

## 532 Hosanna Praises

In preparation for the Jewish Passover in AD 33, Jerusalem was filling up with pilgrims from far and wide. These pilgrims consisted of both Jews by birth as well as “proselytes”, that is, Gentile converts to the Jewish Faith, who in many cases had travelled hundreds of miles so as to be present in Jerusalem for the Feast. (We get an idea of where such pilgrims lived in Acts 2.8-10, when presumably many of them were still in Jerusalem, this time for Pentecost: they all heard “the wonderful works of God” being supernaturally uttered in their own languages - “Parthians, Medes and Elamites” and all the rest of them!).

Those pre-Passover Jewish crowds in Jerusalem knew their Scriptures, notably concerning the long-promised coming of Messiah, the “Anointed One”. Beginning in AD 26, for three and half years thousands had flocked to hear John the Baptist, “the voice of him crying in the wilderness”, with his urgent message, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ... Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Many were baptised in “Jordan, confessing their sins” (from Isaiah 40.3-5 / Matthew 3.1-6, KJV). The scene was being set, the people were being prepared, for the arrival of Messiah.

When John’s time of ministry came to an end, it was followed by a further three and half years of Jesus’ own ministry. (These seven years of ministry, of John and then Jesus, thus comprise “the seventieth ‘seven’, or ‘week’”, of Gabriel’s crucial prophecy recorded in Daniel 9.25-27. Because “the covenant” mentioned in verse 27 has not yet occurred, we see that God the Father is going to re-run this seventieth week in future, as a 7-year period of judgment upon Jew, Gentile and the apostate church, known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble”, and “the great tribulation” (Jeremiah 30.7 / Matthew 24.15-22)).

Jesus duly reached the climax of His ministry in Jerusalem in April AD 33. Of particular relevance for Him right now was Zechariah 9.9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... he [is] just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass” (KJV). Jesus knew that that prophecy referred to Himself, and that the time had now come for its literal fulfilment.

So the preparations were made. Somehow word had got round as to what was going to happen that day, so by the time that Jesus began to

ride down the Mount of Olives “multitudes” from near and far had gathered along His route, laying in His path their garments and branches freshly torn from the trees (- and too bad for the City Council!), (Matthew 21.1-11).

Those garments and branches were signs of a royal welcome (eg., II Kings 9.13), joined by the cries of “Hosanna!” (meaning by that time “All praise!”), and “Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” (from Psalm 118.26). So here was a very public statement that the true but lowly King of Israel was entering Jerusalem, a statement which confronted the authorities with a straight choice – to accept Him or reject Him. As we learn from John 11.41-53, the decision had already been made, prompted by the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Our response to all this is also one of Hosanna praises: “All praise” to God the Father for “foreordaining” His Son, “before the foundation of the world”, to become incarnate as One of us, yet sinless (I Peter 1.18-21 // Isaiah Chapter 53 / John 8.46a / II Corinthians 5.21 / Galatians 3.13 / Hebrews 4.14-16). And then “All praise” to God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: for His steady obedience and close walk with His Father; for His foreknowledge yet resolve; for His calmness and courage; for His loving concern and His plain speaking; for His shedding of His innocent blood on behalf of sinners, that the gates of the Father’s forgiveness could be swung wide open; and for His great victory cry, “IT IS FINISHED!” (John 19.30). And then “All praise” to God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who “guides us into all truth” (John 14.26; 15.26; 16.13).

We may not put our coats in the path of passing donkeys these days, or excitedly rip branches off the trees, but we still cry out our own Hosanna praises, looking back with those multitudes to that first Palm Sunday, and – O praise indeed - looking forward, with today’s multitudes, to the fulfilment of these precious words – “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (see I Thessalonians 4.13-18).

Yes, comfort. “Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord!”.