

The Prophecies of Palm Sunday

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John chapter 12. We're going to be looking at a few verses here and reminding ourselves of the Palm Sunday events. We call it Palm Sunday because this is the day that Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem to great excitement, fervor, and jubilation of the people and we're going to look at some of the things related to it, particularly how Jesus came in and fulfilled prophecy during this Palm Sunday event. This last week of Jesus' public ministry, we're starting with Palm Sunday, we're in the last week of His public ministry.

This is going to be a huge week for Him in terms of just that historical significance. On a Sunday Jesus rode into the city on Sunday, which would be the day after the Sabbath for the Jews, and it was in that final week that we had a lot of things going on. The last supper will take place, the arrest of Jesus, the mock trial, the trial before Pilate and finally, of course, the crucifixion. You've got to know that with such a monumental week that is before us here, the events of this day had to be very significant, and they were.

Let's take a look at it starting in verse 12, chapter 12, verse 12. It says, *"The next day the great crowd that had come to the feast, (and that's the feast of Passover) heard that Jesus was (on his way) coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him."* (ESV)

And by the way, a palm branch was traditionally and historically used as a means of expressing joy in victory. It would be something that you would've seen when a conquering general would've ridden his steed into the city after a successful military campaign, and as he comes proudly riding into the city the people would've taken up palm branches and waved them as he came in, so as to herald his coming and rejoiced at the victories that were gained and so forth.

So, the palm branch had a very specific meaning related to that and it was a way of the Jews to say that same thing as Jesus now was coming into the city. Victory. They're saying victory. Now, they don't have a clue what kind of victory they're talking about. Well, no, they do. They know what they're talking about. They're talking about victory over Rome. They don't have a clue what Jesus is about to accomplish as it relates to the victory that is going to be won on the cross. But that's a whole other situation anyway, and they even shout. Hosanna, which is a term that means save now.

And we're going to see the prophetic significance of that statement in just a little bit. They also said, ¹³ “...blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, blessed is the King of Israel!”

So, they recognize Him from some standpoint as the king, but once again, they don't recognize the true significance. And we're told in verse 14 that, “*And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,*” ¹⁵ “*Fear not, (do not be afraid) daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!*” (And then here's the verse that I really want to use as a springboard this morning. It says) 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.*”

Let's just pause for a moment and pray. Father, open our eyes, open our hearts. Fill us with grace and understanding. We look to you Lord, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. John marks this event for us at that event, which of course for us singularly marks this Palm Sunday celebration. But he confesses to us as he's relating it for us, that he and his fellow disciples, and I'm talking about the closest to Jesus, really didn't understand. They really didn't have a clue about the historical and prophetic significance of what this event was. In fact, he said when it was happening, I'm paraphrasing here.

We just, we didn't know, we didn't understand. We were clueless. It wasn't until later when Jesus was glorified that we started to connect the dots and realize that these things had been spoken of beforehand and so forth. And how many prophecies Jesus actually fulfilled just in this last week, I have no idea. But we're going to take a look at some of the ones that we know for sure that He fulfilled, and we're going to look at basically three different things that John is telling us here in this passage. The first thing that, and I'll put these up on the screen for those of you that are taking notes, the first thing that he's going to tell us about, of course, is the entry of Jesus into the city.

- The entry of Jesus into the city
- The Response of the People
- The Unbelief of the Jews

Next of course, he's going to deal with the response of the people, and then finally he's going to deal with the unbelief of the Jews, which we'll see a bit later. We didn't read that verse yet, we'll read it in just a moment. What you and I need to know about this point in Jesus' public ministry is that it's winding down. It's coming to an end. And Jesus is on His way into Jerusalem for the last time, and make no mistake about it people, Jesus is coming to die. He knows

that. He's been telling His disciples for a long time that that is what was going to happen. In fact, He's been saying to them prior to this point, "It is not yet my time. My time has not yet come. My time has not yet come. My time has not yet come."

Well, guess what? His time has come. This is now the time, and He knows exactly what's going to take place as He goes into Jerusalem. The people don't know. The disciples, as John says, weren't connecting the dots yet. But Jesus knew and understood that His time had come. He knew that the Jews would reject Him, that they would turn him over to the Gentiles, that He would be crucified for our sins on the cross. He knew exactly what was going to take place, and that too has been prophesied 700 years before the birth of Christ. Isaiah moved by the Holy Spirit, I'll put it on the screen, Wrote these words,

Isaiah 53:4-6 (NIV84)

Surely, he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows; yet we considered him stricken by God; smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all"

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That's powerful. Maybe, I don't know, maybe I'll dare say one of the most powerful prophetic passages in all of Scripture, because it's so beautifully, so poignantly, so powerfully describes what Jesus is going to do there as He goes to Jerusalem for this last time to be ultimately rejected by His own people, the Jews. But this is where Jesus comes into the city to basically extend one more offer of reconciliation, one more offer of peace. And you might ask yourself the question, why even bother?

I mean, He knows what they're going to do. He knows they're going to reject Him, so why even bother with extending this last olive branch, if you will, to the people? Well, that's the heart of God. It's the heart of the Lord. Knowing what He knows, always knowing what He knows He never ceases to give more opportunities. He never ceases to pull back his arms. His arms are always

extended for as long as they might be extended. The arms of the Lord are out so that people might take that opportunity. And all of this is foretold by the prophet Zechariah once again on the screen. In these words,

Zechariah 9:9 (NIV84)

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle in riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

- He comes as a King
- He comes to you
- He comes righteous
- He comes having salvation
- He comes gently

Rejoice greatly, (he wrote) O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! (And boy, that's what they did on this day) See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle in riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

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Whereas Isaiah was written some 700 years prior to the birth of Christ, Zachariah penned these words about 500 years before the birth of our Lord and in specific prophetic terms, foretold that He would come through the gates of the city riding on the colt of a donkey, and that He would come. But I want you to notice how Zachariah says He would come. Five things I want to bring out here very quickly.

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First of all, He comes as a King, right? Again, the people didn't understand the full dynamics of what that meant. They were looking for their Messiah king to come and set them free from bondage to Rome. But Jesus came as a different king. As He said to Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" (John 18:36) The kingdom of God begins in the heart of man and grows there. But he also says, Zechariah tells them He comes to you, He said see, or a daughter of Zion. See your king comes to you. Jesus made a specific appearance to the Jews.

This was a very privileged people to receive the human incarnation of God Almighty. See, your king comes to you, people of Israel. And He comes also, thirdly, righteous, completely righteous before God. Next, having salvation. They, of course, salvation has an interesting meaning throughout the Scripture. Salvation can simply mean being saved from death, being saved from your enemy, being saved from a well, if you happen to fall into one. The word salvation doesn't necessarily always refer to spiritual salvation.

But in this case, of course it does. They didn't know that. But Zachariah prophesied, see your king comes to you righteous with salvation. He comes with an offer of salvation. This is where it says his arm is out. He comes with salvation. Did Jesus come with a sword? No. He came with salvation. Did Jesus come to punish? No. Did he come to condemn? Jesus said, I haven't come to condemn. I've come to save.

And then lastly, He says, He comes gently. Did you catch that? That's all the symbolism that we see of him riding through the city gates on a donkey. If a king came riding on a donkey, you knew he was coming in peace.

If he came riding on a white horse he came as a conquering king, and you better buckle up, cause things might get nasty. But no, this king comes riding on a donkey as a show of peace. He comes peaceful. Zachariah foretold all of these things in beautiful detail. And what do we see the people, how do we see the people responding to this situation?

Well, of course the jubilation, the excitement. Boy, that must have been so wild for the disciples. Jesus had always attracted pretty large crowds, but they of course, knew that there was a lot of opposition as well, and that they had to move from town to town, place to place sometimes just to be safe because of the threats that came against them from time to time.

But now, here is Jesus and the city is full of worshipers because it's Passover time. And the people are just pumped. They're excited and not only that, but they're heralding Him as the Messiah. These disciples had heard Jesus time after

time, after time, speaking to people, doing miracles, but yet saying to those whom He touched, don't say anything to anybody. Don't tell anybody. Of course, that didn't stop a lot of the folks from going out and running off with their mouth. But the point is He was constantly saying, keep it on the DL because there was a timing issue that Jesus had related to this whole thing of being heralded publicly as Messiah.

And Jesus knew that if things got out of hand, that people might take Him by force and crown Him king, or at least attempt to do something in some stupid attempt to overthrow Rome, which was not in God's plan. But the point of this is that the disciples must have been so excited to see the people just in an uproar of excitement over Christ and Him coming, and they're yelling and they're waving palm branches, and they're taking off their outer garments and laying them down on the ground, and they're saying, Hosanna, save now. And then they're declaring, blessed as He who comes in the name of the Lord.

Wonderful. It's exciting. I mean just thrilling. And I think that's one of the reasons the disciples had a hard time connecting the dots of what prophetically had been said about Jesus. They probably looked at this scenario coming into the city thinking, wow, we got this thing dialed in. I mean, our popularity just absolutely went through the roof and we're probably good to go here now. What was all this talk Jesus was saying about being rejected, turned over to the Gentiles, stuff like that? There's nothing, no sign of that right now. Things are looking good. They're looking great.

We are on the rise, sort of a thing. But you know, as the week went on, I think the people who believed that Jesus was coming as their picture of what the Messiah should be, realized that He didn't have their agenda in mind. And these very same people who are shouting, Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Many of them will be shouting, crucify him in just five days. That's how quickly things can turn south. That rise of popularity.

Jesus knew better than to try to ride any wave of public sentiment, or popularity that might somehow suggest He's got this, He's got these people in the palm of His hand. He knows better. He knows the fickle nature that we humans have and so forth that they might say, save now Hosanna, and in five days crucify Him. But you know, it's interesting. Even this duplicity of the crowd is something that the prophets included, interestingly enough. There is a Psalm that is connected very much to Palm Sunday and His triumphal entry into the city.

It's one of what we call the Hallel Psalms. That Hallel means praise, and it was sung during Feast Celebrations of Israel. It's Psalm 113 through 118, these make up these Hallel Psalms and this is the last of them. And you'll notice as we look at this on the screen together, that it'll contain language that very much connects us to Palm Sunday and the events that take place here from a prophetic standpoint. Again, the Jews didn't, or the disciples didn't make that connection yet, but as we look at it here on the screen, it says,

Psalm 118:20-27 (NIV84)

This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 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.

This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O LORD, save us; (There's basically the essence of that Hosanna declaration) O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. (That's verbatim what they were saying when Jesus came into the city) From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. (here we go) With boughs in hand, (or branches, if you will) join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

This has long been considered a Messianic Psalm, meaning that it points to, and speaks of, the coming of Messiah. Again, the disciples didn't connect it, but you and I now looking in retrospect, we can see Palm Sunday all throughout this section of this psalm with taking their bows in hand and joining the festival procession and blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord and Lord save us. And we see all these things connected here now, but did you notice in the midst of all the praise and all the rejoicing and all the jubilation. Did you notice that one note of rejection, right in the, let me highlight it for you.

Psalm 118:20-27 (NIV84)

*This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. **The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone**; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. 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.*

Right kind of in the first part of it, it says, “the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,” or if you will, the cornerstone. So, in the midst of it all, we see this prophetic insight into the duplicity of the mind of Israel that they would rejoice in the coming of this one and joining in the festival procession, and yet right there in the middle, the understanding that He is the stone the builders rejected. That He is a rejected king. Anyway. We then turn to the continuing unbelief of the Jews. This isn't something we've read yet. Join me though there, in John chapter 12.

If you'll skip down to verse 37. It says this: “*Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs (and look at this) in their presence (it says) they still would not believe in him.*”

We talked about unbelief last Sunday as part of our study in finishing up Matthew chapter 12. But I want you to notice here how John highlights the unbelief of the Jews, even as he's talking about how Jesus clearly performed miracle, after miracle, after miracle in their presence. And that's exactly what Isaiah prophesied that they would do. Going back to chapter 53 of Isaiah. I'll put this on the screen for you. Two questions that the prophet basically asks,

Isaiah 53:1 (NIV84)

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Now that second question is interesting. Remember, in the Old Testament, the word arm always means strength. So, the arm of the Lord means the strength of the Lord. So, it's saying, to whom has the strength of the Lord been revealed? Well, what's the answer to the question? The answer is the Jews. They saw the arm of the Lord, the strength of the Lord clearly, powerfully. In fact, not too

long from this very time when Jesus comes into the city, He's done one of His most powerful miracles that has gotten the attention of everyone. It's the raising of Lazarus.

And you remember Lazarus and his sisters lived just mere two miles from Jerusalem in Bethany. And that was an easy distance for people to travel. And many people who knew Lazarus and his sisters and respected them came to mourn with the ladies when they heard that Lazarus had died and there was a crowd there when Jesus got there. And they were impressed when Jesus showed up, they were impressed that He cried at the tomb of Lazarus, and they were horrified when He said, "Take the stone away, roll the stone away." Even one of Lazarus's sisters objected and said, yeah, there's going to be a stink here because he has been there for a while.

But Jesus insisted. Just believe. And you guys know the story, the stone was rolled away, Jesus stood at the mouth of the tomb, thanked God for always hearing Him, and then called Lazarus by name out of the tomb, and he came out alive and the people were blown away. In fact, we're told in this very chapter of John that people were flocking from Jerusalem to Bethany to see Lazarus. They wanted to see the man who was dead and had been raised to life. They'd heard about it. Many of them had been there.

Many of them had seen him come walking out of the tomb, and even more probably by the hundreds were making their way to Bethany to see this man. In fact, the crowds were so huge going to see Lazarus, it tells us here in John chapter 12 that the Pharisees and religious leaders decided they needed to kill Lazarus too, just to stop the excitement of the people. Can you imagine? What a dumb thing to do. To kill Lazarus? He's already been dead. It's like, been there, done that. But it's just it's that heart of unbelief.

It's interesting that the religious leaders didn't even attempt to try to explain the raising of Lazarus away. They just said, we just need to kill the guy. Keep him dead this time. He's causing problems. In the midst of all that, there is still a fundamental unwillingness on the part of the religious leaders and many of the Jews to believe and so much so that it creates this dangerous condition in a human heart.

And I want to end with this thought, and it's not necessarily a fun thought, but it's an important one, and that is that repeated unbelief, unwillingness, stubbornness to embrace God and what He has shown us has, can have, a lasting effect on a human heart, whereby an individual then becomes unable to believe.

Now, when does that take place? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what the cutoff point is. And God's not telling. He doesn't say to you and I, well, there's a place and it's right there, and once you hit that spot, you're past the point of no return, there's no turning back, you have a reprobate mind and you're unsavable and that's just it. He doesn't give us that specific place. And I'm glad He doesn't because if he did, we'd play around with the edge. We'd try to get as one pace from the edge and play there.

I've even heard people say when hearing the Gospel, well, that's all interesting, it's all good, but I need to live my life first and maybe I'll consider these things when I get older. Consider maybe that Jesus is who He says He is and that I should maybe open my heart to that I'll do it when I'm older. Hey, you don't even know if you're going to get older. You don't know if you're going to get any older than you are. None of us do. And that's just playing Russian Roulette with time and fate and all the other things.

And in the end, it's just stubbornness and unbelief. And we're told in the Word that there comes that place where you can no longer believe. And again, where that is, I don't know, but you know, Isaiah speaks of the hardness of heart that the Jews portrayed when they saw the miracles of Jesus repeatedly and still refused to believe. Let me put this on the screen for you, Isaiah chapter six. God speaks to the prophet. He says,

Isaiah 6:10 (NIV84)

Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

I know you might read a passage like this and think, well, that's cruel. It sounds like God's fixing the situation so they can't believe. Please understand here people, God is not rejecting people. God is responding to the repeated, ongoing rejection by people of Him. You know when people reject God; when they repeatedly say, I don't want this in my life. There will come a point when, again, where that point is I don't know, but there will come a point where God will accommodate you. I mean, what I have done here this morning is I've shared with you just a couple of the prophetic fulfillments of Palm Sunday.

I've shown you in some passages here where God spoke either 700 or 500 years before the fact, and called these events, called them to detail, and so forth that we can look at in the Scripture. And even then, and this is going to happen throughout our nation today is I'm sure it is. Right now, we're going back, we're reading these passages, we're looking at these, we're mentioning the fact that these were prophetically spoken of. And there will be people, and maybe even in this room, I hope not, but there will be people throughout the churches here in the United States and elsewhere who will get up from church and they will leave unchanged.

Even in the face of the prophetic evidence, even knowing that these things can be proven, that these prophetic words were given hundreds of years before the fact in explicit detail. And yet they will walk out of church, and they will not believe, and they will not change their lives. They will not come to God. And I want to just issue a warning that the Scripture gives a sober reminder to you and I, that you can't play that game forever. That eventually there's a time of reckoning.

Eventually there's a place where we need to respond to what God has given us in His Word. And I think, so I thought about this. I thought, boy I hate to end on such a dreary note, but my heart is the same as the writer of Hebrews who after speaking of some fairly sobering, harsh reminders of life, said this,

Hebrews 6:9 (NIV84)

Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case - things that accompany salvation.

Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case - things that accompany salvation.

Not things that accompany death. And so, this morning I want to just exhort you and encourage you that if there's anyone here who's been holding back in just opening your heart to the things of the Lord just know this. You don't have forever. And even as I make this appeal to you, know that the Lord Himself is making the appeal, and His arms are open wide and that willingness on His part to receive you is still very much there, and He wants you to come, He wants you to open your heart, He wants you to put your faith in Him today. God has bent over backwards to give you and I a faith that we can look at that's reasonable.

People who don't believe and don't want to believe they call what we have, blind faith. Anything but blind faith. It's not blind at all. It's visual. I mean, we have biblical historical records that can even be corroborated outside of the

Bible, that speak of the things that we've looked at here today. The triumphal entry of Christ into the city. These are historical writings and it's interesting that the triumphal entry is something that's covered in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All four of them. It's there.

It's corroborated elsewhere. Not that it needs to be, but it is. And we have that historical evidence and we have biblical proof that God spoke of these things beforehand and that these things would take place. And you and I have that evidence, that reasonable evidence on which to base our faith and say, Lord I believe, I open my heart to you today.

It's not blind faith. You want to hear blind faith? It's what comes out of the mouth of an atheist when he says, I can't believe the Bible because it doesn't make sense to me. What he's done is he's placed the faculties of his own intellect above the revelation of God. Now, that takes faith and that's blind because you have no proof that your intellect exceeds the revelation of God, and yet you believe it.

Who's got blind faith? We've got a faith that's reasonable and that is why God says through the prophets, *"Come let us reason together. Though your sins were like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* (Isaiah 1:18) Let us reason together. This is a reasonable thing that we have today. This is a reasonable revelation, a reasonable body of truth that is given to us in the Word of God. It's not unreasonable. It's not outlandish. God has taken great pains to prove and to lay things down and to speak of things before they take place, so that you and I might look at the prophetic evidence and go, yeah, God knew this, He talked about it. We know it. We understand these things. And we embrace them.