**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 07 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, When they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.*

*John 12:12,13*

IN THE CALENDAR OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH THIS IS known as Palm Sunday. On Sunday last we considered our Lord's interpretation of His passion-baptism as indicated in words chronicled only by Luke, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

Now amid the Lenten shadows there breaks a ray of brightness, and flashes a touch of color. We are accustomed to speak of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem as a triumphal entry. There are certain senses in which that description is warranted; yet, it may be a misleading description. The picture is one of ineffable sadness. Contemplated in the light of the ministry of Jesus; considered in relation to all the surrounding circumstances, it was a very, very sad entry. It is a picture of great sadness, merging into gladness; of ineffable sorrow, preparing the way for unutterable and final joy.

It was the first day of the week. In the calendar of the Hebrew people it was the day on which the sacrificial lamb for the Passover was secluded. The Master had spent the Sabbath in quietness among His friends. The day of rest over, He is seen passing to Jerusalem amid the thronging and surging multitudes. It is a little difficult, I sometimes think, for us to comprehend the vastness of the crowds that gathered in Jerusalem at the Passover feast. Josephus sets the number at three million. In all probability we are correct if we say that at that great Passover feast, half, or even more, of the population scattered around Jerusalem gathered to the city. Jerusalem was quite unable to entertain them, even the surrounding villages were overcrowded, and thousands lived in booths and tents erected that they might be able to be present at the Passover feast.

The fame of Jesus had, of course, spread through all the countryside, His name had become a household word. The three years of His public ministry, the wonder of His works, and the more matchless wonder of His words had carried His fame everywhere. The people were eager and anxious to see Him, many who had never seen Him, and others, many who had often see Him, were desirous of seeing Him again. There was the added wonder of the raising of Lazarus as we are told by the evangelists. The last great public sign in demonstration of His power had been that of the raising of Lazarus. Then the news spread that He was actually coming to Jerusalem, was to enter Jerusalem that day; and so He came, passing through vast multitudes lining the way, thronging the streets.

Now the remarkable thing about this story is that He chose to enter publicly, and deliberately arranged for His entry in such a way as to provoke demonstration. You will remember another occasion where there was a feast in Jerusalem and His brethren after the flesh tried to persuade Him to come up and do this very thing; to present Himself publicly in the midst of the crowds and proclaim His Kingship; and He had said to them with a touch of tender sarcasm, "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready." He eventually went to that feast, but He went quietly, unobserved, finding His way in all probability over some of the mountain paths and through their passes, and it was not known He was coming until suddenly He was found in the temple teaching. How different this entry. He chose now to enter publicly, evoking demonstration. It was by His own arrangement that He went riding upon the colt, the foal of an ass, surrounded by the little band of His own disciples; and by those vast Galilean crowds who had always more sympathy with Him than the crowds of Judaea; the crowds from Galilee of the Gentiles, as the Judaens termed them with contempt; Galilee, the country merging on Gentile land and which had passed under Gentile influence, and in that way had become contaminated.

This entry of our Lord was part of the Divine program; that is made most clear in the Gospel of Matthew, which reveals Him in His kingly character. After He had been rejected by the rulers, He departed from Jerusalem and for a period following Caesarea Philippi, the period during which He was instructing His disciples in the necessity for His coming Cross, He had not been near the city. He is now seen going back to the city for a definite purpose, in awe-inspiring solemnity to challenge those rulers, to compel them by parabolic method to find a verdict against themselves, and then at last to pronounce the doom of the city.

I draw your attention to that only in passing, and yet, we must not lose sight of it. I feel personally that it cannot be too often emphasized that the whole movement of the ministry of Jesus in the latter days, was under His own government and by His own arranging. If we look at Him during those passion days as a victim of circumstances, we miss the vision entirely. Not as a victim did He take His way to Jerusalem and to the Cross, but as a Victor. This entry into Jerusalem was for the specific purpose of uttering its final doom, rejecting the Hebrew people from their position in the economy of God. It was during this final visit to Jerusalem that He uttered the words so full of awful solemnity, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This was a Kingly entrance. He was going deliberately and with determination, for the awe-inspiring and solemn work of pronouncing doom on the city. Yet, He was going to break a way through the doom toward the ultimate victory, going - to use the descriptive phrase of the conversation with the heavenly visitors on the mount of transfiguration - to accomplish an exodus.

Our attention then is to be fixed upon this actual entry; and we will observe it first as to the event itself; secondly, briefly as to the sequel; and finally as to the lessons it has still to teach.

Look for a moment at this entry of Jesus as a patrician Roman would have looked at it. If you do that, your heart will be filled with contempt for the whole movement, I make that suggestion in order that we may see this thing as it really appeared. Has it ever occurred to you that it was a very remarkable thing that the Roman officials did not interfere with this demonstration? They were there to quell insurrection, to hold in check the hot, turbulent Jews, and yet, there was no interference on their part! They were accustomed to see these vast multitudes gathered for religious exercises at Jerusalem; but they were perfectly aware of this strange movement and this unusual excitement manifest. They knew of the prophet of Nazareth, but they did not interfere. Why not? Because the whole thing was so utterly and absolutely contemptible. I put it more strongly still and say that which we describe as a triumphal entry would have been in the eyes of the Roman a laughing stock; the Roman who perchance had seen in the eternal city sitting on its seven hills, the triumphal return of a conqueror! I need not stop to describe in detail those triumphal entries, in which the conqueror, drawn in triumphal car, with kings whom he had overcome in war chained to his chariot wheels, amid the plaudits of the assembled multitudes, entered the city in military magnificence. Some old soldier who had seen such an entry into Rome, would look at this entry characterized by old clothes, broken trees, unarmed peasant folk, and would have held it in supreme contempt, in the kind of contempt that the West End still feels for any procession out of the East End at any hour of any day. It was just a mob; unorganized, shouting, tearing branches from trees and casting them in the way, taking their garments off and putting them across the back of the colt upon which a man rode. A man riding upon old clothes, in the midst of broken trees, surrounded by a shouting mob. That would have been the Roman outlook upon the whole scene. Grotesque!

Yet look again, for it was a most impressive procession. Forget the accidentals of the old clothes and the broken trees, and the patrician contempt for peasant folk; and see humanity thronging, pressing, jostling, around one central Man. I have seen many impressive congregations gathered in Westminster Chapel, but one abides in my memory with more impressiveness than any other. Several years ago, there was a procession of unemployed to the House of Commons, and we opened these doors simply to shelter the women while the men went on to the House. I saw this building filled from floor to ceiling with women of the East End, and never was I more impressed by any gathering in all my public ministry. The very fact that they were out of their usual place, and that there were upon them the marks that would have caused them to be held in contempt by patricians, was impressive. There was eagerness and anxiety in all their faces. Their singing of "The Marseillaise" I shall never forget; nor when asked what hymn they would like to sing they replied, "Count your blessings," and they sang it. It was a vast mass of human beings, eager, intent, wondering, ready for anything. That is the grandeur of the crowd that surrounded Jesus as He rode that day.

Look once more upon this gathering and see, so far as it is possible to see, the great spiritual truth, the thing the multitude did not see, the thing that His own disciples did not understand, the thing which at the moment He alone perfectly understood; He was taking His way to the goal which the people desired, but in a way they did not understand. They crowd around Him, these Galilean peasants, and the children of Jerusalem, crying, "Hosanna - Save now: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," were crying out for the establishment of a Kingdom, for the authority of a King, for deliverance from the yoke of bondage which rested upon them, for the dawning of a new day of light and life and peace. He was riding through the midst of that clamour toward that very goal. He was going by a way that they knew not of, a way that they so little understood that, presently, they turned the cry of Hosanna into the hiss of crucify.

He was moving through the worthless present, transmuting it into the triumphant future. If we fix our eyes upon Him alone, the other things which the patrician Roman would hold in contempt become transfigured and they become beautiful. The old clothes marked sacrificial loyalty on the part of the men who flung them upon the colt. Nothing else was at hand, therefore they brought their garments and spread them upon the colt that He might ride upon them. The old clothes of the disciples were more beautiful than the purple of patrician Romans. The very tree branches were in fact more beautiful than any human work of art could possibly be. Unarmed men have always been His army, for conducting His warfare and bringing in His victory.

The very things upon which I gaze and hold in contempt when measured by human standards have suddenly cast upon them a light and glory, that transmutes them into fine gold; and there is suggestiveness and beauty about this entrance from which one cannot escape.

Look for a moment at the crowds. The disciples, passionately eager for His crowning. This is what they so often hoped He would do. This is the kind of demonstration to which they have been attempting to urge Him. At last He is riding in, fulfilling prophecy, to proclaim Himself the King of Israel. In their gladness, in their shouting, and in the manifestation of loyalty, there was a strange yet natural reaction from the sadness of those days since Caesarea Philippi. In our Lord's contemplation of His passion, these men could not understand or follow Him; they shrank from the Cross; but this is what they had hoped for. At last, it appeared to them, that He had abandoned those words He had been uttering about the necessity for buffeting, bruising and dying in Jerusalem. At last He was going to Jerusalem, not to yield Himself to the hostility of His foes, but to proclaim His Kingship. They were filled with zeal for Him; but it was zeal without knowledge. He will teach these men, in preparation for the days to come, in the only way in which they can understand His teaching; that the Kingdom cannot come as they expect. Even though He provoke sentiment, and compel demonstration; even though the crowds are ready to shout His name and proclaim Him King; He cannot escape from that determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God which is for Him the way of the Cross.

Turn from that inner circle and observe the multitude; seeking a King, and now crowding around Him. I have often wondered what they meant when they shouted "Hosanna," and I am not quite sure until this moment. Hosanna is a combination of two words in the Hebrew tongue, the one meaning save, the other being always an exclamation, sometimes "Ho," sometimes "Now," but always exclamatory. Look at these people round about Jesus. Look at the children as they take up the song and make it ring in the temple courts. What is the thing they sing? "Hosanna, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." It is an appeal. I think we are perfectly safe in saying it means save now. You discovered from the reading of the paragraph in Psalm 118 that this was a quotation from the ancient psalmody. What did they mean? Were these Galilean peasants appealing to Him, or were they appealing to Jerusalem? Did Hosanna mean they were crying to Him to "Save now," or were they appealing to Jerusalem to receive the King? I leave it as a question, please understand that. If for the moment, I only give you my own conviction you will receive it as such and not as dogmatic or final. I think they were appealing for Him, even though as I have already said, the "Hosanna" presently merged into "Crucify"; but remember, they were two different crowds that cried, "Hosanna" and "Crucify." They were the Galilean crowds that cried, "Hosanna," and the Judaean crowds that presently cried, "Crucify." I believe that day the Galilean multitudes appealed in their song that He might be received. It was the Galilean appeal to Jerusalem to receive Him. Who answered? Not the city, not the rulers, not the publicans, but the children. For a moment there is the most perfect picture of the temple in all the ministry of Jesus. Again He cleansed it, driving out the traffickers. Then He stood in the midst surrounded by children and cripples; children singing the Galilean song, and the sick being brought to Him for healing. This for a brief hour ere He doomed the city and said, "Your house is left unto you desolate," notice "Your house," which at the beginning of His ministry He had called "My Father's house."

Whether the multitudes were appealing to Him to save, or to Jerusalem to receive, the fundamental truth is the same; they were seeking for His authority. Yet, the basis of their desire was wholly wrong. The basis of their desire was selfish, they would crown Him, as they had attempted to do again and again, because they believed that if He were King they would be fed with material food, healed of physical disorder, brought into the place of material blessing. There is no spiritual passion in the cry, no deep sense of sin underlying it. So He rode in with disciples mistaking His meaning, glad because He is abandoning, as they think, at the last moment, His purpose of the Cross; surrounded by the multitudes seeking authority, appealing to Him to save, or to Jerusalem to receive, as the case may be, in order that the Kingdom may be upon a material basis.

Now look once more. The only consistent people in the crowd apart from the King, are the Pharisees; hostile, fearful, rebellious, determined; consistent with themselves. Remember, a man may be consistent and that may be the terrible indictment you can bring against him. John was beheaded that Herod might be consistent; "l have given my word to the wanton and I will behead the prophet"; so spake Herod. Let us beware of being consistent if consistent means persistent in a thing which is evil.

So the procession moved on, and the King moved in. Though the disciples and the multitudes alike saw the glitter of a crowning, He saw the blood of the Cross. They imagined He was now coming to establish His throne, and break the yoke of Rome and set His people free; He knew that He was moving toward His final baptism, and so He knew that He was moving toward the glory of the crowning and toward the victory that lay beyond.

What of the sequel of this entry? The tears of Jesus. As He observed the city, He wept over it. The temple cleansed by Jesus and restored for a brief hour to its own true use. The accursed tree to which the King went of His own choice and of His own will; the tree which He made the throne of empire, the great center of that government which shall at last build the city of God and establish His order in the world.

The sequel! The disciples all forsook Him and fled. The multitudes of Galileans left and hurried away. The Judaean crowd took up the cry, "Away with Him, Crucify Him," The Pharisees remained consistent, and murdered Him, Jerusalem was destroyed.

Looking back upon that scene, these are the things that it seems to say to my heart and soul. I hear the King saying in the midst of all that multitude, "My Kingdom is not of this world," which does not mean that His Kingdom is not to be set up in this world, but that the Kingdom of the King can never come according to worldly ideals, by worldly methods, or result in the glamour and glory which is entirely and absolutely of the world.

I say this with all carefulness and all reverence; let us be careful lest we desire to crown Him still upon the worldly foundation, and by earthly method, and only for material glory. The peril has run through the centuries and today desires to make Jesus King because He can feed the multitude. He will have no throne upon that basis. He will never allow Himself to be crowned in that way. He will build God's city in the world. He will revolutionize the social order. He will bring, ere His work be done, the true brotherhood growing out of the recognition of the Fatherhood of God. But He must begin at the center, at the spiritual center, and in no other way will He ever do His work. His Kingdom is not of this world as to ideal, or method, or ultimate glory. His Kingdom is over the world, over all its necessities, the clothes that He sat upon; over all its beauties, the trees with which they strewed the way of His entry; over its finality, men, for whom all things were made, and who constitute the crowning glory of the creation of God. His Kingdom is over the world, and it will be established over the world and all the facts and forces of the material will also be under His dominion. But these He will remake, renew, render finally beautiful by dealing with the spiritual center, and from that spiritual center He will change the material circumference. Do not let be led astray by any demonstration that seeks to put Him on the throne in any other way than that of His own appointment.

What is the nature of our joy in the presence of the King? The question appeals to me as being full of searching power. Is our joy that of these multitudes? Is our joy that of these disciples? Or is our joy that which was the inspiration of the King Himself? What was the joy of the multitudes in that brief hour of acclamation? The joy of believing that the King would provide peace and power and plenty. Peace interpreted as quietness to dwell under their own vine and fig tree in comfort. Power, as ability to break the yoke of Rome by their own hand. Plenty, as freedom from all material poverty. This is what they were looking for. This is the joy that was in the heart of the multitude. What was the joy in the heart of the King? The vision of the purity of the redeemed earth, of the peace that would issue from that purity, of the power that would come to men by the way of that purity, and of the plenty which would result. His joy was that of the certainty that by the way of His coming Cross and passion, He could remake men at the center of their being, so that they should be pure, clean, holy, and conformed to the character of God; and the certainty that out of the remaking of the spiritual life there must inevitably come the renewal of everything related thereto. The passion and joy of the fickle crowd was that for material comfort. The passion and joy of the Lord, which was His comfort and strength as He walked the way of the Cross and endured it, was that for the holiness which was within the will and nature of God, and that of His certainty that out of such conformity to the will and nature of God, there must come the final result of peace and good-will among the sons of men.

Therefore, what is my joy in the presence of this Christ? Is it that of my conviction that He will establish an order that shall be materially perfect; or is it the deeper joy of the assurance that He will glorify God in human history by holiness and purity? The first which is selfish will make me cowardly and unfaithful, and may change my singing of "Hosanna" into my crying "Crucify." The second, which is Godly, will enable me to suffer, to dare all things, if necessary to die; but it will make me victor in fellowship with the triumphant King.

So our last glance at this picture is in the presence of that question. See the disciples and the multitudes; full of expectation, joy and singing; but wholly selfish, wholly of the earth, utterly out of harmony with the deep spiritual purpose of the One around Whom they lift their acclamation.

Behold the King! What is His passion? It is the passion for purity, and the passion for holiness, the passion for the victory of God.

May it be given to us to share that passion and that vision, that so we may be prepared to share the travail that makes His Kingdom come.