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"HOSANNA, IN THE HIGHEST!"

– JOHN 12:12-26. – APRIL 23. –

Golden Text: – "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
– Matt. 21:9.

THOUSANDS of people were gathering in Jerusalem, not only from every quarter of Palestine, but from Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Spain. It is estimated that at some of these Passover feasts a couple of millions assembled within and on the outskirts of Jerusalem. This was according to the divine commandment respecting the observance of the Passover feast. It is but reasonable to suppose that the majority – coming from a distance at considerable expense of time, etc., – if not pious, were religiously inclined, although some doubtless regarded it merely as an excursion. The purely mercenary had little to expect, for there were a sufficient number so inclined already residing in Jerusalem, who would secure the best opportunities for money-making in merchandising, money-changing, etc.

Our Lord and his disciples, as we noted in our last lesson, were amongst these pilgrims to the holy city, and these, we saw, took up their abode at Bethany. On the morning after the feast at which our Lord was anointed with the spikenard, he sent two of the apostles for an ass – a donkey. On its arrival garments were spread on it as a saddle, and our Lord, riding thereon, with the company of his disciples and the friends of the family and those who had witnessed the calling forth of Lazarus from the tomb, started as a little procession for the city. En route they were met by quite a company of people coming from Jerusalem to Bethany, because they had heard that the Lord was there, and because they desired to see the one of whom they had heard as the mighty miracle-worker who had even raised Lazarus from the tomb.

BRANCHES OF THE DATE PALM.

Our Lord's fame had spread abroad, and evidently divine providence had much to do with this entire arrangement, the meeting of the two companies, etc. Many of the people broke off branches of the date-palm [R3538 : page 108] trees growing in that vicinity, fernlike in shape and sometimes ten feet long. These were symbols of rejoicing and honor, symbols representing in this case that our Lord was the hero of the hour, whom they delighted to distinguish. At the meeting, there was a joyous uproar of praise and thankfulness to God; they were carried away with the enthusiasm of the moment. They spread the palm branches before the beast upon which our Lord sat, and those who had no palm branches spread their outer garments as an honor to the one who thus rode triumphantly, and picking up their palm branches and garments after our Lord's beast had walked over them they went ahead with these and strewed them afresh, thus in every way seeking to do honor to the one whom God had so signally recognized. In doing this the people were but expressing the pent-up feelings of their hearts.

For over sixteen centuries, since they had come into Canaan, they had been waiting for Messiah and the glorious fulfilment of the Oath-Bound Covenant made to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob and their posterity. The majestic personality of our Lord fitted to their grandest conceptions of Immanuel, and had been attested by the wonderful miracles of which they had heard, the most prominent of which was evidenced before their eyes in the person of Lazarus and those who had borne testimony that they had seen him come forth from the tomb after he had been dead four days. Their hearts were right; they had not yet been spoiled by the doubts and fears of human wisdom, which in the worldly wise insisted upon seeing the money, and the soldiers, and corresponding influence before it could believe in or accept any one as the Messiah, the Deliverer from the Roman yoke.

So it sometimes is with the Lord's people to-day. In the simplicity of our hearts we see precious promises in his Word and are ready to believe them; then the Adversary brings along objections, fears and doubts, and queries as to how, and the faith becomes diluted and loses its power to control our lives and conduct further. Our Lord, therefore, urges upon his followers that they should have the faith and obedience of little children and not be of the worldly wise. His Word assures us that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, and that God's wisdom and God's plan seem to the world to be foolishness. We must take our choice as between human wisdom and divine wisdom. Blessed are they who walk by faith and not by sight, and accept the wisdom of the divine Word. The end of the Lord's plan will fully justify their confidence, and work out abundantly more and better things than they ever dreamed.

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

The word Hosanna is an acclaim of praise and confidence and expectancy and very closely resembles in thought the word hallelujah. Collecting the different exclamations of the people as given in the different Gospels we have these: "Hosanna," "Hosanna to the Son of David," "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," "Blessed is the King," "Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord," "Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord," "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest," "Hosanna in the highest." Our Lord, of course, understood the whole situation – "He knew what was in man." He knew the depths of the sincerity behind these exclamations and acts of reverence; he knew, too, of the forces of evil and their power to make light appear darkness and darkness appear light.

He knew that he was to be the Passover Lamb, and **[R3538 : page 109]** that within five days another multitude, led by religious teachers, would be crying "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He knew that this shout now around him, gladly hailing him as the Messenger of

the Covenant, would be disconcerted by the wolves – that they would be fearful of their own lives and interests as they would realize the power of the rulers and the mob under their control. He realized that with their little knowledge they would not dare to trust their own judgments as against those of their religious teachers; he knew that the Shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep to be frightened and scattered, yet he said nothing; he allowed the divine program to be enacted; he was going as a sheep to the slaughter, but he opened not his mouth to appeal for aid, to defend himself, to explain the true situation. He could, but he would not, deliver himself out of the hands of those who sought his life; for this very purpose he had come into the world – to die, to be sacrificed for sins.

"THE VERY STONES WOULD CRY OUT."

Some of the Pharisees had come along, perhaps through curiosity or perhaps to act as spies – perhaps some of those with whom Judas was conferring, and who were endeavoring to decide when and how the Lord should be taken, not realizing that their powers were limited until his hour was fully come. These spoke to the disciples, requesting them to call to the attention of Jesus the language of the multitude, and to suggest that it was not appropriate for him to permit them to thus proclaim him the Messiah and King. We are to remember that Jesus did not sound a trumpet before him, prominently announcing himself as the Messiah, as impostors were in the habit of doing. For three years he had preached the Gospel, gathering his disciples, performing his miracles, but had said nothing about his being the Messiah. He allowed his disciples to wonder and the public to wonder.

Some said he was a prophet, others that he was one of the prophets risen from the dead, others that he was Elias, but Jesus himself said nothing until a few months before the time of the lesson, when he broached the matter to his disciples by asking whom they considered him to be, and Simon Peter, speaking under a measure of

inspiration or guidance, declared him to be the Messiah. From that time on Jesus began to explain to them that although he was the Messiah he must suffer, and they understood not. To them it seemed that, so far from his death being near, the very reverse was true. Some of the people were just getting awake to his greatness and power, others were just finding out that Messiah had really come – it could not be, they thought, that their Master would be crucified. They considered this one of his dark sayings.

But Jesus would not bid the multitude stop. On the contrary, he explained that their shouts were but a fulfilment of a prophecy made centuries before by Zechariah (9:9) – "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass." Furthermore, by way of emphasizing the matter, by way of convincing his disciples that he was the very one mentioned by the prophet, he declared that if the multitude had not broken forth in a shout the very stones of the ground must have shouted, because thus God had caused it to be written aforetime in the prophecy, and not one jot or tittle of the divine declaration could fail. A little later on, when our Lord and his followers had reached the Temple, the shoutings of "Hosanna" were renewed; and in that connection it is particularly mentioned that the children joined in the shouting, in accord with the words of the Scripture – "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise."

THE TIME OF THEIR VISITATION.

How remarkable is this scene! – the people of Israel waiting for Messiah for centuries, striving to be ready to be his peculiar people, to be associated with him in his Kingdom work, in the blessing of all the nations of the earth their religious teachers, with broad phylacteries and many outward manifestations of piety, zeal for the law and for the Sabbath, and claiming to be waiting for the Messiah, were all unprepared, not in the heart condition which alone would be

able to recognize the Messiah – "blind," leading the blind multitude who were too confidently trusting in them.

On the other hand the apostles, ignorant and unlearned men from Galilee, at a distance from the advantages of Judea, were the chief supporters and backers of Messiah. The crowd around him and favoring him, recognizing him, shouting his praises, were common people, many of them strangers to those parts, who had fewer advantages religiously than the people of Jerusalem. Amongst the number to give him praise were the little uninstructed children. How strange the scene appears, and yet it is no more strange than at present. Again we are in the days of the Son of man – again the doctors of the law, doctors of divinity and chief priests and scribes and learned professors and prominent church people, professing faithfulness to the Lord and praying continually, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," are blind to the fact of our Lord's second coming, to the fact that we are now living in the days of the Son of man." – Matt. 24:37-39.

Only a few realize the situation and they are chiefly of the Nazareth and Galilean type, not highly esteemed amongst men and in religious circles – thought to be rather peculiar at very best. These alone to-day are hailing Emanuel, shouting his praises and laying at his feet their garments of praise and the palm branches of such victories as they can gain on behalf of the Truth in conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil.

"YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE."

The little procession was not long in passing from Bethany to the knoll of the Mount of Olives, which overlooks Jerusalem. Here the Master stopped and the multitude with him, their attention riveted upon the city and the King. They knew not the importance of the moment, they realized not that the great clock of the universe was striking, that a new dispensational change was taking place, that the favor which God had for centuries bestowed upon Israel as a nation

was about to pass from them, because they were not as a nation in heart readiness to receive the blessings and privileges proffered to them.

And it is not for us to mourn that they were not ready – rather it is for us to realize that the plan of God was not thwarted nor hindered by their unreadiness; and in God's providence, as he had foreknown and foretold, the fall of natural Israel from divine favor was about to open the way for so many of the Gentiles as were ready **[R3539 : page 110]** for the blessing, to come into divine favor, and become with the elect of natural Israel members of spiritual Israel. The Master saw all this, and as it was the marked-out divine plan he murmured not in any particular, and yet he wept as he beheld the city, as he thought of the privileges that were about to be removed from Israel as a nation, and how instead of blessings there would come upon them as a consequence of their rejection of their opportunities a "great time of trouble," awful trouble. He felt now as he expressed himself a few days later as they wept with him on the way to Calvary, "Weep not for me, weep for yourselves."

By way of identifying the transpiring events in the minds of his followers, even in this day, our Lord uttered audibly the words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" – Matt. 23:37-39.

WHAT THE SENTENCE IMPLIED.

Our Lord's words emphasize five points:

(1) The Jews as the natural seed of Abraham had the first opportunity under the divine arrangement of becoming fully and

exclusively the elect of God, the Church, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. But only a remnant of them were worthy, because only a remnant were in the heart condition of Israelites indeed. The majority were praying to the Lord with their lips while their hearts were far from him, as Jesus declared.

(2) The time had come for the end of their national favor. The "house of Israel" according to the flesh had received all the favor God intended for it up to this time, and now, being found wanting, it was cast aside – "Your house is left unto you desolate."

(3) When that typical house of servants was left desolate it furnished the opportunity for the installation of the antitypical house of sons. The Apostle expresses this, saying, "Moses, verily, was faithful as a servant over his house, but Christ as a Son over his house [house of sons]; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." – Heb. 3:5,6.

(4) Our Lord's absence during the period of the selection of spiritual Israel is indicated by his statement that natural Israel should see him no more "until *that day*." Spiritual Israel would see him, but only with the eye of faith, as our Lord again expressed it – "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more, but ye shall see me."

(5) Our Lord's words indicate further that when that day shall come the blindness of natural Israel shall be turned away, their eyes of understanding shall open, and they also will see out of the obscurity, out of the darkness under which they were then laboring and under which they have been for more than eighteen centuries of this Gospel age.

The Apostle emphasizes this point, telling us that as soon as the spiritual Israel class has been completed and glorified, then favor shall return to natural Israel, and the blindness which came upon them because of the rejection of Messiah and because their house was rejected from the Lord's favor will pass away – "All Israel shall

be saved" from their blindness. The Lord through the prophet tells the same thing, assuring us that in *that day* he will pour out his Spirit upon the house of David and the house of Judah, and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced and shall mourn because of him. He assures us that in that day he will pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication.

How glad we are for these assurances that God hath not cast away perpetually the natural seed of Abraham, whom he foreknew and to whom pertained the promises, and who are sure to get a share in those promises, although they have forfeited their privileges as respects the chief part, concerning which the Apostle declares, Israel hath not obtained it, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. So, then, while sympathizing with Israel in their loss, we rejoice that in God's providence our eyes have seen and our ears have heard of the King and his Kingdom, and that we have become his spiritual Israel and are to be with him the seed of Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed, natural Israel being the first of those who will receive the divine favor.

"Ride on triumphantly, O Lord,
Pride and ambition at thy feet we lay.
Our eyes are opening and we hear thy Word;
We are thy followers, lead thou the way
To victory over sin and death and grave."

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL'S ANTITYPE.

The Scriptures clearly indicate that spiritual Israel, as the antitype of natural Israel, will similarly have a great testing in the end of this period or age; that a harvest time for the gathering of the wheat is the consummation or closing of both the Jewish and the Gospel ages; that a terrible time of trouble, symbolized by fire upon the chaff of the Jewish age and by fire burning the tares in the end of the Gospel age, will prepare the way for the grander dispensation to

follow the glorious reign of Messiah. The Scriptures declare that as our Lord proved a stone of stumbling to the great mass of nominal Israel after the flesh at his first advent, so he will be for a stone of stumbling to spiritual Israel, his second house, at his second advent.

We are, therefore, to expect that now in this harvest as in the harvest at the end of the Jewish age, the great mass of the Lord's professed people will be unready, and stumble, and go into the great time of trouble which will wind up this age. While sympathizing with the conditions, while weeping as our dear Redeemer wept over the natural house, while saying, Babylon is fallen, as he then declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate," we nevertheless learn to rejoice in the outworkings of the divine plan, realizing them to be the very embodiment of justice, wisdom, love. And the more deeply we inquire into the Word of the Lord, the more do we see that his love has still wonderful provisions in the future for many who are not found worthy to be of the very elect, the house of sons, but who may come into divine favor on a lower plan during the Millennial age.

Those who did receive the Lord at his first advent, those who were "Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile," not only were kept from stumbling over the Lord, but, instead of becoming a stumbling-stone to them, by the grace of God he became a stepping-stone to the higher and grander things of this Gospel age, to the great spiritual blessings which began at Pentecost. **[R3539 : page 111]** And so now, while the mass of nominal spiritual Israel, Christendom, are stumbling in the time of the second presence, we need have no doubt that all who are now spiritual Israelites indeed will be found of the Lord and gathered into his garner; and that while the masses of professors will stumble, all of this class will find the Lord and the present Truth a stepping-stone to the still grander and still higher new dispensation to which we will be ushered in, not by another Pentecost, but by the glorious change of the first resurrection, which shall make us like our Lord, spirit beings, partakers of the divine nature.

This class, prepared for this blessing and exaltation, will be found – much like the class at the first advent – to contain not many great, not many wise, not many learned, but Israelites indeed, sincere lovers of the Truth, willing at heart at least to lay down their lives for the Lord and for the brethren. To them also come the Lord's comforting words, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." Even in the present time they have a blessing, before the change.

THE JEWS SOUGHT SIGNS, THE GREEKS WISDOM.

John's account does not give all the details respecting the entry into the Temple, but, passing over some of these, enumerates an incident that occurred probably a day or two afterward while our Lord was preaching in the Temple. Certain Greeks, realizing that the Lord was not appreciated by his hearers, apparently thought to invite him to go with them to their homes, not realizing the plan of God in respect to his great sacrifice. They requested an audience with Jesus, and, naturally enough, went to Philip and Andrew, whose names of Greek origin implied that they had a knowledge of the Greek language. These made known the matter to Jesus, who, however, merely used the incident for an opportunity to impress still further the lesson of the hour, that the time had come for him to be glorified – not glorified in the way that his disciples and friends had expected and hoped, but glorified in the higher sense which our Lord realized. He knew that his hour was approaching in which he was to be crucified, and that his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, was the condition upon which his high exaltation in the divine plan was made to hinge. His heart, fully consecrated, was merely waiting for the opportunity to finish the work which the Father had given him to do.

"IF A GRAIN OF WHEAT DIE."

Our Lord answered in a dark saying, in a parable, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone;

but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." No wonder that the apostles and the Jews were mystified by such statements of the truth. Indeed we know from other Scriptures that the majority of our Lord's teachings were not expected nor intended to be understood until after Pentecost – after the holy Spirit of adoption would enlighten their understandings. Now, by reason of this enlightenment, we are privileged to appreciate the rich depths of our Lord's statement. **[R3540 : page 111]**

We see that if Jesus had kept his life, had not sacrificed it, he might indeed have maintained it forever, but he would not in that event have been privileged to bestow life upon the Church and the world. His death, the just for the unjust, applied to his believing disciples, justified them to life, "through faith in his blood." His death thus brings forth choice fruit in his Church, his Bride, his Members. And, indirectly, the fruitage will be still larger, for his disciples, justified through faith in his blood, are invited and privileged to lay down their lives with his, to become dead with him. The results or fruitage in their case as members of his body means a still larger crop in the age to come. Otherwise stated, our Lord as the one grain brings forth much fruit, an hundred and forty and four thousand, besides the "great company" whose number is known to no man. And through the hundred and forty and four thousand, his representatives, his members, the result will ultimately be a still larger fruitage, when all the families of the earth shall have the fullest opportunity of reconciliation to the Father and of life everlasting upon the divine conditions.

TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

Stating matters far beyond the comprehension of his hearers, our Lord proceeded to mark out the course of his immediate followers in language which they would understand after the begetting of the Spirit, after Pentecost, saying, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

That is to say, if we esteem highly our present existence, under present imperfect conditions, we will not be willing to lay down our lives in the Lord's service in the hope of future life, seen only by the eye of faith.

We must love less the present life under present imperfect conditions in order to appreciate more the eternal life under better conditions. Whoever is satisfied with the sinful and imperfect condition in the present life is in no state of mind to become the Lord's disciple. Being satisfied with present conditions, he will be unwilling to sacrifice them for the really better ones which the Lord commends. We have no reason to think that the Lord's words apply beyond this Gospel age – in the Millennial age things will be greatly transformed, reorganized. The Lord's language limits the matter saying, "in this world," – that is, this *kosmos* or order of things.

Still continuing to explain the requirements of present discipleship, our Lord declares, If any man will be my servant let him follow me; where I am there will also my servant be. By this language our Lord shows that his faithful followers shall ultimately share his divine nature in the spirit realm. Again he states the same matter in different language, saying, "If any man will serve me, him will the Father honor." The Father honored the Son because of his faithfulness even unto death; the Father accepts as sons the followers of the Son, justified through his blood; and those who are faithful in walking in his steps the Father will surely honor as he honored Jesus, the first-born, whom he raised from the dead to glory, honor and immortality, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named. Let us all be faithful followers.

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