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COMING KING

As the world ushers in a new year, Christians just finished celebrating the twelve days of Christmas. It ended yesterday with "Epiphany" which means the revelation or manifestation of Christ. How fitting that today we read "**behold, your King is coming!**" as we study the triumphal entry of Jesus.

Last month we celebrated the "Advent" season in the days before Christmas, which herald the past "first coming" of Christ as God in the flesh. This also focuses attention on His future "second coming" - as Jesus will one day return to complete all that He initiated in His first advent.

Keep this in mind as you read through John 12:12-26. Jesus was going into Jerusalem for Passover. Perhaps 2 million people gathered for this feast. Many of them came out to meet Him with a "*ticker-tape parade*" by waving palm branches. This was a national symbol for Israel, harkening back to their last military victory in 164 BC. Now, the miracles of Jesus convinced many He was indeed the promised political redeemer who would throw off the yoke of Rome. This generation was so nationalistic they minted coins with palm branches in the 60s AD, shortly before revolting against Rome. But they suffered utter defeat and the complete destruction of the Temple in 70 AD - part of God's judgment against the generation which rejected the Messiah. But He will come again - to set everything right.

The scene fulfills various prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Verse 13 says they were crying out "**Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!**" Hosanna means "save us now." The people were anxious for God's salvation. John 1:49 calls Jesus "*Son of God and King of Israel*" and in John 5:43 Jesus said He came in the name of the Father. In John 11:27 Martha confessed, "*You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.*"

The miracles of Jesus in John's gospel pointed to His deity, but the people wanted glory. That's coming - on a warhorse at His second advent. But this day Jesus came in humility on a donkey, a sign of peace. Because His first coming was to pay for sin, as the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah. He came to redeem us with His own blood. By the way, that's a powerful contrast to Islam, an ideology that says "*submit to Mohammed or I will kill you.*" Jesus says "*I came to be killed so you can have My life.*"

And Jesus had just raised a dead man to life, saying "**I AM the resurrection and the life.**" So thousands flocked to Him that day. The religious authorities who were jealous of Jesus and wanted to kill Him were incensed at His popularity. "*We are gaining nothing,*" they said, "**Look, the whole world has gone after Him.**" Indeed, in verse 20 Philip and Andrew tell Jesus about some Greeks wanting to come to Him.

Then Jesus enigmatically says "**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.**" He was talking about His impending crucifixion, being "*lifted up*" on a cross. How can such humiliation be "glory"? He explains, "*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.*" Jesus, as the Bread of Life, will give His own life in death, then be raised to life, so that all who believe in Him WILL receive His eternal spiritual resurrection life. That's glory. That's His great yield - Gentiles and Jews - ALL who will come to Him in faith. Will you?

That's verse 25, "**whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**" Just as Jesus gave His earthly life, so must we give ours to Him. His humiliation leads to glorification. Put your trust in His dying on the cross and rising from the grave, then you receive His life, with promise of eternal glory. Because earthly life is just the preview. The main feature is yet to come.

The irony - these people who today said "*Hosanna*" in less than a week would say "*crucify Him*" and "*we have no king but Caesar.*" We are so like them. Fickle. Earthbound. Preconceived notions. We're in an election cycle right now, with various people promising to restore the past greatness of America. But no earthly government can bring real peace, like the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings!

That's a message for us today. We live between His comings. He has come and paid for sin to give us real life. He will come again, in great glory, to raise us into eternity with Him. In verse 26 Jesus says "**if anyone serves Me, he must follow me**" and "**if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.**" These are the marching orders of your King! Come to Him - and get busy bringing people to come to Jesus!