

GOD WITH US

Part 7: Kings & Prophets to Exile and Return *Judah's Fall and God's Faithfulness*

Message 9 – The “Son of Man” Arrives (Palm Sunday, 2018)

Introduction

Daniel saw more precisely than any other prophet the *timing* of Messiah's arrival. Specifically, in the 70-weeks prophecy of chapter 9, Daniel was told that there would be 69 “weeks” (groups of 7 years – 483 years) before Messiah would come.

“Know and understand this: 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.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing” (Daniel 9:25,26).

The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in 445B.C. gave Nehemiah permission to return and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5-8). Fast forward 483 years (360-day years) and *we find ourselves at the beginning of the final week of Jesus' life, as He goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.* All four gospels record the “triumphal entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem on “Palm Sunday.” It is the gospel of John, however, that records Jesus giving the longest commentary on the true meaning of His arrival in Jerusalem. He had come as “*the Son of Man,*” not to be enthroned but to “*be put to death and have nothing*” (Daniel 9:26). The alignment between Daniel's prophecy and Jesus' triumphal entry is strong. We pick up the story in John chapter 12.

A Great Crowd Celebrates Jesus' Arrival

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.” At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Him and that these things had been done to Him. Now the crowd that was with

Him when He called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that He had performed this sign, went out to meet Him. So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after Him!” (John 12:12-19).

There were roughly 2-3 million people in Jerusalem for the Passover. Nearly half the entire country came for this Feast – a vast multitude inside and outside the city. In recent weeks, Jesus had raised Lazarus after 4 days in the grave in the nearby town of Bethany (see John ch.11:38-44). As a result, huge crowds were following Jesus from Bethany and the surrounding areas as He made His way to Jerusalem for the Passover week. As they approached the city, they brought a donkey for Jesus to ride on, at His own request. This was not only a fulfillment of a 500-year old prophecy from Zechariah (Zech.9:9), it was also a customary way for a visiting king to ride into a city. If a king came on a white warhorse, it was an act of intimidation, a sort of declaration of war: Surrender or else! But if a king came on a donkey, it was considered an act of peace, a declaration of diplomacy.

As Jesus was riding into the city with this giant crowd surrounding Him, those from within the city came out to welcome the incoming crowd. This also was part of the tradition. As new groups of pilgrims arrived, those in the city would go out to welcome them, and they would chant a sequence of Psalms back and forth to one another, in a call and response way. One of the Psalms they sang back and forth was Psalm 118, in which we hear these lines:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

“*Son of David*” refers to the 1,000-year old promise that God would send a son of David to rule over a kingdom that would last forever. “*Hosanna*” is a cry for deliverance from Psalm 118: “*Save us now!*” When you put together all the background pieces, it is clear what was happening. This huge crowd hoped that Jesus, after 3 years of incredible miracle-working ministry, was coming into town to overthrow the Romans, undo all the oppression the Jews had been under for centuries (especially the Roman oppression of the previous 100 yrs.) and set up a kingdom that would be nothing short of heaven-on-earth.

In Luke's account we learn that Jesus, sensing their misguided (yet hopeful) expectations, wept when the city of Jerusalem came into full view.

As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

That word "visitation" is only used 1 other time in this sense - 1Pt. 2:12 referring to 2nd coming of Christ. God "visited" the earth once at the 1st coming Christ, and He will make another "visitation" at the 2nd coming. The problem was that these excited and expectant crowds "*did not recognize the time of God's visitation.*" They did not realize that, as Daniel had prophesied, the Messiah had come on this first visit *not to be enthroned, but to be killed (cut off)*. Jesus was not headed toward a throne and a crown of gold, rather, toward a cross and a crown of thorns. As John makes clear, not even the disciples understood the meaning of the events surrounding Jesus' "triumphal entry" (John 12:16).

The Gentiles' Question Signals a Shift in the Clock

It is only in John's gospel that we read of the appearance of a group of Greeks (Gentiles, or non-Jews) who were going up to the Passover feast. They were, apparently, proselytes (converts) to Judaism. Hearing that Jesus was arriving, this group of Greeks sought to obtain an audience with Jesus.

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus (John 12:20-22).

We know that the mission of taking the gospel *to the Gentile world* became the major focus in the book of Acts. Based on Jesus' reaction to this request for a meeting with Gentiles, it seems that Jesus knew intuitively that their interest in Him signaled that a *moment had come*; it was time for Him to make the final provision

for the Gentile mission: He would have to go to the cross and die for the sins of *the Jews and Gentiles* so that forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life could be offered to all mankind.

It is fascinating to note how well this fits in with Daniel's vision of "the Son of Man" as the "Ancient of Days" granted Him authority to establish a kingdom over "*all nations and people of every language.*"

"He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped Him" (Daniel 7:13,14).

God has always been interested in the salvation of the whole world. He intended for the Jews to be a "kingdom of priests" to represent Him to all nations (Exodus 19:5,6). "For God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16). Does your heart reflect God's heart of love for ALL PEOPLE?

John's gospel does not discuss Jesus' actual meeting with this Greek delegation of pilgrims. Instead, John records in detail Jesus' own words explaining what this Gentile interest meant to Him.

Jesus declares that "THE HOUR" has come.

In response to the interest of the Greeks, Jesus declared that "the hour" had arrived for *the Son of Man* to die. (The use of the Son of Man title is very significant here. See earlier notes on p.799.) It was only through His death that the fruit of changed lives would be made possible. And it was only through His death that the Evil One would be defeated.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me. Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had

thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not Mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself." He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die (12:23-33).

Just as the book of Daniel had predicted, the Son of Man would arrive right on schedule (483 years). But He would arrive and subsequently be put to death, not seated on an earthly throne. His death would be like a seed planted in the ground that would bear much fruit (among both Jews and Gentiles). On the level of spiritual conflict in the heavenly realms, Jesus would come to engage in spiritual battle with "the prince of this world" and to drive him (Satan) out from his seat of authority over humanity.

Note: There is not only great alignment between Daniel and John in terms of prophecy-fulfillment on the *historical level*, there is also alignment on the *cosmic level* with their portraits of the spiritual conflict going on between God and Satan. In Daniel, we see angelic beings like Michael and Gabriel *waging war* against evil spiritual beings (eg. Daniel 10:12-14). Daniel gives us insight into how Satan is always trying to hinder the advancement of God's program in this world. Further, we see through Daniel how God is always overcoming Satan's best efforts to maintain control (eg. the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar to be a worshipper of God; or Michael the angel helping Gabriel overcome the opposition of "the prince of Persia" – the evil angelic being assigned by Satan to guide the king of Persia or, later, the prince of Greece – 10:20).

In John's gospel, we see similar themes. Clearly, Jesus' life, death and resurrection was a battle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light (see John 1:5). As He approached His death, Jesus saw the war between Himself and Satan coming to a head (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). It is no surprise, then, in his summary of the purpose of Jesus' coming that the apostle John would later write: "*The Son of God appeared for this very purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1John 3:8).

The Crowd's confusion – Jesus' Reply

The crowd that heard Jesus was confused. They thought that when the Messiah (the Son of Man) arrived He would set up a kingdom that would last forever. They wanted to know what sort of "Son of Man" this was who would die . . .

The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” (12:34).

Jesus kept His explanation simple. He told them that the battle between light and darkness was about to reach a whole new level, and that they had better stay close to Him while there was time.

Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When He had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid Himself from them (12:35,36).

Many then and now say that Jesus was “just a man.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus was the divine “Son of Man” who was granted authority by God the Father to be the ruler of mankind, the King of eternity. He came the first time to die for the sins of the world and to break the power of the Evil One. He will come a second time to demolish Satan’s kingdom and establish the eternal kingdom of God on earth (see Rev.18,19). Truly, history is His-story!

Discussion Questions

1. The battle between kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness is very real. What evidence to you see today, in our world, of this ongoing spiritual warfare between the Son of God and the Evil One? How does Ephesians 6 tell us to be strong in this spiritual warfare (Eph.6:10-18)?
2. The crowds expected Jesus to be their triumphant revolutionary. We all have many “expectations” of Jesus that are off (things we expect Him to be or to do for us that He never promised He would do). What are some of your own wrong expectations of Jesus?
3. Daniel saw/prophesied certain things about the Messiah roughly 500+ years before Jesus. Jesus did/said things that completely aligned with Daniel’s message. This is the convergence between prophecy and fulfillment. How does this alignment between Daniel and Jesus encourage you? How does it shape your ability to take God at His word?