

John 12: 12-26 The Triumphal Entry
Pastor Edward Conway, D.Min.

Introduction

The triumphal entry is Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we celebrate as Palm Sunday. It actually took place on Monday (cf. 12:1). The account is recorded in all four gospels (Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-10; Lk 19:28-40). Jesus rode (only record of Jesus riding) into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey, a colt, one who had never been ridden on. The people did not recognize Jesus as Messiah and savior but as someone who may be able to deliver them from Roman occupation and rule. They missed the signs of Jesus' identity. In a few days, the realization that Jesus would not be a temporal deliverer but a spiritual one, the cries of "Hosanna" would turn to a demand for his crucifixion (Jn 19:14).

v. 12 The "large crowd" refers to the pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover and head out to meet Jesus. A second "crowd" included the disciples and those traveling with Jesus from Bethany after the raising of Lazarus from the dead (vv. 17-18). The third group is the religious leaders (v. 19). In the background are Pilate and Roman officials.

Note the dramatic change in Jesus' ministry. John 6:15: "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself". John 8:20: "These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come". John 8:59: "So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple". Why? The time had come v. 23!

v. 13 Palm branches celebrate the King's arrival along with Jewish nationalism. In 164 BC, they were used to welcome the victorious Judas Maccabeus (along with establishing Hanukkah) who delivered Jerusalem from Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The pilgrims chanted Psalm 118:25-26, "Save us we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. "Hosanna" is a Hebrew expression meaning literally, "Save now!" The chant was a plea for the Messiah's immediate intervention as the ruler of Israel. Matthew notes **the fulfillment of OT prophecy**. Matthew writes, "This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying 'Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden'". The spreading of cloaks and palm branches is an act of honor reserved for kings (cf. 2 Kings 9:13). A third fulfillment unstated in the text is found in Daniel 9:24 – the dating points to AD 33 Nissan the 10th Day of Nissan when lambs selected for sacrifice with the 14th Day of Nissan day when the lambs were sacrificed, and Jesus died on the cross as our sacrifice for sin. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/seventy-weeks.html>). Note: Jesus' identity is established through the Scriptures! "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29).

vv. 14-15 Jesus' spiritual kingdom did not match the crowd's expectations. In fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, Jesus comes as a messenger of peace, not as a conqueror (cf. Rev 7:9 – second coming). Zechariah 9:9 reads literally, "Cease from your fears, O daughter of Zion" which is a personification of the city of Jerusalem (Isa 1:8; 52:2; 62:11; Jer 4:31; 6:23; Lam 2:4, 8, 10, `3; Mic 4:8; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:10). The account in Luke 19:41-44 recalls the heart of Jesus toward the "daughter of Zion". Jesus wept for he saw the coming destruction of the city and the Temple at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D.

v. 16 The disciples did not understand Jesus' plan (Matthew 16:21-23; John 13:7; Jn 14:5; Acts 1:6) until after Jesus' cross and resurrection (cf. Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Jn 5:11-12). Key point: Jesus' identity is fully known post resurrection through the work of the Holy Spirit and scripture (cf. Lk 24:13-35; Acts 1:3).

vv. 17-19 The crowd following Jesus caused the religious leaders to view their attempts to halt Jesus as futile.

vv. 12-19 Reflection and Applications - The contrasts between Jesus' kingdom and the expectations of the people provide rich content for reflection and application on how we can represent Jesus in our own day. A king who came on a humble donkey not as a mighty warrior. A messiah who came not by force but in love, grace, mercy, and to give His life

as a sacrifice. A savior who comes not with armies and splendor but in humble servanthood. Jesus conquers not nations but hearts and minds. His message is one of peace with God, not temporal peace. Jesus' peace results in salvation and eternal security. As followers of Jesus, we are called to walk in His steps. The apostle Peter writes, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep but now have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:21ff.).

Some Greeks Seek Jesus vv. 20-26

vv. 20-22 A day or two later a group of Greeks asked to see Jesus. The Greek pilgrims were seekers of the one true God and had some knowledge of the Old Testament. Gentile pilgrims were welcomed at the Passover and would have gathered in the "court of the Gentiles". The Greeks engaged Philip and Andrew, both Greek names, and from the northern side of the lake of Galilee an area dominated by Gentiles. They asked, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus".

vv. 23-24 Jesus' immediate response to the Greeks is "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies..." Jesus had said, "my hour has not come" (2:4; 7:6; 7:30; 8:20) but now is the time (13:1) – the cross opens the way for the Gentiles to experience salvation (1 Cor 1:18).

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/seventy-weeks.html>

The "seventy weeks" prophecy is one of the most significant and detailed Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. It is found in Daniel 9. The chapter begins with Daniel praying for Israel, acknowledging the nation's sins against God and asking for God's mercy. As Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and gave him a vision of Israel's future.

The Divisions of the 70 Weeks

In verse 24, Gabriel says, "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city." Almost all commentators agree that the seventy "sevens" should be understood as seventy "weeks" of years, in other words, a period of 490 years. These verses provide a sort of "clock" that gives an idea of when the Messiah would come and some of the events that would accompany His appearance.

The prophecy goes on to divide the 490 years into three smaller units: one of 49 years, one of 434 years, and one 7 years. The final "week" of 7 years is further divided in half. Verse 25 says, "From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'" Seven "sevens" is 49 years, and sixty-two "sevens" is another 434 years:

49 years + 434 years = 483 years

The Purpose of the 70 Weeks

The prophecy contains a statement concerning God's six-fold purpose in bringing these events to pass. Verse 24 says this purpose is 1) "to finish transgression," 2) "to put an end to sin," 3) "to atone for wickedness," 4) "to bring in everlasting righteousness," 5) "to seal up vision and prophecy," and 6) "to anoint the most holy."

Notice that these results concern the total eradication of sin and the establishing of righteousness. The prophecy of the 70 weeks summarizes what happens before Jesus sets up His millennial kingdom. Of special note is the third in the list of results: "to atone for wickedness." Jesus accomplished the atonement for sin by His death on the cross (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17).

The Fulfillment of the 70 Weeks

Gabriel said the prophetic clock would start at the time that a decree was issued to rebuild Jerusalem. From the date of that decree to the time of the Messiah would be 483 years. We know from history that the command to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was given by King Artaxerxes of Persia c. 444 B.C. (see [Nehemiah 2:1-8](#)).

The first unit of 49 years (seven “sevens”) covers the time that it took to rebuild Jerusalem, “with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble” ([Daniel 9:25](#)). This rebuilding is chronicled in the book of Nehemiah.

Converting the 360-day year used by the ancient Jews, 483 years becomes 476 years on our solar calendar. Adjusting for the switch from B.C. to A.D., 476 years after 444 B.C. places us at A.D. 33, which would coincide with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem ([Matthew 21:1-9](#)). The prophecy in [Daniel 9](#) specifies that, after the completion of the 483 years, “the Anointed One will be cut off” (verse 26). This was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified.

[Daniel 9:26](#) continues with a prediction that, after the Messiah is killed, “the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The “ruler who will come” is a reference to the Antichrist, who, it seems, will have some connection with Rome, since it was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem.

The Final Week of the 70 Weeks

Of the 70 “sevens,” 69 have been fulfilled in history. This leaves one more “seven” yet to be fulfilled. Many scholars believe that we are now living in a huge gap between the 69th week and the 70th week. The prophetic clock has been paused, as it were. The final “seven” of Daniel is what we usually call the [tribulation period](#).

Daniel’s prophecy reveals some of the actions of the [Antichrist](#), the “ruler who will come.” Verse 27 says, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’” However, “in the middle of the ‘seven,’ . . . he will set up an abomination that causes desolation” in the temple. Jesus warned of this event in [Matthew 24:15](#). After the Antichrist breaks the covenant with Israel, a time of “great tribulation” begins ([Matthew 24:21](#), NKJV).

Daniel also predicts that the Antichrist will face judgment. He only rules “until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” ([Daniel 9:27](#)). God will only allow evil to go so far, and the judgment the Antichrist will face has already been planned out.

Conclusion

The prophecy of the 70 weeks is complex and amazingly detailed, and much has been written about it. Of course, there are various interpretations, but what we have presented here is the [dispensational, premillennial](#) view. One thing is certain: God has a timetable, and He is keeping things on schedule. He knows the end from the beginning ([Isaiah 46:10](#)), and we should always be looking for the triumphant return of our Lord ([Revelation 22:7](#)).

vv. 25-26 The great Christian paradox is we must die if we would live. It is only through personal faith in Jesus’ penal substitutionary atonement that our sin is removed. This is what makes us acceptable, sinless, and completely clean before God. We are saved by identification with Christ in his death. We are justified because we have died with him and made free from sin. This is the reason that the cross is the symbol of Christian faith. (Rom 6; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 2:20; 1 Jn 5:20).

vv. 20-26 Reflection and Applications - Jesus says, “if anyone serves me, he must follow me” (v. 26). The test of following is, will we follow Jesus to the cross (Romans 6; Luke 9:23; Mt 16:25). Will we voluntarily give up our life for his life? Tozer writes, “In every Christian’s heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne till he puts himself on the cross. If he refuses the cross he remains on the throne. Perhaps this is at the bottom of the backsliding

and worldliness among gospel believers today. We want to be saved but we insist that Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of Mansoul and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar, but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility". **Read:** Luke 9:23 and Romans 6:6. **Reflect:** How do we know who is on the throne of our heart? What are the implications of having self on the throne – having Jesus on the throne? What are the implications for eternal life? **Resolve:** Memorize Galatians 2:20. . **Resource:** Free pdf of "The Radical Cross" by Tozer, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/01/01fa6a48-f167-48c2-9e16-f1b013ed4206/documents/the-radical-cross-a-w-tozer.pdf>