

Begin with recollection of BB King and U2 concert 1989.

Part of the crowd, an observer enthusiastic but there for the experience, not to play the game.

All Blacks England Carisbrook same an observer a fan not part of the game.

Passover 2,000 years ago and Jerusalem was humming!

More so than even Easter Dunedin with Ed Sheeran coming.

Thousands of participants there for the annual Passover festival, an integral part of the fabric culture history and life of the Jewish people. This was the centre of their religion of their identity, it was the place and time to rehearse to recall and remember what God had done in the past.

The defining moment of their identity was wrapped up in this remembrance event. An event that continued not only with looking back but looking forward in hope to the time when God Yahweh would once again deliver them, would once again bring them independence, when once more the glory of the Lord would emanate from Jerusalem so that all the world would know there was a God in Israel, the God of all!

Those who gathered year by year were not merely there for the experience this was no one of rite of passage this was what marked them as the people of God the sons of Israel, the chosen ones. Imbued with history and story going back centuries they gathered, in joyful solemn and hopeful assembly.

The closest we in this part of the world might have, and there could be debate about this is that of ANZAC commemorations, (or perhaps the All Blacks winning a world cup?).

So the scene was set, this time the time that we remember today this particular Passover what is now remembered as Palm Sunday was fraught with a new tension, a different dynamic.

The Roman garrison was fully manned the legion based in Cesarea has reinforced the Jerusalem garrison for at this time of year they expected trouble.

John 12:12-19

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

(Mt 21:1–11; Mk 11:1–11; Lk 19:28–40)

12 The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!”

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

15 “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead

continued to testify.^d 18 It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”¹

Josephus in trying to convey the size of the crowds that would have been present at some Passovers, in particular the one of the dedication of the rebuilt temple claimed that there was in excess of 2.5 million people present in Jerusalem at that time.

Either way you looked at it for that time or even for our time today there were very large crowds of people there for Passover.

Amongst the crowds were those who were witnesses of the event of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, there were the disciples the apostles, and also those for whom this was an experience not to be missed this miracle worker one who raised the dead.

They came because they followed Jesus, they came because of the signs and miracles Jesus did they came to see what else he would do, they came to see and convince themselves as to whether or not he really was the troublemaker they thought him to be!

Where would we be?

Jesus came as John points out deliberately and intentionally into Jerusalem this ancient city of God. The manner in which he rides in is deliberate the actions are deliberate, this is a very marked entrance for those who would know and those who as John points out would later reflect on what was taking place would know this was no accident, no fluke of history no ill conceived attempt at grandeur in the vain hope of achieving fame and glory! Everything step Jesus was taking was leading to the heart of why he was there in the first place!

He comes to the acclamation of the crowds he, calling Hosanna which literally means save us! Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

He comes riding a donkey's foal, not as a conquering victorious hero, one who has vanquished all his foes he comes gentle riding symbolically an animal that brought tidings of peace, humble and lowly. Jesus comes to save, he comes in gentleness as an envoy of peace.

Recall his birth, he was to be Emmanuel God with us, he was to be Prince of peace!

Zechariah says this

The Coming Ruler of God's People

(Mt 21:5; Jn 12:14–15)

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;

d Other ancient authorities read *with him began to testify that he had called...from the dead*
1 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Jn 12:12–20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 He^{c2} will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ³

“Take away the chariots”: an end to the main vehicle of war.

- *“Take away... the war-horses”*: no need for horses used in war.
- *“The battle bow will be broken”*: no need for bows or arrows for fighting.
- *“He will proclaim peace to the nations”*: His message will be one of reconciliation.
- *“His rule shall be from sea to sea”*: the King will control extended territory with no enemies of concern.

Jesus fulfills this prediction of Zechariah. Worldwide peace proclaimed by this humble King will be a fulfillment of the angels’ song in [Luke 2:14](#): *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”*

Unbeknownst to the majority of the crowd that day were these symbolic actions that Jesus was doing, and even the disciples did not fully comprehend what was taking place until the Holy Spirit opened their understanding after Jesus was glorified.

The Pharisees did pick up on what was happening and understood at least in part what was being played out but they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah so thought he was a troublemaker intent on bringing down the wrath of Rome and lose of power!

Where are you in this crowd today?

Eager to know and the see what spectacle is to take place?

Already a witness to some sign, some significant event and want more of that, either greater signs, or to know Jesus more?

A disciple a follower already knowing Jesus yet wanting to know more, desiring to follow more closely and somewhat afraid of what the cost might be?

An antagonistic observer, not believing yet having to see what is happening not wanting either

2 ^c Gk: Heb I

3 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Zec 9:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

personally or on behalf of someone else for you to get carried away with religion!

The invitation of Jesus is there still really, are you am I willing to follow as a disciple, to follow Jesus this prince of peace on the road to calvary, it costs us nothing yet demands our all, Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, when Jesus calls a man he calls him to die!

Where are you today Palm Sunday 2018?