**THE KING IS COMING!**

We just read where Jesus attends a dinner given in His honor in Bethany six days before the Passover (v 1-11). V 12 begins “The next day…” So it’s now five days before the Passover. The Passover is held on Saturday (actually starts Friday evening and runs until Saturday evening). So this event we read about in v 12-19, what we normally refer to as the Triumphal Entry or Palm Sunday, the beginning of Passion Week, actually takes place on a Monday. The people in Jerusalem (many who have gathered from all over the world for the Passover) have received word that Jesus is on His way down from Bethany, down the Mount of Olives, headed for Jerusalem. Great anticipation and excitement fills the air. Let’s read…

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast [speaking of the Passover feast] heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” 14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, [John now quotes from Zechariah 9:9] 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!” **I** 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified [in other words, after His resurrection and ascension], then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. [so while all this is happening the disciples are not aware that Jesus is fulfilling O.T. prophecy] 17 The crowd that had been with him [Jesus] when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness [hundreds of people had witnessed that incredible miracle and they couldn’t stop talking about it]. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.” [the Jewish leaders are concerned that the people en masse are leaving Judaism, their religion, and following after Jesus, a real concern for them].

There are actually two crowds – (1) the large crowd in v 12-13 coming out (from Jerusalem) to meet Jesus; (2) the large crowd of Jews in v 9 that had gone to Bethany to see Jesus the day before and was still with Him. The people, part of the approx. 1 million or so who had come together for the Passover in Jerusalem, goes out to meet Jesus and they shout, “Hosanna!” which means “Give us salvation now!” “Save us Jesus!” is their cry. “Deliver us!” And just to let you know WHO they think Jesus just might be they say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” These are words straight out of the Hallel, Psalm 118. They ascribe to Jesus Messianic titles right out of the scriptures. “King Jesus has arrived! Long live the King, our Savior, our Messiah!” Such words of hope and jubilation, right? But THIS King has come for a specific purpose and that purpose is to die. By the end of the week many in this same crowd extolling Jesus as their Messiah will be yelling, “Crucify Him!” Do you think Jesus knows all this? Of course He does. John doesn’t record it here but in Luke’s account it says, “And when [Jesus] drew near and saw the city [Jerusalem], He wept over it.” (Luke 19:41-42) Jesus is fully aware that these people’s hearts are superficial, that they will very shortly turn on Him, influenced by their religious leaders, and they’ll be crying out for His death. He knows this.

The waving of palm branches is how the people of that day and locale hailed their heroes. Notice that Jesus is riding on a young donkey. This isn’t normally what a king (they called Him King of Israel) would ride in on, is it? Kings rode in nobly and proudly on horseback. Jesus rides humbly not just on a donkey, but on a donkey’s colt. This fulfills O.T. prophecy. Zech 9:9, part of which is quoted here says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus if bringing salvation all right, but it’s not the salvation that this crowd is looking for is it? They want Jesus to deliver them from the bondage of Roman tyranny and set up His kingdom. Remember they had tried to make Him their king before, back in John 6:15 after He fed the 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish. But King Jesus has come to deliver the people, not from Rome, but from their sins. I don’t have time to expound fully but Jesus here in this passage also fulfills Daniel’s prophecy (Daniel 9:24-25). The exact number of days that Daniel prophesied from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the coming of the “anointed one,” the Messiah – 177,880 days – is the number of days from when Artaxerxes, King of Persia’s issued his decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 2:1-8) March 5, 444 B.C. to this day in history March 30, 33 A.D. This is all according to God’s perfect plan.

We’re told in this passage that the people have come to see Jesus because of His great miracles, specifically in raising Lazarus from the dead. We’re told in this passage that the disciples at the time are clueless as to the significance of this moment. We’re told that the religious leaders feel threatened by Jesus and want Him dead. Nobody except our Lord Himself understands what’s about to happen, what will unfold by the end of the week. But it is all part of God’s sovereign plan of redemption. Daniel 9:24 says that when the Messiah does come He will “finish the transgression, put an end to sin, and atone for iniquity.” How will King Jesus do this? By dying for the sins the world on a cross; which is why He came. As Hebrews says, “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Oh, by the way Daniel 9:24, that prophecy about the coming of the anointed one, goes on to say that the Messiah will “bring in everlasting righteousness, seal both vision and prophet, and anoint a most holy place.” But these won’t happen until Jesus’ second coming, which you can read about in Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 19-20.

For now we rejoice in what Jesus did for us the first time He came and we look forward to what He is going to do when He returns. Oh, and when He returns the second time, He’ll return not so peacefully as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He’ll riding in on a white horse! *[Sing “Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King!”]*