

The Jesus we never knew x 15 (PP1 Jesus laughing) VPBC 09 April 2017

Damilola read us the first part of the account of Jesus triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem from **Matthew 21: 1 – 11**. And now we look at the next 2 verses which tell us about what response Jesus got as he came into the city.

He was riding on a donkey, flanked by his disciples and friends from Bethany but also the pilgrims from the region of Galilee coming up for the PASSOVER FESTIVAL. Jesus and his disciples had collected the colt and donkey on their way through Bethpage in the suburbs of Jerusalem but as they entered into the main city they hit the crowds of Jerusalem pilgrims and we are told that it caused quite a STIR – in fact the city was **SHAKEN**.

PALM SUNDAY: verses 10 and 11. WHO IS HE?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was thrown into an uproar. “Who is he? The people asked.

“This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee”, the crowds answered. (PP2)

The crowds of Jews who were in Jerusalem were there to celebrate Passover – the celebration of the deliverance of their people historically from their Egyptian oppressors. Nationalism was riding high because yet again they, the Jews were oppressed and in this case occupied in their homeland by the Romans.

The sight of this man riding on a donkey and people waving palm branches, throwing the branches on the road and shouting – “**Hosanna, save us NOW!**” made their blood and passion for freedom run hot. “Who is he? The city dwellers cry out.

Those who came from Bethany and had witnessed the raising of Lazarus and the dwellers of the region of Galilee give them the answer - “***This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee***”.

All 4 Gospels report this incident and the 3 synoptics place it chronologically towards the end of Jesus' life just before the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus. (An act of judgement on the Jews own defilement of the Temple by corruption and hollow worship).

Jesus chose to act out and fulfil the promises of the MESSIAH – deliverer.

Zechariah 9:9 (and Isaiah 62:11) Your KING comes to you humbly riding on a donkey. So, Jesus – for the first time as far as we know has to be helped by his disciples onto a donkey. His approach is not a militaristic ride into conquer Jerusalem on a charge but a slow and measured approach.

The crowds respond with verses from the Hallel (*Psalms 113 – 118*) “***Blessed is he who comes...***” The ride peacefully and with the palm branches is reminiscent of *2 Samuel 15: 30* as when King David rode through the Kidron Valley having crushed the uprising of his son Absalom. Also, when the Temple was rededicated in 164BC Palm branches

were waved and crowds shouted “Hosanna”. All these things were ringing warning bells in the crowd’s memory – the stories their parents and teachers had taught them that salvation, rescue would come when a Messiah rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey. And so, the city was in uproar. (John in his Gospel tells of the outrage of the Jewish leaders and their jealousy: *The Pharisees said to one another, “You see we are not succeeding at all! Look the whole world is following him!”*(John’s Gospel)

“This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee”.

This statement maybe doesn’t sound too inspiring to us but the great Book of *Deuteronomy 18: 15 – 18* had spoken with hope of the coming of the PROPHET. This was closely tied into Jewish eschatological expectation (see *John 6: 14 cf and 1:21*). They waited for the Prophet.

The excitement and expectation of the crowd grew – could this be the one they waited for?

Jesus choice of arrival – shows his obvious intention to say – yes, I am the one you have waited for and whose help you need.

Even today as we think about Jesus the question to ask is **WHO IS HE?**

Who do you think he is? **What would you say if someone asked you?**

Is he just a great man? A wonderful teacher? Is he from the historical past or is he still alive as his followers say?

Some people follow *Mohammed*’s teachings (born 570 founder Islam) Or the teachings of *the Buddha* (Gautama Buddha born – 480?), or the teachings of *Guru Nanak* (founder of Sikh religion born 1469), others follow religious, scientific systems or Political Systems.

Followers of the person Jesus claim that he is alive and indeed that he is “God the Son” – God with skin on. Followers of Jesus are very keen for others to also discover the truth of Jesus and follow him as the way to true life. (Jesus not just a human teacher or reformer like civil rights leaders Mahatma Gandhi (Hindu Nationalist) or Martin Luther King Jnr (Baptist)).

Who do you think he is? Or was?