

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Palm Branches in Heaven

Revelation 7:9-17

INTRODUCTION:

Due to the flow of the message this morning we will be reading from the scripture text a little later in the sermon.

We have all heard of the events leading up to and immediately following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. It all started with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

This was the week before Passover, the most important festival of the year. Historians say that there could have been over 100,000 people in Jerusalem that week. We call this week Palm Sunday, the week before Easter. It commemorates the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival and ultimately die for our sins.

Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. Because Jesus is fully God and fully man, He knows what is going to take place in the coming days. As they are on the way to Jerusalem Jesus tells two of His disciples to go into the village and get a colt and bring it back to Him. Jesus told them, "If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'"

The disciples went into the village and they found the colt and his mother tied to a post outside on the street. They went over to the donkeys and began untying them just as Jesus said. The owners of the donkeys said, "What are you doing untying the colt?" The disciples said exactly what Jesus had commanded them to say. And just as Jesus said, the owner let them take the donkey and her colt to Jesus. Jesus told them what would happen and it happened just like He said.

Zechariah prophesied over 700 years before it happened that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem mounted on a young donkey.

When the disciples brought the colt back to Jesus they placed some clothes on the colt's back and Jesus sat on it. As Jesus rode this young donkey into Jerusalem and the people saw Him coming, some in the crowd took off their outer garments and laid them in his path, to roll out the "red carpet" for him and they cut palm branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The palm leaves in these times symbolized triumph and victory.

ILLUSTRATION:

A little boy was sick on Palm Sunday and stayed home from church with his mother. His father returned from church holding a palm branch.

The little boy was curious and asked, "What are you carrying in your hand, dad?"

"It is a palm branch, son. You see, when Jesus came into town, everyone waved Palm Branches to honor him, so we got Palm Branches today."

The little boy replied, "Really? The one Sunday I miss is the day that Jesus shows up!"

At the time that Jesus was entering Jerusalem riding a donkey, God's people were being mistreated by the Roman government. When the crowds saw Jesus riding a donkey they welcomed Him as their king. God's people felt that their greatest need was to be rescued from the Roman government and they thought Jesus was coming as the King to save them from the Roman government. God knew what they thought they needed but He really knew that their greatest need was to be forgiven of their sins.

Unfortunately, the praise the people lavished on Jesus was not because they recognized Him as their Savior from sin. They welcomed Him out of their desire for an earthly king, someone who would lead them in a revolt against Rome. But when He failed in their expectations, when He refused to lead them in a massive revolt against the Romans, the crowds quickly turned on Him. Within just a few days, their hosannas would change to cries of "Crucify Him!" Many who hailed Him as a hero would soon reject and abandon Him.

Pilate offered to free one prisoner. He asked the crowd if they wanted him to release the King of the Jews. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to release Barabbas instead. Then Pilate asked what do you want me to do with Him who you call the King of the Jews. They shouted back, "Crucify Him!" **This showed the fickleness of the crowd. How they, like us, were swayed by peer pressure to follow the crowd.**

Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

BODY:

I. THE FICKLENESS OF THE CROWD.

For the students here this morning, are you experiencing peer pressure in school?

For those of us who have been out of school so long we can't even remember our teacher's names, can you remember what peer pressure in school was like?

Some students smoked or drank alcohol, had sex, or took drugs and their friends felt pressure to do it too. There were other kinds of pressures too: what to wear, where to go, who is popular, who is not, popular groups to belong to and groups to avoid, popular hair styles (long or butch (we had a lot of "hippie" hair in our day), afro or mohawk, colored hair, miniskirts, low hanging pants, holes in the knees, tattoos, etc.

One of the big things then, as well as now, was to own a pair of Converse high top tennis shoes. If the parents would refuse to buy them, many students earned money on their own to buy their own pair. Others even resorted to stealing them. Everybody had them

(except you, it seemed) and you JUST HAD to have them. You envisioned yourself running much faster and being able to dunk the basketball with them.

After spending their own money, they find out that they really cannot run any faster nor jump any higher except for the slight improvement of not having as much **weight in their wallet**.

They started out happy and proud of the Converse shoes with the logo on the ankles. But it had no lasting value. It never really made them a part of the group, even though they dressed just like them.

So, here is the point, do you think that some of the people involved in the parade on Palm Sunday were also in the crowd outside of Pilot's residence on Friday morning?

Peer pressure makes people want to be in the popular group. First the people were celebrating the entry of the King then just a few days later they were demanding that He be crucified. The only difference was that the disciples were no longer leading the parade. Now the Jewish leaders were influencing the crowd.

Peer pressure makes people want to fit in with the crowd and not stand out. It causes people to remain complacent and quiet even when wrong things are happening. Peer pressure can cause one to choose the world over choosing God. The crowd in Jerusalem were influenced to choose a murderer and thief instead of the Lamb of God.

Now, we could never be influenced like that right? We are sophisticated and mature we could not be influenced by peer pressure to choose something other than Jesus!

Folks, it is easy to be caught up in the excitement of the crowd. It is easy to celebrate as the parade is passing by and then shout **crucify** when the mood of the crowd has shifted. It is easy to just go with whatever the crowd is doing and not be bothered by our flippant faith and witness.

Peer pressure will lead you to a life where you are never satisfied. Where you will never really know Jesus because His ways are not popular or fashionable to you. Peer pressure will make you act out against what God wants and lead you into utter darkness and ultimate disappointment.

Folks, today is a good day to choose to revive your relationship with the Father through His Son. It is a day to leave what the group wants and be willing to break out of their expectations and work toward God's. His direction and plan offer you eternal promises not just a worn-out pair of tennis shoes.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 7:9-17 (NASB)

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying,

“Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” 14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16 They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, we thank you so much for the life we have in Christ. A life that is being spiritually protected as we live during this time of tribulation. We thank You that You have rescued us from this domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of Your beloved Son. We thank you, Father, that You have sealed us as your children by sending the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. This morning as we look at this beautiful scene in Revelation, I pray that it will provide encouragement, hope, and assurance to us that one day, we too, will be in Your presence with this group in heaven, free from all sin, to give You the praise and glory that You deserve.

Give us eyes to see and ears to hear Your word. I pray that you will provide accuracy and clarity in all I say in order that You will be glorified.

In Christ's name I pray.

Amen

II. A SCENE OF SALVATION.

Here in Revelation we see, once again, see palm branches. These visions are not here so we can just have more information for information's sake. Instead it is here in order to stimulate those of us who are in the midst of the tribulation. It is intended to stimulate our hope, faith, assurance, and encouragement as we continue in these last days.

The scene has shifted from the complete people of God living on **earth** to a scene in **heaven**. We see a multitude from every nation, peoples, and languages and they are standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Further, the great multitude is clothed in white and have **palm branches** in their hands. The imagery of the white robes is a picture of victory because they have remained pure and faithful to God. They were able to STAND against Satan. They have overcome!

The palm branches at the triumphal entry denoted the victory of Christ as the ruling king. In Revelation it is the great multitude that is pictured victorious. They are wearing white robes and holding palm branches signifying the victory that they have obtained. They are no longer battling with the elements of sin, they are now living in the presence of God.

This victory and deliverance is not because of themselves or because of who they are.

Revelation 7:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying,
“Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

The multitude recognizes that their victory is really God’s victory. Salvation belongs to our God and because of this truth we experience salvation and deliverance.

This great multitude that no one could number is actually showing the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that He would "multiply his seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore".

John is told that this multitude came out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb. They will hunger no longer, not thirst anymore, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

That is the intent of chapter seven **It is intended to stimulate hope, faith, assurance, and encouragement as we continue in these last days.** We should strive to be sealed by God and seek to overcome.

III. ENCOURAGEMENT TO OVERCOME.

There are numerous scriptures that try to help us develop Christ centered thinking. So that we are willing to deny ourselves certain things that will be troubling and destructive to ourselves and stay focused on that prize that awaits us.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NASB)

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

ILLUSTRATION:

We live in a world that embraces instant gratification. Our faith is much like a savings account. When we look back on our lives and see the times that we did without and sacrificed to stay within our spending limits. How we ate ramen noodles for weeks in order to make the house payment and keep it current. How we either wasted our money on things that we really didn't need or how we avoided the temptation to spend beyond our means. Those who were patient and invested into the future are now reaping the benefits of that sacrifice.

We are to store up our treasures in heaven. Those treasures will only accumulate if we remain steadfast in our faith.

Remember the seven letters to the seven churches? In all of them, our Lord is mindful of their struggles and He always includes words of encouragement in each of these letters. They are reminded that the one who overcomes will walk with Me in white. To the one who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life.. The one who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death. He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and

before His angels. And on and on these promises are woven into each letter. So that amidst the tribulation we can have this hope of what awaits us if we overcome.

What was the sealing of the 144,000? It is God identifying everyone on earth who is His and assuring that their faith will not fail amidst the tribulation. Now notice how this scene follows up that scene. We are assured that 144,000 that were sealed will one day be in the presence of God in heaven. It brings surety into what God has done in sealing us. It shows the surety of the seal as now we have those who had been sealed on earth now standing in heaven in the presence of God and His glory.

We know that they are the same people because we see the 144,000 once again in chapter 14

Revelation 14:1 (NASB)

14 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb *was* standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

And we see the sealed in heaven again in chapter 22.

Revelation 22:3-4 (NASB)

³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

The encouragement, then is to be sealed, to overcome, and be found standing when our time on earth is done. Then we too can be a one of the multitude of people from the tribulation "*which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands*".

Do you like to see yourself in scripture? Because of the blood of Christ, you can be one of the multitude in heaven clothed in white robes with palm leaves in your hands.

CONCLUSION:

The triumphal entry lead to the most important event that has ever occurred during the history of mankind, Christ's death on the cross! It was at the cross that Christ purchased our salvation with His blood.

But even the cross and Jesus' cold, dark grave are not the end of the story. Jesus rose in victory over death and the grave.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the greatest miracle of all time for mankind. Raising from the dead was a miracle outside the boundaries of natural events. It proved to us that what Jesus taught and claimed to be was of God. It was God's stamp of approval on Christ.

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

He is Lord!