

John 12:12-16 – Who is Jesus to you and how would you greet him?

TSK, Henry, Pulpit, GreekLexicon, Hutcheson, Gill, Handfuls, Godet, Clarke, Barnes, Calvin, Family, Four-Fold, JFB, Johnson, Poole, PNT, Robertson, Ryle, Trapp, Brothers and sisters in the Lord: There is no question the Jews were genuinely happy to meet Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and they showed it by waving palm branches and spreading their clothing on the ground to cushion the hooves of the donkey on which he was riding. But those people were missing some very important things! They **didn't really know who Jesus was** and they **didn't know what he came to Jerusalem to do**. You will hear about these things today.

Our headings are:

The People saw Jesus as a great earthly king

The Lord showed himself as a Servant King

The Disciples understood what Jesus meant

Our goals are: **That you will properly understand who Jesus is and what he came to do, and you will then adore and work for him.**

The People saw Jesus as a great earthly king

12 The **next day a great multitude that had come to the feast**, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 **took branches of palm trees** and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "**Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'** The King of Israel!"

1. All Jewish males were obligated to take a yearly trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, so hundreds of thousands were usually there – sometimes over 2,000,000 – often with their wives and children.

The Passover was a special celebration to remember how God freed the Jews from Egyptian slavery and took them to live in freedom and comforts in Canaan.

2. Now many of those Jews who were in Jerusalem heard of Jesus and thought he would be the Messiah.

They knew he worked many miracles. He was afraid of no one. He talked a lot about the kingdom. Many people were following him. **And Jesus was much better than the ones they expected to be kings in the past whom they had welcomed to Jerusalem.** Years before, Judas Maccabaeus had similarly entered triumphantly to free the Jews from Greek control, but he failed. Likely many for these “foreign” Jews were hoping they would be able to return to Jerusalem, **their religious home**, which was also a **thriving metropolis at this time**.

So they thought Jesus, as Messiah, would be the one who would redeem the Holy Land by crushing Rome, the occupying power, and restore the kingdom – riches and religion.

They longed for the glorious days of King Solomon.

3. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the large crowd waved palm and olive branches.

Palm branches were used as a sign of victory in war and to pay homage to warriors and kings. In Leviticus 23, Palm branches were used for worship. Also, many **date palms meant survival from famines!** Dates could provide nourishment for years. (The

Babylonians believed there were 360 benefits from the palm tree.)

Olive branches were used to signify victory in battle, as well as in sports. Olives trees symbolized great wealth. From olive trees the Jews got oil, medicines, food, and wood. So waving palm and olive branches was good and appropriate to the Jews.

4. The people cried out “Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David.” (Compiled response.)

a. “Hosanna.” This means “Save, I beg you.” And **“Hosanna in the highest”** suggests they were praying to the Highest One to save them. There was no greater power! They were praying to Yahweh! And you can see the excitement of the people.

b. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” This is better translated, “Blessed is he that should come in the name of the Lord.” Jesus was the one they were expecting. They were quoting Psalm 118. The phrase “in the name of the Lord” meant Jesus was coming with Divine authority and blessing to be Messiah and save the Jews. The Messiah was the Ambassador.

Psalm 118:24 This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. 25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.

Every Jew was well-familiar with this phrase. This Psalm was sung at the end of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

By saying and doing these things, they were unconsciously fulfilling the predictions of Psalm 118.

As Ambassador, Jesus came to bring the message of the Father, a message of how peace could be restored between the warring parties. And then he had to die for sinners for breaking the covenant. And when he was done, he returned to the Father.

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, **when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand** of the Majesty on high,

The problem was **the Jews did not realize this was the kind of Ambassador Jesus would be!** They thought they were meeting a strong and powerful physical king! This was nationalism.

c. They shouted, “Blessed is the kingdom of our father David.” (Mark 11:10) They believed Jesus was the Messiah and that the kingdom Jesus was inaugurating had Divine approval...so it would be blessed by God. An important note: Normally a Jew would describe himself as a son of Abraham. But they described Jesus as the Son of David, a title for the Messiah.

And by calling Jesus the Son of David, the Jews officially accepted and announced he was the Messiah. So the people had the right actions (calling Jesus a King), but they were wrong in their understanding of the work of the King.

5. Their celebration imitated the celebration at the Feast of Tabernacles – which symbolized God’s provision for his people.

Leviticus 23:40 ‘And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD...

6. Lessons:

a. You have to understand the whole picture of the Scripture or you will be fooled, like the Jews who thought Jesus was going to be an earthly Messiah, whereas he came to die to make peace between God and man and be a spiritual King.

b. Jesus came willingly to die for the world...willingly into the world...willingly to Jerusalem...willingly to the cross.

c. May you have the same desire as David...that Christ will save those who are in darkness. Do the same work as David...tell of Jesus’ saving work to the world.

d. Reject anyone who brings any other message than that which came from the Lord Jesus. They are fake. Compare what they say with the Word, and if it conflicts, reject them and their word. Jesus did not come to bring social justice, end socialism, or bring equality!

The Lord Showed himself to be a servant king

14 Then Jesus, **when He had found a young donkey, sat on it;** as it is written: 15 "**Fear not,** daughter of Zion; Behold, **your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.**"

1. Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a young donkey, just as it was prophesied. V14

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. 10...**He shall speak peace** to the nations; **His dominion** shall be ‘from sea to sea, And from the River to the **ends of the earth.**’

Through Jesus’ words -the Gospel -not a sword, not parliamentary laws, he will be able to reign over the nations. Note the word “dominion.” It is strong word.

2. Why was Jesus riding a young (not even an experienced) donkey instead of a horse?

Donkeys were ridden in peace time, horses during war. So **Jesus was showing himself, not as a king going out to war, but a king who brings peace.**

It would have saddened Jesus to know the **Jews were hoping he would save them from**

Rome who had taken over their lands. They were not hoping to be saved from their sins. And you see the condition of the hearts of these people because these same people would cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" after they realized he was not inaugurating an earthly kingdom.

3. But why were the people told to "fear not?"

John was saying the people should not worry about Jesus being on a donkey...but rejoice. Jesus would accomplish what he came to do. **He had no horse...but he was a conquering King!**

4. Lessons:

a. Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual one.

b. Using the state (as the Jews wanted to do) to advance God's cause shows a lack of understanding of how Christ's kingdom will come. The state is to provide safety, by punishing the wicked and protecting the godly – only that!

c. The biggest enemy the Jews had was not the crushing of the Romans, but the crushing of sin. And the crushing of sin would only be remedied by crucifixion of the cruel cross. In fact, the Jews were no better than the Romans. We need to be saved from ourselves...not from Marxism, evolution, or abusive capitalism.

d. This is the Jesus you must meet – the suffering Savior who conquered Satan and will conquer the world. And nothing can destroy his people and his kingdom.

The Disciples understood what Jesus meant

16 His **disciples did not understand these things at first**; but when Jesus was glorified, **then they remembered** that these things were written about Him and that **they had done these things to Him.**

1. It was clear the disciples did not understand the people had a wrong view and expectation of Jesus.

The disciples themselves has the erroneous view the people had. They thought Jesus would establish that earthly kingdom.

John 12:34 The people answered Him, "We have **heard from the law that the Christ remains forever**; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁶ "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." **These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.**

Even after the Lord's resurrection, the disciples were still hoping for a military restoration of Israel.

Acts 1:6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, **will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**"

The palm branches proved the prophecy about who Jesus was, but many did not get it.

2. And yet, there will come a time when all of God's people will then be able to wave the palm branches - when the kingdom does expand and when the Lord does conquer the nations.

Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,**

This is what God promised to Abraham. Genesis 17.

3. Note the last phrase: The disciples remembered...that they (the people) had done these things to him.

They remembered they had gotten the young donkey instead of a horse.

But more, **they remembered what the people did...treating Jesus as a military king when he was a spiritual king!**

And when the Lord went back into heaven...and they saw him themselves...and heard what the angels said...and then were filled with the Holy Spirit to go and spread the Gospel in the world...they finally understood why Jesus came. He had come to die to establish a spiritual kingdom in the whole world.

4. Lessons:

a. The greatness of Israel's new spiritual, all-powerful, resurrected king would have removed all cause for fear from Jesus disciples. They had seen their Savior die, buried, gloriously resurrected, and then ascended, with the confirmation that he would return again. So you have no reason to fear. His kingdom will be established as far as he wants it! And when your work is done he will call you home.

b. Learn to ponder the Word of God so you are not easily fooled and make mistakes.

Be students of the Word. Don't repeat things because famous people say it. Don't take something from a preacher here without checking to make sure it is true. Even the ones who are in church for a long time (the disciples were with Jesus for a long time) need to study the Word of God carefully and consistently. We all forget.

Conclusion:

The people met Jesus with palm and olive branches because they thought he would physically save them, ascend to David's throne, and restore Israel's power. Jesus made it clear he was a suffering servant King who came to make peace between God and man. It wasn't until after his resurrection (and ascension) the disciples realized that.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Do you see Jesus as a good example? Do you see Jesus as a strong God who can protect you from Covid-19? Do you see Jesus as the one who gives you food? I hope your answer is "no."

2. This is how you must see Jesus: The suffering, sacrificial Lamb of God who was sent to die for the sins of the world.

3. This is how you must meet him: With humility, with worship.

4. This is how you must serve him: Explain exactly who Jesus is to the world. Help them understand he was not a military king...and help them understand he was not just a man who gave a good example. Help them understand he is the peace maker between God and man – the only peace maker.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, know that the Lamb of God is the only means by which you can be saved from your sins... Or you could die in yours sins and pay the price yourself. If you want Jesus' death to be counted as yours, ask God. He will hear and answer.