

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY
Matthew 21:1-16

Intro: This amazing event, our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, has been remembered by the professing church on the Sunday immediately preceding Easter Sunday. That is where we are today! The Lord had entered into the last week of His life on earth prior to His crucifixion, and a remarkable change took place here in comparison with what He had done before. Previously He had avoided any attempt to make Him prominent in the eyes of the general public. He had, of course, been in the public eye for some three years, but He always shunned publicity. The Apostle John told of a time when the people were in the mood to make Him King (John 6:14, 15), but, when they did, "he departed again into a mountain himself alone."

But at this point He even planned the event which would throw Him into public view in such a way that "all the city was moved" (Matt. 21:10). Campbell Morgan pointed out in his message on this passage that the Greek verb translated "was moved" is the verb from which we get our word, seismic. We all should know that a seismograph is an instrument used to measure the motion and intensity of earthquakes. So what Matthew was saying here was that what the Lord did affected Jerusalem mentally and emotionally like an earthquake. The city was shaken from one end to another, shaken to its very foundation.. Nothing had happened recently that had caused such a commotion as this! And it had all been initiated by our Lord!

But why would we call it, TRIUMPHAL?

I do not know who was first responsible for using this word, but I can imagine that it was used because of the manner in which the Lord rode into the city (as a victorious King, coming in humility, and yet in peace), and also because of the huge crowd that made the city ring with the words of Psalm 118 (v. 9)--one of the Psalms that was used each year at the Feast of Tabernacles.

But, humanly speaking, it was no triumph. We might rather call it, THE TRAGIC ENTRY. Luke tells us that it was in connection with this spectacular event that our Lord "wept over" the city (Luke 19:41). He certainly did not feel that it was a moment of triumph for Him, but rather an event which was all a part of the most tragic event in all of the history of Israel--the rejection of her Messiah and King!

And yet, viewed in another way, it was a TRIUMPH--a triumph for the purposes of God, a triumph for the Word of God. The Lord Jesus was clearly in charge, acting boldly like no mere man would dared to have acted, leaving the people who were in Jerusalem, gathered from all of Israel, without excuse!

But let me survey the passage with you, and then make some comments on it afterwards.

The first seven verses give us

I. THE PREPARATION (for it) BY THE LORD (Matt. 21:1-7).

Incidentally, this account in the life of our Lord was recorded also in Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-16.

The Lord initiated it all. He was in completed control. The disciples did what He told them to do. The donkey was there, and they were able to bring it. And Matthew said that this was all in accord with the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9).

Next we see

II. THE PROCESSION OF THE MULTITUDE (Matt. 21:8-11).

Luke recorded that this was "the whole multitude of the disciples" (Luke 19:37). Probably most of these were from Galilee where the Lord had done so many of His miracles, but they would have been joined by others in Jerusalem when all of the excitement started.

They cried out a portion of Psalm 118, verse 26. "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Originally this was a prayer; they were using it to praise. Hosanna means, Save, we pray! It was taken from Psa. 118:25 where we read, "Save not, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."

But you will notice how, for the second time, the Word of God was prominent in what was happening. In addition they said, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. 21:11).

It did indeed seem like a final triumph for our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, this was to lead to other things which would finally result in the death of our Lord. There are four things to note in verses 12-16, a section which we can call,

III. THE PUBLICITY OF OUR LORD (Matt. 21:12-16).

The first thing that the Lord did which would stir up all kinds of trouble for Him was

A. The cleansing of the Temple (vv. 12, 13).

For the third time we have a reference to the Word-- this time, by the Lord: Isa. 56:7.

Money-making, business for profit, had become an accepted thing in the Temple. The worship of God had been perverted. And it was fully supported by the religious leaders of the day. And, is it not interesting that, when something was introduced contrary to the Word of God, the original plan and purpose of God was forgotten? The people were being robbed; the Lord was not being sought.

What would the Lord do in our churches today? Just in the past two weeks I heard of a lady who was turned away from a church counselling service because she had not paid her bill! What does the Lord think of that?

This action by our Lord must have rocked the Temple area as much as His procession had rocked the City!

Secondly,

B. The healing of the sick (v. 14).

Note: "The blind and the lame" did not come primarily into the Temple, but they "came to him in the temple."

And thus we see that there were more credentials of our Lord's Deity. "And he healed them."

It would be hard to object to this, and certainly no one could deny what was happening. There had never been a day like this in the Temple before.

And then a very wonderful thing happened:

C. The singing of the children (v. 15).

Children are usually oblivious of tense situations. And so they continued in the Temple with that which had gone on outside of the Temple. They continued to praise the Lord with this petition.

This was more than "the chief priests and the scribes" could take. And so our text concludes with

D. The objection of the chief priests and scribes (vv. 15, 16).

And again the Lord answered with the Word of God, rebuking them for their failure to read the Scriptures.

Undoubtedly they had read Isaiah's prophecy, but they had not really paid attention to what it said.

I hope that during this week you will take the time to read again the Gospel records concerning what happened after this in the life of our Lord during that last week before He was crucified. It is the most amazing story ever written!

Concl: But what, now, can we learn from these verses that will be especially helpful to us?

Pre-eminently we see

- 1) The sovereign, royal, divine authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This account shows how easily He could have turned things in the opposite direction, if this had been His will and the will of God. From His entry into the city to the singing of the children, He was clearly in charge, and He was the center of all that was going on.

Never, never, in your reading and hearing of the Scriptures, can you afford to lose sight of the grandeur and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is a second thing:

- 2) The importance, and the truthfulness, of the Word of God.

We have no less than four references to the Scriptures in these sixteen verses: two from the Psalms, and two from the prophets--one from Isaiah, and the other from Zechariah.

And four things stand out in these four quotations:

- a) From v. 5 we learn that the Scriptures give us our only reliable authority for knowing what to expect in the future.
- b) From v. 9 we learn that the Scriptures will teach us how to worship and to praise the Lord. The Scriptures teach us how to pray.
- c) From verses 12 and 13 we see that the Scriptures teach us how to do the work of the Lord.
- d) From v. 16 we learn from the Scriptures about the ways of the Lord. Instead of silencing our children, it often will pay us to listen to their simple devotion to the Lord Jesus.

Let me ask you this morning, Just how important is the Word of God to you? You may read it, but do you really notice what it has to say?

There is much more that could be said, but let me conclude with one other very important lesson. We have in these verses

3) An indictment of the human heart.

And for this I ask you to look at two groups in this story-- one large group, the other, comparatively, a small group:

a) The crowd.

And there are two things I want you to note about this crowd.

(1) Their mistaken idea about salvation.

What was, and is, the right idea?

(2) The superficial nature of their praise.

It is very, very likely that many of these people were among those who just a few days later were crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him. We have no king but Caesar."

The Lord was not deceived by the crowd, but they were deceived about themselves, and it is easy for us to be deceived in the same way. Cf. Jer. 17:9.

Let us beware. How genuine is our professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

But then look at

b) The chief priests and the scribes.

Their objection to the Lord about the children, and about everything else that had taken place that day, was justified IF our Lord were not "the King." IF He were not "the Son of David," the Messiah, IF He had not come in the name of the Lord, IF He were not "the prophet," IF the Temple were not His "house." BUT WHAT IF THESE THINGS WERE TRUE?

Another series of miracles had been performed right before their eyes, but they were blind to them. They must have known that their money-changing was wrong, and that the people did not like it. But still they refused to listen to what was taking place before them.

You and I can say, "How could they be so deaf and blind to what was going on before their very eyes?" And yet, what about us? HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE THERE WHO THROUGH THIS EASTER SEASON WILL HEAR THE STORY OF THE TRIALS, THE SUFFERINGS, AND THE DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YET WILL PASS IT OFF LIKE SOME INSIGNIFICANT EVENT IN THE MORNING NEWS?

Multiplied millions of people are already in hell because they never took the time to consider the evidence, the overwhelming evidence, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that it is only through His death and His resurrection that people in any generation can escape hell and be assured of heaven.

There are plenty of religious leaders today who are laying up great treasure on earth, who have nothing awaiting them in heaven. And there are millions of people who are willing to let things go as they are, never stopping to realize that, in so doing, they are agreeing to the eternal damnation of their own souls.

Let me plead with you today to listen to the Word of God. This story is here to warn us that this very thing is going on today. People are glad to give at least one day in the year to show some respect for Jesus Christ, but, when the day is over, you realize (and they can, too) that Jesus Christ really does not mean anything to them.

Oh, make sure that you know Him, that you are trusting Him, that your hope is not in a church, nor in some religious system which may be as corrupt as hell itself. Today, hear His voice. Do not continue to harden your heart. Put your faith in the sacrificial death of the only One Who can save you from the punishment you so truly deserve. Christ is our only Hope!