

Palm Sunday April 5th, 2009

1). Near the end of the three years of Jesus' earthly ministry, we read about an event that occurs just days before His crucifixion. In the Scripture passage we will be reading and focusing on, we see the events of a day which we now call "Palm Sunday," because of the palm branches that were placed on the ground. This event is sometimes known as the 'Triumphal Entry.'

Let's read about the event—

Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. 3 "And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." 4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Meek, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" 6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. 8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" 10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" 11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

- We can see that this passage is undeniably *Messianic* in its scope. Palm branches are symbolic of victory and not only do we see them mentioned here, but we see them again in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation-
Revelation 7:9
After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands...
 - The palm branches appear here, symbolizing victory, in relation to the Tribulation saints at the conclusion to their sufferings, and just prior to the institution of the Kingdom of God.
- And going back to the events recorded concerning the first Palm Sunday, we cannot and should not miss the Messianic language being spoken by the crowd, 'Hosanna to the Son of David'

- The word “Hosanna” literally means, ‘save now.’
- And the name ‘Son of David’ should immediately take us back to that which was spoken by Nathan the prophet to King David back in—

2Samuel 7:12-14, 19

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. 19...for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future...

2). The picture is clear – We have Jesus, the Christ (meaning ‘the Anointed’), Son of the Living God, the greater Son of David, King of the Jews entering the city of God, having come to His own things. The parallel with Solomon (whose kingdom foreshadows the Millennial kingdom) is unmistakable, and the parallel would not have been lost on the crowd—

1Kings 1:33

The king also said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon. 34 "There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!'

- Christ’s position as King over Israel, according to scripture, was never in doubt.

John 1:11

He came to His own, (literally ‘own things,’ that being the throne of David) and His own (literally ‘people,’ the nation of Israel) did not receive Him.

- Concerning Jesus’ position, witness the Wise Men at the time of His birth –

Matthew 2:2

...saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

- And concerning His position, consider the words of Jesus Himself –

Matthew 27:11

Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" So Jesus said to him, "It is as you say."

- And even concerning His death, His position is made known—

Matthew 27:37

And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

3). However, going back to what was recorded in our introductory Scripture passage, let’s please remember that the event recorded in Matthew 21 does not happen in a vacuum. It

comes within the context of what has happened before this event and what will happen after it. And as we see it within its context, we will discover that it offers great spiritual truth.

- Although Christ's entry into Jerusalem afforded the nation of Israel yet another opportunity to come to repentance (and it was a real opportunity to turn back to God) we must also see this event within the context of prophecy, that it was inevitably leading *not* to the repentance and restoration of Israel, but to the suffering and death of the One who was born their King.

- Remember again the Road to Emmaus in—

Luke 24:25

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

- The prophets had already spoken the unalterable word of God which clearly shows that Christ must first suffer and then to enter into His glory.

- We can see that this predetermined end for the Christ—rejection, suffering, death, glory, *and then acceptance* by His own people—is not only spoken in word, but also in the types.

- Remember the type of Joseph, who was rejected by his brothers and not recognized by them until their second meeting in the land of Egypt.
- And you'll remember Moses, who was rejected by his Jewish brothers and did not bring deliverance until he came a second time.
- And of course the foundational type of Cain and Abel. The brother of the flesh who murders the brother of the spirit.

- We will also need to call to mind the events recorded in Matthew Chapter 12 –

Matthew 12:24, 32

Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

[And Jesus replied to them].....32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

- In effect, this is the point at which the Kingdom of the heavens is taken from the nation.

4). Zechariah 9:9 is quoted in the Matthew passage we began with this morning, and the fulfillment of this passage is also within the scope of the context.

- In Zechariah, the prophecy is written this way –

Zechariah 9:9

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

- The word for 'lowly' is the Hebrew word *aniy*, which means 'poor or afflicted.'
- In the King James Version of the Bible, the Zechariah prophecy in Matthew 21 is written this way –
Matthew 21:5
Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- The Greek word for 'meek' is *praus*, which means 'gentle, humble, or unassuming.'

5). So then, what is in view here with the picture of Jesus being lowly, humble, and poor as He comes into the great city of Jerusalem for His people?

2Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

- Concerning the idea of the word 'afflicted,' we see sufferings recorded –
Isaiah 53:3-5
He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.
- And it is with this in view that He enters Jerusalem.

6). Christ entering Jerusalem as King is beyond dispute, but He did not enter with the character of regality, but with the attributes of the suffering servant. Notice how the King, who has come to His own things, is treated--

Matthew 27:28-30

And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.

- The mockery that is made of His regality is quite shocking. Why would the One 'born King of the Jews' accept this? Our answer can be found in—

John 18:36

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

And—

Hebrews 12:2

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- This entry into the great city of Jerusalem was not the time for Him to take the scepter of rulership. The time for the establishment of His Kingdom, that promised to David in 2 Samuel 7, remained *and still remains* yet future. The events we have read about in Matthew 21 happened during the times of His suffering and humiliation, set during the period of time know as the Times of the Gentiles, when the Gentile nations would wield the scepter within the present system of the god of this world. Not only did the times of His sufferings have to be fulfilled in time past, (*cf.* Isaiah 53 + Luke 24) but the Times of the Gentiles, which yet continues, must be fulfilled as well before Christ can come into His glory.
- Here, at this His first coming, Christ remained in complete accord with His 'meek'/'lowly' entrance into Jerusalem, being completely gentle, humble and unassuming, while being persecuted unjustly within the Gentile power structure of His day.
- However, the Day is coming when He will return in a manner completely different to that seen in Matthew 21 –

Revelation 19:11

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
- In this future Day, the words gentle, humble and unassuming will not be relevant. Rather, His character will be defined by that given in –

Psalms 2:9

You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."

And—

Daniel 2:34-35

34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

7). Now, having said all of that, let's find the spiritual truth for us in all of this.

- Firstly, let's draw attention to the following verses—

Colossians 1:12

...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

And--

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus...

- Our calling, the Christians' calling, is to be that Day yet future when Christ will establish His Kingdom, after the fashion described to us in Psalm 2:9, Daniel 2:34-35 and Revelation 19:11-13. This is our calling and it is to be our focus *continually*.
- Jesus advises us on how we are to do this-
Matthew 16:24
Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
- He also told us –
John 14:6
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- Christ is our model and our pattern. He has shown us the way and we are to follow Him by following His example. In the light of our subject this morning, this would be particularly with a view to our present conduct within the present world system.

8). As Christians we are not to hold the scepter of regality today; rather, we are to adopt the same position with regards to world government as Christ adopted. We are to patiently endure the trials and testings of life in a gentle, humble and unassuming way.

- And if necessary, we are to continue in this way through any unjust treatment that God may allow to befall us, as we look forward to another Day when Christians with Christ will rule the nations.

1Peter 4:12-13

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings (Present), that when His glory is revealed (Future), you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

And—

2Timothy 2:12a

If we endure (Present), we shall also reign with Him (Future).

And—

1Peter 4:1

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...

And—

Acts 14:22

...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

9). Let us be encouraged in this, and be encouraged to continue in the faith, keeping our eyes on the prize. And let us note what is recorded in respect of the overcoming Christian in the Lord's words recorded in Revelation 2—

Revelation 2:26-27

"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- 27 'He (The overcoming Christian) shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father;

- These are exactly the same words used of Christ in Psalm 2:9, used here to show how that the coheirs of Christ will share the same character as Christ in relationship to the rulership of the earth in the Kingdom which is to come.
- If we are to have the same character as Christ in that future day, it must logically follow that we should also have the same character as He had at His first coming during our present day. Do you remember the instruction given by the Lord to His disciples *in respect of Kingdom living* in what we call The Sermon on the Mount?

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek (Present), for they shall inherit the earth. (Future)

- Isn't this exactly what Scripture teaches us throughout? And note—

Romans 8:17

...and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

10). So as we remember our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, let us receive the truth that it teaches us... and let us determine to apply this truth to our lives.

James 1:22

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.