

The Gospel of John is most likely the last written of the four Gospel-accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. This is because it includes the most detailed theological reflection upon what transpires, incorporating elements of Greek Philosophy (the notion of logos (**Word**) as the essential force behind all things) as well as the highly developed metaphorical poetry with which the story is told (such as the repeated contrasts between light and darkness, life and death). The prologue of John is unique among all of the 4 main gospels, directly because of the use of these elements which then shape the way John tells the story and invites us to fathom it and come to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in Christ’s name” (John 20:31)

In the beginning: John begins intentionally quoting and referring back to the first words of the Hebrew Scriptures in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning when God began to create the heavens and the earth....” – John’s gospel story is another look at the origin story of creation and God’s mission in the world.

LIVED AMONG US Verse 14 in the Message translates the text as “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

The next day: the preceding day, recounted in John 12:1-11 tells of Jesus being anointed by Mary during a dinner, most likely to celebrate the resurrection of Lazarus (who was there) and anticipating the Passover.

THE FESTIVAL: the festival of Passover, the primary religious feast – and foundational story – of Judaism. It recalls how God, through Moses, led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, from death to life. Jerusalem, the Jewish capital, would have been teeming with pilgrim tourist come to the Temple to celebrate Passover. Undoubtedly the political tensions would be heightened as the Jews were now oppressed (differently enslaved) by the occupying Roman forces. The city was like a powder keg ready to explode at any minute.

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John 1:1-14

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ *In the beginning* was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. ² **He** was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through **him**, and without **him** not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in **him** was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ **He** was in the world, and the world came into being through **him** yet the world did not know **him**.

¹¹ **He** came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept **him**. ¹² But to all who received **him**, who believed in his name, **he** gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the **Word** became flesh and LIVED AMONG US, and we have seen **his** glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.

John 12:12-19

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹² *The next day* the great crowd that had come to **THE FESTIVAL** heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord— the **King of Israel!**”

¹⁴ **Jesus** found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.
Look, **your king** is coming,
sitting on **a donkey’s colt!**”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸ It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. ¹⁹ The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the *world* has gone after him!”

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What shimmers in your attention in this reading?**
- **The whole entry scene is well-thought out and orchestrated: rich in allusions to scripture and expectations of God’s Anointed-Warrior-King to come and bring freedom and peace. If you were in the crowd, and knew the scriptures of Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9 about the promise of God’s deliverance...how would you see Jesus? What is that guy doing on the donkey? What is his message...then....and for us now?**
- **What connection(s) do you see between John 1 and the story of the Triumphant Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in John 12?**
- **What invitation for living and acting do you hear in this text for our world, life and neighborhoods today?**

Hosanna: a Hebrew term that means, literally, “save, please” or in more formal terms “Save, we pray” It is based on the same root of the word that underlies the names Joshua, Hoseau, and Jesus. More than just an exhortation, is a reference to Psalm 118 a psalm-song that pilgrims would sing as they came to Jerusalem and that Jews would recite on the Passover holiday. It’s a tradition still observed today at Passover and Sukkot (the feast of Tabernacles).

Psalm 118 - A Song of Victory - NRSV

- ¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!
- ² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
- ³ Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
- ⁴ Let those who fear the Lord say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”
- ⁵ Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
- ⁶ With the Lord on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?
- ⁷ The Lord is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
- ⁸ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in mortals.
- ⁹ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.
- ¹⁰ All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- ¹¹ They surrounded me,
surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- ¹² They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed like a fire of thorns;
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- ¹³ I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the Lord helped me.
- ¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
¹⁶ the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.”

MORE NOTES & QUOTED SCRIPTURES:

Psalm 118 (continued....)

17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
18 The Lord has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

19 *Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.*

20 *This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.*

21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 *This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

25 **Save us,** we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

26 **Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

27 The Lord is God,
and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with **branches,**
up to the horns of the altar.

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

29 *O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

In Hebrew it's the word הוֹשִׁיעָה
HOSANNA!

It's this section that is quoted in
John 12:13

Branches of palm trees are used in the ancient (and contemporary) celebration of Sukkot also known as the Festival of "Booths" or "Tabernacles." – The palm reminds us of Psalm 92:12 "The righteous flourish like the palm tree.." and is commanded to be used in Leviticus 23:40 "On the first day [of Sukkot] you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days."

Psalm 118 begins and ends with the same phrase.

Hosanna: a Hebrew term that means, literally, "save, please" or in more formal terms "Save, we pray" It is based on the same root of the word that underlies the names Joshua, Hoseau, and Jesus. More than just an exhortation, is a reference to Psalm 118 a psalm-song that pilgrims would sing as they came to Jerusalem and that Jews would recite on the Passover holiday. It's a tradition still observed today at Passover and Sukkot (the feast of Tabernacles).

Jesus: in Hebrew **Yeshua**, it comes from the root word meaning to save, be triumphant, to deliver, or to be righteous – to be good in the widest, most Biblical idea of the word. The name **Jesus** literally means “**God [YHWH] saves!**” or “**God will deliver us!**”

your king.. coming.. a donkey's colt: verse 15 is a direct quote of Zechariah 9:9 the beginning of a poetic/prophetic section about how God will send a promised King (or “*annointed one*” [“*Messiah*” in Hebrew or “*Christ*” in Greek] to deliver Israel, the people of God, from their oppressors, giving them freedom and life. Kings in ancient Israel rode on donkeys (not horses – which were used for war by foreign powers).

Here's the whole section of Zechariah 9:9-17 in the Message Translation

9-10 “Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!
Raise the roof, Daughter Jerusalem!
Your king is coming!
a **good king** who makes all things right,
a **humble king riding a donkey**,
a mere colt of a donkey.
I've had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim,
no more war horses in Jerusalem,
no more swords and spears, bows and arrows.
He will offer peace to the nations,
a peaceful rule worldwide,
from the four winds to the seven seas.

11-13 “And you, because of my blood covenant with you,
I'll release your prisoners from their hopeless cells.
Come home, hope-filled prisoners!
This very day I'm declaring a double bonus—
everything you lost returned twice-over!
Judah is now my weapon, the bow I'll pull,
setting Ephraim as an arrow to the string.
I'll wake up your sons, O Zion,
to counter your sons, O Greece.
From now on people are my swords.”

14-17 Then God will come into view,
his arrows flashing like lightning!
Master God will blast his trumpet
and set out in a whirlwind.
God-of-the-Angel-Armies will protect them— all-out war,
The war to end all wars, no holds barred.
Their God will save the day. He'll rescue them.
They'll become like sheep, gentle and soft,
Or like gemstones in a crown,
catching all the colors of the sun.
Then how they'll shine! shimmer! glow!
the young men robust, the young women lovely!

The Hebrew word is נָקִי meaning **triumphant, victorious righteous**, as in having the mind and purpose of God. It's the base of the name Jesus/Yeshua. It also can be translated as “humble” or “lowly” – not in the sense of passivity or smallness, but in the sense of **being able to listen to others, to share resources, to lead well: to prioritize community.**

It's underneath the world-transforming vision of the beatitude in Matthew 5:5

“Blessed are the **humble**, for they will inherit the earth.”