

The Triumphal Entry of Christ As King

The four gospels present Jesus as the promised Messiah (Matthew 1:1, 16; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 9:20; John 1:41; 4:25). (Note the title Christ is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew title Messiah). This study is about the Triumphal Entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem which occurred three days after He arrived in the area on 9 Nisan 3793 (Hebrew calendar) or 27 March A.D. 33 (Gregorian calendar). We are going to watch two prophecies be fulfilled as Christ publicly enters Jerusalem. They predicted that the Messiah-king would ride on a colt into Jerusalem and that the people of Jerusalem would shout the praises of their long-awaited king. In the last study, we learned that the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-26 predicted the date after which the Messiah would die. That is now only five days away. These prophecies all point to Jesus as the only one who could have fulfilled them and He did. Jesus displayed the evidence that He was and is the Messiah. After the feeding of the five thousand, the people wanted to make Him their king but for the wrong reason. At the Feast of Booths in the summer of A.D. 32, the people were wondering if Jesus was the Messiah, the coming king. His miracles and teaching proved He was the God incarnate Messiah (Micah 5:2). Our study is a pinnacle in the gospels. You will see Jesus praised as the king of the Jews at the Triumphal Entry (Matthew 21:1-11, 14-17; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19). It is a fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

Preparing For the Triumphal Entry. John 12:9-10 has told us already that a large crowd knew Jesus was near Jerusalem. Jesus' reputation had spread into the surrounding countries. Now that He is in Jerusalem for the Passover, they wanted to see and hear this sensational man. They also wanted to see Lazarus, the man whom Jesus raised from the dead. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, reports that millions of people came to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, which began every year on Nisan 14 in the Hebrew



calendar. So, we should not be surprised that there is a large crowd which wants to see Him. Jesus' fame had spread east, south, west, and north.

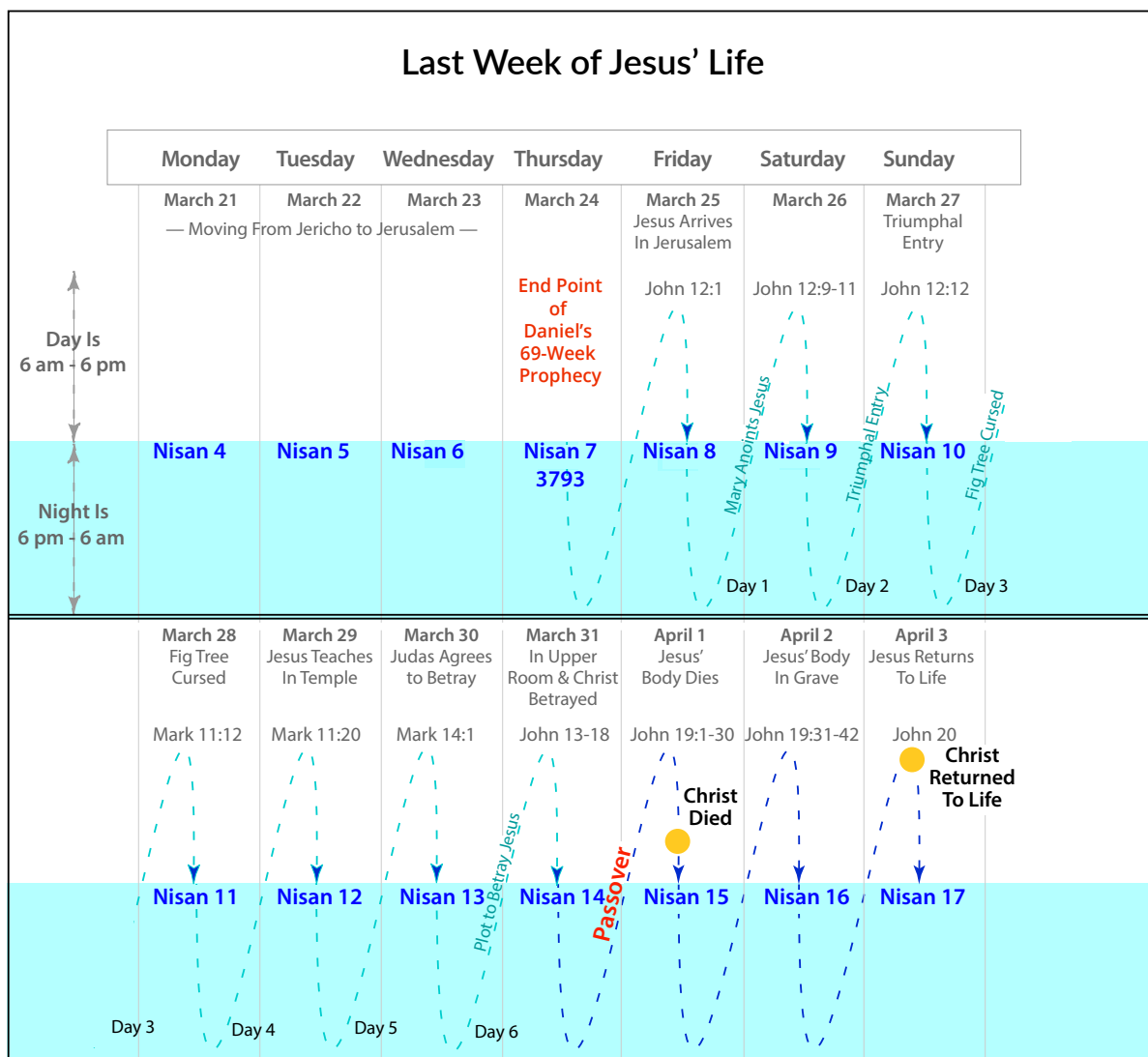
Our study begins with John 12:12. The verse says,

On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. John 12:12 (NASB)

We are told that it is the next day, Sunday, 27 March A.D. 33. The same large crowd that had already visited Jesus on Saturday, 26 March A.D. 33 (John 12:9-11), had heard that He was going to Jerusalem and so they came looking for Him. We are not told how they knew He was coming to Jerusalem, but one of

the disciples had to reveal the plan, or perhaps Mary, Martha, Lazarus, or Simon the former leper.

Matthew 21:1-3 gives us more insight as to how the day began than any of the other gospels. The passage says,



When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, 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. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”
Matthew 21:1-3 (NASB)

Here we are told that as Jesus approached Jerusalem, He came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives. Mark 11:1 and Luke 19:29 add that the villages of Bethphage and Bethany were near the Mount of Olives. They were close together. Since Jesus and the disciples already had dinner in Bethany two days earlier (Friday, 25 March A.D. 33), the implication is

they had stayed there. Therefore, it appears that on this day they had left Bethany and approached Bethphage on their way to Jerusalem. John 11:18 tells us that Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem or a Sabbath's journey according to Acts 1:12. That means Bethphage was less than two miles from Jerusalem. Consequently, this helps us understand that Bethphage was the village that Jesus said was on the opposite side (Matthew 21:1-3), apparently just opposite Bethany.

When they arrived near Bethphage, Jesus told the two disciples to go into the village opposite of them, find a donkey and its colt which were tied up, and bring them to Him. Mark 11:2 and Luke 19:30 record that Jesus said no one had ever sat on the colt. Some have asked how did Jesus know a donkey and its colt were tied up at the entrance of Bethphage? They suggest that Jesus had made previous arrangements. Maybe

He did. But such a question ignores His divine nature. His knowledge of the colt and His foreknowledge of this event does not surprise anyone today who has seriously studied the gospels. Nor would He have surprised the disciples, for Jesus had already demonstrated that He knew the hearts and thoughts of men (Matthew 9:4; Mark 2:8; Luke 9:47; 11:17; 16:15). The point is that the critics cannot accept the possibility that Jesus or the Father had divinely orchestrated these events. God makes prophecies and then He divinely ensures the events occur (Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 14:27). That is why He knew the location of the two animals and what words would result in their release. This should not be difficult for most believers to quickly accept. God the Father knows what will happen because He has planned what is going to occur. So His plans are fulfilled.

Since no human had ever ridden on the colt, Jesus wisely told the disciples to bring both animals. Why did He do that? Because the presence of the colt's mother

would have helped the colt to be calm when Jesus rode upon it. But why was it important that no one had ridden on the colt? Because Jesus is the Messiah who someday will reign and rule over the earth in the millennial kingdom. Also, we are told that Jesus instructed the two disciples that if anyone asked anything, they were to simply say, "'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." In Jesus' omniscience, He knew that someone would object. He knew how to ensure the plan succeeded.

Prophecies of the Triumphal Entry. Beginning with Matthew 21:4-5, Matthew reveals one of two significant fulfillments of ancient prophecies. The first prophecy is from

Zechariah 9:9. The second one is from Psalm 118:26.

Matthew 21:4-5 tells us that the 500 year old prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 about the King of Israel riding on the colt of a donkey was soon to be fulfilled. Here is Matthew 21:4-5 rewording of the prophecy.

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

**"SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION,
'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU,
GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY,
EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST**

**OF
BURDEN."**

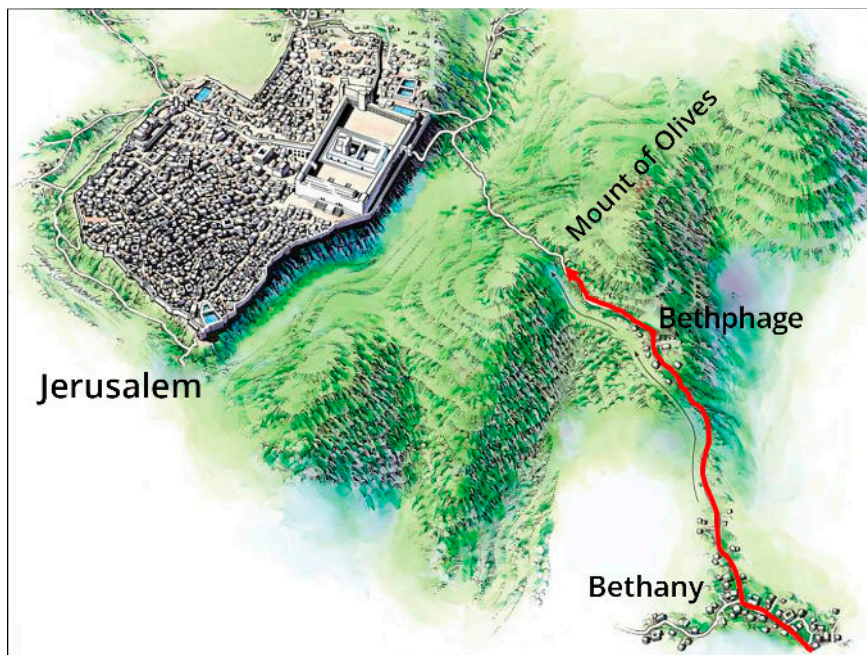
**Matthew 21:4-5
(NASB)**

Matthew quotes the Hebrew Bible, but leaves out the third line of the Zechariah 9:9 prophecy ("He is just and endowed with salvation"). He did not quote the Septuagint (LXX).

Both Matthew and Zechariah refer to a "foal." A "foal"

is a one-year old offspring of either a horse or a donkey. It is also called a "colt." So, Zechariah 9:9 prophesied the king of Israel would ride a one-year old donkey. The divine plan was that the Messiah would humbly ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. Even though Zechariah 9:9 uses the word "lowly" and Matthew 21:5 uses the word "gentle," it is important to know they have the same meaning. The Greek word for "gentle" is *praus*. It literally refers to strength under control, like a tamed horse. Even though a tame horse has been humbled, it would be wrong to say it is weak because its response is a choice.

So the prophecy states, "Your king" is coming. He is



humble. He has great strength under control. I rejoice that He has great power, yet is humble, kind and compassionate. That is an ideal king for Proverbs 29:4 says,

**The king gives stability to the land by justice . . .
Proverbs 29:4 (NASB)**

The proverb describes Jesus Christ. He is the righteous king who is humble, has great power, and brings stability to the land.

Next, Luke 19:32-35 tells us that the two disciples obeyed Jesus' command and found the two animals. The passage says,

So those who were sent went away and found it just as

imagine the crowd standing nearby the animals as they waited for Jesus to arrive. The expectation must have been high. Today, someone might be selling food and drinks. I wonder what was happening as they waited?

Two disciples brought the animals to Jesus, laid their coats on the colt and lifted Jesus up onto the colt. Luke 19:36 recorded what occurred next. Luke wrote,

As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road. Luke 19:36 (NASB)

The Greek word for "spreading" is *hypostronnyo*. It means "to spread beneath something." It is in the imperfect tense. The word gives us the picture of a crowd repeatedly casting their coats on the ground before Jesus as He moved along the



He had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord has need of it." They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it. Luke 19:32-35 (NASB)

The two animals were near the entrance to Bethphage. Mark 11:4 says the colt was in the street and tied at the door. As they untied the colt, the owners asked, "Why are you untying the colt?" Mark 11:5 just refers to the owners as "bystanders." The owners were standing near-by. The two disciples gave the owners the answer Jesus had given to them. Then they were able to bring the donkey and the colt.

What is truly amazing is the amount of historical details the four gospels give us about this event. We even know the animals were in the street and were tied to a door. We can

road. It is a very dynamic picture. In addition to throwing their coats on the road, Matthew 21:8 states that most of the crowd was spreading branches on the road.

Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. Matthew 21:8 (NASB)

But what kind of branches? Mark 11:8 states the cuttings were leafy, and John 12:13 says they "took the branches of the palm trees." That is, they laid their coats and palm branches from the palm trees along the road ahead of Jesus as He was riding on the colt.

Luke 19:36-38 tells us that as Jesus approached the peak of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd began to joyfully praise God with a loud voice. That means He had ascended

the Mount of Olives (elevation of 826 m or 2,710 ft) and was now about to descend.

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, shouting:

“BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Luke 19:36-38 (NASB)

Imagine the beauty of the panoramic view of the city of Jerusalem below, and the temple below at about 91.4m or 300 feet below. As He reached the peak, the crowd broke out in loud praise, “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

If we combine all of the information together from the gospel accounts (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13), we learn they gave praise to God with these magnificent words,

“Hosanna to the Son of David;

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE

NAME OF THE LORD; even the King of Israel.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David;

Hosanna in the highest!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

The words in capital letters are the direct quote from Psalm 118:26. This is the second fulfillment of an ancient prophecy about the Messiah in this study. When they added “Son of David,” they revealed that they believed Jesus was the Christ (Greek title) or the Messiah (Hebrew title). When the crowd added, “the King of Israel” and “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David” they reveal the crowd believed He was the Messiah-king who would rule over the kingdom established initially by David. The word “Hosanna” is like bookends to their loud joyful praises. They shouted Hosanna before and after. The word means “Save now.” They wanted

to be saved from the Roman Empire. They were exalting Christ because that was the Father’s plan. His plan would be fulfilled. The Messiah was going to be recognized and honored.

The gospel of John adds the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 at this point.

“FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.” John 12:15 (NASB)

He switches the order of the two prophecies (Psalm 118:26 and Zechariah 9:9) as given in the gospel of Matthew. At the beginning of John’s quote, he inserts the words “Fear not” from Isaiah 40:9. Matthew and John are the only two gospels that mention both prophecies. As we saw in our introduction, the gospels announced that Jesus was the Messiah at His birth. Some of the disciples discovered He was the Messiah when they met Him. Jesus announced the kingdom was near and taught parables about the kingdom. Now the crowd exalts Him as the Messiah-king. Jesus was worthy of their praise.

Purpose the Triumphal Entry. Next, the gospel of John adds,

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. John 12:16 (NASB)

The disciples did not understand the purpose of the Triumphal Entry. They missed the fact that it fulfilled the ancient prophecies. We must remember that Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and He did (Luke 13:33; 24:25-27; Acts 3:21). The Triumphal Entry of Christ fulfilled two very important prophecies. They missed it. They missed the exaltation of Jesus as the Messiah. In theology, these two fulfillments are called “already, but not yet.” That means they were pre-fulfillments of the future complete fulfillment that will occur when Jesus will reign as the Messiah-king over the millennial

kingdom. The ancient rabbis in Jesus' day believed that Zechariah 9:9 referred to the Messiah. The gospels record the fulfillment. We will soon discover the religious leaders missed that for which they were waiting.

It is very important to note that Justin Martyr (A.D. 116-165) wrote to a man, called Trypho, and urged him to believe in Christ. He taught Trypho about the Triumphal Entry of Christ in Jerusalem. Then he said this about Jesus.

“And as this was done by Him in the manner in which it was prophesied in precise terms that it would be done by the Christ, and as the fulfilment (sic) was recognised (sic), it became a clear proof that He was the Christ. And though all this happened and is proved from Scripture, you are still hard-hearted. Nay, it was prophesied by Zechariah, one of the twelve [prophets], that such would take place, in the following words: ‘Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; shout, and declare, daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King shall come to thee, righteous, bringing salvation, meek, and lowly, riding on an ass, and the foal of an ass.’”¹

Did you notice his strong appeal to the fulfillment of prophecy as proof that Jesus was and is the Christ? It is obvious that Justin believed the prophecies were fulfilled. He lived only about one hundred years after Christ. He may have heard the testimonies from some early Christians who were eyewitnesses about Jesus.

In his book “The First Apology,” Justin wrote this,

And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate. And we will cite the prophetic utterances of another prophet, Zephaniah, to the effect that He was foretold expressly as to sit upon the foal of an ass and to enter Jerusalem. The words are these: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem behold, thy “King cometh unto thee; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the

foal of an ass.”²

Notice his appeal to the Acts of Pontius Pilate³ as proof “that these did happen” (see the footnote below).

We can praise God because Jesus fulfilled the five hundred year-old prophecies of Psalm 118:26 and Zechariah 9:9. We know these prophecies existed before Christ was born. For they were recorded in the Septuagint (LXX), which was written about 270 B.C. and the Dead Sea Scrolls which are dated about 150 B.C. Christ was born about 2 B.C. These facts affirm that the prophecies existed before Christ appeared. The Triumphal entry affirms that Jesus is the Messiah-king. This is a tremendously encouraging reality for every believer.

Response to The Triumphal Entry. John 12:17-19 also records the response of the crowd to Christ and the panic of the Pharisees.

[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.” John 12:17-19 \(NASB\)](#)

First, we are told that some of the crowd witnessed the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. So some of them had come. But why did the Pharisees come? Verse 19 reveals they had heard He was coming too! But they did not come to praise Jesus. They did not like Jesus. So they rejected the crowd. The crowd understood that a miracle had occurred when Lazarus was raised. This panicked the Pharisees. They hated Jesus' popularity.

The fulfillment of the two prophecies motivated them to greater fear and hatred. Notice their statement, “You see that

¹ Justin Martyr. Dialogue With Trypho. chapter 52. Philip Schaff. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Hendrickson. 1995. vol. 1, p. 222.

² Justin Martyr. The First Apology chapter 35. Philip Schaff. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Hendrickson. 1995. vol. 1, p. 175.

³ Ibid. These Acts of Pontius Pilate, or regular accounts of his procedures sent by Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius are supposed to have been destroyed in the early period, possibly in consequence of the unanswerable appeals which the Christians constantly made to them. There exists a forgery in imitation of these Acts.

you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.” This is an important comment. It reveals that the actions they had taken already were not hindering Jesus’ popularity. They had to be more aggressive. It meant that eventually Jesus would die.

While John 12:16 tell us the disciples did not understand the meaning of this event until later, Luke 19:39 reveals the Pharisees did not either.

**Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him,
“Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” Luke 19:39 (NASB)**

This verse captures the Pharisees’ reaction to the crowd. They did not like the praise given to Christ, just as hardened-hearts today do not like Him either. So, they demanded that Jesus rebuke His disciples and keep them quiet. They believed it was wrong. But they were wrong. The entire crowd was not composed just of His disciples. Most of them were travelers coming for the Passover Feast on 14 Nisan.

The Pharisees did not recognize their Messiah. Yes, they knew the Scriptures. They knew the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. They knew about Zechariah 9:9. They knew the Scriptures, but they could *not* accept Jesus due to their jealousy and hatred of Him. It is amazing how our feelings can affect our ability to think logically. Hard hearts cannot see the truth. Sadly, that can be true of us too!

So, how did Jesus reply to the Pharisee’s demand, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples? Luke 19:40 gives us the answer.

**But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent,
the stones will cry out!” Luke 19:40 (NASB)**

Jesus said that the stones would cry out if the crowd was silent. The two prophecies were going to be fulfilled even if it required the stones to cry out, “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.” Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:26 would be fulfilled. The shouting recorded in the prophecies was going to occur! The Pharisees had missed the fulfillment of two amazing prophecies. They had missed an extremely significant and monumental event. They missed their Messiah-king. All of their

years of study and training were wasted.

Conclusion. We must not miss the reality of this significant Triumphal Entry either. Jesus is the Messiah-king. He is the fulfillment of genuine, ancient prophecies. He is the promised Messiah-king dating from Genesis 49:10 (1405 B.C.).

The Triumphal Entry should thrill your heart. The four gospels rarely all recorded the same events. But all four gospels recorded this event. All four gospels specifically tell us that Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. They point to Christ as the Messiah. They also gave praise to Jesus Christ who deserved the words of praise from the very large crowd. This is the purpose and the climax of the Triumphal Entry. Praise the Lord!!