

THE LAMB OF GOD CHOSEN
John 12:12-19

Well I have to tell you that there's two times of the year that I've really come to appreciate. Christmas and Easter. And even though they aren't anywhere prescribed by Scripture as holidays or ordinances that we have to celebrate, I'm sure glad they're there because during these two times of the year, we celebrate the two most important events that this world has ever seen, by the most important Person to ever walk the face of it. Jesus' birth or incarnation at Christmas and Jesus' death and resurrection during Easter. The beginning of His life and the end of His life. These are two most important events that behind our faith. God became a man to pay for man's sin and He did it! And what I love these two times of the year is that they are *times* of the year. Not just days of the year. It gives us time, weeks even, to really reflect on and teach on the importance of Christ's birth and death and resurrection – which are foundations of our faith. The reason we even meet on Sunday is because it's the day of the resurrection! It's our Lord's day! It's not that we don't think about these doctrines the rest of the year, but that we emphasize them. And I believe as Protestants, we need to take advantage of these holidays and take them use them for good – to evangelize and celebrate what Christ has done.

This emphasis on Christ's life and work should develop in us some of the most worshipful thoughts about our Savior and all that He is and Has done for us. I enjoy taking a whole week this time of year, to just go back and read through the gospel accounts surrounding the final week of our Savior's life on earth. There's something refreshing about getting back into the gospels and walking with Jesus throughout the week as He did in His final moments. And that's my main purpose this week with focusing on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Resurrection Day: to increase our praise and wonder over what our Lord has accomplished for us. It's really that simple.

Jesus, as you know, has many titles He is considered: The Word of God, Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah, King of Israel, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Savior, Light of the World, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Bread of Life, the True Vine, the Lion of Judah... We could go on and on. But the title for Jesus that I think of the most when it comes to Easter and His sacrificial work for us is the Lamb of God. He is the Lamb of God. John the Baptist's whole ministry was to prepare people for Jesus Christ. He was to make straight paths for the Lord and prepare hearts for Jesus coming. People would come to him out in the wilderness east of Jerusalem in Bethany beyond the Jordan and he was leading people to a confession and repentance of sins and baptizing them with water and telling them One was coming after Him who would baptize them with the greater baptism of the Spirit of God. And when Jesus finally showed up where John is doing ministry and John sees Jesus coming, do you remember what he said? **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** This is Him! The Lamb of God! Isn't it interesting that Jesus, right at the beginning of His earthly ministry is called the Lamb of God? Makes you wonder how the people responded. Well, John 12, where Jesus makes His last entry into Jerusalem might give us an indicator of how they responded to this title – likely with confusion. Please turn with me to John 12:12-19

“On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.” These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead,

continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”

This event in Jesus’ life that we just read about is commonly referred to as Palm Sunday. It’s the beginning of the end of Jesus’ time on earth before the cross. This first day of the week, where Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, even the colt of a donkey, marks the first day of the last week of His life. The last week, also known as Passion Week, where we see Jesus’ great passion for us by giving Himself up for our sins. So many prophecies are coming together and being fulfilled by Jesus during this time it’s just incredible. **In our passage we see the plan of God being carried out through three choices, from three groups: One from the adoring crowd, one from the religious elite, and one from God.**

I. THE ADORING CROWD CHOSE CHRIST AS THEIR KING. (VV. 12-14)

Some followers from Galilee and some from Jerusalem who had heard of Lazarus’ resurrection miracle had come to see Jesus and are clearly evidencing that they want Jesus to rule over them as their king. They believed He is the one who is going to free them from the oppression of Rome. That seems to be the primary reason.

A. They wanted freedom from political oppression. (v. 13)

During the Passover Feast which was just starting it wasn’t uncommon to have Jewish nationalists try to start a revolt against Rome because there were so many Jews in the area for the Feast. Maybe they thought Jesus might be that nationalist who would really do it. The way we can tell is that they were quoting Psalm 118:26: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” but they added, “the King of Israel” part. The King of Israel is who they wanted! They were expecting Jesus to ride into Jerusalem and set up the kingdom of God right then and there. “Hosanna!” they were shouting means “Saves us now!” They’re looking to be set free from the Roman regime and after seeing all of Jesus miracles that He was performing, in particular the latest of raising Lazarus from the dead, they were so sure that even the health and the wealth that the Old Testaments prophets said would come during the kingdom reign was going to commence any second. The verse just before 118:26, being 118:25 says, “O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity!” They were after the King of the Old Testament that brought righteousness and peace and justice and well-being to all people.

Verse 16 tells us even the disciples weren’t aware of what was taking place until after He was glorified. I don’t know about you but I find their consistent confusion very comforting. It really is for some reason because we have so many questions for the Lord ourselves don’t we? It is also clear that they needed the Holy Spirit to understand the things taking place. They understood it all so much better after Jesus was glorified and He sent the Spirit. But if the disciples and the people were confused, imagine how the people felt at the Jordan river three years ago when John first described Jesus as the Lamb of God? Does anybody want a lamb for a leader? There’s nothing macho about a lamb. Nothing strong about lambs. No one fears lambs. Lambs aren’t the king of the jungle, lions are! The people wanted a lion! A king who would come and dominate the world! Even in Zechariah 9:9, which is quoted in verse 15, “Fear not daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt,” is followed up in the next with in verse 10, “I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off.

And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” Speaking of King and dominion and world peace.

Because there was such a difference in some of the prophecies about the coming Messiah – one that suffered and one that ruled – some thought there would be two Messiahs. But some Jews also thought Christ was going to come and fulfill both prophecies fully at the same time. They thought the first portion and second portion would be fulfilled at the same time – that Him riding and donkey and establishing dominion from sea to sea were now. The first half points to His first coming and the second half points more to His second coming. It’s what’s referred to as a **double reference prophecy or double fulfillment prophecy**. Dwight Pentecost described this as, "Two events, widely separated as to the time of their fulfillment, may be brought together into the scope of one prophecy. This was done because the prophet had a message for his own day as well as for a future time . . . It was the purpose of God to give the near and far view so that the fulfillment of the one should be the assurance of the fulfillment of the other."¹ One of the best ways to look understand a double reference prophecy that I’ve heard or was taught, is that you look at them like a mountain range. From a distance you see all of those mountain peaks side-by-side, but you know that there is gap between them. To experience it, like these people in John 12 would be like experiencing a false summit. It’s when you’re climbing a mountain and you have your eye on reaching this point you think is the top, and then you get there, only to realize the summit is much higher. It can be very hard on someone psychologically and test your will. You get to one peak and realize, the peak you really wanted is on the other side of this big gap. This is why the Church Age is also known as a “Gap” or “Great Parenthesis” because there is a gap or interval of time known as the time of the Gentiles that takes place between Christ’s first and second coming. And unlike the crowds following Jesus at this time, we are so blessed now to be able to go back to the prophecies and see which parts of prophecy refer to which coming, which advent.

So as far as we can see, these adoring crowd want the kingdom now. And by the different miracles and stances Jesus would do or take now and in the next few days, He demonstrated He is Israel’s King and is able to usher in the kingdom. He just raised a guy from the dead. He’s riding a colt that’s never been broken, which He obtain in a miraculous way. He causes the fig tree to shrivel and die by the word of His mouth. He cleanses the Temple, then preaches in the Temple. So He was able to bring the kingdom, but as you read on, it’s clear He’s also rejected by the religious elite. They don’t want the kingdom now.

II. **THE RELIGIOUS ELITE CHOSE TO REJECT THE KING. (V. 19)**

“The Pharisees said to one another, ‘See this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’” Jesus never once allowed a public display of Himself like this. He never wanted some celebrity status or big show. And this wasn’t anything for Him to celebrate either. Other gospels reveal He was actually weeping over Jerusalem as He rode in. He often turned people away by His honest messages who came to Him for just prosperity. He often told people not to tell anyone who He was or who healed them. He was waiting for the right time to cause a stir in the city. And He allowed it this time because it was His intention to stir them up. Someone described it as if Jerusalem were a beehive, He was hitting with a stick! The Romans were already on alert in case of a nationalistic uprising with some 2 million people in and around the city and the Jews already decided not to do anything with Jesus during Passover. However, with the raising of Lazarus from the dead and this royal entry, He might as well have knocked the beehive out of the tree! Wiersbe

described it as though Jesus is actually forcing their hand² making them reject Him and do something about Him before Passover instead of after. The Pharisees didn't want the Romans to come down on them and they didn't want to lose their positions if Jesus became king. And by accepting the royal treatment, He is also reaffirming Himself as the true King of Israel they must accept or reject. So reject Him they did. They didn't want the whole world to go after Him.

III. GOD CHOSE CHRIST AS THE SAVIOR. (VV. 14-18)

He didn't choose for Christ to first come as political king but as Savior. **Before He's known as the Lion of Judah, He must first be the Lamb of God.** God had Him come first, humbly, as the Savior.

A. Christ is revealing God's gentle and humble character. (v. 14)

Just like 33 years ago when He humbly entered into the world as a baby born in a manger. Now He enters Jerusalem humbly, not in a golden chariot pulled by a team of big, beautiful stallions or on the back of a stallion, but on the back of foal, the colt of a donkey, which also was the royal ride for Jewish kings like Solomon. They were giving Him royal treatment but it sure is humble compared to Rome's parades. This says something great about how our Lord desires to be known. He is more than just some big angry God up in the sky. He is humble and full of love and compassion and mercy and grace. In fact, the only time Jesus describes who He is in the core of being is in Matthew 11:29 where He says, "I am gentle and humble in heart, and if you take My yoke upon you, you'll find rest for your souls." He's humble and gentle just like a lamb. The cross expresses that the most.

B. Christ is fulfilling multiple prophecies and types. (vv. 14-16)

It's clear from Christ's fulfilling of these two verses mentioned in the Old Testament that what is going on isn't some strange thing or just the product of random chance and circumstances. God is behind it and Jesus Christ is purposely heading to the cross. He set His face toward Jerusalem. He is never a victim. He gives up His own life of His own accord and in accordance with God's plan. In the moment, the disciples didn't realize the prophecy being fulfilled. But it says in verse 16, that they realized it when He was in glory, with a little help from the Spirit. Wouldn't you love to be there when they realized all the prophecies they'd played a part in fulfilling? What a joy for them and what assurance that Jesus really is the chosen Lamb of God! Daniel 9:26 actually prophesied the exact day that Jesus would come into Jerusalem like this. But think too about the Old Testament types that prophecy of Him.

Coverings/Offerings

The idea of a lamb being slain for sins is just about as old as the world. It was first implied that someone or something had to have its blood shed for sin all the back in the garden of Eden. After the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, sinned against God, they immediately knew they needed some type of covering. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves they sewed together. But God, in His grace, gave them a better covering and a symbolic one – He made garments of skin or leather for them, but the animal it came from had to have its blood shed. Not long after, we discover too, that out of the two sacrifices offered by brothers Cain and Abel – Cain offering a sacrifice of the fruit of his harvest from farming and Abel offering a sacrificial firstling of his flock as a rancher – only Abel's sacrifice was accepted by the Lord. The Lord accepted the animal sacrifice. And the

offering of a blood sacrifice from animals like sheep, goats and cattle continues throughout the rest of the Old Testament as the most acceptable sacrifice because it typifies Christ.

Abraham and Isaac

Same thing on Mount Moriah with Abraham and Isaac. God tested Abraham's faith, asking Abraham to take his beloved son, Isaac, up and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord (something which probably wasn't all that strange because human sacrifice was practiced, though not by the godly – but was also strange in the sense that the Lord promised to give Abraham offspring through Isaac). God was testing Abraham to see if Abraham loved Him and trusted Him above anyone or anything. On the way up the hill, even, when Isaac asks, “[where is the lamb for the burnt offering?](#)” Abraham says God will provide the lamb. And as soon as Abraham had the altar built and Isaac tied to it and stretched out his hand to slay his son, God stops him, saying, “[Now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold your only son from Me.](#)” Abraham then looked and saw a ram caught by its horn in the thicket and he took the ram and they offered it in worship and Abraham named that place, “[The Lord will provide.](#)” What Hebrews 11:19 has to add to this is absolutely amazing. It says, “[He \[Abraham\] considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him \[Isaac\] back as a type.](#)” What an incredible type of the Lamb of God to come! The Father, sending His own Son, the Lamb of God, to take our place! When Jesus last went up to Jerusalem he was not some unsuspecting Isaac who didn't know what was going up to on Mt. Moriah. He was going to be that Lamb, knowingly He would be sacrificed for our sins. He knew full well the Scripture He wrote. He was never a victim. God the Father loved us enough to sacrifice His Son for us and Jesus loved us enough to follow through with it. He knew this was going to be His last week.

The Lord's Passover

But what's just as incredible is the story of the Passover from the account of Exodus. This is where the Passover Feast that Israel celebrates. After repeated warnings (9 already) from Moses telling Pharaoh to let God's people go or else suffer a plague of some type, and Pharaoh not complying, God's tenth plague finally made him comply. The Lord told Moses, “[About midnight I am going out in to the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on the throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstone... and there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as will never be again.](#)” And the Israelites, to cover or protect themselves from this judgment were to take a lamb for themselves, for each household. The lamb had to be a young, unblemished male. They were to kill it at twilight and take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel houses that they eat it in. They were supposed to roast it with fire and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (hyssop) and no bones were to be broken on it. And they were not to leave any left over. Further, they were to eat it with their loins girded [robes hiked up for traveling] and sandals on and staff in hand and eat in haste. And God Himself called this ordinance the Lord's Passover. For He went through the land of Egypt that night and struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast... there was not an Egyptian home where there was not someone dead. but when the Lord saw the blood on the houses of the Israelites, He passed over them.

Again what a great picture of Christ, the Lamb of God to come! Jesus Christ is the **unblemished young male lamb** – the Perfect One! The **roasting with fire** could signify how He went through the fiery judgment of scourging and beatings and the cross. The **unleavened bread** signified to the Israelites the sinful ways of the Egyptians, who were among the earliest known people to practice raising bread with yeast³ and they were to be freed from that. Yeast is often associated with sin in the Bible. But unleavened bread ultimately signifies Christ's sinlessness, being without the leaven of sin. The **bitter herbs** signified to the Israelites their bitter days of slavery in Egypt and they were to remember that forever and how the Lord took them out. Ultimately it could signify the bitter pain and agony Christ endured for us through His suffering and that freeing us from our life of slavery to the sin nature. The **bones left unbroken** would signify that His bones were not broken at all either, in contrast to the other thieves who had their legs broken. **Eating the lamb** signifies that we too, must nourish our souls by feeding on Christ's sacrifice. We reflect on it often, for it is through His sacrifice that we find life just as we nourish our bodies with real food. They also **ate it in haste**, expecting deliverance and displaying faith. We are to earnestly put our faith in Christ and be delivered from our sins. They were also to **apply the blood** to the doorposts of the home so that the Lord would pass over them and they be protected. We too, must apply the blood of the Lamb of God to our lives by personally accepting Him as our Savior. We personally put our faith in Him and apply His sacrifice to our lives. Unless you accept Christ as your Savior, you remain unprotected from death and the wrath of God.

You see all of those unique Old Testament events and feasts and celebrations weren't just some ritualistic meaningless things to keep. They were all pointing to something greater! Someone greater! Paul said in Colossians 2:17 that these things are a mere shadow of the substance that is Christ who was to come. The feasts were a shadow. The substance that created the shadow and that the shadow directed us too is Christ.

The Passover Feast

To really put into perspective what Jesus is doing on this great day where He enters into Jerusalem, get this: **Jesus enters into the Jerusalem the same time that Jews would be coming to Jerusalem to celebrate and choose their Passover lamb!** They would choose a lamb and then examine it for four days to make sure it was without defect and then they would sacrifice it.⁴ Well on this day, the first day of the week for them, whether those accepted Him or rejected Him, they were actually **choosing their ultimate Passover Lamb**, who a four days later on Thursday night (which would have been Friday morning in Jewish time – Passover day!) would be sacrificed and have His blood shed to protect everyone who believes in Him from death and from the wrath of God and to bring them out from a life of slavery to the sin nature and into real life.

CONCLUSION:

A. Don't forget to stop and marvel at God's work.

They say don't forget to stop and smell the roses. But after this passage, I think, don't forget to stop and marvel: over the work of God and the plan of God and the authority of God. People are accepting Him and rejecting Him at the same time, yet He foretold it. But they didn't know that by crucifying Him, they were doing exactly what He wanted. He was forcing their hand to act. It's just mind-boggling how He can fulfill His Word perfectly and work out His perfect plan to a T, even in the midst of mayhem. And don't forget that God

is that marvelously wise. He can do great things and work out His plan even in the midst of such chaos. The cross is marvelous in our eyes. To wonder and marvel is to worship.

B. Go after Him!

The Pharisees said, “[The whole world has gone after Him.](#)” They didn’t know how prophetic their words really were did they? Even right now, as we speak, other churches all around the world are examining the same story of Palm Sunday or even the exact same passage from John and men and women are being drawn to Him from all over the world through His Word and by His Spirit. We need to remember to go after Him, too! It starts by placing your faith in Christ and then continually pursuing Him, to know Him more and to worship Him more every day. Go after Him. Keep going after Him. If we don’t, the rocks will. So let’s keep those rocks from having to cry out.

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), pp. 46,47.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 2007), 273.

³ Ronald Isaacs, *Every Person’s Guide to the Passover* (North Vale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 2000), 120.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 2007), 163.