

Well now, on this sabbath day large groups of Jews leave the city of Jerusalem. They descend the mountains on which Jerusalem is built and then they climb the mount of Olives behind which lies Bethany.

They are making for Bethany, where they want to meet Lazarus.

In the home of Martha then on that sabbath day there is an unusual amount of activity. There is coming and going. The many visitors look with curious eyes upon Lazarus. Yes, it is true, he lives and there is nothing unusual about his appearance. He speaks just like other people. There is nothing to show that he has been dead. There is nothing to show that he has lain four days in the grave.

Then they turn their wondering and respectful glances to the Lord Jesus. He then, the Prophet of Nazareth, has worked that great miracle. In the gospel of John we read that many believed on the Lord Jesus.

The Pharisees notice very quickly that something unusual is going on. They see the stirrings among the people. They hear the discussions. They hear that on every hand people are talking about the Lord Jesus with respect and admiration. They realise from the words of the people that many of them see in Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

That is a serious matter. Their hearts are filled not only with anger and revenge, but also with anxiety. O, all is not well, all is not well.

They had resolved to put Jesus to death. They had issued a command that any who knew where Jesus was, should come and tell them at once.

And now just look. ... In great troops the people are going out to look for the hated and feared Nazarite. But, foolish as they think the people are, they themselves will act wisely.

The Sanhedrin is called together in nervous haste. There they consider what to do. They must do something to put an end to this, but what can they do?

O, it is so difficult for them, so terribly difficult! They cannot deny all the signs and wonders which Jesus has done and is still doing. Yes, they did once say that Jesus did them through the power of the devil, but they do not really believe that themselves. They had said that to mislead the people.

Look, there sit the Scribes and Pharisees together. One suggests this, another that. They clench their fists in helpless anger. Some suggest a plan to kill Lazarus, for they can achieve nothing so long as he lives as a witness of Jesus' mighty power.

Is it not terrible, boys and girls? Without any good reason they want to kill Lazarus, who is quite innocent. They want to murder that God-fearing man. Truly, nothing will make these wicked Jewish leaders repent. Instead of acknowledging Jesus as the long promised Messiah, their hearts are full of murderous plans.

At last, evening falls and quietness returns to Jerusalem.

It has been a restless Sabbath for the members of the Sanhedrin, a Sabbath which filled those Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem with hatred and fear. Probably they spent a sleepless night puzzling and planning a method of putting Jesus, that dangerous Nazarite to death. Shall they succeed? ...

Quiet! ... Just listen! ... What is that? ...

In the far distance we can hear a confused uproar. Is it a battle cry? ... No, it is not the sound of battle. It sounds more like the rejoicing of a large crowd of people.

Listen! ... The sound comes nearer! What can it mean? ... There is as yet nothing to see, for the Mount of Olives is ahead of us. But beyond it people are singing and shouting with joy and jubilation. What is it all about? ...

Come, in our thoughts we will go and see, children. We hurry down to the valley and then climb the slopes of Olivet. And then, when at last we are on the top of the mountain, we can see what it is.

A crowd containing hundreds and hundreds of Jews is approaching.

O, just look how happy they are. Their eyes gleam with joy. They wave their hands in which they are holding branches of palm trees. They are ~~singing~~ ^{singing} and cry out joyfully.

"Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Who is coming then? ... Look ... over there!

In the middle of this great multitude there is a strange group. Upon the foal of an ass there sits a Man. The little animal walks calmly along the road. Around that Man crowds of Jews are rushing to and fro enthusiastically. They cast their clothes upon the ground, so that He shall not ride upon the road, but upon a carpet of clothing.

This Man is - ~~the~~ ^{the} King!

That is why the people rejoice and cry "Hosanna".

The Man upon that lowly beast is ... the Lord Jesus, the great Prophet of Nazareth!

But ... but, does Jesus permit such things? ... Earlier on, in Galilee, the Jews had also wanted to make Him King, but He had then refused. He had then constrained His disciples to go into a ship. Then, He had sent the multitude away.

And what now? ... Now He does not refuse!

But, surely, the Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die? ... Why then does He permit the people to pay Him homage as King? Why does He not forbid it?

Listen, and I will try to make the reason clear to you.

We have just been reading that upon the Jewish Sabbath, that is on our Saturday, the Lord was in Bethany. It is now Sunday morning. For the Jews that is the first day of the working week. For us Sunday is the day of rest, is it not? But for the Jews it is the first workday.

In the morning the Lord leaves Bethany with His disciples and proceeds on His journey to Jerusalem. Many Jews who have stayed the night in Bethany, accompany them. These Jews are excited. They are hoping that Jesus will now at last accept the crown. They expect Him now at last to set up the kingdom. And indeed, it appears that they are to be proved right.

? an The Lord Jesus sends two of His disciples out to fetch the foal of the ass. They have during this time come close to the little hamlet of Bethphage.

He tells them: "Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat; loose him, and bring him hither. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him."

The two disciples went and ... everything came to pass precisely as the Lord Jesus had foretold them.

Who was the owner? ... We do not know. Evidently he was a man who believed in the Lord Jesus, for when the disciples say to him: "The Lord hath need of him," he makes no further enquiry, and lets them go.

Soon afterwards the disciples return to their Master with the beast. Then they take off their coats and lay them over the back of the colt to form a saddle. They then set Jesus upon the colt and proceed on the journey.

There now is their King! O what joy wells up in the hearts of Jesus' disciples! At last! At last! And in spite of everything! But the people too are also overcome by joy. At first the crowds looked on in wonderment, without realising the intention, but as soon as they do realise what is taking place, then their eyes too sparkle with happiness. Yes, yes, that is fine! Jesus is their king!

But a king should surely be shown royal respects? ... Well then, that shall be attended to.

They take off their garments and spread them on the ground before the Lord Jesus, that He should ride over them. That is a sign of the highest honour. Others pluck branches from palm trees and cast them upon the garments, or wave them to and fro in their hands.

Loudly they cry out: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Such is the joyful shout which echoes among the mountains of Judea.

But look, a huge crowd is coming out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus. The Jews in Jerusalem have heard that the Prophet of Nazareth is drawing nigh. They hurry to meet Him. And when they behold the joy of those who are coming with Jesus to Jerusalem, then they too take branches of palm trees.

That is why we call the Sunday before Easter "Palm Sunday".

The two groups are meeting. What happiness, what immense joy. The air is full of rejoicing. The groups unite and together they make towards the city.

They climb the Mount of Olives. Soon they are standing at the top of the hill. And then the joy reaches its crescendo ... for there, before them, in all its beauty lies the old city of David, Jerusalem!

The sunbeams reflect from the great buildings of the Lord's temple. O, now the city shall be released from the Roman yoke. Now shall the kingdom of David be restored in all its glory. The moment of liberation is approaching. At last, at last!

And for that reason ... "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!"

Just look at the disciples! An unknown sense of joy rises within them. Their fear is gone. Gone is their gloomy premonition. They have forgotten the words of their beloved Master, with which He had foretold to them His ignominious death. They do not give that another thought.

"Hosanna! Hosanna!" is their joyful cry also.

Look, there rides their King! Their beloved King! How happy He must be. Happy? ... Just look then.

Jesus also beholds the city of Jerusalem in all her beauty. But the eyes of Jesus do not sparkle with joy. His eyes are filled with tears. He weeps!

Why is that then?

Is He thinking about His sufferings and death, and is He weeping about that? Does He dread it? ... Is He in some way anxious about that? ...

No indeed! ... Why, then does He weep?

O, the Lord Jesus, the All-knowing is not looking just four days ahead, but forty years! O, terrible times are in store for that city, which now lays bathed in sunlight. Upon that same Mount of Olives mighty armies shall come. The armies of world-conquering Rome. They shall besiege the city. They shall destroy and burn it down.

He, the All-knowing, weeps because He knows that thousands, yes tens of thousands shall perish miserably in that desperate war. They shall perish with hunger. Pestilence shall carry them off to the grave. The swords of the Romans shall cut them down. Mothers shall kill their children and eat them, maddened by gnawing hunger.

He knows that all this misery shall come of a certainty. Why? ...

Well, because they reject Him, the King of Israel.

Reject Him? ... Surely not. They are shouting His praises enthusiastically. They are carrying Him in with joy.

Ah, those rejoicing people are mistaken. They think that Jesus is about to set up an earthly kingdom. They are bearing in an earthly king.

But that is not what He is. He is the Saviour, the suffering Surety! He shall shed His blood and give His life for His people.

But the Jews think nothing of that. They have no desire for a Saviour. And that is why those same people, a few days later, shall scream themselves hoarse: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" They shall nail Him to the God-cursed tree.

And that is why the punishment shall fall. The fearful punishment. The vengeance of God. The beautiful city of Jerusalem shall be completely destroyed. Blood shall stream down the steps of the altar. A smoking heap of rubble shall be the horrible end.

So, boys and girls, that is why the Lord Jesus is weeping. Hear how He cries out mournfully: "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" He means: if only the people in Jerusalem could see Him as their Saviour and Redeemer.

Then, with a sigh, He says: "But now they are hid from thine eyes."

His warning voice is still to be heard. He foretells to those foolish people the unbelievable suffering which they must endure. But no-one listens.

No indeed. "Hosanna! Hosanna!"

Amongst the rejoicing multitudes there walk also a number of Pharisees. They see and hear everything in tight-lipped silence. Their hearts are beating with fear and anxiety. Now it has happened - just as they had feared.

They grumble among themselves, saying: "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him."

Anxiously they press forward and say to Jesus in indignant tones: "Master, rebuke thy disciples."

But the answer is calm. "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." He means: "This must take place, and that is why I do not forbid them on this occasion."

Matthew 21 vv.15 and 16.

The procession moves on. It descends the Mount of Olives and soon begins to climb up to the city itself. Jesus rides solemnly into the city.

All Jerusalem is moved. The people rush together and ask: "Who is this?"

And the joyful answer comes from the crowd: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

But that which thousands of those Jews had expected, does not happen. They had expected Jesus to call them to battle. They had hoped that the cry would soon echo: "Death to the Romans! Kill! Kill!"

At the temple however, Jesus steps down and enters the house of God. There He heals some who are blind and lame, who come to Him.

But listen! Suddenly some children's voices call: "Hosanna to the Son of David." O, the little ones are copying the grown-ups.

The Pharisees begin to mock. With contempt they say to Jesus: "Hearest thou

"It is becoming a game for children, do you allow

such a thing?"

They are very displeased about it.

Calmly the Son of God replies: "Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

In the meantime evening has come.

The Jewish people are disappointed. Why has Jesus not called them to battle? ... Is He not the King of Israel? They cannot understand it. They had quite certainly expected something like that to happen.

Slowly the anxiety of the Pharisees recedes. What they had feared has not come about. The great uprising against the Romans has not taken place.

And while rest returns to Jerusalem after that exciting day, a little group of men walks through the dusk towards Bethany. This group consists of the Lord Jesus with His disciples. They too are disappointed, yet they are following their Master. The joy however has gone from their hearts.

Soon afterwards they reach the home of Martha and there, after that tiring day, the Lord Jesus at last finds rest.

Just one more thing I must point out to you.

~~xxxxx~~ Perhaps some of you are thinking: "Why has the Lord Jesus allowed all this to take place?" Formerly He refused again and again. Why then did He not refuse now?"

Listen now! In ~~the~~ Zechariah 9 verse 9 it 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."

The prophet Zechariah lived in the time when the Jews, under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel, rebuilt the ruined temple. Can you still remember that? That was then more than five hundred years ago.

Well now, the prophet of the Lord had already prophesied that the Lord Jesus should enter Jerusalem, riding upon the foal of an ass. That prophecy had to be fulfilled.

That is why the Lord Jesus allowed it on this occasion, and that is also why He said to the Pharisees: "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out."

The prophecy of Zechariah IS now fulfilled. What is written in Zechariah has now literally taken place. They have rejoiced and Jesus has entered the city upon the foal of an ass.

O, Pharisees and Scribes, you know the Bible so well. Take notice of this. Can you still not see that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the King of Israel? Can you still not see that He is in truth the Messiah? ...

No, children, they did not want to believe in the Saviour, because there was no room in their hearts for the suffering Redeemer. They hardened their hearts under all these warnings from God. You may be sure that their conscience spoke to them, but they resisted the warnings it gave.

Is that how you react too, boys and girls? If so, O how fearful will be your end.
