

The Exodus of the King (John 12:12–33)

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Introduction

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus spoke of His purpose to die. He would be taken by the Jewish authorities, tried, turned over to the Romans to be crucified, but He would also be raised from the dead. His disciples did not understand this, having another view of Jesus' mission—that He would establish David's throne and an earthly kingdom. God's plan was the cross.

The cross is part of a process by which the Lord leads the redeemed nation out of bondage to sin and Satan's service into the glorious Kingdom of God. This exodus involves three things: (1) the ransom of a people from the slavery of sin, while yet in the world, is symbolized by Egypt and pictured in the Passover with its sacrifice and application of blood (Exodus 12:21–23; 1 Corinthians 5:7). (2) The securing of the everlasting salvation of Christ's people (obtained at the cross) is through their sanctification unto holiness. This a work of the Holy Spirit purging them from the dominion of indwelling sin and is pictured in the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel. (3) The establishment of eternal victory is through submission and obedience to the rightful King. This is pictured in the conquest and settling of the Promised Land—the Kingdom of God.

I. A Brief Exposition of the Passage (John 12:9–21)

1. John states that a large crowd of Jews (probably Judeans) came out from Jerusalem to Bethany to see Jesus due to a report that He had returned from Ephraim (vv. 9–11). Doubtless, many were curious to see Lazarus also. The dinner given in His honor did not assure Jesus any privacy.

This interest to see Lazarus, in the opinion of the priests, provided opportunity for many to put their faith in Jesus. This provoked the priests and Pharisees to plot the death of Lazarus as well. While the rulers feared the people's enthusiastic reception of Jesus' person due to His signs and miracles, remember, however, that true faith must be grounded on the reception of Jesus' *words*, not His signs.

2. The Triumphal Entry (vv. 12–15) is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus that is covered by all four Gospels. Verse 12 indicates that the event occurred "*the next day*"—Sunday of the passion week, hence Palm Sunday. The great crowd that had gathered included many pilgrims who came for the feast, as many as two and a half million souls.

Verse 13 records that the crowd took palm branches (which were abundant in the area) and went out to meet Jesus. This raises some question due to the fact that there is no OT text prescribing the use of palm branches at Passover. They were to be used at the Feast of Tabernacles. However, there is no reason to suggest any error. Indeed, the palm branch became a national symbol associated with the Maccabean revolt (141 B. C.) and the rededication of the temple (164 B. C.).

3. The understanding of the crowd's seeking Jesus. They cried out, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" *Hosanna* is a transliteration of the Hebrew *hosi-a-na*, which means, "*give salvation now,*" and has Messianic connotation (Psalm 118:25, 26). Clearly, the people also understood what they were saying.
4. The divine intention of the crowd's seeking Jesus is seen in that the event clearly fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. The Synoptics include much more about this event than does John. Notice that Jesus was not riding a war-horse, such as He will when He returns (Revelation 19:11). In this account, He rode a *donkey*, the symbol of peace. His demeanor was *humble* or *gentle* because He was bringing salvation, not war. The crowd was mistaken; this was not a Messianic offering in the sense they under-

stood—a warrior overthrowing Israel’s enemies (Luke 19:41–44). There are also clear hits that Jesus’ purpose was to include all nations—Gentiles (Mark 11:17; Zechariah 9:10).

Simply put, the King has come to restore the Kingdom to its rightful Sovereign. This process is pictured in the second Psalm.

II. An Application of the Passage

1. The problem stated in Psalm 2 is the *rebellion* of the sinful heart: “*Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us*” (Psalm 2:3). The Sovereign authority of *Adoni* is currently inoperative because—
 - a. The reign of the *will* in sin rejects divine Kingship (Luke 19:14). However, all must have a ruler; so all have adopted a false authority. It should be, “I will because the Lord wills,” but it is, “I will because *I wish*.” But all are enslaved to fickle, imperfect desires of the flesh and mind, ruled by the god of this world—the one who energizes the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).
 - b. The sin-enslaved will cannot obey God; thus, the rightful King is dethroned, and His will spurned. In so doing, all have abandoned the true principle of life. Under the mastery of sin, none is able to do anything but sin.
2. The response of God to fix the problem: “*I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill*” (Psalm 2:6).
 - a. The Triumphal Entry fulfills this purpose of the Lord. Jesus did not come to present Himself to Israel if they would have Him. Rather, Jesus presented Himself as the King of His people, bringing their deliverance from the bondage of self and sin. Even Pilate acknowledged the truth and wrote it on His cross (John 18:36; 19:14–16; Psalm 2:4–6; Acts 2:30, 31, 34, 35).
 - b. Jesus identified Himself with His people in the penalty and paralysis of sin in order to bring His people into identification with Himself in pardon and freedom of righteousness. Jesus broke the will of Pharaoh and led His people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and into the Promised Land—His Kingdom.
3. The real exodus is seen in Hebrews 11:22, where the word translated here as *departing* is *exodus*—“to exit” or “to depart.” This truth also appears in Luke’s account of the Transfiguration, as the New American translates it, “*His exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.*” (Luke 9:30, 31). Moses (representing Israel’s exodus from Egypt) and Elijah (representing Israel’s failure and apostasy in the Kingdom) spoke of Jesus’ exodus, the real exodus, not merely from slavery to Pharaoh, but from the shackles of sin. Peter, James, and John, who were sleeping, suddenly awakened to see Jesus with Moses and Elijah. Peter, confused and shocked, blundered a suggestion that booths be constructed for each of them. Peter’s mistake was corrected by the Father Himself from the cloud; “*This is my beloved Son, hear Him (only, implied).*” Then they saw Jesus alone. The real exodus and the real Kingdom belong to Jesus alone.

Lesson

The Passover, the wilderness, and the conquest are three parts of God’s means of freeing His people from the slavery of sin. We would do well to obey the warning of Psalm 2:10–12.