



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 21:1–11; Zechariah 9:9–11

Gospel of Matthew

“The Untriumphal Entry”

TRANSCRIPT

What we are going to have in the hour that follows is a passage gathered around some Old Testament Scriptures, and one in particular. I want to read a few verses from Zechariah chapter 9, so I give you some time to try to find it. Zechariah chapter 9, the next to the last book of the Old Testament, and I want to read verses 9 through 11 of that prophecy, and then we will turn to Matthew chapter 21. So turn back a few pages in your bible to Zechariah chapter 9, and let me read beginning with verse 9 through verse 11.

I am sure that many of you have read through the prophesy of Zechariah, and you know that it is probably the greatest of the minor prophets and one of most important of the prophesies of the Old Testament—a prophet who was deeply indebted to the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, the prophet Isaiah. And in the last six chapters of the book of Zechariah there are primarily two burdens that the prophet has, and each of these burdens consumes three of his chapters, so that in chapters 9, 10, and 11 the burden is of “the king in rejection.” And then in chapters 12, 13 and 14, the second burden is of “the king enthroned.” These verses that I am going to read now are in the section in which he has a burden that touches the rejection of the messianic king. Verse 9 of Zechariah chapter 9 reads,

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: (that incidentally is a kind of theme clause for the entire book of Matthew: behold thy King cometh unto thee. The prophet continues) he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he (that is the rider) he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit in which is no water.”

Let's turn now to Matthew chapter 21 and read the passage that contains the historical fulfillment of at least one major point of the prophecy that Zechariah gave so many hundreds of years ago. Verse 1 of Matthew chapter 21, and the evangelist writes,

“And when they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, ‘Go into the village opposite against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say anything unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.’ All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the

trees, and spread them in the way. And 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. 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.”

May the Lord bless this reading from his Word.

We appreciate those words that have been spoken by Lynn concerning music, because it is important to remember that the reason that we do sing lies in the instruction that we receive from the things that we sing and also in the things that we express through the things that we sing.

And of course we sing best and we sing most meaningfully when the things that we are sing are true to the Word of God. This hymn is one of my favorite hymns and it also is so popular among members of the Christian church that other uses have been made of this particular hymn, and one of them I could not help but think of as we were singing that last stanza: “Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also / the body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still / His kingdom is forever. And some years ago I remember reading an article on why we should follow the Word of God regardless of what it may mean to the local church.

And, in fact, we may even have to follow the Word of God and follow it so necessarily that the membership of the local church may suffer as a result. And that we should remember that we must follow the Word of God rather than, even, our natural desires to have a large congregation or, a large membership, and someone inserted these last words of this hymn but added to them, “Let goods and kindred go *some membership* also the body they may kill God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever.” I’m tempted at times to sing that, but he was trying to express the truth that in the final analysis it is what God says in his Word that is the important thing and not our success according to earthly standards while we are here upon the earth.

The subject for the exposition of today is the “The Untriumphal Entry.” It’s hardly without design that probably the two most significant figures of human history appeared in the same generation of the human story. One of these was Augustus Caesar *homo imperiosus*, or imperial man who destroyed Cato’s dream of the old republic and its freedom. Augustus has been called on the ancient inscriptions the “divine Caesar” and the “son of god” giving to him the titles that belonged ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, it is probable that the writer of the book of Revelation was alluding to some of these things in the exaltation of the Roman emperors and particularly Domitian when he spoke of the Lord Jesus and particularly Domitian as being King of Kings and Lord of Lords, because these titles were given to the Roman emperors, ultimately, as the worship of the emperor became more predominant in the Roman Empire.

Augustus, or *homo imperiosus*, shattered his foes by force but he could not bring in the golden age. As one of the men who has dealt with this particular part of history in much depth has said, “He could find but he could not slay the dragon.” The Lord Jesus is the Prince of Peace—*principis pacis*, or *homo pacifare*, or “the peace-bearing man.” And of course that title is derived from Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6, when the titles of Prince of Peace and other titles are given to him, and it is said that on him he shall bear on his shoulders the ultimate universal rule.

At the crucifixion, the Lord Jesus, by the path that he trod, was able to wrest the kingdom from the ancient dragon, overcome him, and make it possible for messianic rule to take place upon the earth and then on into eternity. So you can see that from the standpoint of earthly history, Calvary is as some of the ancient poets blindly anticipated—Virgil for one—Calvary is the hinge of history. And our Western history is largely determined by what happened when Jesus Christ suffered upon that cross.

Now we’ve been looking through the Gospel of Matthew, and we have noted that there are a number of high points in the ministry of our Lord. We think of course of his virgin birth, of his temptation, of his baptism, of the transfiguration, and later on we shall spend some time dealing with the agony in Gethsemane, and ultimately the death and resurrection. One of the other high points of

our Lord’s ministry—and high point of the steps that he took along the way to the climax of his work—was the triumphal entry.

We think of it today as Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday was a day of wild rapture of enthusiasm and the delirium of eager welcome, but of little genuine spirituality. Those who were shouting out, “hosanna in the highest!” or as those words mean, *hoshiana*, “Save now, or save, we pray,” they little realized what they were saying. Few seemed to understand the meaning of the hour, and to most the entry was not a triumphal entry at all, but very untriumphal. And if you’re looking at it from the standpoint of worldly success, we all would have to say it was not a very triumphal entry.

I’ve always thought since I read the stanzas by G. K. Chesterton that he had forcefully caught something of the hidden meaning of our Lord’s triumphal entry. He wrote, “When fishes flew (this is was entitled the donkey) when fishes flew and forests walked and figs grew upon thorn, some moment when the moon was blood, then surely I was born. With monstrous head and sickening cry and ears like errant wings, the devil’s walking parody of all four footed things, the tattered outlaw of the earth of ancient crooked will, starved, scourged, deride me; I am dumb. I keep my secret still fools. For I also had my hour one far fierce hour, and sweet there was a shout above about my ears and palms before my feet.”

Well I don’t think the donkey really understood what was happening. But I’m sure that as you look at it from the standpoint of the donkey there was something that was happening. That while the world did not understand. we have now come to understand as being exceedingly significant. The excitement that was there was real, but it was misguided. Some of it understood the essential nature of the person of our Lord, because the things that were said were said by men who had truly believed in him, though their understanding was limited. But a lot of it was totally misguided, and as a matter of fact, most of the people were totally unprepared for what our Lord did. George McDonald, I think, has captured their mood effectively: “They were all looking for a king to slay their foes and lift them high though camest a little baby thing that made a woman cry.” So we

have a wild rapture of enthusiasm and eager excitement of welcome but misunderstanding of what was really transpiring.

I often think we have a great deal of that in some of our evangelical churches we have a lot of excitement, a lot of enthusiasm at times, but it is totally misguided. It is not grounded in the words of Holy Scripture, not grounded in the sound doctrinal teaching of the Word of God. The entry of our Lord into Jerusalem has great doctrinal significance, because it is solemn declaration of himself in his office. It was his way of pointing out as effectively as could possibly be pointed out that he was the Old Testament, promised messianic king. And I think it's interesting too that from this point on, the Lord Jesus does not it seems keep his messianic secret any longer. We have noticed in going through the Gospel of Matthew that at specific points in his ministry, when it was evident he had performed a mighty miracle, he frequently turned to them and said, “Now don't say anything about it, because it was not yet his hour. And he knew that their sense their ideas of the messianic kingdom were wrong, they thought of it only as a political kingdom, that if they had proclaimed that nature of it too soon, it might have hastened his crucifixion and been out of harmony with the slow measured progress that God the Father had determined. And so, from time to time he said keep quiet. Now they didn't always keep quiet, but that's what he was telling them.

From now on the mission and the dignity of the Son are no longer a secret, the ancient prophecies are to be fulfilled, and all of the parts of this little account here unite to proclaim to the nation Israel and to others, Behold your king. It was the feast time of the Passover. Thirty years after the time of the Lord Jesus, the Romans took a census of the lambs that were slain in the city of Jerusalem on a later Passover feast, and according to the account, they counted two hundred and fifty thousand lambs were slain in one of those Passover feasts thirty years after the death of our Lord.

Now in rabbinic literature, it is stated that there should be ten individuals for each lamb—a minimum of ten individuals for each lamb. In other words, when a lamb was slain, there should be at least ten people gathered in the house to eat that particular lamb. So you can see if that were carried

out at the time of our Lord’s death at the time of his visit to the city of Jerusalem, then the city of Jerusalem must have had a population of over two million people at this time. Now since its ordinary population was of a relatively small city by our standards, you can see that it was packed and jammed with literally hundreds of thousands of people who had come from all over the land, and perhaps all over the inhabited world to celebrate this important feast in Judaism. So that’s the background.

Now there is one other thing I think we need to understand if we are going to understand this account, and that is that the prophets of the Old Testament—and remember, our Lord, is the last and greatest of the prophets; he is the prophet of the prophets; he is the everlasting prophet; the Great Prophet, according to Moses in his prophesy. These prophets of the Old Testament not only spoke their messages but they also often gave their messages by acting out in parabolic fashion, dramatically, the things that they wanted to say. Now they usually accompanied this by words, because it is really impossible for us to be certain about the meaning of events if we do not have a written or spoken interpretation of them. But they frequently were told by the Lord to carry out certain physical acts in order to get over their prophetic message.

For example, when it became evident that there was going to be a division in the kingdom at the time of Solomon’s death, and Rehoboam’s accession to the throne, when it became very evident that most of the land was not going to follow the impetuous Rehoboam, God knowing all of this in advance, spoke to the Prophet Ahijah and made known to the Prophet Ahijah that it would be Jeraboam who would rule over the ten northern tribes and Rehoboam would rule over the two faithful southern tribes.

And so Ahijah was directed by God to go to Jeraboam with a new garment when he came into the presence of Jeraboam who was not yet king, he took off this garment and tore it into twelve pieces, and gave ten of the pieces to Jeraboam and kept two of him for himself, and this was his way of saying that the kingdom was going to be rent in two there would be a division into the northern and southern kingdom kingdoms, and ten of the tribes would follow Jeraboam and two would remain faithful to Rehoboam. So this was a kind of acted parable of spiritual truth.

Later, Jeremiah, for example, Ezekiel does this often, but Jeremiah, when it also had become evident through the words of the Lord to him that it would be impossible for the nation to escape the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah made bonds and yokes and sent them to the cities round about the land of Palestine. He sent these bonds and yokes in order to let them know he sent them to Edom he sent them to Tyre he sent them to Sidon and cities like this—that was to let them know that no matter what they did, they would not escape the Babylonian captivity. And then Jeremiah put a yoke upon his own head in order to signify that the land of which he was a part would not escape the captivity.

Later on, the Prophet Hananiah, speaking—he was one of these prophets who liked to speak what people liked to hear rather than the truth of God (interested in the membership, you know)—Well Hananiah, in objecting to this sad, defeatist message of Jeremiah, went up to Jeremiah and took the yoke off of his neck and broke it signifying that what Jeremiah had said was not going to come to pass. But of course, God fulfills his words, and the words of his true prophets, and it did and he did.

So now it is necessary for us to remember all of this as we come to the triumphal entry, because it's obvious that the Lord Jesus acts here as the Great Prophet, and as a matter of fact, acts out in messianic symbolism what he is really doing when he enters the city of Jerusalem.

Now we read in verse 1, “And when they drew near unto Jerusalem.” They had come from Jericho, and he had come from the north, and they, according to the other Gospel accounts, had spent the night in Bethany which was near the city of Jerusalem. There the Lord Jesus always had a welcome in the little village of Bethany, because that was the place where Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived. They spent the night there and then the next morning they set out in the festive procession for the city of Jerusalem.

And it was fitting that they should come from Bethany to the mount of Olives, because the mount of Olives in the Old Testament had messianic significance. There were messianic associations with it. I wish we had time to look at passages like 2 Samuel chapter 15 and verse 32 and others. And

then we remember that when the Lord Jesus comes in his second advent and comes to the earth, his feet shall touch the Mount of Olives. It is from the mount of Olives that he ascends, and it is to the mount of Olives that he comes in his second advent. So it was very fitting that he should approach the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

When he arrived at the little village of Bethphage, there he told two of his disciples to go over into a village that was just across the way from Bethphage, and he said to them, I want you to go into that village and you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her, and I want you to loose them and bring them to me. A great deal of speculation has been expended on what this really means and also how it was carried out. Was this totally unexpected on the part of the person who owned these animals or had our Lord Jesus already made provision for it? Well the Scriptures are silent on that particular point, but it does seem evident that this person must have been a believer. He understood exactly what was meant when they said the Lord had need of them. So either he had made preparation for this in advance—and that’s not unlikely because he made preparation for the Passover and the use of the upper room, so it’s entirely possible that he had said, when I enter the city of Jerusalem, I may need two of the animals, and keep them ready—or it may be that he was simply a believer in the Lord Jesus and recognized the disciples as believers and when they said the Lord has need of them, he was willing to part with them.

At any rate that is what has what is said, and the other Gospels add another important feature. The Lord Jesus said to them you will find an ass and a colt—incidentally Matthew mentions two; they only mention one, and that also has occasioned a great deal of discussion by the commentators who have sought to find here a misunderstanding of the book of Zechariah by Matthew because of Hebrew parallelism in the Old Testament, the passage in Zechariah probably has reference to only one animal, but Matthew, not reading it correctly, has seen two animals, failing to see the particular form of Hebrew expression there, so that he misunderstood the parallelism and saw two animals instead of one.

I've always thought that this is an amazing thing that people with a sound mind could believe that commentators in the twentieth century would know more about Hebrew parallelism and the meaning of Old Testament text than Hebrew men who were outstanding students of the Word, and apostles of the Lord Jesus understood nineteen hundred years ago. Now that's strains my imagination to think that there could really be people who think that they understand more about the Old Testament than the apostles who were taught by our Lord, but nevertheless that's the truth.

Now recently there has been a well-known doctoral dissertation which has taken up this point, and this author, a respected man, has contended that the reason there are two animals is because in the case of the colt of the ass, it's a well-known fact that the colt of the ass, the foal of the ass, would not be ridable at all if the mother were not there and so the reference here to riding upon an ass is a reference to the mother, and the colt the foal of the ass, is to the offspring of the mother, and because the mother was present, then it was possible for our Lord to ride the animal on which no one had yet sat.

Now that's the other thing that the other accounts add. It is specifically stated that this ass should be an ass upon which no one has ever sat. The reason for that would be understood by people who lived two thousand years ago, but not so well by us. It also was the custom when a village or people welcomed a king for them to do things for the king that were absolutely new. For example, if we were in ancient times, and if it were told us that the president is going to visit us, we'll transfer that and say the the king in Washington is going to visit us—there's certainly a similarity there maybe more than we realize—but anyway, if he is to visit us, then the city fathers or the village fathers would seek some way by which they can honor the king. And one of the popular ways was to construct a new road into the village on which no one has ever traveled, so that in honor of the king, they would cut a new road so that when the king came, he would come in on a new road.

Furthermore nothing that was secondhand or used was ever to be put in put to the service of a king. So when it is stated that he should come in upon an animal upon which no one has ever

sat, that was an indication of the fact that our Lord was the messianic king, and you’ll notice it comes from him. It is his claim in effect that he is the messianic king.

Now when Matthew describes this he himself adds some things. These incidentally are the evangelist’s interpretations. Notice the 4th verse: “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” So you can see from these verses that Matthew has inserted here that the evangelist understands that all that our Lord is doing in taking the ass, riding upon the ass, with the people following along in front and in the rear, all of this was designed by our Lord to provide Israel with a giant object lesson to imprint upon the minds of the viewers this event and to say in effect to them, the kingdom is mine; I am the king. Zechariah, the prophecy in which it is said, thy king cometh unto thee is fulfilled in my entry into the city at this time. So it was then, I say, our Lord’s way in parabolic fashion of teaching, that the kingdom came when he entered the city with him.

Well now in verses 6 through 9, the evangelist describes the procession towards Jerusalem. The disciples had gone their way into the little village. And he and those that were associated with him inched their way along the caravan road from Jericho to Jerusalem and made their way up toward the top of the Mount of Olives, at which when reaching, that he would look out over the city and break into tears mourning over the fact that their hearts were so cold and unresponsive to him.

But we read in the 8th verse, and a very great multitude spread their garments in the way. Now I think it’s important for us to understand what happened in order to understand what this really means. You see, the disciples had gone off into this little village, and in addition, there were many other disciples of the Lord who had also gone into the city of Jerusalem which was nearby, no doubt to spend the night. Word had been noised abroad that the Lord, or Jesus of Nazareth, was in the area, and that created a great deal of interest on the part of those who were either curious about him or who had seen some of the miracles he had performed and had been won to him.

And furthermore, since he had been coming down from the north, and had reached the city of Jericho with a large group of people who were his disciples, there were those who were with him who were his disciples, and then there were those who came out from the city out of curiosity—perhaps also some of them were disciples—and then of course there was the giant multitude in the city, who, as we shall see, are largely rebellious with reference to the claims of the king.

So, all of this group of people apparently meet, and the meeting of the groups of people in the presence of our Lord before he reaches the city evidently generates a great deal of enthusiasm and arouses the spontaneous shouting which we read of in verse 9: “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.” So here is the crowd composed of disciples, of curious people who have come out from the city, going into the city, which is rebellious toward the Great King.

And the disciples, the apostles of the Lord, are traveling along now with the Lord Jesus as he rides on this little animal. They have taken their garments off they’ve thrown their garments down in enthusiasm before the ass, before our Lord. Others of his disciples have cut down limbs from the palm trees and myrtle trees and willow trees and they were throwing them out in front of the animal, because that had been done in the Old Testament when Jehu was anointed king as well. So carried away with the enthusiasm of the occasion and understanding something about it, the Lord Jesus was moving toward the city.

The disciples, I say, were walking along, I think, dazed and dazzled by everything that was happening. They understood of course something about our Lord. They had put their trust in him but beyond that they understood very little of what was happening. The crowd that was acclaiming him were primarily the provincials who had come from the north who were his friends. You’ve often heard people say in reference to the Lord Jesus that the people who acclaimed him as the king one day in a few hours are shouting crucify him, crucify him!

Now of course I do believe that men’s hearts are that wicked, but so far as we know that is not what happened on this particular occasion. There were two entirely different groups: those that

were shouting to him, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the son of David; Hosanna in the highest, were those who had some concept of his greatness and his glory and who had believed in him, but the crowd within the city that shouts out, crucify him, crucify him, that crowd is representative of the great of the mass of the nation who have never responded to the claims of the Lord Jesus.

Now it is striking, too, that they do shout, Hosanna to the son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest, or as Luke said, Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Again they reach back into the Old Testament, I'm sure, guided by the Holy Spirit, though they may not have understood much about it. They reached back into the Old Testament they take out a text from Psalm 118, one of the greatest of the messianic Psalms which someone has called a string of pearls each one independent of the other, because it's a Psalm in which there are some magnificent expressions of theological truth, but it's very difficult to follow the argument of that particular Psalm.

Now that Psalm the one 118th Psalm, was the Psalm that was used at the Feast of Tabernacles for the liturgy of that feast. We don't have time to talk about the seven great feasts in Israel—but this is the greatest and last of the feasts in which there is a recognition of the fact that there is to be a kingdom of God upon the earth, so at the Feast of Tabernacles, it is designed to represent the period of time in the future when the nation shall gather in rest in the kingdom upon the earth, and so it is very fitting that they should reach back again into the Old Testament, select a text that has to do with the messianic king and his authority.

And even these branches that they took the *lulabim* as they were called, we also recognized as having some messianic significance. They say, also, incidentally, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and the expression he that cometh was one of the messianic titles of the Old Testament. So you see all the details of this event unite to show that this is the official presentation by the Lord Jesus of himself to the nation Israel.

Now if this is the official presentation of the king to the nation, and if this is the royal procession, and if this is a king, it's a strange king indeed. Because he's a king who doesn't even have an ass of his own to ride upon; he has to borrow an ass. And furthermore, instead of followers who are soldiers dressed in shining or resplendent armor, he has a group of peasants with palm branches. Instead of having swords and weapons of warfare they have the palm branches. What would a Roman soldier or one of Herod's men have thought of this rustic procession of a pauper prince who's riding on an ass and a hundred and two or more of weaponless, penniless men? I'm sure they were very much unimpressed.

But Christ's one moment of royal splendor is as eloquent of his humiliation as the long stretch of his whole of his lowly, humble life. All of this is designed to express certain things about his character. And yet, as is usually the case, side by side with the lowliness of our Lord, there gleams his supreme sovereignty. We talk about lowliness, and after all, this was lowly because when a man rode upon an ass, he rode upon a beast of burden. In the East, the beasts of burden were the asses, the camels, and the women. These were the beast of burden in those days. And the ass was the lowliest beast of burden, so to ride upon the ass was about as humble as a person could get.

Now I say it was a strange king and yet at the same time notice that amid this humility there is also sovereignty. He speaks to those two disciples, and he says, now I want you to go into that city, and I want you to say to the man the Lord has need of them, and they will turn them over to you, and that's exactly what happened. In other words as the king he requisitions those animals and they respond to it. So even in the midst of this humble appearance of our Lord, there is nevertheless, underneath, the dignity of the supreme sovereign of this universe.

And you know my friends let me say this, I really have, I must confess, no problems about the genuineness of our Gospel. I can remember when I was first beginning to study the New Testament when I was an insurance man in Alabama, and I had most of the natural questions that people have. In fact, I guess most of my problems were altogether, I thought, intellectual, about the

Word of God about other things. And I have always attempted down through these thirty years or so to try to find the reasons for the things that I believe. I do think that that is important.

And of course, I have come I think to my own particular view of how we know spiritual things as a result of wrestling for many years over the questions of how we can know with certainty. And finally it came to me as an illumination for the Holy Spirit the same thing that he had done with many others that we can ultimately know nothing apart from the ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. And that the ultimate attestation of everything that we know must be divine. There can be no certainty in human experience apart from the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit which brings us to the conviction with the assurance of the Holy Spirit’s testimony within, that the Word of God is true.

Now once that came to me, then many things began to become perfectly plain. The problems of the Gospels—I’ve never had any problem with them any longer—many things I don’t understand yet. And I put them aside to ponder and think about until God does reveal the truth to me. But you know one of the greatest problems is how it would be possible for anyone to think of a supreme sovereign, and at the same time an humble man who would ride upon an ass, and to weave together these two concepts of the supreme sovereignty of the Son of God and the utmost and lowliest humility into one harmonious picture.

Now if a Shakespeare or a Milton or any other great human being had attempted to do this, he would of course fail. None of them ever attempted to do it. All of the attempts have failed because there is no way in which these two things can be put together in such a way that you see one harmonious whole.

Now how is it possible for these evangelists—Matthew who was nothing unusual, Mark, Luke, John—how were these ordinary men able to do it? Well, of course, they were able to do it, because they were taught by the Holy Spirit. But there is something else I think that needs to be said. They were able to do it because they did not manufacture anything. They were reporters. In other

words, what they saw, what they wrote about, were things that they saw with their eyes and heard with their ears and they simply reported them.

And these two great truths of divine sovereignty and utter lowliness are found beautifully meshed and harmonized in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they simply reported what they saw. And we see that so beautifully here, because even as he rides upon the ass, he is the supreme sovereign of the universe who requisitions the animals upon which he rides, and men respond.

Now when he entered into the city there was a great deal of puzzlement. The milling multitude entered the city, and as a result of their loud acclamations, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna to the son of David: Hosanna in the highest as they shouted over the small city, the crowds began to gather around them, and Matthew says the all the city was moved. Incidentally, that word moved is one that is used of earthquakes, so this was a a rather severe moving. They were agitated, but they were agitated by the anxiety that was created through the acclamations that were offered to the person of our Lord, and I do think that the agitation ultimately proceeded from the Spirit’s convicted ministry. This is the crowd that later on, will shout crucify him crucify him, but now they ask the worried question, who is this? Who is this? And the answer of the multitude this is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Now I don’t think there is anything more anticlimactic in all of the Word of God than that. Now we don’t realize how anticlimactic that is until we think about it just a moment. Here is the Lord Jesus coming in upon the ass, people are shouting out, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the multitudes, agitated, speak out, who is this? Well you might expect them to say, why this is the Lord Jesus Christ the King of Israel the Messiah the Savior of the world; he is thy Lord, worship thou him.

But instead, what do we get? It’s Jesus—the human name—the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. He’s just one of the long line of men who have attached to themselves the name prophet. Well you can see from this, our Lord, no doubt with some of the wetness of the tears that he shed on the Mount of Olives still upon his face, enters into the temple in a few moments. He’s silent through

all of this, and finally he turns and goes home late in the afternoon with hardly a word. It’s obvious that he saw the die was cast. The nation will not respond.

May I conclude by saying this, that the evidence is overwhelming that he formally offered himself to the nation here. If you study the prophecy of Daniel, you will see, from Daniel chapter 9 verse 25, that this was the precise time when the sixty-nine weeks or the four hundred and eighty-three years had come to a conclusion at the time our Lord entered the city. Some of the students of the prophetic Word have even claimed that those sixty-nine weeks were fulfilled on the very day he entered Jerusalem.

Any student of Scripture would have known the Messiah was near at hand. The prophetic symbolism and the fulfillment according to Zechariah 9:9 is so obvious that anyone who understood Zechariah would say this must be the fulfillment. The evangelist Matthew makes the comment and says, this was done that that prophecy might be fulfilled. He understood this as the official presentation of himself to the nation, and the following parabolic teaching which we shall study—this very interesting parable at the end of the chapter—is grounded in the fact that our Lord understands that the kingdom has been presented, and furthermore that it is being rejected and the peoples’ actions in the shouting out of messianic texts concur.

By the way a modern scholar—to show you how blind men can be in the study of the Bible—a modern scholar has said the reason the Lord Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem riding on an ass is because he was tired, and the road was uphill all the way. You cannot be blinder than that.

So what we can say then is the provincial recognition of the deity of our Lord Jesus and his kingship did not carry national assent. The nation stumbled at the stone of stumbling, expecting a king on a warhorse, like a Bellerophon on a mighty Pegasus, or a Seattle [insdistinct], but instead the king came riding upon an ass. Of course, in his first coming, he came to die. O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written: ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, he told them on the Emmaus Road, and then to enter into his glory. They didn’t understand that he

must die first because of sin to make that atonement, and then would come the time of glory. So they stumbled at the stone of stumbling.

Now all is not lost. We read over in chapter 23 that later on the Lord Jesus said to the nation, behold your house is left unto you desolate, and then in chapter 23 verse 39 he says, for I say unto you you shall not see me henceforth till you shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. So there is a time coming when the nations shall respond saying, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and they shall say it genuinely at his second advent. Then there shall be a triumphal entry that is truly triumphal. In the meantime, the prayer lament of the genuine is: O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourn and lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

If you're here this morning and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus. I know our time is up. I again remind you that he has made an atonement for sinners, and if God the Holy Spirit has brought conviction to your heart that you need this salvation, it's available for you as you turn to him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle said, and thou shalt be saved. May God help you to truly believe. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, these texts are so momentous, and it so difficult for us to adequately expound them, and we pray Lord, that Thou wilt take these very weak and failing words concerning the glory of the Son of God and bring them home to the hearts of those who to do need to hear concerning him. So Lord we commit the Word of God to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. May grace mercy and peace go with us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.