

Messiah's Entry into Jerusalem

As we come each week to memorialize the crucifixion of Messiah, we also look to his subsequent glorification, and the future time of his coming again. We see the One “who was made a little lower than the Angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). Both of these aspects feature in the Old Testament Scriptures, as “it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1:11). In our New Testament reading for today, we have the entry of Messiah into Jerusalem just prior to his rejection by those he came to save. In our exhortation for today, we shall see how that as the Word made Flesh, he fulfilled many Old Testament references relating to that event, and in this he foreshadowed his future entry into Jerusalem, when he shall be glorified in his people.

Matthew chapter 21 describes how two of Jesus' disciples were sent to collect an ass, and her colt with her, saying to anyone who questioned their actions that “The Lord hath need of them”. That statement was enough to satisfy the owner of the animals, and they were duly brought to him. But the interesting feature in this narrative, is that these things took place in order to fulfil certain Old Testament prophecies:

“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King Cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass” (Mat. 21:5).

When we actually look up these words and phrases, we find that they form an composite quote. That is, they are echoing the words of several prophecies. So the first part comes from Isaiah 62:

“Behold, Yahweh hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, **Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh**; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him” (Isa. 62:11).

But notice the change of terms here: the Prophet said “behold, thy **salvation** cometh”, whereas the New Testament quote expounds this to be “Behold, thy **King** cometh”. Evidently, the point being that it is the King who shall bring salvation, something we shall consider shortly.

There is another quote in the context of Matthew chapter 21, and this passage of Isaiah. Matthew chapter 21 recounts how that when Messiah entered into Jerusalem, there were crowds of people in the city who questioned his identity: “... and when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, **Who is this?** And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” (Mat. 21:10-11).

This quotes the next chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, which speaks of the future march of the Anointed to Jerusalem from the south:

“**Who is this that** cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save” (Isa. 63:1).

We know that this personage is the Christ-Body, as the next verse is directly applied to him in the Apocalypse (Rev. 19:15). But the point here, is that the same question is raised by those who will observe his coming presence, this time as a great deliverer, to save Jacob from the hand of he that is stronger than they, and re-establish glory in the land. So Psalm 24 also speaks likewise:

“lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. **Who is this** King of Glory? Yahweh, strong and mighty, Yahweh

mighty in battle ... **Who is this** King of Glory? Yahweh of Hosts, he is the King of Glory. Selah” (Psa. 34:7-10).

The “King of Glory” is thus defined by the name of “Yahweh, strong and mighty”, able to bring salvation to his people by waging war against the powers of sin. So the prophets speak of the deliverance from the enemies, and Matthew the deliverance from sin itself.

THY KING COMETH

As we already observed, the cited words in Matthew 21 are “Thy King Cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass”. These words are lifted from the prophecy of Zechariah, and chapter 9:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, 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” (Zech. 9:9).

Notice, the King is here described as “just, and **having salvation**”, which supports our earlier remarks that it is the coming King who brings salvation with him. Isaiah also speaks of this coming to Jerusalem:

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Yahweh shall lift up a standard against him. And **the Redeemer shall come to Zion**, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Yahweh” (Isa. 59:19-20).

In order for Israel to be redeemed, they need to turn from transgression, something which will surely take place when they bow before their king that they rejected so many years ago.

HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID

At this time, when Christ came to Jerusalem into the temple, the crowds – including children (vs 15-16) cried out with words of praise:

“... the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Mat. 21:9).

The word *Hosanna* literally means “Save we Pray”, and emphasises how that Salvation is only possible through the coming King. The words used by the multitudes are also lifted from the Old Testament, and particularly the book of Psalms:

“Save now, I beseech thee, O Yahweh: O Yahweh, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. **Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of Yahweh**: we have blessed you out of the house of Yahweh” (Psa. 118:25-26).

Interestingly, in the context of this Psalm, there is reference to the gates that the Just One shall enter as we saw from Psalm 24:

“Open unto me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise Yahweh: This gate of Yahweh into which the Righteous shall enter” (Psa. 118:19-20).

In Psalm 24, it is the “king of glory” that shall enter the gates, and this aspect of both Psalms are brought together in Ezekiel’s prophecy, which describes the Glory of the Lord returning through the Eastern Gate of the Temple:

“The glory of Yahweh came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east” (Ezek. 43:4).

These passages paint a wonderful word-picture of the Kingdom age, when once again glory shall dwell in the land, and the Anointed One shall be seated as king in the Temple, ruling over the tribes of Jacob. In that day, said Yahweh this will be “the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever ...” (Eze. 43:7). The occupant of that throne will be Messiah, bearing the Yahweh Name, with his fellow saints with him: “to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias” (Rev. 3:21-22).

ENTERING THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21 continues to describe how that Messiah entered the Temple, and cast out from it the defilement of human enterprise:

“And Jesus went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mat. 21:12-13).

Here is an irony: the people delighted in Jesus, saying “blessed be he that cometh in the Name of the Lord”, but when he came, it was necessary for him to be a judge, casting out the moneychangers and dove sellers out of the house. The situation is akin to what we have described in the prophecy of Malachi, which describes the future entry of Messiah into the rebuilt House:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord **whom ye seek**, shall **suddenly come to his temple**, even the messenger of the covenant **whom ye delight in**: behold, he shall come, saith Yahweh of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and **he shall purify** the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Yahweh an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:1-3).

Notice here, the Lord is one who the people “delight” in, yet when he suddenly comes to his temple, he shall come as a purger and purifier, to carry out judgements upon them. Then, the offerings would be “in righteousness”, not like the doves sold for money within the temple precincts.

There is an important exhortation for our learning here: we delight in Jesus. We recognise that he is blessed, and that he came in the Name of Yahweh. We seek him and his appearing, looking for the day of his return. But what manner will his coming be to us? Will we be ready for him to receive us, or will we be cast out like the moneychangers? The question is a very real issue: in Israel of old, they looked forward to the Day of Yahweh, as being a day of light and goodness – but it turned out to be very different: “Woe unto you that desire the Day of Yahweh! To what end is it for you? The day of Yahweh is darkness, and not light ...” (Amos 5:18). Let it not be so for us.

A DEN OF THIEVES

The Master cited Isaiah 56:7 describing the symbolic dwelling place of Yahweh as a “house of prayer”, but the Jews had made it a “den of thieves”. There is another allusion to Malachi chapter 3 here:

“Will a man rob God? Yet he have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation” (Mal. 3:9).

The house had become a den of those who robbed God of that which was rightfully His due. The expression “a den of thieves” is lifted from Jeremiah chapter 7:

“Is this house which is called by my Name, become **a den of robbers** in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 7:11).

Again, the context of Jeremiah 7 is interesting: in the very next verse, the prophet directs his hearer’s attention to what had taken place earlier, in the days of Eli:

“But go ye now unto my place which was at Shiloh, where I set my Name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel” (Jer. 7:12).

The reference here is to 1 Samuel chapter 4, where the Ark of Elohim was taken, and Shiloh made desolate. A prominent feature of worship at that time was the way in which Eli’s sons robbed God, by taking meat from the sacrifices for themselves before it was placed upon the altar. Eli was complicit in this sin, hence the Divine rebuke came:

“Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering; which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons before me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people” (1 Sam. 2:29).

The priests stole from Yahweh in taking the “chiefest” of the offerings for themselves, and the Jews at the time of Christ were no better. Using the sale of sacrifices to obtain personal gain, they turned the house of prayer into a house of merchandise and robbery.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES AND SUCKLINGS

The Chief Priests and Scribes were “sore displeased” at the way in which the children also praised Yahweh’s Anointed, and so he rebuked them by citing Old Testament scripture. They “said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Mat. 21:15-16). The quotation is from Psalm 8: but notice the change in wording:

“O Yahweh our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. **Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength** because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger” (Psa. 8:1-2)

Whereas the Psalmist said “... has thou ordained strength”, Messiah changed it to “... thou hast perfected praise”. The implication being that strength ought to be manifested in praise: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with **all thy strength**” (Mark 12:30). Rather than to rob God, we must render to him all that is due: all of our strength must be engaged in worship before him.

We come to focus our attention now to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. By direct contrast with those who were robbers in his Father’s house, the spirit of Christ in the Psalmist writes: “Then I restored that which I took not away” (Psa. 69:4). The Righteousness of God was restored by the willing obedience of Messiah to lay down his life for his friends. Let us then learn from the principles that lie behind Messiah’s entry into Jerusalem, that we might search after the ways of the Living God with all our heart, soul and might. Then, it will be given to us to be seated in the Throne of the Millennial House or prayer with Christ, even as he is set down in his Father’s Throne.