



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## A Not-So Triumphal Entry

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*John 12:12-36. Palm Sunday, Jesus' final Passover prior to the cross has come. He enters Jerusalem to the cry of "Hosanna!" as palm branches wave by the thousands. The crowds are ecstatic that their long-awaited king has come to save them from the tyranny of Rome. Yet, they never seem to notice Him riding on a lowly donkey weeping with each step that Jerusalem is gravely mistaken. He came for a cross His first coming; He comes for a crown His second.*

"Lazarus, come forth!" With these words, Jesus raised a man from the dead the week prior to His own death. It was a vivid reminder that if death did not win over Lazarus, it would not win over the One who had raised him. All who had followed the Lord would soon find Him lying dead in a tomb, and their faith should have found substance in this miracle.

No one believed Jesus' life would so end. The idea of messiah meant power, glory, splendor and honor. Miraculous signs. Great wonders. He would be a conquering king whose reign would bring eternal exaltation for Israel, and yet, this isn't what we find. The Gospels reveal a lowly and humble servant-messiah, a savior who wouldn't save politically, a Christ who had come to die (cf. Isa 53). No one expected anything like this, as it seems Jesus' talk of death was always misunderstood or dismissed (cf. John 10:15-17, 12:32-34).

Jesus left Lazarus' family in Bethany and walked the two-mile path to Jerusalem. It was Palm Sunday, the start of the annual Passover. Word had spread throughout the village and beyond that Lazarus was alive. This was not the first miracle the town or region heard about, but it was the greatest. To the citizens of Bethany, Lazarus' resurrection meant Jesus must be their messiah. Speculation ceased. Three and a half years of ministry would now culminate in this moment when the Lord rode into Jerusalem.

Crowds followed and swelled in joyful anticipation that the king had come. Jesus descended the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem's Eastern Gate to the welcome of thousands more. No longer would He work in secret, hide or escape from the authorities. His time had come. Jubilant shouts of "Hosanna!" erupted, and cloaks were thrown down to pave His path. Palm branches waved, and the long-awaited king entered the City of David.

Everyone was elated with the thought of revolution and divine blessing at hand. One person, however, was heartbroken and in tears: Jesus. He came riding on a donkey weeping over the city He loved (cf. Luke 19:28-44; John 12:11-17).

### THY KINGDOM COME (JOHN 12:12-19)

One year prior to this Passover, Jesus multiplied a meal for 5,000 Galilean families. He revealed Himself as the prophet Moses foretold (cf. Deut 18:15-18), and the people rightly identified Him as their king. And yet, He sent the crowd away. They came back hoping for more food, He refused, and a massive crowd of Galileans left embittered (cf. John 6). Why? Because if the king had truly come, the blessings of the kingdom should begin now.

Do you remember when Mary poured a life-savings worth of perfume upon Jesus (cf. John 12:1-11)? It happened only a couple days before Palm Sunday. Hers was an act of worship; Judas thought it an absurd waste. The same happened again just a few days later, during Passover week. Another woman so lavishly worshipped Jesus (cf. Mark 14:3-9). Judas despised it again. Here he realized there would be no revolution or glorious kingdom over Rome. He would never have the wealth he had hoped to find following the messiah. It made no sense to him, for if the king had truly come, the blessings of the kingdom should begin now.

History has a way of repeating itself. Many saw Jesus' miracles, heard His teachings and identified Him as the messianic king. Yet, when the kingdom didn't come as expected, they left Him. The crowds on Palm Sunday would do the same. For the moment, they hail Jesus as king and rushed to see Him with visions of the kingdom in mind.

*John 12:13—"So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"*

*Hosanna!* means "Give victory now!" The crowds were chanting this Hebrew word from Psalm 118:25, a psalm of thanksgiving to God for victory. They shouted with the hope of war at the top of their lungs while waving palm branches. These were a symbol of Jewish nationalism. The Jews waved them after Judas Maccabaeus reclaimed the temple (164 B.C.), when Simon Maccabaeus won independence for Israel (141 B.C.), and they stamped the image of palms on their coins. It seems that palm branches were to the Jews as the American flag might be to us.

The people were ready for some miraculous battle. Yet, Jesus entered the ancient city without any appearance of insurrection. No war horse or armed battalion. He simply entered Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of peace that wouldn't have alarmed a single Roman soldier.

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: THURSDAYS AT 7:30AM, CAPITOL CHAPEL

JUSTICES AND STAFF: TUESDAYS AT 7:30AM, SUPREME COURT BUILDING

# ILLINOIS

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The Lord quoted Zechariah 9:9, which was a prophecy of peace (cf. John 12:15), and He fulfilled the first parts of it by riding on a donkey accepting the title, “king.” The rest of this prophecy, however, speaks of international peace and the king’s rule extending “to the ends of the earth.” The Lord wanted His people to know He is that king. This prophecy is about Him, but He made no attempt to fulfill the entirety of it 2,000 years ago. He merely linked Himself to it.

Amidst palms, praises and a proclamation of prophecy, Luke’s Gospel tells us that Jesus wept (cf. Lk 19:41-44). Looking upon Jerusalem, tears flowed as He foretold its destruction forty years beforehand. The city would fall in A.D. 70, her people would be persecuted throughout the ages to come, and many would die in their sins. The only kingdom blessing the king offered at His first coming was salvation from sin. It wasn’t physical, but it was the basis for entry into His kingdom. Those He loved believed they were already in God’s kingdom (cf. John 8:31-33). They now wanted physical blessings, and they would reject the true king as a fraud for not giving these.

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“THE ONLY WAY INTO THE KINGDOM IS THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE KING.”<sup>1</sup>

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What would have happened if Jesus stormed Jerusalem on a war horse? He could have called legions of angels to establish His kingdom and swept the world with political, economic and social reforms (cf. Matt 26:53). Israel would have been blessed... but only for a time. Why? Because every man, woman and child would still die in sin. Realize there could never be a glorious kingdom apart from the king dying in the place of His subjects. He died in their place that they might live with Him forever blessed.

One day the king will return and fulfill the words of Zechariah—Jerusalem, the Middle East and the nations will finally have peace. The kingdom will be established, “the government shall be upon His shoulders,” and then He shall reign forever and ever (cf. Isa 9:6-7; Ezek 37:24-28). For now, we wait.

### LIFE BY DEATH (JOHN 12:20-36)

Within a matter of a few days the disciples saw their Lord raise the dead and enter Jerusalem amid shouts of praise. According to Josephus, some 2.7 million people annually attended the Passover. If even 5% rushed outside the Eastern Gates to see Jesus, that’s easily a crowd of more than 100,000 shouting, “Hosanna!”

On the following day, Gentiles joined with Jews seeking the messiah when Jesus said to his disciples, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (cf. John 12:20-23).

Glorified as in exalted, honored, or lifted up. The last thing in anyone’s mind was death. The disciples most naturally would have felt a surge of excitement as Jesus seemed ready to revolt. And yet, with His very next breath He says He’s come to die (cf. John 12:24). The king would not lift Himself above Rome, but would be lifted up upon a cross (cf. John 12:32).

*John 12:24—“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.”*

The glory of the king would come through death. Jesus likens His entire life on earth to that of a wheat grain. Unless that grain is planted in the ground and destroyed, there will be no harvest. In other words, the incarnation, life and ministry of Jesus Christ matter only because He died and was raised to life (cf. 1 Cor 15:17). Only by dying could the king save His people from their sins and establish a kingdom for them to dwell.

This entry into Jerusalem was anything but triumphant. The Lord’s heart was heavy (cf. John 12:27), and His eyes moist with tears. The lowly animal. His reminder of death. Nothing about the scene says triumph, but much here demonstrates submission. The Son does not ask the Father to save Him from this hour—this hour is the culmination of His entire life and ministry. Rather, He presses forward to the cross that the Father would receive glory (cf. John 12:27-28). Though fully God, submission characterized the Son’s life (cf. John 4:34, 8:28, 12:50; Phil 2:5-8). At His baptism, transfiguration, and on His final week, the Father audibly affirmed He was well pleased.

What brought the Father glory was the Son’s death, and this is exactly what no one wanted. The king reiterated His plans, the people clearly understood, and they reacted: Our Scriptures say the Christ will not die, and You say He will—who are you?! (cf. John 12:34). The question is pretty forceful in the Greek, and Jesus doesn’t engage the angry crowd. After hundreds of miracles and countless hours teaching over three years, He expected them to trust Him. Walk in His light, follow Him. Believe (cf. John 12:35-36). They weren’t required to understand; they were required to trust Him in faith and follow. Sadly, in the days ahead, the crowd would turn and demand His death.

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<sup>1</sup>Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 111.