were doing and went out to meet him. Of course, they knew that Caiaphas had issued an arrest warrant for Jesus. But they did not think Jesus was a criminal. They believed Jesus was sent by God. They acted according to their hearts and went out to meet Jesus. They formed an instant parade route, lining the street on both sides.

Look at verse 13. “They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the King of Israel!’” Their actions and their words in verse 13 were a literal expression of Psalm 118. This great messianic psalm describes the coming of the King of Israel to the temple after winning a great victory over the enemies. It anticipated the coming of Christ to reign over his people, bringing deliverance and salvation. The people welcomed the King by saying in Psalm 118:25-27, “O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.” When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people welcomed him as the Christ, the King of Israel, promised and prophesied in the Scriptures.

Look again at verse 13. There are three phrases quoted here and each is indeed meaningful. The first is “Hosanna.” This was a Hebrew expression that literally meant “save” but it came to be an expression of praise to God who saves. It is roughly equivalent to “O Lord, save us.” When the people cried, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!” they were crying out to the Lord Jesus to save them. They believed that the promised Messiah would deliver them from all their enemies and bless their lives to be abundant and happy. This is true. Jesus saves his people and blesses us in many ways. After delivering a healthy baby boy Judah, Shepherdess Amy Stasinos was happy. Then she found some complication in her body that seemed to be a serious threat to her health. She and Shepherd Steve cried out to the Lord for help. Chicago UBF fellowship leaders also cried out in prayer. And our Lord Jesus answered us. He planted faith in their hearts and assurance that Shepherdess Amy would be okay. After that she began to get well. Shepherd Steve was so happy and thankful that he brought delicious Dunkin Donuts to our fellowship leaders’ meeting last Monday.

Pastor Kevin and Dr. Maria Albright have served the work of God very sacrificially for the last 18 years since they married. God blessed them with three healthy and active boys, John, Peter and Paul. But they really wanted a girl. So they cried out to the Lord for his blessing. Recently we received some good news. Dr. Maria is pregnant not with one baby, but with two babies. Some time ago, Grace Ahn was wandering a little. Her parents and other servants of God cried out in prayer for her. Soon she found her direction in Jesus. She could study hard and teach the Bible to fellow students. Moreover, God blessed her with a special scholarship to the accelerated Pharm. D. program at UIC. Anna Isla cried out for God’s help and received a golden apple scholarship even though she did not have a social security number.

Jesus is our Savior. When we cry out to him, he hears us and he answers us. Those with job problems must cry out to the Lord. Those with school study problems must cry out to the Lord. Those with relationship problems must cry out to the Lord. Those with health problems must cry out to the Lord. Those with marriage problems must cry out to the Lord. Jesus can save us and make our lives blessed and happy.

The primary purpose of Jesus' coming is to save us from our sins. Sin cuts us off from God, and from others, and makes us spiritually sick. But when we cry out to Jesus, Jesus saves us from our sins. One young man is the only son in a great missionary family. But he felt that Christian life was not much fun. So he became rebellious toward his parents, abandoned God, and lived a pleasure-seeking life. Soon he found that he was a slave of sin, worthless and useless. In his misery he cried out to the Lord. The Lord Jesus took away his burden of sin. Now he feels the grace of Jesus in his soul and he wants to live for the glory of God.

Look at verse 13 again. The second phrase is "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Jesus can save because he is the Savior sent by God. Jesus did not come in his own way or in his own name. Jesus came in the name of the Lord. Jesus is in very nature God. But he came down from heaven, became flesh, and made his dwelling among us. As a man, he humbled himself before God to be absolutely obedient. He humbled himself to be the servant of all kinds of people. In everything he did and said, Jesus revealed God and fulfilled the will of God. Jesus lived by God's time schedule (2:4; 7:6). Jesus taught only the word of God (7:16). Jesus worked only for the honor of God (7:18). Jesus always did what pleased God (8:29). Jesus was so obedient to God that he was never apart from God. Jesus could say, "I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:30). When Jesus came into Jerusalem at the Passover, it was God's coming into Jerusalem to be with his people.

The last phrase of verse 13 says, "Blessed is the King of Israel!" The people welcomed Jesus as their King. They recognized his divine appointment. They acknowledged him as the one who would sit on David's throne and reign with righteousness. Isaiah 9:7b prophesied this: "He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." The people of Jerusalem welcomed Jesus as the King sent by God.

Second, "your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt" (14-15).

Jesus heard the exuberant shouts of the crowd and their united singing that welcomed him as the King of Israel, the promised Messiah. And Jesus accepted it, because Jesus is King. However, Jesus was not the kind of king they had expected. Jesus knew that they did not really understand the nature of his kingship. But Jesus did not try to correct this with many words of explanation. Instead, Jesus made a dramatic act that would remain forever as a statement of his kingship.

Look at verses 14-15. "Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 'Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'" Jesus' act of riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt fulfilled Zechariah 9:9,10. This prophecy reveals most excellently the nature of Jesus' kingship. It says, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth." Let's think about what kind of king Jesus is, based on this prophecy.

In the first place, Jesus is the king of righteousness who brings salvation. Jesus is a spiritual king who saves us from the power of sin and death. Sin separates us from God and brings many kinds of misery in our soul. Sin leads men to despise themselves and to condemn themselves without remedy. No one can solve his sin problem no matter how hard he or she may try. But God gives us righteousness in Jesus, who is the king of righteousness. God, in his love, sent Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus paid the full price. Now we can have the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." When Jesus rules as our king, God declares us to be righteous. When we are right with God, our souls overflow with joy. We also find great hope and can see a bright vision for the future.

In the second place, Jesus is the gentle and humble king. Most kings rule with applied power. They want to intimidate their subjects to keep them under control. In the past, in communist countries, there were annual parades of military might in which all the weapons of war were displayed in a dramatic presentation of the nation's power. It meant, "If you mess with us, we will bury you." Jesus is God Almighty. Jesus could have put on a display of power that would have shaken the world to its core. Jesus could have made volcanos erupt and earthquakes rumble. Yet Jesus came riding on a donkey's colt. No one is afraid of this image. Even children are happy to see the picture of Jesus coming on a donkey's colt. They feel free to approach him and make friends with him. Jesus came in such a

humble and gentle way because he knows we are fearful and insecure due to our sins. Jesus knows that we could not endure his holiness as it is, so he clothes himself with humility. Jesus humbled himself like this to be our friend. Jesus wants us to trust him and to open our hearts to him. Jesus wants to have an intimate relationship with each of us. He already knows all about us. He knows we cannot save ourselves. So he came humbly on a donkey's colt to be our friend and Savior King.

In the third place, Jesus is the king who proclaims peace to the nations. When Jesus reigns in the hearts of individuals, they are transformed into humble and loving children of God. They no longer suffer from anxiety about the future, for they have eternal life. They no longer envy their neighbors because they have God's best treasure in Jesus. Jesus takes away all the causes of war and strife. Jesus proclaims peace to the nations. These days we grieve over the war in Iraq. We feel very sorry that brave young soldiers and their families must suffer so much to engage in this war. Although we believe that God has used it in his own good way to open the Middle East to the gospel, we pray for the war to end soon. True and lasting peace never comes from war. Only Jesus can bring peace to the nations. We must pray earnestly to send 100,000 missionaries to 233 nations with the gospel of Jesus. Then there can be true peace on earth.

By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt, Jesus revealed the nature of his kingship. Jesus is the king of righteousness, humility and peace. Jesus did not come to establish a political and economic kingdom like the kingdoms of the earth. Jesus came to reign in men's hearts and to bring forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Jesus came to bring peace to our souls and peace among men. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he did not force his kingship on anyone. Jesus offers himself as our king. Jesus dearly wants to be our king. Jesus wants to be our Savior King so much that he humbled himself to the lowest place. But Jesus does not force his kingship on us. We must accept his kingship with a willing heart. We must accept Jesus as our spiritual king. Then he rules with righteousness, peace and love. However, if we ignore him, he will not come in. Then we will remain slaves of sin under the power of the devil. The choice is ours. May God help each of us to accept Jesus as king with a willing heart.

From the time of his triumphal entry until now, Jesus has come as king into the hearts of innumerable men and women. Jesus' kingdom is not identified in terms of a geographical location. Jesus' kingdom comes when individual persons willingly accept his reign. We pray for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. It does not necessarily mean that all the branches of our governments will be run by genuine Christians, although this would be nice. It does not necessarily mean that many laws will be passed that protect the sanctity of life and prohibit sinful activity, although this is indeed desirable. What it does mean is that we pray for Jesus to reign over the hearts of people, one by one, as each person makes a decision to accept Jesus through Bible study. Our fervent prayer is, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." For this we engage in one-to-one Bible study to advance the kingdom of God, person by person. In this way may God make North America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Third, have Bible-believing faith, not miracle-seeking faith (16-19)

Look at verse 16. "At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him." Jesus knew that the disciples would not understand the deep meaning of his triumphal entry at the time. Even though God was using them to fulfill prophecy, they did not realize it. Nevertheless, Jesus planted a strong impression in their minds and hearts by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. They could never forget this event and it has been included in all four gospels. After Jesus' death and resurrection, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they came to realize the meaning of Jesus' triumphal entry through the word of God. They could truly understand Jesus' kingship only through the word of God. We don't always understand the deep spiritual meaning of God's work going on around us. But when we simply follow Jesus and continue to study the Bible we can grasp the spiritual meaning of Jesus' kingship.

In verses 17-19 we find two more kinds of people. One were those who responded enthusiastically to Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. These people were at a fever pitch emotionally and went in droves to see Jesus. Yet, a few days later, many of them would join the mob that demanded Jesus' crucifixion. Again and again, John warns us about miracle-seeking faith. When we want to live under the reign of King Jesus, deep and consistent Bible study is most important.

The other group of people mentioned are the Pharisees. Despite their best efforts to suppress the truth about Jesus, a great crowd of people welcomed Jesus as the Messiah. They felt that the whole world was going to believe in Jesus. Though they spoke in frustration, their words turned out to be prophetic. At present, there are roughly 2.1 billion Christians in the world. The whole world has gone after Jesus. Many have found salvation and eternal life in King Jesus.

Today let's accept Jesus as king in our hearts. May Jesus' kingdom come in our nation and to this world. Amen.