

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

By

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

“ART THOU HE that should come, or do we look for another?”

Questions like this lie heavily on the hearts of many whose intentions, in other respects, are honest and sincere. “Is He the Lord from heaven? Is He the King of Israel?” “No!” is the response of an apostatizing world; and, alas! the lamentable condition of His Church on earth seems only to confirm this negative assertion.

For:

- If He fills the throne of omnipotence and glory, *why do the people rage?*
- If He governs all things, *why does Satan so frequently triumph?*
- If His arm reaches from heaven to earth, *why does He not close the mouths of blasphemers?*
- If He wields the sword of divine justice, *why does He not immolate those who defy Him and lay waste His vineyard?*
- If all power is at His command, *why does He not compel, by signs and wonders, the glory which is His due? And*
- If He only need put forth His breath to reanimate the dead and refresh the wilderness, *why have not the wastes of the heathen world long ago flourished, and the deserts blossomed as the rose?*

O how often do these and similar questions urge themselves even upon believers; and how inclined they are to doubt whether He is that which they think Him to be!

But doubt is the worst enemy to peace; and hence nothing is more acceptable to those who are sincere than that which disables and destroys the former. To such, the narrative of our Lord’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem will be, therefore, extremely welcome, all things, and that His eternal Father would grant such a power with His words that, as He expressly says, the owner would “**straightway**” send them.

Oh, let us revive from our state of despondency by the consideration of our Lord’s self-consciousness, as here manifested, which substantiates His superhuman glory.

The ass's colt is led away with its parent. The disciples lay their garments upon it as a covering, and the Lord seats Himself upon the animal in order to ride into Jerusalem. This seems a trifling feature in the case, and scarcely worthy of notice; but look a little deeper, and its importance will increase.

Our Lord by this act, testifies something infinitely greater respecting Himself than would have been the case had He suddenly placed Himself upon a royal throne, or had made His entry into the Holy City beneath a gilded canopy, and arrayed in a purple robe.

It is evident, and the Scriptures expressly inform us, that our Lord had in view, at that moment, an ancient divine prophecy. You will read it in Zechariah 9:8, 9. The Lord there says - predicting the future - **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”**

This is a delightful prediction, at which the whole world of sinners ought to rejoice.

It is a gracious star of hope in the hemisphere of the Old Testament, greeted for centuries by the saints of God with tears of ardent longing. More than four hundred years had elapsed after these words had been uttered, when, on the summit of the Mount of Olives, the Man of Nazareth appears, and calls to mind this ancient prophecy. On the point of approaching Jerusalem, He orders an ass and its colt to be brought Him, seats Himself upon one of them, and publicly enters Jerusalem upon it, in the presence of assembled multitudes.

But what does He testify by this mute but significant action?

- What else than that the prophet's words are being fulfilled in His own person?
- What else than that He is the promised King of glory, just, and having salvation, and bringing peace to His people?
- What else than as if He had said, “It is I, whose dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth? It is I; therefore rejoice, O daughter of Zion! and shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!”

Yes, He announces this as loudly as with a voice of thunder.

No other meaning can lie at the bottom of that scene. If JESUS were not the promised King of Peace, with what epithet should we be compelled to designate that act? But He knew what He did, and how far He was justified in it; and hence, in His entry into Jerusalem, we have a new, powerful, and actual proof that Christ was the true Messiah announced by the prophets, and at the same time, the only-begotten Son of the Father, our Mediator, and eternal High Priest.

The passage on which we are meditating has never been sufficiently appreciated from this point of view.

The disciples, and even many of the people after this event, had no doubt whatever that He was no other than the mighty Prince of Peace so long before predicted. Observe how He is attended.

A more than regal entry is prepared for Him. The people cast their garments in the way, bestrew the road with verdure, and precede and follow Him with palm-branches in their hands, as in a triumphal procession, and there is no end to their exulting hosannas. "**Hail,**" they cry, "**to the Son of David! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**"

Only think of such homage being paid to a simple individual, devoid of all regal insignia! But it explains itself. The rider on the lowly beast of burden was seen, in part at least, by the ancient prophets, surrounded by this homage.

It could not fail that Zechariah, in particular, whose prophetic vision of the King of Glory enabled him to describe the scene as minutely as if he had really witnessed it, fully dispelled from their minds any remains of obscurity, which might still envelop the person of Him who was thus entering Jerusalem. But that which elevated their ideas of Him to perfect certainty was the stupendous miracle which He had performed at Bethany, in raising Lazarus from the dead. After such an occurrence, how could they be silent, or cease exultingly to exclaim, "**Hosanna to the Son of David!**"

The Pharisees heard the rejoicing with secret indignation, and morosely said to Him who was thus applauded, "**Master, rebuke thy disciples.**" But why did not they rebuke the rejoicing multitude themselves? Why did they not accuse them of being under a delusion? Why did they not adduce proof that the raising of Lazarus was only a tale, as well as that one born blind had been restored to sight by Him?

O had they been able to do so they certainly would not have refrained! But this was out of their power. The facts were too generally known and acknowledged. In despair, therefore, they ask the Master Himself to rebuke His followers. O how does this significant trait tend also to strengthen our faith!

But does the Saviour comply with their wishes, and reprove the enthusiastic crowd? On the contrary, He rides on, surrounded by a thousand hosannas; thus letting the ancient prophecy of Zechariah develop itself in all its aspects in His procession, and calmly receives the homage as His due, while remarking to the Pharisees, "**I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.**"

My friends, what more can you desire? Nothing under heaven is more fully proved than that the Lord JESUS knew Himself to be the God-man, who had been promised and expected for thousands of years; and this is in itself a sufficient weapon for us victoriously to repel and overthrow all objections which might be raised against our belief in Him.

The whole scene of the entrance of JESUS into Jerusalem has both its typical and prophetic side. The progress of our Lord, so destitute of pomp, neither clothed in purple, nor on a gayly caparisoned war-horse, nor accompanied by ribboned magnates or dignitaries, but in the simplest attire, on the foal of an ass, and surrounded by poor fishermen and trades-people, gives us a hint in what manner Christ, for centuries together, will manifest Himself on earth until His second coming.

And the expressly quoted, and now accomplished prophecy of Zechariah, confirms and attests this, in the words, "**Behold, thy king cometh unto thee lowly**" - a word which implies at the same time the idea of an entire absence of display, pomp, and dignity; and this is the attribute which is peculiar to His government to this hour.

"But where do we discover Him?"

O descend into the basements of human society; become initiated into the privacy of experimental religion in the cottage; listen to the narratives of "the quiet in the land." Read the missionary records, which, like Noah's dove, fly toward us with the green olive leaf of refreshing intelligence from the regions of home and foreign missions.

Inquire of the many thousands, who, in every quarter, and in quiet concealment at JESUS' feet, are healed of their heartfelt maladies, or else, already comforted, fall asleep in His name to awaken to life eternal.

Do this, and you will no longer ask, Where is Christ, the King? Truly He is still among you, with the same power, love, and miraculous grace by which He was formerly accompanied. The "**Hosanna to the Son of David,**" has not yet ceased upon earth, and never will.

"But will His kingdom prosper in the world?"

O be not anxious on this account! The passage we have been considering affords a powerful panacea against such apprehensions.

Observe, first, what our Lord commissions His disciples to say to the owner of the ass and its colt: "**Say to him, that the Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them.**" "**The Lord hath need of them**" - more is not necessary. If He requires them, all must be at His command. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. "**The Lord hath need of them!**"

What a glorious encouragement for missionaries; what valuable consolation for the Church, when fears are entertained for the supply of faithful witnesses! What an incomparable assurance that He can never be deficient of means for the accomplishment of His plans! Hide these words in your spiritual treasury, my friends, and refresh yourselves with them as often as you feel your courage fail.

Observe, further, how the Lord, while fulfilling to the letter the prediction of Zechariah by the manner of His entrance into the Holy City, confirms at the same time, the whole of the prophecies respecting Him.

You know what these passages predict.

- According to them His foes shall eventually become His footstool;
- The ends of the earth shall be His inheritance.

- Jerusalem, cleansed and purified, shall become a praise in the earth; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd; and whatever else the eternal Father may have sworn to give Him.

As infallibly as the one was accomplished, so surely will not the other remain a mere type and shadow. The literal fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy is a most striking pledge of the eventual accomplishment of the vision of John in the Revelation. "**Behold, a white horse, and he that sat upon him is called Faithful and True, and hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.**" And in like manner shall be fulfilled that other vision in which he beheld, around the throne of the Lamb, that host of adoring saints "**which no man could number.**"

Finally, consider another expression of Immanuel's, which Luke records. When enraged at the loud rejoicings of His disciples and the people, the Pharisees called upon the Lord JESUS to reprove them, He uttered the following significant and ever memorable words: "**I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.**" The Lord, in these words, could not have more clearly evinced His inmost conviction of the invaluable blessing the world enjoyed in Him, and the object of His mission. For what else do they imply than that "I am such a Saviour and bring you such aid, and offer you such felicity, that if it produced no exultation and rejoicing among mankind, the Almighty would animate the lifeless creation to celebrate His love and compassion!" The Lord, in these words, gives us also the assurance, that earth shall never be silent concerning Him and His salvation; for should Israel and Christendom be silent, He would animate the sons of the desert, the dead heathen world, to sing hosannas to Him. This He has done, is still doing, and will continue to do.

Earth's whole population shall eventually spread their garments on His path, and strew it with palm branches, even as the people did on this occasion. As thousands did then, millions will hereafter shout, "**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**"

O let us mingle with the adoring crowd, and once more take our Lord's assertion to heart, that the salvation which God has prepared for us in Him is so infinitely great that if we could keep silence, the very stones would cry out.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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