

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Editor

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Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant

New Series
No. 1605

MARCH — APRIL 1999

Old Series
No. 2605

Editorial

IT IS INTERESTING to observe how one of the illustrious characters of the Bible – David – reacted to the pressures of life. He said: “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psalm 56:3).

David was being hunted by the jealous Saul and was in constant danger of his life. Faced with perils as he was, he declared: “What time I am afraid, I will trust.” He resolved that he would not yield to fear; the best antidote to fear is faith.

Israel’s great king had his battle with fear and won. His experiences have given inspiration and confidence to many of God’s people in every age. It is, of course, a far cry to the days of David and life today is very different in every respect. Nevertheless God is still the same. He is able to handle our complex situations, He is not indifferent to our needs.

The believer need have no fear about the future. We don’t know what the future holds but we know Who holds the future. Encourage yourself with His promise: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

The Triumphal Entry

A Sermon by the Editor

Luke 19:29-40

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY into Jerusalem was a great occasion with a great deal of shouting and singing with palm branches and the spreading of garments on the road as our Lord Jesus Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem.

I want to look at what is a very familiar story and to draw out four thoughts concerning our Lord and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

1. HIS TREMENDOUS COURAGE

When the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem that day He was moving forward with deliberate and set purpose for the last and the most bitter conflict, the last and fiercest strife. He knew full well what lay ahead, and yet He never flinched, He never moved. He had "a baptism", He said, "to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!". He never flinched, and yet He knew that He was a very much wanted Man, and many would no doubt have counselled Him on His way to Jerusalem to act very cautiously and secretly, but *He* knew that His earthly ministry was drawing to a close. He knew that His hour was approaching when He must finish the work that He had come to do. The time, then, for secrecy was past; Jesus knew in effect what was forthcoming. You may remember earlier Luke had said that He had steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem – there was that resolution and determination – He had made the journey south in the company of His disciples, and now the moment of conflict had come. He had reached the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem lay before Him, and all was set for the final conflict with the powers of evil, and He sent two of His disciples to borrow an ass whereon yet never man sat. I think there is something *tremendous* in that, because it was an unbroken animal. It had never been used; no one had sat on it; no one knew what it might do. Do you not see the power of our Lord over this animal whereon yet never man sat? Then, to the amazement of the crowd, He boldly rides into the city of Jerusalem to meet the Scribes and Pharisees and the whole Jewish hierarchy. Surely there was amazing courage here. He knew all that lay ahead and with tremendous courage went to meet all that was to come.

Of course, the story of Palm Sunday, in a sense, is singularly at variance with the usual tenor of our Lord's life. It is curiously unlike the ways of Him who did "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" and to withdraw from the multitudes on other occasions, but now He has said it openly and demonstrated His Messiahship. Hitherto it had been secret – now it was publicly revealed – and not in word only but in deed.

2. HIS POVERTY

When He wished to enter His own city in royal state He did so on a borrowed beast of burden. He had nothing of His own that He could use for the purpose and, surely, there is something tremendous in this! You remember that most moving statement of the Apostle Paul – “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” – and, really, the whole of the Gospel narrative proclaims that. He came to this earth and was laid in a manger; and that was borrowed; years later He was laid in a borrowed grave.

If you read carefully the Gospels you will get an inkling of the lowliness of life to which our Lord stooped. You will remember how He spoke of “patching up old garments” and of “a woman sweeping diligently to find a lost piece of silver”. He was speaking out of the depths of His own experience. He could say, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head”, and when He died they put Him in a borrowed tomb when Joseph of Arimathea came to the rescue. Now for His royal progress to the Holy City He rides on a borrowed donkey. He was much too poor to keep it and He promised He would return it immediately He had had the use of it. (Surely that gives those who borrow and do not return a little brush.) But the point I want to stress is His poverty. Is not this the wonder of it all that He, by whom all things were made, with all the glory of heaven at His disposal, will lay it by – and why? We cannot do better than use the words of the Creed: “It was for us men and for our salvation.”

3. HIS HUMILITY

By coming into Jerusalem the way He did Jesus was clearly asserting His Messiahship. He was presenting Himself to His people as their Messiah and their King. The Prophet Zechariah says: “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” (Zechariah 9:9). There it was, written centuries before; it was wonderful how it was all fulfilled. This was fulfilled, because He was meek and lowly in His hour of triumph entering into the metropolis.

It was significant that He did not come into Jerusalem on a horse, the symbol of war, but He rode on an ass, the symbol of peace. He was not accompanied by armed forces brandishing their swords or other items of weaponry, His companions were merely a body of simple, humble souls. Imperial Rome would not have been impressed or unduly alarmed by such a fact. Clearly He was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah, coming as the King who was meek and lowly, not to make war on the Romans, but to redeem men from the power of sin and Satan, to exercise His rule of life in the hearts of His people. The Jewish magistrates would have none of this. It did not match up with their ideas of Messiahship, and

so they rejected Him and, before the end of the week, He was crucified, dead and buried.

4. HIS MAJESTY

What are we to make of the happenings of the first Palm Sunday? Did it all end in failure? The answer to that is "No". This in a very real sense was our Lord's hour of triumph. His true majesty was revealed and acclaimed, but how far the crowd guessed the true meaning of it we cannot say, but they clearly sensed that this was a real occasion for joy for they cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." On that day in Jerusalem the procession certainly showed no lack of enthusiasm.

I would suggest to you – can we not learn something from them here? All too often our love is lukewarm and we show little zeal and little enthusiasm for spiritual things, and it is no wonder that we have sometimes been called "God's frozen people"! Let us take a page out of the book of these people on the first Palm Sunday. Oh that there were more enthusiasm injected into our christianity and into our service for Christ!

So these Galileans not only brought their garlands and waved their palm branches as the symbol of victory, but they also raised their loud "hosannas" for the Son of God, a kingly title. The crowd recognised in Jesus the Messiah fulfilling ancient prophecy; it was indeed a royal acclamation, for the Son of David was a kingly title. They were, in effect, saying: "God save the King." It was, then, as King that Jesus entered into Jerusalem. That was why He was given such a rapturous welcome. Of course, the Pharisees did not like it one little bit, and they protested most vigorously. "Master," they said, "rebuke, reprimand Thy disciples," and the Lord said: "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." There was nothing that could stop the proclamation of His majesty, but, alas, the enthusiasm soon turned into disappointment, for He had come to suffer and to die, and yet, by the Cross, He triumphed. By death, He conquered death and all His foes. He ascended to His throne and established His kingdom.

So then, the Triumphal Entry becomes a **last appeal** and a **final warning**. It was an appeal to Jerusalem to repent and believe while the opportunity was there. It was a warning, too, that their hate and their rage were directed against the Lord's Anointed. How moved the Saviour was when He saw Jerusalem the last time from the turn in the road on the Mount of Olives: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" He told them that they knew not the day of their visitation. Yes, they did *not* know it, and many now do not know that they have a day of grace and a day of opportunity, but the day of grace ultimately closes. Jerusalem did not know – *do you?*

But when He comes, as He will come at the end of time, when history is closed up, He will come in His glorious majesty, He will come as the King triumphant,

before whom every knee shall bow. He *will* come, not on an ass, not coming as He did that first Palm Sunday, but He will come in the clouds of heaven, He will come with the shout of the Archangel, and with the trump of God. He will come to establish His kingdom, to take up His great power, and reign. *This* is the great hope of the Christian believer, but meantime we too, surely, can raise our glad hosannas and ascribe to Him all glory and honour, for He alone is worthy. The believer can praise God, can praise the Saviour for all that He has done now. He has washed us and loosed us from our sins. He alone is worthy. We worship Him as King. We give Him the homage and the adoration of our hearts, and we can sing:

“The people of the Hebrews
With palms before Thee went,
Our praise and prayers and anthems
Before Thee we present.”

... *for He alone is worthy.*

Here, then, is the familiar story of Palm Story, recording as it does our Lord's tremendous courage, His poverty (do remember that), His humility, His majesty, linking on from that day so long ago to *that event* which cannot be far distant when *He will come in His glorious majesty to wind up the things of time.* Amen.

M.H.



For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

BEST DRESSED

MOST PEOPLE like to dress smartly for a special occasion like going to a wedding or a party. This can be quite expensive. Perhaps you like to wear special clothes for playing football or going to the gym. All the right sports gear can be very expensive too. Sometimes it can seem so important to be dressed properly – but why? Is it just so that other people can admire us? The Bible tells us about the special clothing that a Christian has and what's more it doesn't cost a penny!

Peter in his first letter tells the Christians to be “clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5). This is a beautiful garment. The person who is clothed in humility has a right view of God and of themselves. When you are clothed in humility you realise how wicked and sinful you are but you also see how beautiful God is. The person who is proud or self-important is displeasing to God. He does not give God the first

place in his life. If we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He will exalt us. It is a truly humble thing to cast all our care on the Lord and depend completely on Him.

Isaiah tells us about lovely clothes that God has given to him and to every Christian. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

What an amazing provision for a poor sinner who looks to Christ for help! Salvation from the guilt and punishment and power of sin is freely given to all who repent and with grief and hatred of their sin, turn to follow and love the Lord.

The robe of righteousness is a gift from Christ too. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). We may try our best to do what is right but that is not acceptable to God. He wants us to realise that we need to be covered with the righteousness of Christ. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1).

Paul in his letter to the Church at Colosse tells them to be clothed with mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and longsuffering, and especially charity (or love).

These qualities should be obvious in the life of a Christian – making him different from the people of the world around him who may be critical, mean, proud of themselves, haughty and easily irritated. Are we sometimes more like the people of the world than we should be? Ask the Lord to help us to put on the characteristics that come from His love in our hearts.

The Christian is the best dressed person on earth – clothed with humility, salvation, righteousness, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering and love.

Do you like to buy new clothes and to get dressed up? God's Word tells us in Proverbs 31 what the best dressed people wear. This chapter tells us about a lady. "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." What does God mean by strength? He doesn't mean muscles or being able to lift a really heavy weight. The strength that God tells us about here is the strength that we get from trusting in Him. When we trust in God He gives us the strength we need for all the problems and difficulties that we face.

When we have strength from God and are kind and merciful to other people this is better than the best sports gear we can buy. When you love God with all your heart and soul and mind and you love others better than yourself, it's far better than that gorgeous dress you saw in the shop window the other day. Characteristics like love and mercy, humility and patience will make you a really beautiful person in God's eyes. God is the only one that really matters and it is His opinion that we should care about.

All the beautiful, expensive clothes that we buy in the shops today will soon be worn out, torn, faded or thrown away, but the special "clothes" that God gives to His people are lasting and always beautiful.

PUZZLE

Find the missing words in the chapters given. The initial letters of your answer will spell out one of the garments that God gives us and which we read about in Proverbs chapter 31.

1. Psalm 132. I will also clothe her priests with _____: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
2. 1 Timothy 6. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor _____ in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.
3. Job 29. I put on _____ and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.
4. Luke 24. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be _____ with power from on high.
5. Revelation 3. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy _____ do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.
6. Isaiah 61. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the _____ of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.
7. Ephesians 6. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with _____ and having on the breastplate of righteousness.
8. Proverbs 15. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before _____ is humility.

A FEW PITHY SAYINGS

No man is less beloved because he is tempted. Brooks.

When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words, than words without heart. Bunyan.

Grace grows best in winter. Samuel Rutherford.

Remember always the presence of God; rejoice always in the will of God, and direct all to the glory of God. Leighton.