

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY IN JOHN 12

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ABSTRACT. This is an exegetical analysis of John 12.12-19, which contains the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It points out the particularities of Jesus' triumphal entry in the Gospel of John, and compares it to the other Gospels. Triumphal entries were well known events in the first century Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman culture, so the article considers the history of such events with which the original readers would be familiar. It explores the situation of the Jewish people under the Roman rule at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, and the Jewish hope of the coming of the Messiah. Jesus is particularly presented as the King of the Jews in John's Gospel and in this event. The article identifies the literary devices that the author uses to get across the message of the identity of Jesus. In verse by verse analysis, it exposes different figures involved in the event and the significance of their roles. Despite the volatile and obtuse groups of people that the reader encounters throughout the Gospel of John, God's chosen king enters God's chosen city hailed by crowds of God's chosen people in what looks like a royal reception. The true identity of Jesus is openly proclaimed – he is God's chosen king, the Messiah – in accordance with John's main subject and prominent Christology.

KEY WORDS: John 12.12-19, triumphal entry, triumphal reception, Jesus as King, Messiah

Introduction

In John's Gospel 12.12-19, the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is short, but packed with action (triumphal reception), characters (Jesus, crowds, Lazarus, disciples, Pharisees), and significance (Jesus is the Messiah, the king of Israel). It fits right into the main subject of the book – the identity of Jesus as the Messiah (Conway 2008: 358). John's Gospel contains characteristic long speeches by Jesus, where he reveals his own identity (Kysar 2007: 13). However, in the story of the entry, as described in John, Jesus does not say anything, but the actions speak about his identity more powerfully than words. In John's Gospel, Jesus' identity is sometimes revealed by the narrator (e.g. Jesus is the Word), sometimes by Jesus ("I am" statements), and sometimes by other characters (e.g.

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John the Baptist: "Here is the Lamb of God"). In this story Jesus enacts his identity, a multitude of people proclaim it, and the narrator confirms it with a scriptural quote. The story is here to confirm powerfully to the reader that Jesus is God's chosen king, the Messiah. In portraying Jesus, John often uses Jewish tradition and Scripture (O'Day and Hylan 2006: 15). This event happens in the context of the Passover feast, evokes imagery of great Jewish kings of the past, and contains quotes from the Jewish Scripture.

This passage is a narrative story describing a historical event with a theological purpose. Several literary devices and features that characterize the whole Gospel can be found in this brief story: metaphor, irony, contrast and conflict (Keener 2013: 420). Metaphor in the story is Jesus as the king of Israel (O'Day and Hylan 2006: 8). The political king of Israel (Galilee and Perea, to be exact) at the time is Herod Antipas, the governing ruler of Judea is Pontius Pilate, above them all is the Roman Emperor Tiberius, but God's true king is Jesus the Messiah. The reader can pick up the irony in the story, knowing from the previous passages that the Jewish rulers want to ruin Jesus, yet he comes into the capital city hailed as the king of the Jews. The contrast in the story is the response of the multitude (enthusiasm) and the response of the Pharisees (desperation). The conflict in the story is sensed between Jesus and the Pharisees, because of their response. Another important feature in the story is a prophetic act, or an "acted parable" (Bruce 1983: 259), partially enacted by Jesus (riding in on a donkey) and partially by the crowds (coming out of the city to meet Jesus, waving palm branches, shouting messianic acclamations). In order to better understand this passage, we will first examine some relevant background information such as triumphal entries, the Roman rule and Jewish hopes, and the theme of Jesus as king.

Triumphal Entries. Background

Triumphal entries were well known events in the first century Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman culture. The Jews were an occupied nation in the first century, under the Roman rule, part of the Roman Empire, but they knew of triumphal entries from their Holy Scriptures and history, and from the imperial culture they lived in. Diaspora Jews surely witnessed such events in Rome as the victorious emperors or generals came back to the capital city from successful military campaigns. In the Jewish Scripture maybe the first association would be the triumphal celebrations related to Israel's greatest kings of the past – David and Solomon. When Saul and David were returning from their battles as victors, large crowds of women greeted them with joy, dancing, music and song (1 Samuel 18.6-7). When Solomon was crowned the king of Israel, he rode on king Da-

vid's mule and a crowd of people greeted him with great joy and music (1 Kings 1.38-40; for more possible scriptural precedents for Jesus' entry, see Watts 2013: 980-81). Since the crowds call Jesus "the King of Israel" in our passage (12.13), probably they had these events in mind, hoping that another great king of Israel was coming to power.

In Jewish history, the period of the Maccabees was well known for astonishing victories over the imperial Hellenistic power of Seleucids and reinstatement of Jewish religion and freedom (Grabbe 2008, 750). Many commentaries on this passage in John mention the Maccabees (see Brown 2008: 461; Bruce 1983: 259; Dodd 1965: 156; O'Day and Hylan 2006: 124; 1 Maccabees 13.51 and 2 Maccabees 10.7). Simon Maccabeus retook Jerusalem in mid-second century BC and there was a triumphal entry of the Jews into the city with palm branches, acclamations, music and singing, "since a great enemy had been crushed and thrown out of Israel" (1 Maccabees 13.51). Second Maccabees 10 states that under God's leadership, Judas Maccabeus retook Jerusalem and the temple from the enemy, and purified both the city and the temple. After that, there was a celebration and a procession of people carrying palm branches, singing and praising God (2 Maccabees 10.7). This is the Feast of Dedication (today Hannukah), also mentioned in John 10:22, and attended by Jesus (Gruber 2007: 442-43). Looking at these two descriptions in Maccabees we can see certain similarities with Jesus' triumphal entry, and the specific detail of palm branches, which among the Gospels is found only in John. Jesus had not conquered political military enemies before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but he had shown himself capable of conquering the greatest enemy – death – by raising Lazarus from the dead. On the other hand, probably the hopes of the people greeting him at Jerusalem were exactly such that he would end the political and military power of Rome over Israel.

Jesus' entry has similarities with the triumphal entries and kings in Roman or Hellenistic empires. Some of the diaspora Jews who came to Jerusalem for the Passover feast were likely to have witnessed such entries, especially those who lived in the city of Rome. It is also possible that the author of the Gospel witnessed such an entry before this one of Jesus. Brant states that "John presents the crowd as going out to meet Jesus and receiving him into the city as the *parousia* (arrival in person) of the king, in imitation of the Hellenistic and Roman traditions of welcoming the returning victor from battle" (Brant 2011: 189). The Greek word *hypantēsis* used for meeting Jesus "is a technical term for a civic reception of a ruler" (Brant 2011: 191) and "the normal Greek expression used to describe the joyful reception of Hellenistic sovereigns into a city" (Brown 2008: 462).

This passage is here not only to give us information, but to leave a strong impression on us. In order to better visualize and feel and understand Jesus' triumphal entry we might invoke similar events of national importance in our time that maybe we experienced by attending personally or observing through media. For example, I live in the capital city of Croatia and I have experienced the triumphal entries of sports teams or prominent sports figures returning from sporting "battlefields," when medal winners are greeted by crowds in the streets and at the main city square, followed by a special program of celebration. There was also a triumphal spontaneous gathering of large crowds of people in the public squares all over the country of Croatia after decisive military campaigns which ended the Croatian War of Independence in 1995. All such events feature large crowds, acclamations, singing, and waving of national flags. It is when mass euphoria, national pride and hopes for the future are at its highest.

Roman Rule and Jewish Hopes in Jesus' Time

What was, briefly, the Jewish situation in the time of Jesus? Generally speaking, in the Roman Empire, 3 percent of the wealthy elite ruled over and lived at the expense of the 97 percent of the oppressed and struggling non-elite (Carter 2006: 10). Judea was a Roman province, so Israel was a subjected nation, under the foreign power and rule. Jewish submission to Roman authorities is clearly seen in John's Gospel in their interaction with Roman governor Pilate in Jerusalem during Jesus' trial (chapters 18 and 19). The Jews were allowed to practice their religion, but under Roman control. At the center of their religion, in the Jerusalem temple, they had to offer sacrifices for Roman Emperor (Carter 2006: 66). Common Jews were exploited both by Roman elites and domestic elites in Jerusalem (Carter 2006: 67). Some Jews lived in their homeland, which was the Roman province of Judea in the first century, and others lived in Diaspora, in other provinces of the Roman Empire (see map of Jewish Diaspora in the Roman Empire, 1st century AD, at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org). *Diaspora* is a Greek term describing the dispersion of Jews among other nations, outside of their ancestral homeland. By the first century there were Jewish communities in almost all areas of the civilized world (Levinskaya 2007: 120).

What were, briefly, the Jewish hopes of the time? According to Edersheim, the Jews had a strong bond and a common hope, expressed in their writings and prayers – the coming of the Messiah, the restoration of Israel's kingdom, and the return of the dispersed to their ancestral homeland (Edersheim 1993: 532). The problem was that above all they hoped for national restoration and glory, and in such view the Messiah was to be an instrument to make that happen. They expected Israel's exaltation, not the salvation of the world (Edersheim 1993: 593).

In other words, Jesus did not align with contemporary Jewish expectations of the Messiah, but he did align with God's plan to provide a way for spiritual liberation for all peoples. He did not give them political freedom and glory that they wanted; he gave them the possibility of true life and glorification as described in John's gospel. According to Carter, Jesus' royal triumphal entry was covertly subversive to the Roman Empire. "His actions are, for those in the know, extremely threatening to Rome, yet on the outside they appear to be nothing more than participation in the permitted festival activities" (Carter 2006: 130). Jesus will later clearly establish before the Roman governor Pilate that he is the king, but that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18.36-37).

Jesus as King in the Gospel of John

The theme of Jesus as King is important in John. It starts in chapter 1 with Nathanael's recognition that Jesus is both the Son of God and the King of Israel. It continues in chapter 6 when the crowd wants to make him king by force, but Jesus refuses by withdrawing himself from them. In chapter 12, in our text, Jesus is clearly confirmed as the prophesied king of Israel, by a large crowd of people and by the narrator. In the passion narrative, in chapters 18 and 19, the theme of Jesus' kingship takes on a major role. Pilate's first question to Jesus is "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus clearly states that he is the king, the ruler of his kingdom, but that it is not of this world. Roman soldiers mock him as the king of the Jews. Pilate wants to release Jesus, but the Jews use Jesus' claim to kingship to make him a direct opponent of Caesar. The Jews (Jewish authorities) completely reject Jesus as king claiming that Caesar is their king. Finally, Pilate (a representative of Roman authorities) also rejects Jesus as he gives him over to be crucified. However, Pilate confirms that Jesus is the king of the Jews with a sign fastened to the cross "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". He has it written in three languages – Aramaic, Latin and Greek (covering Hebrew, Roman and Hellenistic culture) – and refuses to take it down. A great irony is at play here. The true king from above is rejected by the rulers from below (the Jews and the Romans), yet he will be vindicated by his resurrection. As such, dualism is an important feature and device of the Gospel of John.

Triumphal Entry in the Synoptic Gospels

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is described in all four Gospels (see Matthew 21.1-11, Mark 11.1-11, and Luke 19.28-44). Dodd states, "Beyond the quotations from the Old Testament, there is very little similarity between John and the Synoptics. They differ, in fact, in every point where it is possible to differ in relating the same incident" (Dodd 1965: 155). However, in my judgment, all the

major points of the story are the same in the Synoptic Gospels and John: Jesus rides in on a donkey, he is welcomed as king by a large excited crowd, they use the branches and shout prophetic words from Hebrew scripture, and the event is seen as a fulfillment of prophecy. There are differences in details, for example, all the Synoptics give an account of acquisition of a donkey, while John completely omits it. Furthermore, in John, the entry is related to the raising of Lazarus, while in the Synoptics it is related to the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the Temple (Culpepper 1998: 193). Both in the Synoptics and in John, this story is chronologically located at the same timeframe – at the end of Jesus' public ministry, before the Passover in Jerusalem and the passion of Jesus. In my opinion, a plausible explanation for the differences could be the use of oral tradition by the authors and different purposes in writing the Gospels (see discussions on oral transmission in Eddy and Boyd 2007).

Verse by Verse Analysis

Verse 12

The “next day” is the day after Jesus was anointed by his friend Mary in the home of her brother Lazarus in Bethany, a village located only about 2 miles from Jerusalem. Mary, Martha and Lazarus, are two sisters and a brother, friends of Jesus, who play important roles in chapter 11 and 12 in the events directly preceding the triumphal entry. The “festival” is the Passover. Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12.1), where a great crowd came to see him and the resurrected Lazarus. So, this was five days before the Passover, when another big crowd that came early to prepare for the Passover learned that Jesus was coming. Passover was one of the three pilgrim festivals when many Jews (men, women and children) from Judea and Diaspora came to Jerusalem to celebrate what was commanded in Leviticus 23.5-8, and became an important tradition (Twelftree 2013: 272). They came a week early in order to prepare for the festival. So, we know that in the text of John, the crowds consisted of Jews from Jerusalem, Judea, and Diaspora. There were also Greeks present (12.20). We are not told how large the crowds were, but Twelftree offers some numbers for Passover crowds in the period of Second Temple Judaism, and they range from 200 thousand to 3 million (Twelftree 2013: 273). How many people came out of the city to meet Jesus, we cannot know, but it must have been a large number considering what we know about the Passover crowds in that historical period. We should also take into account the euphoria which was created at Jesus' entry, which surely attracted larger numbers of people.

It is significant that Jesus' triumphal entry happens in the context of Passover. Saunders informs us that at Passover gathering “nationalist feelings and hopes

rose to feverish height” and some expected that “the Anointed One would suddenly appear” (Saunders 1967: 250). Twelftree states that “Jesus uses the backdrop of Passover, commemorating and anticipating salvation, to make an implicit claim to messianic kingship” (Twelftree 2013: 275). The original Passover is the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, one of the paramount events in the history of Israel, because they were set free from slavery, liberated from oppression, led by God-appointed leader Moses, came under God’s rule, and became a nation in its own right. In this context, Jesus the Messiah is God’s chosen leader to liberate the oppressed, establish God’s rule, and create a new people of God. In other words, the New Exodus is about to happen.

Verse 13

The behavior of the crowd (coming out of the city to meet Jesus, carrying palm branches, shouting acclamations in support of the king) is what makes this event a royal entry, as already described in the background section. Palm branches are specific to John’s account. “Palms were an emblem of victory, and in John’s mention of them here we must detect a reference to the triumph of Christ” (Morris 1971: 584). Palm branches are mentioned in the book of Revelation (7.9), also traditionally a Johannine book, also in the context of the triumph of Christ and salvation. The text describes a scene in heaven, which has similarities to our text, because a multitude of people from every nation is standing before God’s throne in heaven and before Jesus (the Lamb), holding palm branches, and shouting an acclamation about salvation to God and to Jesus (the Lamb) (7.10). The crowd in our text consists of the Jews from many nations, and some Greeks also, shouting “Hosanna!” which is about salvation. It is a Hebrew expression “hōwōššāh nā” meaning “save now!”

The quote in this verse, the repeated shout of the crowd, is a partial quote of Psalm 118.25-26, with the addition “the King of Israel.” The full text of Psalm 118.25-26 states: “Save us [hōwōššāh nā], we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord” (NRSV). This Psalm expresses messianic hopes, where “the one who comes in the name of the Lord” is the Messiah. In his article, Guenter explains how first century Jewish audience would understand the allusions and echoes of Psalm 118 and why they would use it in relation to the king of Israel (Guenter 2016: 425-447). For them, Psalm 118 expressed echoes of David’s triumphant return and their longings for the appearance of a new triumphant king of Israel (Guenter 2016: 447). This explains why the crowd in John’s account adds “the King of Israel” to their acclamation. The theme of Jesus’ kingship is important in John and has been covered in the back-

ground section in this article. John is the only evangelist who uses the title the King of Israel (Dodd 1965: 155). Several commentators argue that the actions of the crowd have political and nationalistic overtones, and that its expectations are misguided (Brown 2008: 461; Bruce 1983: 259).

Verses 14-15

Unlike in the Synoptics, Jesus himself finds a donkey. Bultmann (1971: 419) believes that the Greek word *heurōn* “gives the impression that he found it accidentally.” I believe the expression “Jesus found” could be John’s way of intentionally omitting the whole part of the story of the Synoptics on the acquisition of a donkey because he did not consider it important for his narrative and purpose. Because of the differences, Dodd (1965: 156) assumes the possibility of existence of variant traditions on Jesus’ entry. Be as it may, Jesus sat on a donkey, and we assume that he also rode on it and entered Jerusalem, even though John does not explicitly say so in his narrative. The important thing for John is that this happened as a fulfillment of scriptural prophecy.

Verse 15 is a partial quote from Zechariah 9:9. The full text states: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (NRSV), confirming additionally the triumph and victory of Jesus. “Do not be afraid” is generally a common prophetic phrase by which the Lord addresses his people in the Old Testament, usually followed by a promise of what he will do for them. “Daughter of Zion” refers to Jerusalem, Zion being a hill in Jerusalem. Jesus’ act is a powerful picture. “Within his own time and culture, his riding on a donkey over the Mount of Olives, across Kidron, and up to the Temple mount spoke more powerfully than words could have done of a royal claim” (Wright 1996: 490). This whole verse is another powerful confirmation of the kingship of Jesus and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Several commentators mention the continuation of the quoted text, Zechariah 9.10, which states: “He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth” (NRSV). The fact that Jesus is sitting on a donkey, not riding a war-horse, and that he will bring peace to the nations, shows what kind of king he is – not the kind that the crowd expects. “In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is seen to consciously enact Zechariah 9.9 and proclaim himself king, but in John, the crowd proclaims him king, and he responds by getting on a donkey.

He accepts their acknowledgment, not as king who will kill to save them, but as king who will die for their salvation” (Brant 2011: 190).

Verse 16

The narrator’s comment brings us to the recurring theme of the disciples (and the Jews in general) not understanding Jesus’ signs or statements (e.g. 8.27; 10.6). Jesus is aware of this and tells them later during the foot washing: “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand” (13.17, NRSV). The narrator gives a similar comment about the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus: “for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead” (20.9, NRSV). What is it that changed the understanding of the disciples? Later in the Gospel, Jesus promises to send the disciples the Spirit after his glorification (chapters 14-16), who will teach them, remind them, and lead them to the truth (14.26; 16.13). It must be the Spirit who helped them realize the fulfillment of scriptural prophecies in Jesus; to be able to understand which prophecies referred to Jesus and to connect them to the specific events in his life, death and resurrection. In this verse, and in other instances in John, Jesus’ glorification refers to his death and resurrection.

Verse 17

This verse reminds us of the events of chapter 11 when many Jews were present with the family of Lazarus when he died and when he was resurrected (11.19; 11.45). This is the crowd that believes because of the sign that they saw, and therefore they testify, the theme of testifying and witnesses being significant in the Gospel of John. It might be unclear from the text what they testify to, but a footnote in NRSV indicates variants in manuscripts which inform us that they testified that Jesus had called Lazarus from the dead. In fact, considering all the confusion of the Jews and the unbelief of the authorities so far, this triumphal entry would be a big surprise, if it was not for the raising of Lazarus. In this Gospel, the great sign of raising a dead person to life has turned the tide in Jesus’ favor. However, this is only for a while, because already in this same chapter the narrator tells us that most did not believe in Jesus, in fulfillment of God’s prophetic word through Isaiah (12.37).

Verse 18

We learn that the crowd which personally saw the raising of Lazarus and the crowd which heard about it join together. However, by the triumphal entry, the reader of John’s Gospel should be aware of the dynamics between Jesus and the crowds. The crowds are volatile, uncommitted in following Jesus. At times they follow him, at times they leave him. For the most part they do not understand

his signs or his statements. They are divided over his identity. At times they want to stone him for blasphemy. In chapter twelve, considering the behavior of the crowd at Jesus' entry, a reader might think that things have changed for good. However, the Passover crowd in Jerusalem will not stand up for Jesus in any way when he is arrested, tried, abused, condemned and crucified. Where is this enthusiastic crowd during the passion of Jesus? It seems that they left him again. Were they afraid of the Jewish authorities, or disappointed by Jesus, or fulfilling scripture?

The word "sign" (Greek *sēmeion*) that appears in this verse is significant in John's Gospel. Of all the miracles and wonders that Jesus did, John chooses seven for his narrative, and calls each one a sign. It is a sign of Jesus' true identity. It is supposed to show and confirm that he is the God-sent Messiah. However, it is also important to note that signs faith is not enough in John's Gospel. To really understand the signs means to grasp the true identity of Jesus, and then come to "mature faith that needs no signs" (Kysar 2007: 101). The reader is supposed to believe without seeing, as stated in the purpose statement of the book: "But these [signs] are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (20.31, NRSV).

Verse 19

The Pharisees were influential Jewish religious leaders in the time of Christ, dedicated to Jewish law (Cohick 2013: 673). Here they are representative of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. They are often mentioned together with chief priests, and their relationship with Jesus is very conflicting and hostile in John's Gospel. Jesus' act is not only subversive to Rome, but also to the Jewish authorities, in the sense that it is against what they want and believe. Far from believing that he is God's chosen king, the Messiah, many of them say that he is not from God (9.16) and that he has an evil spirit (10.20). Majority of the Jewish leadership is against Jesus, but from certain passages we know that some secretly believe in him (12.42; 19.38). The hostility of the chief priests and the Pharisees towards Jesus is evident throughout the Gospel. They try to trick him and look to arrest him. The hostility escalates to the point that they want to kill him, make plans to kill him, and manage to realize them. However, the reader knows that Jesus is in control of laying down his life (10.18).

The end of chapter 11 (vv. 45-57) is important for understanding our text because it explains the stance of Jewish leadership in Jerusalem toward Jesus prior to his entry. Many Jews believed in Jesus because he raised Lazarus to life. The leaders in Jerusalem were concerned because of it, called a meeting, decided to

put Jesus to death, and gave orders for finding and arresting him. The cowardice of the Jewish leaders becomes evident in the text; they are not brave enough to arrest Jesus in public, when the majority of people are with him. They are politically cunning, like many self-serving leaders, in taking down their opponents. They want to arrest him and kill him but they are looking for the best opportunity, where they can get away with killing an innocent person. Their political games will come to the fore again during the trial of Jesus, in their interaction with Pilate. However, John's gospel makes us aware that Jesus is completely in charge of laying down his life and taking it back again (10.18).

The Pharisees' conclusion that the world has gone after Jesus is a hyperbole and confirms that, at the moment, many Jews and some Greeks are following Jesus. This is the first and obvious meaning. However, this expression may have a double meaning. First, John is prone to using ambiguous language (Kysar 2007: 5-6), and this might be another example. The Greek word *kosmos* means both "world" and "universe". Second, John's Gospel has a cosmic setting (Kysar 2007: 7), as Jesus is the pre-existent word. Third, John is prone to people unknowingly prophesying, such as the high priest (Jesus dying for the people, 11.49-52), and maybe even the crowd in our text (that Jesus is the Messiah and the King). So, possibly, this is an unintentional revelatory statement by the Pharisees about Jesus.

Significance of the Text

What people previously in this Gospel's narrative discovered in private, that Jesus is the king of Israel (Nathanael), that he is the Messiah (Samaritan woman), what some people in Jerusalem wondered among themselves ("Is this the Messiah?"), is now revealed in the most public event, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem before the Passover – Jesus is the Messiah, the king of Israel. It shows Jesus' true identity, in accordance with John's main subject and prominent Christology. On the one hand, Jesus' triumphal entry would be quite surprising in the narrative of John's Gospel, if it was not for the raising of Lazarus which excited the crowds. On the other hand, it shows God's sovereignty, as the reader feels that God is orchestrating the fulfillment of scriptures which are quoted in this text. It also confirms Jesus' sovereignty, because he is in control in John's narrative. In a way, through this event, the Father glorifies the Son in front of the nation of Israel and in front of their rulers, before his final glorification, which is his death and resurrection. After being misunderstood and mistreated by his disciples, the crowds, and the Jewish leadership in the course of the Gospel narrative, Jesus finally gets the reception and praise that he truly deserves!

However, Jesus will not be the kind of king that the crowd wants. "Jesus is not the king of Israel expected by the crowd but the Messiah promised by Zechariah" (Moloney 1998: 351). Given the Jewish nationalistic hopes explained in the background section, and the narrator's admission of even the disciples not understanding the event at the time, it is safe to assume that the crowd's expectations were misguided. Jesus "rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to symbolize a conception of messiahship very different from that of the crowds. They hailed Him as the messianic King. He came as the Prince of peace" (Morris 1971: 586). Furthermore, Jesus' act is subversive to Rome and to the Jewish authorities, but it is submissive to God's authority. It is what God the Father wants since Jesus only does what the Father tells him (John 5.19). The Father-Son relationship is very prominent a theme in John's Gospel and Christology.

Conclusions. Continuation of Triumphal Reception

The event of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is celebrated annually in many Christian traditions on the so-called Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday before Easter. The worshipers usually bring palm or native branches to the church services, or carry them in processions as part of liturgical celebrations on that day (see Mershman 1911). What this passage of text celebrates through the crowd and the narrator, that Jesus is the Messiah, the king who brings salvation to the people, is continually celebrated in Christian worship services all over the world. In my opinion, every Christian worship service, particularly the praise and worship part, is a triumphal celebration of Jesus. This is when we welcome him, rejoicing and praising him for his messiahship and kingship, and for the salvation that he enabled for the world. Unlike the Pharisees, with joy we watch the peoples of the world going after him. We continue to proclaim the great triumph and the great truths of this passage: Salvation is here, Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is King, do not be afraid, the world has gone after him.

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