

“HOMECOMING”

by Steve Hammond, Sunday, April 14, 2019
Zechariah 9:9-13 and Exodus 12:3 at NFBC

//3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.//

—Exodus 12:3 NIV

//9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.//

—Zechariah 9:9-10 NIV

So, how many here know what Monday is? I’m expecting everyone to say “tax day.” But what I really want to point out is an observation made in Jonathan Cahn’s Book of Mysteries (day #95). Monday, April 15th is according to the Jewish calendar the 10th of Nisan. Nisan is where the Hebrew new year starts. So Nisan is kind of like “January” to them, only they get to enjoy the new year in spring time.

The tenth of Nisan is important because it was the day referred to in Exodus 12:3 when the Israelites were to select a lamb and bring it into their home. Five days after that, on the 15th of Nisan, would be the Passover. On Passover the lamb would be sacrificed and be a part of the Passover meal remembering the protection from the Angel of Death given the Jewish homes by the blood of the lambs put on the doorposts. After this came their freedom from Egypt and birth as a nation to worship God and seek out the Promised Land.

This gives today, on Palm Sunday, all the more meaning to us, on top of everything else, I mean. It is the beginning of our Christian Holy Week. It is when the crowds, gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover, heard Jesus was approaching the city and went out to greet him with scriptural palm branches in their hands and Hosannas on their lips. It is when Jesus deliberately approached the city of Jerusalem by riding on a donkey’s colt. That was a messianic sign he was entering the city in peace and in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.

But now there's also the significance of choosing the lambs for the Passover. While everyone was selecting their spotless lambs to bring into their homes, Jesus, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," was entering Jerusalem, the city that holds the Jewish temple, the "House of God."

Do you get the idea that God has layer after layer of meaning in the times, places and events surrounding his Son Jesus? Sure do. All of these things come together as if they were the stars in the heavens and the stones of the earth forming a great arrow pointing everyone to Jesus.

This year the 10th of Nisan (Monday) is very close to our Palm Sunday. In fact there's some debate as to whether Jesus entered Jerusalem on a Sunday or a Monday due to this and other details, along with the complicating factors of the Hebrew days starting in the evenings and their calendar being based on the moon instead of the sun.

But if you go back to AD 33, the most likely year Jesus was crucified, the date of Jesus' death would have been the day before the Passover, a Friday, before sunset at 3 in the afternoon. The Last Supper would have been on Thursday (an early Passover for the disciples, which *was* allowed). And the choosing of the lambs would have been on that Monday, the 10th of Nisan. I'm not going to worry whether it was a Sunday or Monday. But do take note of this. Jesus only entered Jerusalem on what we call "Palm Sunday." He waited until the next day to go to the Temple. That would make it exactly the day when the lambs would be entering the people's homes.

So the point remains, as Jonathan Cahn put it: "The Lamb of God had to come to the House of God that the blessings of salvation could come."

However, we also know that Jesus got something of a rude welcome when he went to the Temple. There the spotless Lamb found the House of God to be full of the spots and blemishes of sin. What was to be a house of prayer was a den of thieves. No wonder Jesus was angry with a righteous indignation. Psalm 69 prophetically references what Jesus was experiencing, in these verses:

*8 I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children;
9 for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.*

---Psalm 69:8-9 (NIV)

Our ideas of a homecoming are usually pleasant. Oh how we love to see those videos of soldiers coming home to surprise their wives, mothers, children or even their dogs sometimes. But Jesus' entry into Jerusalem must have been a bittersweet kind of joy. For he knew better than anyone why he was there. He wasn't going away like a soldier to battle. He was coming home in peace, like the paschal lamb, but also to give his life for the sake of those he loves. And only he really understood it all. Because of this, his very home was like a foreign land and even his family must have looked at him like a stranger.

Palm Sunday would mark the beginning of the end of Jesus' last week of life. His normal, earthly life at least. This is what was prophesied in Daniel 9 and in so many other scriptures – right down to the year, the month, the day and the hour, like a countdown for a great and terrible event. They didn't have explosions and rockets in that day. But there was an event that shook heaven and earth at the climax of this holy week. The Lamb of God would die for the sins of the world – once and for all. Righteousness would be established forever. The Covenant with Israel would become the Old Covenant. And a New Covenant would be established without the borders of Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. The only thing that would matter, as it had always mattered, would be faith expressing itself in love. Through the sacrifice of this Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, faith would be counted as righteousness and make way for forgiveness and salvation.

Big as this event was though, huge as this spiritual explosion might be, it went mostly unnoticed. When that countdown reached zero the earth didn't physically rock. Well, not in proportion as one might expect, given the profound nature of what was happening. When Jesus died on that cross the sky did indeed grow dark, at least around Jerusalem. The ground did actually shake, at least in Israel. I believe there were tombs that were opened up. And I believe there were some bodies of saints that just couldn't resist rising from their graves and finding their way into Jerusalem, maybe in search for their homes and families. I think their stories have been lost, like a handful of Lazarus fellows – without the record of scripture beyond a single verse or two in Matthew 27.

Some say this account of the dead rising is poetic, apocalyptic language being used to show how profound the time was. And maybe that

is so. Sometimes God is poetic about his truths. But sometimes God is more practical than poetic. Sometimes he actually raises the dead.

The day is coming, and is even started in Jesus, when God will call his people home by raising them all from the dead. Even now, when we stand at the edge of the grave and speak of a loved one being “called home,” we need to be careful. For it isn’t death that takes someone home. It is Jesus. Death isn’t life. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. *He* is the resurrection and the life. And he is the One who has overcome death, once and for all.

Now, even though the homecoming of Jesus to Jerusalem and the temple was bittersweet, there is still a great joy within it all. It’s the joy made possible by the cross itself, by the Lamb and the sacrifice. It’s the joy of Jesus coming into our lives as if coming home. The joy of his being no stranger to us, but a friend, even the elder brother where together we call God our Father.

Jonathan Cahn speaks of this and challenges us this way:

“... if you would know the blessings of God, you must bring the Lamb home. You must bring Him into the place where you live your life... into every room, every closet, every crevice. The blessings begin when the Lamb comes home.” (day #95)

And to paraphrase Zechariah: Rejoice greatly, Daughter of New Hampshire! Shout, child of the ends of the earth in *Newport!* See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly... and in the way that speaks of peace in your heart and in your home.