

The Gospel of John

The Heavenly Triumphal Entry

John 12:23-28

INTRODUCTION:

Today we are remembering Palm Sunday. We have all heard about the Triumphal entry of Jesus. He comes to Jerusalem and asks two of His disciples to go to a village and find a donkey and a donkey's colt tied to the post and bring them to Him. When the disciples reached the village, they see exactly what Jesus said they would see. They start to untie the animals to take the animals with them, and the owner comes out and says, "What are you doing? Why are you taking these animals?" You remember their answer? They said, "The Lord needs them." So the owners allowed the two disciples to take them.

The disciples took off their outer cloaks and threw the outer garments over the colt and over the mother of the colt and brought them to Jesus.

Jesus chose the colt to ride and not the mother because He wanted to come into the city in humility. He rode the weaker, younger colt. The mother was brought along to lead the young colt because the colt will always follow his mother. As He approached the city and the crowd began to gather around Him, people spread their garments in front of Him, like throwing down the red carpet, so the colt could walk upon their garments and then they would pick them up.

Along the way, others cut down palm branches which symbolized victory and threw them on the pathway for their coming King. The closer Jesus came to Jerusalem, the more the enthusiasm of the crowd mounted. Although their enthusiasm is fickle and misguided, He will not deny their hosannas. He is the Messiah. He is the King. Later we are told, "If these people don't cry out hosanna, the rocks will cry out."

So you see they see Him as their king, their savior, their deliverer, their Messiah. Their hope and their expectation is that at **any** moment, this power over death that He exhibited, and His ability to perform miracles will be exercised against Rome. The Romans will be crushed and Jesus will establish His throne and fulfill all of the promises through Abraham, David, and all the prophets.

But their expectations, for the most part, was for selfish reasons. They really were not interested in Jesus' teachings. They heard that He had just raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 12:9 (NASB)

⁹The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

They were attracted by the supernatural and what may be in it for them. He was the person everybody wanted to see because He cast out demons. He healed. He created food. And He even raised people from the dead. There had never been and never will be anybody like Him. They wanted to take every advantage of the opportunity to be a part of what He was doing in a miraculous way. But once they realized that wasn't what Jesus was about, they wanted Him dead! So on Friday they will choose Barabbas, a well-known criminal, to be released and Jesus to be held prisoner. Then they will scream "**Crucify Him!**".

This was all patterned after the Roman Triumphal Procession. This procession was to honor the major commander after he returned back from a significant victory. He was the star of the show. The god-like victor would ride a spectacular tall-sided chariot pulled by four horses. He wore a special purple-colored robe and a laurel crown and carried a laurel branch in his right hand. **(Does this sound familiar?)** In his left hand, he carried an ivory scepter with an eagle at the top which was symbolic of the victory.

The consuls and politicians would lead, followed by a number of impressive-looking captives from the battlefield – best of all would be a captured royal. Certain episodes of the battle might be represented in the procession with paintings or even enactments involving real captives. There were musicians, torch-bearers, and flag wavers to add to the pageantry, as well as examples of the exotic flowers and animals from the conquered region. Next came the war-booty. The more gold and silver on display the better.

Has it ever occurred to you that it was a very remarkable thing that the Roman officials did not interfere with Christ's triumphal entry?

The Romans were there to put an end to any insurrection, to hold in check the turbulent Jews, and yet, there was no interference on their part! They were accustomed to see these vast multitudes gathered for religious exercises at Jerusalem. That which we describe as a triumphal entry would have been, in the eyes of the Roman, a laughing stock.

With this in mind, I would like to look at what I would consider the real triumphal entry of Christ. We have reviewed the earthly one among a fickle crowd. I would like to consider the **Heavenly Triumphal Entry when Jesus returned to His Father in heaven.**

Stand and Read Scripture

John 12:23-28 (NASB)

23 But Jesus **answered them by saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. *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. *25* The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. *26* If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. *28* Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again."

Prayer

BODY:

I. THE WAR.

Let us start by looking at the war. The war started in the Garden of Eden when Satan gave the fruit from the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil** to Eve, who in turn handed it to Adam, and they both ate of it. They had been told not to eat of this tree. As you know it caused them to bring the curse of sin upon all mankind. It separated us from God and Satan became the ruler of the earth. The first battle had been fought but the war was not over.

Genesis 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ And I will make enemies Of you and the woman, And of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise Him on the heel.”

Mankind had been separated from God and needed salvation so God sent His Son into the world to fight this war.

John 3:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.

Christ’s ultimate battle (**and subsequently ALL Christians**) is not against fleshly beings but against those who are spiritually wicked and opposed to God; i.e., the Devil and his dominion.

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB)

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

It is hard to imagine an angel like Lucifer (Satan) believing he could even do battle with God, much less defeat Him. Even the most depraved mind should be able to see that a creature cannot possibly contend with the Creator. Yet Satan attempted to dethrone God and strives to this day to defy God’s authority, thwart His plans, and harass His people.

Part of the explanation of his fall is found in Isaiah 14.

Isaiah 14:12-15 (NASB)

¹² How you have fallen from heaven, You star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who defeated the nations! ¹³ But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ Nevertheless you will be brought down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.

Satan probably rejoiced in the death of Christ on the cross, believing it to be a victory for him, but like all his victories, that one, too, was short-lived. When Jesus rose from the

grave, Satan was once again defeated. Satan does have certain victories—although they are within the boundaries God has set for him—and perhaps these victories allow him to continue the illusion that he can have victory over God Himself.

II. THE VICTORY.

The victory over Satan involved many battles.

First, Jesus had to live a sinless life. Satan did everything in his power to tempt Jesus. Once was when Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days with nothing to eat. Each time Satan tempted Him Jesus would answer Him with a scripture. Jesus handled temptation, and He did so without sin.

Jesus was both God and Man. As God He **could** not sin. As man He **would** not sin. This was critical because He had to live a perfect life in order to be the perfect sacrifice on the cross for our salvation as the prophets prophesied.

Of course it was His death on the cross that provided the **ultimate victory** against Satan. Satan still is the ruler of this earth and has great power, but his power is buffered by God. His demise is already in place and it will be completed when Jesus comes again.

One of the victories of Christ's death on the cross was **the forgiveness of sin**.

The sacrifices of the old Levitical system were insufficient to take away sin. But Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice, once for all time. With the shedding of His blood on the cross, never again would animals need to die as our substitute.

God did not send Jesus to deny the fact of sin or help us forget about our sin. God wanted to do away with sin once and for all. In Christ, God forgave sin and released us from its penalty. Through faith in the Son, we have full deliverance from the hold of sin itself, true salvation, and real peace with God.

Romans 8:1 (NASB)

8 Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Our religious actions cannot put away sin. Neither can feeling sorry, practicing self-denial, or holy living. Not even our death can get rid us of sin. Sin is a blot on our soul, a stain in the fabric of our being that we cannot wipe away. It can only be washed away by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Jesus alone can wipe away our sin. He made it possible for **ALL** Christians to receive forgiveness of their sins without having to pay the eternal penalty of separation from God.

1 Peter 2:24 (NASB)

24 and He Himself brought our sins in His body up on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by His wounds you were healed.

Another victory from Jesus' death on the cross was that we would be **made righteous**. Jesus took on our sin on the cross and paid the price for it with His perfection. He then replaced our sin with His righteousness.

This provided another victory. We no longer had to **fear death** because we now have Christ's righteousness within us. When we face God on Judgment Day He will only see Christ's righteousness. Our sins will have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

Another victory of the cross is that when we are saved we are given **eternal life**.

John 6:40 (NASB)

⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

This eternal life is not just a thing of the future. It is a gift given to us when we are saved. Since Jesus and the Holy Spirit are eternal and they live within us, we have their eternal life within us. John defined this eternal life for us.

John 17:3 (NASB)

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Jesus accomplished the perfect will of the Father and now it was time to go home.

John 17:4 (NASB)

⁴ I glorified You on the earth by accomplishing the work which You have given Me to do.

III. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO HEAVEN.

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus and His disciples went to Mount Olivet, near Jerusalem. There, Jesus promised His followers that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit, and He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit had come. Then Jesus blessed them, and as He gave the blessing, He began to ascend into heaven. The account of Jesus' ascension is found in Acts 1:9-11.

Acts 1:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, then behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them, ¹¹ and they said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

This would begin His **heavenly triumphal entry** where He would return to His full heavenly glory that He prayed for.

John 17:5 (NASB)

⁵ And now You, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world existed.

You see, Jesus had to give up **some** of His glory that He had experienced for eternity with His father in order to become man and come to this world.

Hebrews 2:9 (NASB)

⁹ But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of His suffering death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

This is the desire on our Lord's part for acceptance. His desire was for the Father's verification, for the Father to say, "**Yes**, You have done the work that provides eternal life. **Yes**, You have offered the perfect obedience and **Yes**, now You may come home to the glory that You had with Me before this all began."

The cross is the way home for Him. He yearns to go home to the Father. He yearns to be restored to the full, blazing glory that He knew before He humbled Himself. This is a joy of a mission accomplished. This is the joy of restored fellowship with the Father, salvation provided, Satan defeated, sin destroyed, death killed, and now home to the Father. He had accomplished His mission!

Paul described the scene when He went back to heaven.

Philippians 2:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

CONCLUSION:

As we think about the cross, think about it in these terms – not the agony, not the scourging, not the execution that was so painful, and not even the hatred of His own and of the Romans. Think of the cross as a time for **victory** and **glory**, because that is how our Lord Jesus and God the Father saw it.

Jesus was not caught unaware of what was coming. He knew of his mission that His Father had sent Him to do and He had completed it with perfection. It was time to go back Home to His Father. Let me finish with one more verse as Jesus was on the cross.

John 19:28-30 (NASB)

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture would be fulfilled, *said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing *there*; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on *a branch of* hyssop and brought it *up* to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Family of God.