

Palm Sunday – The Triumphal Entry - Luke chapter 19, verses 28 – 44:-

The Context:- It is worth spending a few minutes reading the different accounts in the four Gospels – Matthew chapter 21, verses 1 – 11; Mark chapter 11, verses 1 – 11; Luke chapter 19, verses 28 – 40 and the Gospel of John chapter 12, verses 12 – 19. Combining the information in the Gospels, it is most likely that Jesus arrived in Bethany, at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, on the Friday evening – John chapter 12, verses 1 – 2. The supper mentioned in John's Gospel would have been the Sabbath evening meal. The Sabbath Day itself would be spent in Bethany with the entry into Jerusalem taking place on the Sunday after the Saturday Sabbath rest.

From this point on Jesus abandoned the cautious attitude which had caused him to withdraw from areas of tension and possible crisis (Mark chapter 8, verse 30; John chapter 10, verse 40 and John chapter 11, verses 53 – 54). Now he openly challenged the Jewish leaders. In the entry into Jerusalem he openly provoked disapproval and opposition.

Luke 19, verses 28 - 35:- Jesus left Bethany and came to the foot of the Mount of Olives. The village of Bethphage was opposite them on the slope (verse 29). We do not know if the use of the colt had been arranged previously. It reads as though it was a miraculous event! The family / neighbours question the right of the disciples to take the colt. The reply "*The Lord has need of it*" (verse 31) gave them the freedom to take it. The version in Matthew chapter 21 verse 2, of there being "*an ass tied and a colt with her*" gives more detail than that of Mark and Luke. If the colt was not broken in ("*on which no one has ever sat*" – verse 30) then the sensible thing to do would be to lead the mother and the colt would follow! Read Zechariah 9, verse 9 for the Old Testament prophecy of the coming of the Messiah / King. The Greek version of this verse, which was in common usage at the time of Jesus, is even more explicit it states "*. . . riding on a new colt the foal of an ass*". That the colt was docile enough to be ridden is another "nature miracle" showing the Lord's authority over creation.

Verses 35 - 44:- The Gospel of John, chapter 12, verse 12 says "*a great crowd . . . heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they . . . went out to meet him*". Those who were cheering him were not just his disciples and followers but many who had heard of the raising of Lazarus joined them (John 12, verses 17 – 19). The spreading of garments and herbs before a king or great person was a widespread custom. (See 2 Kings, chapter 9, verse 13 for an example.)

The acclamations used in Mark chapter 11, verses 9 – 10 come from the Psalms, especially from Psalm 118, verse 26. The word "*Hosanna*" is properly a cry for help addressed to God or the King, meaning "save now" - see 2 Samuel 14, verse 4 and 2 Kings 6, verse 26.

The comment from the Pharisees in verse 39, shows that they understand what is happening. Here is the promised Messiah coming to liberate His people and inaugurate the Kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus refuses to silence the praise and jubilation of the crowd! This is "*the time of your visitation*" for Jerusalem. Knowing that He would be scorned, rejected and crucified he wept over Jerusalem – 'the City of God'.

Read again Matthew 21, verses 6 – 11:- If we are not careful we can miss the vital question! Many of those in the crowd on that first Palm Sunday had met Jesus or been with him for much of his ministry. They knew, or thought they knew, who he was! However the vitally important question for them and for us is - "***Who is this?***". Who is this, who comes into his own capital city, the traditional place of the Temple of the Lord God? ***Who is this?*** On our understanding of the answer to this question depends our eternal salvation!

This is Jesus, the name given to him by the angel of the Lord before he was born, "*the one who will save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1, verse 21). This is "*Emmanuel*" – "*God with us*" (Matthew 1, verse 23). This is the Almighty Word become flesh (John 1, verses 1 and 14).

This Easter tide may we each "*receive him and believe in his name*", the promise then is that we "*should not perish but have eternal life*". (John 1, verse 12 and John 3, verse 16).