

The Humble King

I like true stories. I would like to read a true story about a father and a young son. The father took his son with him on an overnight camping trip one week. It was the first time for the young son to go camping. While it was still dark, the father arose and started a fire. Then he roused his sleeping son and even though the boy was protesting a little bit, he got up and together they stood by the fire and tried to keep warm as they waited for the sunrise to come. Soon the sun began to rise, and the blackness in the east gradually turned to gray, the gray turned to blue, and the image of a lake and shadowy trees began to emerge out of the darkness. The blue turned to a near-white color, finally pink and violet and orange hues emerged in the east over the pines. Suddenly the valley was flooded with light. They watched the spectacular display in silent awe. What a magnificent sunrise they had watched. Finally the boy could not stand it any longer. He turned to his father and wistfully said, “Dad, do it again! Do it again!”

REMEMBERING PALM SUNDAY AGAIN. I could not help but think about that story. There is a sense in which I would like to be able to “do it again.” I would like to have been present on that first Palm Sunday. I would like to see history repeated. I would like to be able to go back and experience it. I would like to be able to see all the events that occurred that day. I am not sure I would really want to see all the events

that followed, but I would because it is related to my salvation. Would you like to see it again? I think I would like to see all the events that occurred before the Palm Sunday events. I would like to see everything that happened in Jesus’ ministry.

I would like to have been able to follow the One who was made lower than the angels. I would like to be able to see the One who was born of a virgin, who lay in a manger and who was nursed by a human mother. I would like to see the One who grew in wisdom, knowledge and stature with men.

I would like to see the one who experienced being a teenager – God in human flesh. That must have been exciting. Just think about Jesus having to experience life as a teenager—growing up, His body changing, His voice changing, and growing a beard. What was it like for God in human flesh to have had that experience?

JESUS WAS ALWAYS OBEDIENT. I cannot imagine how

Jesus reacted. I know how I reacted. You know how you reacted, but would it not have been great to have seen Him go through all that? It would have been helpful to discover how He reacted to His experiences of pain, hunger,



thirst, fatigue as a result of work, fatigue as a result of His own ministry and all the things that He did. Scripture says in Hebrews 5:8 that He learned obedience from His own sufferings. He was God in human flesh and through His sufferings, He learned what obedience was like. He learned

what it meant to be obedient. We began to learn obedience as children. As adults we do not really understand what obedience is like. As adults we are in many ways masters of our own destiny. Yes, we must be obedient in the workplace, but usually we operate autonomously because we have legal and social rights. Consequently, we lose the understanding of what obedience was like as a child. But Jesus was obedient from His birth until His death. Jesus was obedient all the time.

THE WAY OF JESUS. It would have been great to have walked with Jesus when He walked among us. We read in the Scriptures that He was the light of the world. He was holiness in a dark, sinful world. That is what John 1:9-10 tells us. He was on a mission when he came. Mark 1:38 tells us that He came to teach us and to preach. I went through the New Testament looking for every occasion when Jesus stated why He came. I wanted to know why He came to do the things He did. He came to teach and to preach. He came to show His light. He came to tell us that His yoke was easy. He came to reveal the Father to us. He came to display Himself and to reveal the Father.

He said in John 10:10 that He came that we might have life! He came to give us life. He hinted at things to come. Therefore, Jesus came to teach, preach and to give us life. I cannot give life, but I can teach. I can point you to the One who gives life. I can point you in the direction of life. But Jesus is the only One who can give spiritual life. Yet He was the one the Pharisees wanted to kill. Their hatred of Him and passion to murder Him started early in His ministry. In John 5:18 we discover that after Jesus had healed a paralyzed man, the Pharisees were upset. Their desire at that point was to murder Jesus. That was their goal. He was a threat to them.

In John 7:1 we find that they started actively trying to kill Him. In John 7:25, the people finally became aware that their religious leaders wanted to kill this One whom they regarded as a prophet and a miracle-worker. It is just stunning! Think about what Jesus was doing and teaching!

In John 8:37 and 40, we are once again reminded that Jesus was the one they wanted to kill. They wanted to kill Him because of the miracles He did. They kept wanting to

kill Him. In John 11:13 we are told that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, they desperately wanted Him dead. I could not help but think to myself of what it must have been like for Jesus to be healing, teaching, caring, loving, training, giving of Himself, and all the time be aware that there was a group of people who wanted to murder Him. There was a group of people who wanted to snuff Him out of this world. What great stress must He have experienced?

All the time He was aware of what they wanted to do to Him. As a result, after He healed someone, He would tell them to tell no one about the miracle. "Tell no one that you were healed. Tell no one what I did for you." In Matthew 8:4 He told a leper not to tell anyone that He had healed him. In Luke 8:56 He told a synagogue official to tell no one that his daughter was healed. In Mark 7:36 He told a blind man not to tell anyone that he was healed. In Matthew 12:16 we find a statement that leads us to believe Jesus must have repeatedly asked people to tell no one, because in Matthew 12:15-16 we read,

He warned many who had been healed to tell no one about their healing. Matthew 12:15b-16 (NASB)

Jesus was constantly aware of the pursuit of the religious leaders and their desire to murder Him.

TELL NO ONE. There is also something else that reveals that Jesus was aware of His danger. Jesus kept saying that His hour had not come. Do you remember at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, when His mother asked Him to provide more wine? It was Jesus who decided to turn water into wine. Jesus replied to His mother, "My hour has not come." John 7:30 and John 8:20 reminds us that this was an issue.

The crowds were responding. They were enthusiastic and throughout His ministry the crowds were growing larger. He could not even spend time in His own home in peace and quiet. He could not go anywhere without people recognizing Him. People came after Him no matter where He was. Crowds were responding to Jesus in incredible ways, but the Sadducees and the Pharisees were in the background always watching. Therefore, Jesus was telling people, "Do not tell anyone!" His "hour had not come yet!"

PEOPLE COME TO THE PASSOVER. Just on the skirts of Palm Sunday, we are told in John 11:55 that the passover of the Jews was near and many were going to Jerusalem.

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. Passover was near, and they were seeking Jesus.
John 11:55-56a (NASB)

Isn't this great?! They were seeking Jesus. Are you seeking Jesus? I trust you are. I hope Jesus is the one you are looking for. These folks were looking for Jesus. Verse 56 lets us hear some of their discussion.

... and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"
John 11:56b (NASB)

They were talking to one another. They were asking if anyone knew if Jesus was coming to the Passover.

In verse 57 we are introduced to another group who hoped Jesus would come too!

Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him. John 11:57 (NASB)

So here is the backdrop. The people wanted to see Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to see Him too, but they have a different reason and purpose. They wanted to murder Him.

In John 12:9-11 we are told that the large crowd knew Christ had come.

The 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. John 12:9 (NASB)

The crowds also wanted to see Lazarus whom Christ had raised in John 11. That was an incredible miracle. News

of the miracle had spread throughout the region and city. People wanted to see Jesus and Lazarus. John 12:10 adds that the chief priests not only wanted to murder Jesus, but Lazarus also. While we are not given the reason, the most likely reason is that seeing Lazarus provided proof that Jesus raised him from the dead.

But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also . . .
John 12:10 (NASB)

Wow! They wanted to remove the proof of the miracle. Verse 11 says,

... because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus. John 12:11 (NASB)

These religious leaders were extremely wicked. Verse 12 tells us that it is the next day.

And on the next day . . . John 12:12a (NASB)

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST BEGINS. This was the beginning of what we call the Great Processional or Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Jesus was outside of the city and the people were excited that Jesus is coming. They were waiting and eager.

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 . . . John 12:12-13 (NASB)

On the next day the people were looking for Jesus. They had been seeking Jesus and now they have heard He is here. Matthew 21:1 tells us that Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. He is near Bethpage, close to the Mount of Olives which is somewhat northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples are walking along a path near Bethpage, moving towards Jerusalem. Matthew 21:1-2 tells us that Jesus chose two disciples.

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.” Matthew 21:1-2 (NASB)

This is straightforward information. Jesus sent two disciples to a village—apparently not Bethpage—to get a donkey and a colt. The colt would be a young donkey. They were to untie them and bring them. Mark 11:3-6 tells us,

“If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ you say, ‘The Lord has need of it’; and immediately he will send it back here.” They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it. Some of the bystanders were saying to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission. Mark 11:3-6 (NASB)

Jesus told the two disciples that if anyone asked questions as to why they were untying the colt, they were to answer, “The Lord needs it,” and they would then be allowed to take the animals. That was exactly how the events unfolded.

In verse 7 we are told they brought the colt to Christ.

They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it. Mark 11:7 (NASB)

Luke 19:30 states that no one had ever sat on the colt.

Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here. Luke 19:30 (NASB)

Then Mark 11:7 simply states, “And he sat on it.” We can be confident that this colt knew something that the disciples did not know. The colt knew who Jesus was. You can be guaranteed this colt did not buck Jesus but sat quietly. It obeyed and heeded the commands that Jesus gave it. It knew its Creator.

Now Jesus sat on the colt and rode along the road. Luke 19 tells us that when Christ came near the Mount of Olives, the people began to rejoice because of all the miracles they

had seen Him do.

As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen . . . Luke 19:37 (NASB)

Mark 11:8-10 reports that people were spreading branches on the road and shouting, “Hosanna!”

And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting:

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!” Mark 11:8-10 (NASB)

John 12:13-15 reports some of this same information but also provides more information. The apostle John reports the people,

. . . 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.” John 12:13-15 (NASB)

Now the people are shouting. The people are responding. In Jesus’ day royalty and nobles did not sit on donkeys. Instead, they sat on horses. They sat on beasts of honor. John 12:13 quotes Zechariah 9:9 and in the process indicates that it is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Now it is important to know that the Talmud reports the Persian King Sapor when commenting on the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 said,

You say your Messiah will come on an ass. I will send him a

brave horse.¹

This reveals that the Jews in Christ's time knew that Zechariah 9:9 referred to the Messiah. Jesus did not come on a brave horse, but on an animal of low regard. Jesus could have come on a brave horse to impress others, to seek His own glory, to obtain their submission or to receive adoration, but He didn't. He came as a humble king. Someone with humility does not have an "I problem." Jesus was a humble king. He came on a colt.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE ANGRY. In John 12:16-18 we are told once again that some of the people had come because Lazarus had been raised from the dead and they wanted to see the miracle worker, Christ.

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. John 12:16-18 (NASB)

What would it have been like to have been a bystander and watch Christ walking along? That would have been an experience to just watch Him. Do you wonder what it would have been like if you were one of Jesus' disciples walking just behind Him, seeing this crowd of people shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest!"?

While the people were thrilled, the religious leaders were angry because Luke 19:39-40 reports that they wanted Jesus to rebuke the crowd.

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" Luke 19:39-40 (NASB)

The Pharisees were upset. In essence they said, "Hey, Jesus, just tell them all to be quiet." Jesus said, "No, if they do not cry out, the stones will." That would have been even more impressive. But there were bigger concerns for the Pharisees because Matthew 21:11 tells us the people thought Jesus was at least a prophet,

And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." Matthew 21:11 (NASB)

And in John 12:19, we read,

So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him." John 12:19 (NASB)

Apparently the Pharisees turned to one another because the "you" is in the plural. That is, one Pharisee turns to another Pharisee and says, "Do you see what you are doing is not working? The whole world has gone after Him." Now you can imagine what they thought. Jesus has been walking from Bethpage near the Mount of Olives. He is walking towards Jerusalem. The people are shouting and we can imagine the excitement when an entire crowd is doing this. What an incredible experience! It was a glorious day! It was Palm Sunday! It was awesome. Jesus was being honored. He was being exalted as king! He deserved it because He was the King. He was not going to become a King. He was then and is today the King!

MY HOUR HAS COME. If we look ahead at John 12:20, we discover an amazing thing.

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip . . . John 12:20-21 (NASB)

Philip was one of Jesus' disciples.

... who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." John 12:21 (NASB)

1. Sanhedrin. Babylonian Talmud. 98.

Isn't this wonderful? They wanted to see Jesus. "Sir, we wish to see Jesus!"

In verse 22 we are told that Philip came and told Andrew, and Philip told Jesus. Verse 23,

And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." John 12:23 (NASB)

Now what a strange response to Philip – "it is not my hour, my hour has *not* come." All of a sudden there is a change. What we today call Palm Sunday was the culmination or the turning point in Christ's ministry. Palm Sunday was a key day because it was no longer that "my hour has not come." It is now, "my hour has come, my hour has arrived."

Notice verse 27,

Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, "Father, save Me from this hour"? But for this purpose I came to this hour. John 12:27 (NASB)

Jesus is talking to the Father and says, "Lord, save Me from this hour." Then He says, "No, this is the reason I came." This is the reason I taught, healed, and put up with these Pharisees and Sadducees. This is the reason I have done everything." He says, "And now, my hour is here."

Do you know what Palm Sunday is? Palm Sunday is the turning point in Christ's ministry. Palm Sunday is the first day of the very week in which the prophet Daniel prophesied Jesus would die (Daniel 9:25-27). Now that week had arrived. When you think about Palm Sunday, think about it this way. This was the turning point in His ministry. His hour had come. He was now marching to His death. Jesus was no longer avoiding the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Jesus will no longer tell people, "Don't tell anyone." From here on the plan, the purpose, the goal, was to die. His hour had come! That is what the Triumphal Entry was all about.

THE HUMBLE KING. I could not help reflecting on the fact that the humble king had come. He had come to do the Father's will. In 1 Peter 5:4 we find a promise. Verse 4 says,

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the

unfading crown of glory. 1 Peter 5:4 (NASB)

This is a promise to the elders of a church. There is a similar promise for the deacons in a church (1 Timothy 3:13). Then in verse 5 we are told that,

You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. 1 Peter 5:5 (NASB)

Do you know what characterized Jesus? Jesus was humble! Notice what this verse tells us. It defines humility. Have you ever wondered what humility means? We hear about people who are self-deprecating. They never directly honor themselves. They downplay their importance. We say "that is a humble person." But that is not really a good definition of humility. That is our culture's definition of humility. The Apostle Peter actually defines humility here in verse 5. We are going to discover that Paul does too.

The first hint about the definition of humility here is in verse 5. It says, "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders" That is a key statement. The young men are to submit to their elders, and, "all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another."

The apostle Peter just connected submission and humility together. In verse 6,

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God . . . 1 Peter 5:6 (NASB)

This reveals that if you humble yourself under God, you are in submission. You will not be humble if you are not willing to submit. Philippians 2:3-4 echoes the same truth.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4 (NASB)

A humble person does not put his or her own interests first,

but is concerned for the interests of others. Verse 5 gives us the example of Christ.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped . . . Philippians 2:5-6 (NASB)

Here we are told that Christ was willing to become a man. Verse 8 is where we want to go.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient . . . Philippians 2:8 (NASB)

What is humility? It is obedience. Watch this: If we are unwilling to obey the Lord, if we are unwilling to be His servant, if we are unwilling to do exactly what He wants us to do, then we are not humble. Humility is reflected in submission and obedience. Humility is doing what God asks us to do.

In 1 John 3:23 we are given a command. It is the first sign of humility. Notice how the verse reads,

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He . . . 1 John 3:23 (NASB)

What does it say?

... commanded us.

The first sign of humility is belief in Jesus. Look at 1 John 2:4.

The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 1 John 2:4-6 (NASB)

The one who does not submit is a liar, and he is also not humble. Jesus came riding on a donkey. He was the humble king. Why? Because He came to do the Father's will. Jesus showed Himself to be the humble king. Praise God!