

"LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED" Jn 14:1

Hindsight is a marvellous thing. On some occasions, we look back and think if only I had acted differently. Sometimes, it is only at a later stage that we fully understand the significance of the events. How true that is in the Christian faith. While God so often guides and helps us, we don't always have a full understanding until later.

I was fascinated to note John's comment regarding Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Like the other gospel writers he records the events of that day, including the greeting from Psalm 118:26: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." He then adds the words, "even the King of Israel." Matthew records too the cries of the crowd adding, "Hosanna to the Son of David.... Hosanna in the

highest!" Mark adds: "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David" while Luke records: "Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest!" While the crowd clearly use the basic greeting from Psalm 118, it seems that at different times and perhaps in different parts of the crowd, as Jesus passed by, they chanted additional words conveying their thinking and hopes.

John records too, as does Matthew, the words from Zechariah 9:9 concerning Jesus riding on a donkey: "Behold your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." Then with amazing honesty he writes: "These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and they had done these things to Him." (John 12:16) That seems absolutely incredible. The crowd clearly recognised Jesus to be Messiah, but the disciples failed to understand. Now don't get me wrong: I am sure they too recognised Him as Messiah, but what I think John is alluding to is they did not appreciate the full significance. It was only after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, that the disciples fully understood.

BORN – KING OF THE JEWS

The crowd had acknowledged His kingship; He was born King of the Jews! By birth, He could have literally sat upon the throne. The entry into Jerusalem, riding of the donkey, fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah so significantly. He came on a donkey and not on a war horse. Again the words of Zechariah are appropriate: "And He will speak peace to the nations, and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the river [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth."

That phrase which John used, “but when Jesus was glorified”, is important. Maybe, like many of the crowd, the disciples hoped that Jesus would deliver them from the Romans. Now, however, it all made sense. His Kingdom was not of this world. Having saved them, not from the Romans but from sin, He was exalted on high. Their cry of Hosanna (Hebrew: *hoshea na* - “save us”) had been answered, but the royal throne was not in Jerusalem but in Heaven. In the words of the letter to the Hebrews: “When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (1:3) They were right after all to greet Him and treat Him as a King, but His throne was far higher than ever they could have imagined!

Clearly some were right in assuming that the Messiah would triumph over His enemies, and yet that would not be over the armies of Rome but over the powers of darkness. God said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (Hebrews 1:13)

KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

When Joshua and his army routed five kings and their armies, and the kings were captured, Joshua said, “Put your feet on their necks.” (Joshua 10:24) It was a symbolic act declaring that these kings were totally defeated. So complete was their defeat that their territory was taken and the five kings slaughtered. There is a day coming when those principalities and powers that have been opposed to God will be cast into the lake of fire. Islam will no longer be a threat to Israel or to Britain. The powers behind Ahmadinejad will be thoroughly defeated. The powers behind the New Age Movement or One World Religion, leading to the rule of Antichrist, will be destroyed for ever. Even death

itself will finally lose its ability to shorten our lives and bring grief and sorrow.

Even though those powers are not yet finally vanquished the fact is that Jesus won the battle at Calvary, “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them . . .” (Colossians 2:15) Taken further, we recognise, as Paul did, that through the resurrection of Jesus, He was raised to be seated at the right hand of God far above all rule and authority and power and dominion . . .” and that God has made Jesus as “head over all things to the church.” (See Ephesians 1:21 & 22.) Peter reminds us that as a result of the resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God “authorities and powers have been subject to Him.” (1 Peter 3:22)

GOD IS IN CONTROL

Of course God has always been in control. The Psalmist could boldly declare: “The Lord reigns!” Satan has never been in control and could never go further than God would permit - something which is clearly demonstrated in the life of Job. Yet the cross and resurrection of Jesus means that Satan no longer can control the destiny of believers. We are acquitted of all sin through faith in Jesus, for the price is paid. Jesus has demonstrated His victory over death, opening up the way for all of us to experience eternal life. Therefore Jesus’ life, death, resurrection and ascension enables us to rejoice in the fact that God is all victorious. He is the risen, exalted, glorious King. We greet Him not with palm branches, but with jubilant praise which will echo down through eternity.

There is one further matter. In Ephesians 4 we are reminded that the ascended Lord has given gifts to His Church. Those gifts

include grace to serve him in the various ministries such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Yet even there their task is to equip the Church for maturity and service. The result is that the Body of Christ (the Church) operates as any body would with different organs and limbs fulfilling their function. Clearly part of the effectiveness of the Church is that Christ has sent His Holy Spirit to be at work in all of us. So it isn't just a matter of rejoicing that "the Lord is King . . ." as we sometimes sing. He is in control, but from Heaven He has bestowed on us abundant grace to function in the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, earlier in the same letter, Paul talks about Christ being head over all things for the Church that "His fullness" may "be all in all." The same idea is mentioned in chapter 3 as well. He talks about being strengthened with power in the inner man, by the Holy Spirit, and knowing the love of God in all its vastness so "that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." (See Ephesians 3:16-19.)

Some may have been disappointed at the outcome of the General Election and for a while we had no government. Some of us have been deeply disturbed by the advance of ungodliness and lawlessness (i.e. defying the instruction, *torah*, of God) during the last decade. In fact, we have to recognise that things are likely to get worse, leading to the man of lawlessness being revealed. However, we should remind ourselves that our Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, reigning as King, and that ultimate victory is His. In the meantime, we have been endowed with all the grace that we need by the ascended Lord, and we should pray that the very fullness of God will be seen more and more in His Body whether in Israel or in Britain.

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