

Introduction: At this time of the year it is common to focus on the incarnation, the coming of the Son of God wrapped in real and full humanity. It is always right to do so, to rejoice and celebrate the coming of the Lord's Redeemer into our world. I have sometimes taken this occasion to focus on the incarnation, a great and glorious mystery of Christianity. This year I have decided to continue in our exposition of Luke, and here are at least two reasons.

- 1.) The incarnation is not an end of itself, but rather the means that God brought His Son into His world to accomplish a purpose. We must remember that Jesus coming as a baby is not the whole Gospel. God had not yet made peace with humanity. Rather, the incarnation was the doorway through which Jesus came to accomplish redemption. Jesus states this in Mark 10:45 when He said "the Son of man came to serve and to give His life a ransom." In our exposition this morning, we stand at the threshold of what Jesus came to accomplish. I reverently say that if at this point of His life He chose to ascend into heaven that there would be no redemption. The incarnation, the perfect life, the glorious teaches, all would accomplish nothing as to our salvation.
- 2.) There is a connection between the incarnation and our verses this morning. In the incarnation narrative, we have the announcement, singing, and praising of angels and men at the entry of the Redeemer into our world as a man. In particular, there is a parallel between 2:14 and 19:28 (glory to God and peace). The incarnation was the first public triumphal entry, this one is really the 2nd.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR JESUS' ENTRY – vv.29-35

28 When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

- This is a transitional statement from the parable of the Nobleman to the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus has completed the last phase of His ministry outside of Jerusalem, and now goes to fulfill all things written by the prophets, to be betrayed, handed over, and crucified...all things necessary to fulfill the righteousness of God, be resurrected from the dead, and provide the way of salvation which would bring peace between the Holy God and fallen man.

29 And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet,

- He has traveled from Jericho to the East side of the mountain called Olivet, or the Mount of Olives. This mountain is just East of the city of Jerusalem and is about a mile in length, 700 feet in height, and composed of three peaks or summits. Luke names these two towns which existed on the East side of the mountain. The exact place of Bethphage is unknown, but Bethany still exists, now inhabited primarily by Muslims and is named "Lazarus" after the most famous inhabitant, friend of Jesus, who was raised from the dead.
- From what we can reconstruct, they arrived in that area on a Friday evening, just before the Sabbath (John 12:1). Jesus and his disciples will stay with Lazarus (whom He had raised from the dead).
- As they are coming near these places, Jesus instructs two of His disciples to go to Bethphage on a mission:

...He sent two of His disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. 31 "And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing it?' thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it.'"

32 So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. 33 But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, "Why are you loosing the colt?" 34 And they said, "The Lord has need of him." 35 Then they brought him to Jesus.

- There are a couple of ways these verses are explained. One is to emphasize the natural by saying that it had all been previously arranged with some friends of Jesus. There may be some truth in this in that He may have known the people, thus explaining how the simple words "the Lord has need..." would bring about unprotected compliance. However, notice the words "found it just as He had said." This seems to emphasize a kind of unusual fulfillment, not just indicating that it happened, but it happened in an unusual way.
- What is being emphasized at this point, and will saturate the entire account of what happens this last week, is that Jesus is in control of the situation. This is all orchestrated by Him. All that happens, including this entry, the last supper, the garden, His betrayal...it is all falling out as Jesus desires. Nothing is surprising, all is planned and happens according to His purpose.
- One thing that is interesting when comparing the Gospels is that this is a young unbroken colt of a donkey, and that it was accompanied by its mother. Though there are supernatural things going on, there is still the natural phenomena of the need of a colt, to remain calm, to have its mother with him.

And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.

- According to the accounting of the days, this was on the 1st Day of the week. The countdown has begun, and one week from this day He will be resurrected from the dead.
- There is a good bit of discussion among the commentators as to whether riding a young donkey was a display of humility or not. One thing seems certain, that it is a symbol of peace. To have a king ride into a city on a horse was a display of power and ability to conquer and rule. A horse was ordinarily a symbol of war. A donkey seems to have been more a symbol of peace or particularly of peacetime, as it was a beast of burden used for the ordinary labors of people.
- The throwing of their outer cloaks on the colt indicate a respect to the rider.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF JESUS' ENTRY – vv.36-38

36 And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road.

- This is the time of the Passover, and multitudes of people have traveled from afar to Jerusalem and the surrounding area. They are staying with family and friends, ready to celebrate. Jerusalem swells with people. When we combine the Gospels, we get the picture that there is a group (including the 12 disciples) from Bethany that is going with Him. We also see that a group come out from Jerusalem to meet the parade. These are likely those that have heard of him during His ministry, and who hear that He is making a formal entrance into Jerusalem.
- What is happening is that as He goes along, the men are removing their outer cloaks, spreading of them in the path of the donkey as a carpet, picking up in the rear, and running again to the front. It is a sign of devotion and respect which Jesus receives.
- What is doing on here? Throughout His ministry, Jesus is revealed as the Son of David who came to fulfill the promises made to David by God (2Samuel 7). These promises (or covenant) were partially fulfilled by Solomon. Notice what David did to appoint him king (1Kings 1:33). Now He comes as THE great Son of David (of which Solomon was a foreshadowing), the King of the Jewish people.
- This is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9

37 Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen,

- We are told that as He comes to the descent (the bottom part, turning to see Jerusalem) the multitude bursts into a rapturous praise. They praise God for the works they had seen done by God through the Lord Jesus. Much of this was likely stirred as a result to the raising of Lazarus from the dead which had taken place (John 11). Many of these folks were from Bethany, they knew Lazarus, they had gone to His tomb, and some of them were surely there (including wailing women) when Jesus had raised him from the dead.

38 saying: " 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'"

- Here we have an explicit confession of the multitude as to who Jesus is: He is "the King." He comes in the Name of the Covenant God. What is the result of His coming? Peace in heaven. God, through Christ, brings reconciliation between God and man. For this reason, God receives the highest and most exalted praises.
- The other Gospels tell us that in addition to this praise, they were also singing "Hosanna!" or "save Lord." This is a quotation from Psalms 118:25-26.
- There are those who (wrongly) believe that at this point Jesus actually believes for a bit that He will be received as King, that He is excited and hopeful that things will go well. This is of course not true, as He has already clearly stated that this will not be the case.
- Yet in the midst of a people who are misdirected, who misunderstand His Messianic mission, who do not comprehend what kind of Savior He will be (not national/political), He receives their praises.

III. THE RESPONSE TO JESUS' ENTRY – vv.39-40

39 And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

- What is stunning about this is that in Psalm 118:22 (which Jesus knew very well), there is the prophecy of the rejection of the chief cornerstone by the builders.
- As some of the people are singing these praises, those entrusted as the "builders" are continuing to reject Him. Jesus does not for a moment think things are going well, but this too is the fulfillment of prophecy.

40 But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

- While most of His ministry was spent trying to keep His fame from being spread, now He is encouraging it. Even the creation itself would cry out if these voices would stop. He is receiving their rightful praises of Him as King and Messiah.

IV. THE REALITY OF JESUS' ENTRY – vv.41-44

- It was not truly a "triumphal" entry, as these verses point out. There are some who are enthusiastically praising, but when all is said and done, Israel, as represented in the capital city of Jerusalem, will reject Him.
- As He comes in view of the city He breaks out in weeping and lament. He prophesies the destruction of the city by an army that will surround and devastate, that will be fulfilled in 70A.D. If they had known and accepted Him, then there would have been true peace. These things, however, were hidden from their eyes because of the kind of King they wanted. He sees with prophetic vision the armies, the besieged city, the slaying of men, women, and children, and the complete overthrow of the city. This is because they did not know the time of their visitation by the Son of God.
- He enters, within less than a week be rejected by the leaders, and the great crowds will cry "crucify Him." The consequences of rejecting Him will be national judgment. This is an initial lament as He sees approaches the city. Another is coming in Jerusalem.
- What was then the purpose of this kind of entry, why does Jesus allow this? Again, He is in control, and the stirring up of attention will prepare for the whole city to know what will take place. These things would not take place in an unseen corner, but all in Jerusalem would be aware (Luke 24:18).
- He is provoking the leaders against Him, the domino to set into action the events leading to His crucifixion. But every domino falls by His design, exactly as He designs and executes.

APPLICATION

As we approach the coming weeks, we should realize we are on holy ground. We come to the events upon which the redemption of mankind depends. Let us study with reverence and holy awe.

In this passage we see Jesus freely receiving accolades from those who don't understand His ultimate purpose. I have sometimes struggled, particularly at this time of the year, when I think about people singing Christmas hymns like "Joy to the World" and others that don't seem to live as if there is a knowledge of Christ as the Lord of life. I am tempted in my heart to think that it is wrong for them to sing such holy things. It seems this passage points us to realize that God ordains that even those who do not understand would sing His praise. It is good and right because of who God is. Even if you are not a Christian, it is good and right for you to come into the presence of God and sing His praise, because He is worthy. I long for you to know Him, really know. There is no merit in your (or my) singing, but it is right because of who Jesus is.

If the praises of God were sung with such exuberance by those who did not understand, how should they be sung by us? As a leadership we are trying to discern how our worship and particularly singing can be more robust. It is disparaging to God's Name if we gather together and mumble the praises of God. We realize that one stumbling block may be the unfamiliarity of the hymns for some, and are in the process of compiling a list of hymns hopefully more familiar. However, even familiar hymns can be mumbled. The way to change this is not by assigning someone as a "cheerleader" to stir up the crowd in worship, but have a people who are walking with God, who are excited about their salvation, who are desirous to magnify Christ, and who are bursting at the seams to enter into corporate worship to praise God. – How are we coming into God's house? Are we coming with the fires of our soul stoked and inflamed for worship, well rested, prayed up and already praising in the morning hours, hearts full of gladness and adoration? Or are we coming in tired, ½ awake from an unnecessarily late Saturday night, distracted by the cares of the world, minds full of morning news, multitudes of wandering thoughts, even indifference to giving God worthy praise? Yes, we come to receive from God, but we also come to give to God. Are we offering lame and diseased praises? Or are we ready to offer the choicest of the flock of our lives?