

# What has John seen? – week 14

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## Passion and glory

w/c 11 July 2021

*"The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness." (William Blake)*

### Read John 12:12-19

John provides just a brief summary of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. It may be useful to look at the accounts in the other gospels – Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11 and Luke 19:28-44. In particular, reflect on Jesus' response to seeing Jerusalem as he approaches – Luke 19:41.

The crowds for Passover would have been massive, even by our standards – later in the first century, Josephus estimated that they might reach two and a half million. He also records that a census of the lambs involved totalled over a quarter of a million – all needing to be brought into Jerusalem in the space of a few days. They would almost certainly have surrounded Jesus as he entered Jerusalem as the lamb of God.

Since the time of the Maccabees (a group of Jewish rebel warriors who took control of Judea in the second century BC), palm branches had been symbolic of Jewish nationalism. They would reappear on the coins struck during the Jewish revolt later in the century. Here, their use by the crowds would seem to imply that they still see Jesus very much as a military or political saviour. The cries of '*Hosanna*' (Give salvation now!) seem to look for Jesus triggering a full-on rebellion. Do we similarly misread the message of Jesus: what today is our equivalent of their '*Hosanna*'?

Jesus' message though is very different. The nature of the king foretold by Zechariah is clear – not just riding a donkey but putting aside the ways of war and one whose rule is not just confined to Israel but extends to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10). However he might have been seen before, Jesus is very deliberately identifying with the Zechariah prophecy; he clearly sets himself forth as the Messiah (Christ). How do we be the body of a Messiah of peace in the world today?

Reflecting on verse 18, what might be the equivalent in Britain today of the raising of Lazarus that would cause people to *want to see* Jesus?

### Read John 19:1-11

The nineteenth-century preacher, Charles Spurgeon made the following reflection on this passage: "*Oh, that we were half as inventive in devising honour for our King as these soldiers were in planning his dishonour! Let us offer to Christ the real homage that these men pretended to offer him.*" How would that play out in our day to day lives?

Pilate's story makes it clear that not doing the right thing is just as bad as doing the wrong thing. In what ways do our 'sins of omission' today - especially perhaps in regard to humanity's treatment of its poor and of the world – mirror this?

How does Pilate here act as an illustration to Paul's exhortation (1 Timothy 2:1-2) that we should pray for those in authority?

*"The glory of God shines, indeed, in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross." (John Calvin)*