

HOSANNA!!!

Come save us/ We praise You

“*Hosanna*” is a liturgical word in both Judaism and the Christian faith. In Judaism it refers to “a cry expressing an appeal for divine help from the one and only true God.” In Christianity, its meaning has changed for all believers in Jesus as it is now used as “an expression of praise for all that Jesus has done.” Yes, things have changed – even the words we speak, as well as their meaning.

We know that we learn of the usage of the word “*hosanna*” as it was shouted out by the multitude of Jewish people as Jesus made His way into Jerusalem on that day known to all believers as “Palm Sunday” or to many, it is known as “Passion Sunday.” Why were the Jewish people shouting this word out at that time? What does it mean for the believer in today’s world? Let’s see....

The etymology of the word “*hosanna*” is as follows: We must remember that the first re-writings of the New Testament were first written in Latin. This is what first circulated to the world. That was sometime between 500 AD – 1300 AD. The word “*hosanna*” is actually from the original ancient Greek texts (hōsanná) in which the Gospels were originally written.

As the Bible, especially the New Testament, was written, we see that it was originally written in Greek which was the prevailing language of the Roman Empire. It was the common language of the Empire. People would speak their own language but they knew Greek to be able to communicate with all the people. Therefore, the writings of the New Testament were written mainly in Greek so that everyone would be able to read it and come to know more about Jesus and being a child of God.

The language actually spoken by the people in the region of Israel in “Gospel times” was most likely Aramaic and Hebrew. The word “*hosanna*” was translated from its original language, Aramaic אֲשַׁמְעֵנָה/רְצוּנָה (’ōsha’nā) and/or from the original Biblical Hebrew עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ (hōsha’ nā) “please save” into the Greek where we see the word that we now have in our Bibles - “*hosanna*.”

“*Hosanna*” is often translated “*Please Save Us*.” It is a Greek word “ὡσαννά” that most scholars believe is the transliteration of, as just mentioned, the two Hebrew words: עֲשֵׂה - “*yasha*,” which means “to save or deliver” and אֲנָהּ - “*anna*,” which means “please, I beseech.” It is many times written as “*hoshanna*.” Some scholars believe that, although it is Hebrew, it may come from a different verb tense of “*yasha*” עֲשֵׂה which could mean, “to cause or to bring about salvation.” In this tense, “*hoshanna*” becomes a command to bring about or “cause our salvation” instead of a plea for help. In any case, it is still a desire and call for help.

It is one of a very few instances where we see an actual word of the people that was spoken at that time, in their language, written in the Biblical account. This makes it very special for us as we read it. It was not changed into any other language. It remains in the Biblical accounts from that very specific time. Hmmm.....

Psalm 118:25 contains the Hebrew root words, which translates into the English words, “*Save us, O LORD!*” The original Hebrew words, “*yasha*” (deliver, save) and “*anna*” (beg, beseech) are combined, which literally means, “I beg you to save!” or “Please deliver us!” Believers erroneously had always assumed that “*hosanna*” was always a Jewish word of praise to their God. Unfortunately, they were incorrect.

In the Old Testament, in Psalm 118:25, the idea was that it was more of “an urgent cry for help” that would, in context, lead the nation of Israel to prosper with the help of God and to not be destroyed. That was how they used this word “*yasha-anna*” or “*hoshanna*” when Jesus entered Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday. The Jewish people were looking to Jesus as their Messiah who would come and deliver them, not from their sin, but rather from the Romans. It was an urgent “cry for help” to save them from Roman rule.

Whether they were commanding or they were begging, either one, they were calling for this man Jesus, who they believed could be their Messiah, to come and save them from the Romans. We must remember that their cry was to be saved from the Romans. This was not what Jesus really came to do. He came to save the world from their sin as well as the grips of Satan over their lives. This was something that many of the Jewish people could not grasp and really understand. Unfortunately, they erroneously thought they were spiritually okay. It was the natural realm that they felt they needed the help of the Messiah to change.

We must remember that this day that Jesus came into Jerusalem was not any specific "feast day." It was a day that Jesus simply made His way into Jerusalem and then to the Temple. However, it was prophesied that this day would come and that the people would shout out to God for help as seen in Psalm 118:25. There were many people who came from all over to Jerusalem for Passover because it was one of the three major feast days that the Jewish people were required to go to the Temple and worship their God.

We see that "*hosanna*," even though it comes from a Jewish word, only occurs in the New Testament 6 times in the way we know it, today. Matthew, Mark, and John mention that the Jewish people cried out "*Hosanna...*" (in Hebrew – "*yasha anna*" or "*hoshanna*") to Jesus as He made His "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem on the first day of the week just prior to Passover and ultimately His crucifixion. We read this in Matthew, Mark and John.

Matthew 21:9 - "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11:9-10 - "And those who went before 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!'"

John 12:13 - "So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'"

The Jewish people who were celebrating Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem were quoting Psalm 118:25-26, "*Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!*" The phrase "*Save us, we pray*" in Hebrew sounds like "*Hoshanna*." They were really shouting out "*yasha anna*," come save us from the Romans. They were crying out to Jesus, yes in worship, however it was more in the way that they were crying out to Him to come save them from the tyranny of the Romans and their tyrannical rule over the Jewish people.

"*Hosanna*" comes from two roots: *yasha* and *anna*. "*Yasha*" stands for delivers, and "*anna*" means please. In essence, the word boils down to: "Please, save us, our deliverer." The Israelites wanted salvation from Roman rule and the Roman army. They had seen God conquer their enemies in the past. Even though the Babylonians took them captive, when the Babylonians fell to the Persian Empire, the Persians under God's influence, caused the Israelites to return back home to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple and their city.

When Antiochus Epiphanes IV, a Greek king of the Seleucid Empire who reigned over Syria from 175 BC until 164 BC, tried to "Hellenize" the Israelites, the Maccabees cried out to God. They rose up against them and drove them out of Israel. Unfortunately, the Jewish people let down their guard, again, and they were aptly conquered again – now by the Romans. Unfortunately, this happened time and time again to the Hebrew people. Unfortunately, it happens time and time again in our lives. Hmmm....

Now, the Jewish people wanted to see the same thing happen with the Rome. They were crying out for God to send them a man who would come and conquer the Romans and drive them out. They thought it would be Jesus. Jesus did come to defeat an enemy, but not quite the one they had in mind. Jesus knew the ultimate enemy, sin, had enslaved them far more than the Roman occupation in Israel ever could.

Rome would fall a few centuries later. Jesus, however, needed to face and overcome the ultimate enemy that truly separated God's people from Him – sin. That was, and is, a much greater enemy to man than any nation. Jesus needed to overcome the devil's hold over man – the sinful nature.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowds were perfectly correct in shouting "*Hosanna!*" They were acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, as shown in their address to Him, "Son of David." Theirs was a cry for salvation and a recognition that Jesus is able to save. In saying, "*Hosanna,*" the people were crying out for salvation, and that's exactly why Jesus had come.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday, the people expected the conquering Messiah who would restore political power to the Jewish people and set up His kingdom to enter the city. John MacArthur wrote, "They thought the kingdom was coming. Jesus knew judgment was coming. The people thought they would crown Him King. Jesus knew they would soon call out to kill him."

It was not the true salvation that they were looking for. They were looking for earthly salvation. Jesus came to give us all eternal salvation. Within a week, Jesus would be hanging on a cross and then rising from the dead three days later. However, that was not the salvation that they thought they needed.

In the Jewish faith, "*Hoshanna*" is an expression often used during the holiday of Sukkot, which we know and call the "Feast of Tabernacles" as described in Leviticus 23:33-43. This is the seventh and final feast day of the Jewish spiritual calendar. The Jewish people build temporary shelters and celebrate the holiday with branches called the "lulav" and "etrog" from palms, willows, other leafy trees and citrons.

"My Jewish Learning" which is a Jewish website, explains that during Sukkot the Psalms of Praise (Hallel), which are Psalms 113-118, are read and "additional prayers" are included in the service asking God to "save us" (*hoshanna*). During the "Hoshanna prayers," congregants march around the synagogue sanctuary holding the lulav and etrog. The seventh and last day of the festival is called "Hoshanah Rabba," the "*Great Hoshanna.*" It is symbolic of the final times when we ultimately will be with the Lord

So we can see that this whole idea of declaring "*hoshanna*" reveals a time of great hope because salvation may now be possible through this man - Jesus. The people in Jerusalem greeted Jesus as their Messiah by crying out "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*" Their hope of salvation and freedom had come to them - but not in the way they thought.

The Jews didn't grasp how their Old Testament Scriptures pointed to Jesus as a Savior, Prophet, High Priest and King. Basically, Jesus surprised His people. Instead of attacking the hated Romans, He attacked the Pharisees and Sadducees. He pointed out the religious apostasy within the nation and its leaders. Some believed and some did not. Some accepted Him but most rejected Him.

Today the cries of "*Hosanna*" have changed from crying out for salvation to the understanding of shouting out a great big thank you unto Jesus for opening the door of salvation to anyone who would believe in Him. We thank Him for the salvation that He has given us. We thank Him for everything He did on the cross and in the pit of hell. Most importantly we thank Jesus for rising from the dead. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father waiting to return to the earth and taking His throne on the Temple mount. Praise God!!!

John Piper wrote that because of this "shift" from begging for help to that of recognizing that God would send help and that He did send help, the word "*hosanna*" changed and came to mean, "Hooray for salvation! It's coming! It's here! Salvation! Salvation!" It is a personal, joy-filled exclamation of confidence in God and praise for His provision.

We understand that our mindset has now changed from that of declaring “cries for salvation,” to now “praises for our salvation!” Those from whose lips “*Hosanna*” rose that day and looked on Jesus as God’s anointed one, from the house of David of whom the prophets had spoken and through whom they hoped that all their messianic expectations would be fulfilled, had come. Yes, that was true. However, it was even in a greater way than they ever expected. He came to save all of us from our sin. Believing in all that He did, we can now have eternal life. Praise God!!!

What was the role of the Messiah? What did the people expect Jesus to do as they proclaimed “Messiah?” The fact of the matter is that, in Jewish thought, the role of Messiah, even though he was to be sent from God they did not believe that he would actually be God. That is where the Jewish people today are. They truly believe that Jesus could not be their Messiah because He did not set them free from the Romans.

That was what they believed the true Messiah would do. They believed that their Messiah would be a very holy person who was called and chosen by God to set them free from the Romans and even today they believe that the real Messiah will come and set the Jewish people totally free from all their political turmoil.

They believe that the Messiah is going to be a totally human person who would be called by God to lead them into total bliss and happiness as a nation. That is what the Jewish people are truly looking for today just as they were in the time of Jesus. They missed it – both then and now!!! However many are hearing the truth in this hour and they are starting to accept the truth.

Jesus did not come His first time on this earth to set the Jewish people free from the political trials with the Romans. Rather, Jesus came to set us all free from the bondage of our sin and its root cause in causing all of mankind to be separated from their God. The real enemy was not the Romans, nor any other natural or physical enemy. The real enemy is satan and his forces of darkness that permeate this earth in these days. The real enemy is that we are separated from God. We all need a Savior and He must be the Lord of all!!!

The meaning of the word “*hosanna*” has changed for believers over the years since Jesus came and died on the cross and then rose from the dead. We proclaim “*hosanna*” now as a word that declares that Jesus did come and save us. It is no longer a cry of desperation for the true believer but rather it has changed its meaning for the true believer. It means that God did come and save us. Now, it reflects a shout of praise with great joy for all that Jesus has done. We now come together to thank and praise the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit for all that they have done and are continuing to do.

Yes, we can say the meaning has changed for the true believer. The word “*Hosanna*” or shall we say, “*Hoshanna*,” is still a Jewish word that is a cry to be saved from their enemies. However, the real enemy for both the Jewish people and the Gentile people is separation from their God. Jesus came over 2000 years ago to give us the opportunity to believe in Him as not only our Savior, our Prophet, our High Priest and our King, but He is also to be our Lord – the absolute, supreme and final authority in our lives. Yes, Jesus is Lord in the life of the person who believes in Him. However, He is also the Lord over everything and everyone else whether they realize it, or they know it, or they believe it or not.

Yes, Jesus is Lord of all - to the glory of God, the Father!!!