

Our Lord's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem
March 23, 1991 (Palm Sunday)
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A. Intro

Did you ever see a king? How about a president?

1. How would you recognize him (especially if there weren't photographs)?
2. How would you respond to him? Would everybody respond the same way? Bush is popular in the US. How do the Iraqis feel about him?

In today's lesson, the Lord Jesus presents himself to Israel as their king. We want to watch carefully how he identifies himself, and how people respond to him--and then ask, how do we respond to him.

B. Background

1. Jesus' life alternates between Galilee and Judea.
2. His last visit to Jerusalem is at the passover, when he is crucified. Makes his way south from Galilee, repeatedly warning his disciples that he is about to die.
3. Friday before his death, he comes up from Jericho to Bethany.
4. He rests at Bethany with friends on Saturday, the Sabbath.
 - a) Mary, the only one who really believes his predictions about his coming death, anoints him with precious ointment.
 - b) Home of Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead.
 - c) This miracle aroused great interest among the Jews, and when the Lord returned there, the news that the raiser and the raisee were together again would rapidly spread over the hill to Jerusalem.
5. On Sunday, the first day of the week, he travels the two miles up over the mountain and down to Jerusalem. All four gospels mention this "triumphal entry." We'll read Luke 19:28-44 and John 12:12-19, picking up others later as needed.

C. The Royal Claim

1. Based on Zech. 9:9-10. Note his twofold claim to kingship here:
 - a) 9-10a, "thy king," focuses on his rule over Israel, and is all that Matt and John quote in connection with the triumphal entry.
 - b) In 10b, Zech sees beyond Jesus as the King of Israel to his rule over all the earth.
2. The Lord deliberately follows this passage. In fact, Matt. makes

clear that the disciples bring back both an ass and its colt, in keeping with Zech's detail.

D. The Response of the Colt, v.30

1. This colt has never been ridden. That is, it is unbroken. What happens the first time someone tries to sit on an unbroken colt? Clearly, the colt recognizes the authority of the Lord. Reminiscent of the milk cows that the Philistines harnessed to return the ark of the covenant to the Israelites in 1 Sam. 7.
2. Compare the promised response of the rocks in v.40.
3. These exemplify the response of the creature to the creator. Animals, even the inanimate earth, recognizes and obeys him without question. From one perspective, the hero of this story is the donkey! Would that we could be so submissive to our Lord.

E. The Response of the Pharisees, v.39-40

1. cf. vv. 14, 27, the parable with which Luke introduces this story. The priests correspond with the rebellious citizens who do not want the Lord to rule over them.
2. They strongly disagree with what the crowd is saying, and ask the Lord to silence them. They are jealous of their own prestige and too comfortable with the status quo to recognize the Lord. Similar attitude in John 12:19; Matt. 21:15-16.
3. Here is the other extreme from the donkey: absolute rejection of the Lord's authority. Seems hateful to us, until we realize that this is the condition in which all of us exist. Sinful rebels against the Lord.

The contrast reminds us of Balaam and his donkey! Not the first time that a jackass has had more sense than people!

F. The Response of the Multitude, John 12:12-13

1. Greeted as king
 - a) Their address, "The King of Israel"
 - b) Garments on the road, cf. anointing of Jehu, 2 Kings 9:13
2. Yet a few days later, under the prompting of the priests (Matt. 27:20), they cried for his crucifixion: Luke 23:18ff.
3. They exemplify superficial enthusiasm and support that does not last. They cave in, in this case to popular pressure; in other cases, to persecution.

Following the Lord Jesus is not something one does casually. One does not drift into it. We must receive him by making a solemn decision, and then testifying to it by being baptized after we have believed. And we must recognize that we may be oppressed for

this decision. But anything short of this is not real saving faith.

G. The Response of the Colt's Owners, v.33

1. Probably part of the broader band of disciples; they know who "the Lord" is when the disciples explain the reason.
2. We don't usually think of them in this story, but they are far more committed to the Lord than are the multitudes. The Lord doesn't promise when the colt and his mother (Matt) will be returned, or even that they will be returned. Yet they let the animals go immediately (Matt. 21:3; Mark 11:3).
3. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we commit to him everything that we are and all that we possess. He may claim any of it at any time, and we must be prepared to give it to him. Here are people who are manifesting the obedience of the donkey, yet with the understanding and will of a human.

H. The Response of the Disciples, John 12:16

1. Very much like the owners of the colt. Obedient to what they are told to do.
2. We learn one thing more about them: they did not understand at first the meaning of what they were doing, but did later. Later on they did. In spite of their lack of understanding, they do as they are told.
3. This is an important characteristic of God's people. He doesn't ask us to turn our minds off, but neither are we at liberty to sit in judgment on his commands and delay until we fully understand. Paul calls himself a bonds slave of Jesus Christ; that implies full and unquestioning obedience. Now, the Lord graciously elevates us above the place of servants to that of friends, by making known to us all that he has heard from his Father (John 15:15), but when our understanding is not up to our position as friends, we still need to act as responsible servants.

I. The Response of the Lord Jesus, v.41-44

1. He is prophesying the destruction of the city in AD 70 by the Romans.
2. "The things that make for peace:" had they received him as their Messiah, the kingdom could have begun right here. Cf. Jer. 42:9-12: if the remnant had stayed put after the death of Gedaliah, God would have restored the captives and begun the promised New Covenant blessings.
3. But they "did not know the time" of their visitation; in spite of their superficial welcome, they did not truly receive him as

Lord, and so they will be judged.

4. As a result, the Lord weeps. Compare Matt. 23:37-39. His tears are not of anger, but of sorrow. Cf. Ezek. 18:31,32. Part of the unsearchable mysteries of God: he sovereignly elects whom he will, yet tenderly weeps over those who reject him.

If you are rejecting him, contemplate here his tender concern for you. Why will you die?

And if you are a believer, emulate the concern of your Lord for the lost. He would not have us to be like the Pharisees (in open rebellion), or even like the multitudes (in superficial devotion that soon fades). We should be obedience--not just as his creatures, like the colt, but with full commitment, like the owners, and with our minds engaged, like the disciples.