

## A Different Kind of King John 12:12-36

Perhaps you've heard of an African ruler named Jean-Bedel Bokassa?

- On December 4, 1977, in **Bangui**, capital of the Central African Empire, the world press witnessed **his coronation** -- Imperial Majesty, **Bokassa I**.
- The price tag for that one event, designed and choreographed by French designer Olivier Brice, **was \$25 million (estimated up to 80 million today)**.
- The procession began with eight of Bokassa's twenty-nine official children parading down the royal carpet to their seats.
- Catherine, the favorite of Bokassa's nine wives, was wearing a \$73,000 gown made by Lanvin of Paris, strewn with pearls she had picked out herself.
- The emperor had arrived in a golden eagle coach drawn by six Anglo-Norman horses.
- He wore a 32lb robe decorated with 785,000 strewn pearls and gold embroidery.
- On his brow he wore a gold crown of laurel wreaths, like those worn by Roman consuls.
- As the "Sacred March" came to a conclusion, Bokassa seated himself in his **\$2.5 million eagle throne**, took his gold laurel wreath off, and, as Napoleon 173 years before had done, took his \$2.5 million crown, which was topped with an 80-carat diamond, and placed it upon his head. [Adapted from Kent Hughes]

**Bokassa's reign was not as grand as his coronation.**

- He was overthrown in 1979.
- He was eventually put on trial for treason and murder.
- In 1987, he was cleared of charges of cannibalism but found guilty of the murder of schoolchildren and other crimes. He was sentenced to life in solitary confinement.

**Bokassa is just one of many cruel dictators that we read on the pages of history.**

**Jesus Christ is a different kind of King!**

- **He was not the king everyone expected.**
- **He was not the king everyone wanted. But he was the king that everyone needed.**
- **His** entry was different. No golden eagle throne's no stretch limo; no entourage.
- His glory is different.
- His kingdom is different.
- He has a different way of winning followers.

**Context**

**John 1-12 – The book of signs**

**John 13-21 – The book of glory**

We just observed **the most climactic of the signs** – raising Lazarus.

- We observed his anointing and the **plot to put him to death** (12:1-11)
- Now it we are at a **transition point**, preparing us for the book of glory, that his passion.
- **Themes** – excitement, imminent death, promised glorification, rejection and belief.
- **Key phrase: "The Hour has Come"** (12:23, 27).
  - **We have been reading, "his hour has not come"** (Jn 2). **Teenagers like that.**
  - **Every clock in the universe has been waiting on this hour. It is the pivotal moment in human history.**

It was a time of Passover, and there was a lot of buzz not only over the event but over Jesus himself.

## #1: The King's Arrival (12:12-22)

Here we are at **Palm Sunday**, a text you may be familiar with. Consider how four groups of people responded to his entry. The camera moves to four different groups.

### **A. The Crowd's Reaction: Political Enthusiasm (12-13)**

**V. 12: A Large Crowd** – most say the population was doubled during passover. So it was upward of 200,000 people.

- Pilgrims were everywhere for this high holy day.

**V. 13a: Palm Branches.** This is the equivalent of waving the national flag.

- Date palms were abundant in Israel & Palms became symbolic of Jewish nationalism
- When the temple was rededicated during the intertestamental period, during the Maccabean era, Palms were used in the celebration.
- During major wars against Rome, Palms were stamped on coins.
- The waving of these Palms clearly communicated the Messianic hopes of the people: They wanted a political liberator.
- They wanted Jesus to call for arms and drive out the Romans.

**13b: The crowd goes out to meet him.**

- Triumphal entries were common in the ancient world, but it usually involved the conquering king returning to the city, bringing the spoils of war with him.
- It was common for crowds to go out and welcome the triumphant and returning king.

**13c: "Hosanna...."**

- The cry is an Aramaic phrase meaning "Save us now!"
- It occurs in various Psalms (Ps 118:25)
- "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel" ‘
  - Each gospel account includes this entry.
  - Mark adds: "Blessed is the coming of our Father David"
  - Matthew: "Hosanna to the Son of David"

So here is one response: Political enthusiasm.

- Previously in John 6, "They attempted to take him by force and make him king" (6:14-15)

**"He should run for President!" We'd vote for you!"** How could they not:

- He fed a multitude with a sack lunch.
- He healed a bunch of people.
- He raised people from the dead.
- He's single, he has not kids.

- But Jesus wasn't a political king.
- But he was the king everyone needed.

Today, what gets more people excited: Talks about Politics or talks about Jesus?

- Trending news stories today: exposition of John's gospel, or more talks over partisan politics?
- Many people: The first thing they check in the morning is their phone to see the news – and then they're mad all day because there's no good news!
- We need to open the Bible and read the good news, **to remember that there's a king and kingdom over everyone.**
- It is fine and good for Christians to be in politics to be sure; but our ultimate hope is not on Capitol Hill; our ultimate hope is on Calvary's hill.

You see the people had a bigger problem than Rome, and that's what Jesus came to save them and us from – death and condemnation.

And he came to bring a Greater Kingdom – **not like Rome. Pay \$20 for coliseum**

### **B. The Disciples Reaction: Misunderstanding (14-16)**

**V. 14:** Jesus attempts to temper everyone's zeal, and so he rides on a donkey.

- A **Donkey**. They were smaller than the donkeys people breed here in the States. A grown man would have to bend his knees so as to not touch the ground.
- Jesus never denies that he is the King, but the donkey was meant to show them that he was the King God the Father appointed, not the type of King they imagined.
- Nazareth? Carpenter's son? Donkey?
- It was a way to say: "Calm down. I'm not coming on a war horse" (that day will come, but not at the first coming).

**V. 15 –** This event fulfilled prophecy. Matthew also adds it, and extends it:

<sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion;  
behold, your king is coming,  
sitting on a donkey's colt!"

### **Matthew 21:5**

<sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion,  
'Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" (Matthew 21:5)

**John** includes the line "**Fear not**" which may come from Zeph 3:16, or Isaiah 40:9.

- In both places, they are reassurances of God's presence with his people.
  - Zeph 3:17 then speaks of the Lord singing over us, quieting us with his love.  
*The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;*

*he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing.*

- These people had a lot to worry about. We have a lot to worry about.
- What do we do – we look to Jesus.
- He invites his children to not fear (o daughter) because he will be with us always.

**Matthew** includes the word “humble” stating what Jesus is symbolizing by riding on a donkey. He is a humble king.

**The larger context of Zechariah is important because it clarifies what kind of King Jesus is.**

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

<sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall speak peace to the nations;  
his rule shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

<sup>11</sup> As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

**Notice:**

(1) The king is associated with **gentleness/humility**.

(2) The king is associated with **salvation**.

(3) The king is coming to bring **peace not war**

- The world longs for peace.
- These people were the longing of the peace.
- It's even in the name of the city!
- Sometimes cities have nicknames... “City of Oaks” “City of Brotherly love” (can't tell from their sports fans!); Steel City” Motor City”
- Jerusalem: “Foundation of Peace” (or City of Peace)
- But peace was to be found in he Prince of Peace.

(4) The king is not just the king of Israel; he is coming to bring peace to the **nations**.

(5) **Blood** is involved in this king's mission.

All of these indicate that Jesus was not a Political Zealot.

He came on a different mission.

He came to bring salvation to the nations.

**V. 16** – Not only did the crowds **misunderstand Jesus**, so do his disciples.

- They fail to understand the true nature of his kingship.
- John's editorial comments sounds like what he said in John 2:22, following Jesus' cleansing of the temple – after Jesus finished his work (was glorified) -- then the disciples understood things. After the resurrection, by the Spirit, they would understand.
- But for now, they are puzzled.

### **C. The Pharisees Reaction: Frustration (17-19)**

**V. 17-18:** Two groups here: (1) one group bore witness about Jesus' raising of Lazarus (2) those who had heard the report.

- Many people were attracted to Jesus because of his miraculous wonders.

**19:** The Pharisees despise Jesus' growing popularity.

- They say, "the whole world is going after him."
- They know they must do something.
- That statement was true and is true today – for Jesus is the Savior of the world.
- In the next few verses, we see that the larger non-Jewish world is coming to him.
- That's why he came "not to condemn the world, but to save it" (Jn 3:17)

### **D. The Greeks' Reaction: Interest (20-22)**

**20:** During this same time, some "Greeks" came.

- This doesn't necessarily mean that they came from Greece.
- The lands surrounding Israel (eg Decapolis) were filled with Greek speaking peoples.
- They were probably "God-fearers" – not Jewish proselytes (though that's possible).
- That is, people who admire the Jewish faith – its monotheism and its morality (eg Cornelius)
- Why now? Possibly because Jesus just cleansed the temple in the court of the Gentiles (Mk 11) – that would have got the Gentiles interested!

**21:** They go to Philip either because he lived near them, or because both he and Andrew have Greek names.

- Andrew doesn't get a lot of ink, but when we read about him, he's always bringing someone to Jesus (previously he brought Peter to Jesus, John 1).
- That's our job as well, **to keep bringing people to Jesus.**

More importantly, **the arrival of the Greeks is symbolic.**

- They represent something Jesus said earlier concerning "the scattered people of God" (**John 11:52**). And **John 10:16**, "other sheep."
- This gathering now begins, as the passion narrative begins.
- This is how he will win the nations to himself: his death.

**22:** "Sir we wish to see Jesus."

- **This phrase has been carved on pulpits around the world for years.**
- **"Sir, we are not interested in your opinions. Don't be driveling on about unimportant things. Show us Christ!"**

- “Philip, you’re nice and all, but we’ve come for Jesus.”
- They want an interview with Jesus.

There’s a lot to learn here.

- The job of the witness, and the preacher is to point people to Jesus.
- If you are a seeker, make sure you are seeking the right thing: Jesus!
  - Seek to learn about the real Jesus.

## #2: The King’s Announcement (12:23-32)

Jesus is not just the “King” but he is also the “prophet” (who warns and offers hope), and he is the “priest” who will die an atoning death...

Now we have the pivotal turning point in the book: “The Hour has come.”

- Strictly speaking, we don’t know how Jesus responds to the Greeks; instead he focuses on the significance of the moment.
- Their pursuit triggers the following message to the world.
- This is like Romans 9-11, Jews don’t believe, the gospel goes to the nations and droves of people are grafted in...
- Verses 23-33 all relate in some way to the cross.

**V. 23:** He calls himself the Son of Man (Daniel), and then notice how he refers to his death: The son of Man will be “glorified” not “crucified.”

- He would be crucified but he speaks of it as glorification.
- He will glorify the Father, accomplishing his work.
- He will be glorified as he rises from the dead and ascends to the Father. (Isa 52:13)

### A. An Analogy of the Cross (24)

- Jesus knew his audience. They knew farming.
- They knew that a harvest was the result of dying seed.
- The seed must die in order to give life.
- So it is with Jesus. He must die in order for us to live – in order for their to be a harvest.
- Notice also the certainty.
- He is not wringing his hands saying, “I hope someone takes advantage of what I did for sinners.” He doesn’t say his death **might** produce fruit, but that it **will**.
- **Listen: If you are a Christian today, then you are this fruit.**
- Christ’s death has born fruit around the world for hundreds of years.

### B. The Application of the Cross (25-26)

**25-26:** We too must die in order to live.

**Here is the great paradox of the Christian life: we find life by dying to self and by following Jesus.**

- The Christian life is a crucified life.
- Remember that when someone says, “Christianity is for those who need a crutch.”
- **You don’t get a crutch. You get a cross.**

- **We don't choose Christianity because it gives us some kind of artificial comfort; we choose it because we get Christ; we get truth; we get to make our lives count, as we bear fruit; and get glory after the suffering**

See two things: (1) the Christian life is hard, (2) the Christian life is glorious (Piper)

### A. **It's hard to live the Christian life.**

- How do you have a meaningful life? die to self and live to Christ.
- **George Müller: "What has been the secret of your life?" Müller hung his head and said, "There was a day when I died." Then he bent lower and said, "Died to George Müller, his opinions, preferences, tastes, and will; died to the world, its approval or censure; died to the approval or blame even of brethren or friends."**
- **But this is not today's narrative of expressive individualism.**

**Expressive Individualism or the "sovereign self" - Nothing can get in the way of your self-exaltation, your self-expression or self-fulfillment.**

**David Wells:** Expressive individualism, then, is driven by a deep sense of entitlement to being left alone, to live in a way that is emancipated from the demands and expectations of others, to being able to fashion its own life in the way it wants to, to being able to develop its own values and beliefs in its own way, to resist all authority. To be free in these ways, many have come to think, is indispensable to being a true individual" (*Losing Our Virtue*, 67).

You are Almighty, and no one has authority to tell you otherwise. People are drinking this narrative daily. You are the creator of your identity and purpose.

- Everything is about you in this philosophy of life.
- Your **friends** are meant to fulfill you; your **church** is like a store that must provide you with goods to consume; your **marriage** is about you – instead of living for the good of others, serving Jesus' church instead of being a consumer; dying to self for the good of your bride.
- **There are definitely benefits to these relationships, but that's not the goal in the Christian life.**
- **We are to die to self, to consider the interests of others ahead of our own (Phil 2).**
- Mueller: What's the secret? I died to myself. I submitted to Christ's authority.

### B. **The Christian Life is glorious**

- So we die; we hate our lives in this world; we follow Jesus on the Calvary road; we become servants.

**But when we do, what we find is that**

- *We bear much fruit;*
- *we keep our lives for eternal life;*
- *we join Jesus in glory;*
- *the Father honors us....*

**26b: It is the faithful servant that will be honored by the Father.**

- **You may actually be hated by people, like Jesus was hated, but the Father will honor your obedience.**

- Humility now, honor later.
- Here is your **reward** for following Jesus – home with the Father. (Luke 15)

### **C. The Agony of the Cross (27-30)**

**27:** Jesus is now agonizing over what was in front of him!

- John does not include the Garden of Gethsemane, but here he gives us a glimpse of Jesus' struggle and his resolute commitment to do the Father's will.

**27b:** "For this purpose I came."

- You can hear a bit of the garden, "Yet not my will but yours be done"

**28:** His prayer: "Glorify your name."

**This is the prayer that controlled Jesus' entire life, and it must be what controls our lives.**

- This should be the prayer of every Christ-follower.
- What's the opposite of expressive individualism? It's God-centered exaltation.
- It's reflected in this prayer, "Father, glorify your name?" How? By aligning ourselves with His will, not our own will; his word not our sinful desires.
- "Glorify your name" is a radically different way to live than the typical pop song you hear today – which is all about you.

**28b:** A Voice from Heaven

- The Father responds audibly.
- "I have glorified it" – God was already glorified in the incarnation
- "I will glorify it again" – God would be glorified at the cross.

**29:** The crowd does not know what to make of this booming voice.

**30:** Jesus says this voice is has come for their sake – that is, God is continuing to supply the world with evidence! What grace!

### **D. The Accomplishment of the Cross (31-33)**

"Lifted up" not to a throne. That's what you would think would come after that statement from a King.

The "lifting up" of Jesus will be **the climactic event of the world.**

He will be **lifted up to the cross**, and eventually lifted up to glory.

Jesus teaches us three things about it:

**1. The cross will divide the human race. (31-32)**

- With his lifting up, there will be the inauguration of judgment.
- The cross unmasks those who are aligned with Satan, and it identifies who are the children of light.
- People thought they were passing judgment on Jesus, but the cross was a passing of judgment on people.
- The whole history of the world can be divided based on how one responds to the crucifixion of Jesus.

2. His cross was the time in which the “ruler of the world” was cast out. (31)

- **Satan looked like he won, but he did not!**
- Jesus won by dying. (Col 2:13-15)
- When Jesus was ‘lifted up’ the enthroned, Satan dethroned. (Carson)
- Our lives were in the grip of the evil one, but Christ triumphed over him, freeing us.
- He will still bring accusations against us. But we say, “When Satan tempts me to despair and tell me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there...”
- **Jesus’ death stripped Satan of his weapon of accusing us of our lack of forgiveness.**
- He can’t use that weapon if we are in Christ; for our sins are forgiven; we have eternal life.
- The accuser has been thrown out of the courtroom.

3. By being lifted up, he will draw all kinds of people to himself.

- His death will have a global impact.

**33** – John’s editorial comment.

### **#3: The King’s Appeal (12:34-36a)**

**V. 34** – Now this crowd hears what Jesus is intending to do.

- Remember, many were just saying, “Hosanna, save us”
- Jesus must die like a grain of wheat.
- Jesus must be lifted up on a cross.
- They ask, “What kind of Son of Man are you?” What kind of Messiah are you?

**35-36** – Jesus does not really answer them; instead he appeals to them to **believe**.

- He does not go in o questions about Messiahs.

It is an urgent appeal.

**35:** **Believe while you have the light!**

- He was about to depart.
- Don’t become a person who walks in darkness.

**36a:** Believe and become a child of the light.

Behold your king.

Riding on a donkey here, on a war horse later.

His first coming, he came to die; his second coming, he’s coming to reign.

And his kingdom— unlike the kingdom of men — is forever.

I’m glad we have a different kind of King.