

Box 80 A

PALM SUNDAY

D. B. KNOX

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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Just over the hill from Jerusalem is a small village called Bethphage. Less than a dozen houses are built on either side of the narrow, twisty, dusty road that runs through it, and it was there that an incident occurred that we commemorate today, Palm Sunday. Jesus had reached Bethphage on His way to Jerusalem. As He and His disciples climbed the steep ascent from the Dead Sea He paused at Bethphage and sent two disciples to fetch a young donkey so that He could ride on it for the last half mile into Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah had foretold centuries before that Israel's king would enter Jerusalem humbly riding on a donkey. Jesus knew Himself to be that king. When the owners asked the disciples why they were taking the donkey Jesus told them to reply "its(real) owner needs it", and as He road over the hill and down the steep incline His followers shouted with joy "the king is coming". God is king, God was coming, our creator, the real owner of the whole world, had taken our nature and was living among us, man yet God, to set us an example of how we should live, but also and chiefly to undertake the great work of our salvation. He was coming very humbly, sitting on a donkey, not on a war horse, and He was coming as the servant of mankind. For God serves us, that is His nature, although we seldom acknowledge His goodness. Yet He fills our heart with joy and gladness through all the good things He gives us in the world around us, and Jesus was coming as the king of Jerusalem and as its servant.

Not everybody approved of the shouting, the singing, the praise of Jesus' disciples as the procession moved to Jerusalem. The Jewish rulers told Jesus to shut His disciples up,

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but He replied "if these kept quiet the very stones would cry out". The moment was such a momentous one. It couldn't be passed over in silence, for the Son of God was coming to the city of God, yet as you know within a few days, on the first Good Friday, the citizens had crucified Him, executed Him. But this was the chief part of His service, for by His death Jesus overcame sin and death. He became our sin bearer that through His victory over sin and death we might share His resurrection life. He died that we might be forgiven. We are delivered from judgement and eternal Hell. Our king has died for us and risen again that we might rise with Him.

As Jesus rode down the hill to Jerusalem He could not forbear bursting out into tears because Jerusalem was so oblivious of its moment of opportunity and as a consequence there was the awful fate that would soon overtake it because it was rejecting its king. Jesus longed to save His people. He came to His own and they rejected Him. What a moment of destiny! Christ died to save us, but if we reject that salvation then for us too there is the inevitability of judgement. Judgement overtook Jerusalem a few years later when the Roman legions besieged it and destroyed it. If we neglect our opportunity, judgement is the inevitable consequence. Now is our moment of opportunity. Christ our king comes to each of us in His word. Join with His disciples in acknowledging Him as king and rejoicing in His company.



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