

Setting the scene

- 1] For the Jew, Jerusalem was the most important place on earth. It was where God manifested His presence on Earth in the Temple's Holy of Holies
 - 2] Jews made a pilgrimage there, from all over the known world, at one of the three great festivals
 - 3] The size of Jerusalem was c 900m x 1800, roughly the area of Torrance. The normal population was c 30-40K. (10 x Torrance) This rose to c 1m at Passover – 400 x the population of Torrance
- Nb with the dense crowds and the religious fervour it was a powder keg; If there were c 1000 soldiers in Jerusalem, they would be outnumbered 1000:1!

Context

- 1] It was 6 days till Passover. Jesus came back to Bethany, and had a meal with Lazarus, and his sisters Mary and Martha (12:1-8)
- 2] Large crowds came to see Jesus from Jerusalem not only on account of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. (12:9)
- 3] The Chief priests were jealous and made plans to kill Jesus and Lazarus (12:10)

Intro

Which is more powerful – the church Great Britain / USA , - rich, politically powerful, impressive yet shrinking **OR** China / Iran – poor, hidden, persecuted yet growing?

I wonder which you aspire to as you identify with Jesus?

The reception (12,13)**1] *Next day***

I.e. 5 days to Passover

2] *Large crowd that had come to the feast***a) *large crowd***

nb Normal population c 30-40,000 had swollen to a million

Large crowd = thousands hundreds of thousands?

b) *had come to the feast*

i.e. they were pilgrims

3] *They heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem*

Nb they had heard of Jesus – anticipation in the city - He was famous, a celebrity, healing all diseases, casting out demons and performing miracles – now they could see Him?

Nb we know the power of celebrity culture and its fickleness

How do you respond when you hear that Jesus is about? – pursue him or ignore Him?

4] ***So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him***

Nb the crowd was from Jerusalem, not just fellow travellers and those who had already gone out to Bethany

Palm branches – symbol of joy at the feast of booths (Lev 23:40)

Do not be afraid to display your emotions as you greet Jesus

5] ***Crying out Hosanna - Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord***

a) ***‘Hosanna’*** - save me

? ‘save’ from what – a man crying out in water cf Peter (Mt 14:30)?

Not a cry simply of desperation but adoration too – deliverance from the oppression of the Roman occupiers

say Hosanna if you mean it – it is the first prayer of the Christian

b) ***‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’***

nb the expectation of the Triumphant King (e.g. Pss 2;7)

cf the orthodox Jewish expectation to this day

Praise the triumphant King Jesus

Jesus response? (14,15)

1] ***found a young donkey and sat on it***

Nb it was a reaction/ a counter to the expectation

this was a symbol of a king coming in peace – (as opposed to a war like King coming on a charger)

2] fulfilling ***as it is written***

“Fear not, daughter of Zion

Behold your king is coming,

Sitting on a donkey’s colt (Zechariah 9:9)

Cf the one coming in peace is the Suffering servant (Pss 13;22;55;102)

The Jews would see this as referring to nation of Israel, as a whole, not the Messiah. However, those who believe that ‘Jesus is Lord’ recognise this too was part of the revelation of the Messiah in the person of Jesus.

Cf the humility of Jesus (Phil 2:6ff) - not a charger but a donkey!

Note the humility of Jesus and imitate Him

The reaction (16-19)

1] ***Disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and done to Him. (16)***

a) ***disciples did not understand these things at first***

nb no concept of a suffering Messiah

cf Luke writes that Jesus warned them days before of the fate of the Son of Man - “... after flogging Him, they will kill Him and on the third day He will rise”. They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them and they did not grasp what was said’ (18:34)

b) ***when Jesus was glorified***

nb as the crucifixion approached, Jesus said “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (Jn 12:23)

c) ***they remembered that these things had been written about Him and done to Him***

i.e. “...everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” (Lk 24:44,45)

2] The reaction of the ‘***The crowd***’ (17,18) ‘***..that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to bear witness***” But it goes on “***the reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they had heard he had done this sign***” (17,18)

nb two crowds - the one that saw the sign and the one that heard about it and went out to meet Him

Beware when signs become more important than the one who they signify

3] ***So the Pharisees said to one another, “you see that you are gaining nothing. Look the world has gone after Him” (19)***

Nb there were 1m people in Jerusalem. It seemed that everyone had gone ‘crazy’, going to follow Him.

Do not allow numbers to impress you!

Conclusion

1] Who are you following? - a powerful and impressive King who will rule the nations, impress the crowds, and vindicate his people?

- or a humble, selfless and meek saviour

2] If you are looking for the King, you will have to humble yourself and join Him first as ‘one who serves’ (Lk 22:27)