

AP

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THOUGHT
FOR
CHRISTIAN
LIVING

Today's Quick Word Matthew 21:8-11

By Bruce Christian

MATTHEW 21:8-11 - *A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

We ought to be very encouraged today as we read these words!

The powerful, influential, movers-and-shakers of Jesus' day were out to 'get' him, to prevent him from bringing the message of God's saving grace and power to a world that was hopelessly lost in sin and the darkness of human 'wisdom'. But, in spite of the stranglehold they had on culture and opinion (cf the Media today!), the ordinary, common people, through the influence and power of God the Holy Spirit, were able to recognise exactly

who this Jesus was in fulfilment of significant OT prophecies, and to acknowledge him publicly as their Messiah/Saviour.

Let us never underestimate our Sovereign Lord's absolute rule in HIS world, nor his power to SAVE to the utmost all those who are his. Let us continue to proclaim 'JESUS IS LORD', openly and confidently, and let us, in faith, take heart in the face of the forces that are against us. As the imprisoned Apostle Paul urges us, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. ... stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have." (Philippians 1:27-30).



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Today's Quick Word Nehemiah 12:45-46

By Bruce Christian

NEHEMIAH 12:45-46 - *[The ministering Priests and Levites] performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the singers and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon. For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the singers and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God.*

I felt a little sad as I read through this chapter in Nehemiah today. Under normal circumstances it would have made happy reading! It is Nehemiah recording all the details of re-establishing the worship of the LORD in Jerusalem following the Babylonian Exile, and, particularly, the dedication of the rebuilt city wall. One of the key elements of this celebration, as of all their worship, was the SINGING of 'songs of praise and thanksgiving to God'.

The recent restrictions imposed on us in our corporate worship because of the Covid-19 pandemic have caused me to reflect on and appreciate, in some small measure, what the time of Exile

in Babylon really meant to God's people. It is expressed in Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy."

King David made many significant contributions to the DNA of the spiritual life of Israel, and no small part of this was music and singing. How we look forward to the easing, and eventual removal, of restrictions - to the time when our 'exile' is over and we can lift up our VOICES, in harmony with our hearts, and enthusiastically join together to 'SING the songs of Zion!' Thank you David and Asaph and Nehemiah for rekindling the fire in us for this.

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Today's Quick Word Genesis 28:12-15

By Bruce Christian

GENESIS 28:12-15 - *[Jacob] had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

As I read these verses I thought about the brief interchange between Jesus and Nathaniel at the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry: "Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.' Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You shall see greater things than that.' He then added, 'I tell you the truth,

you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'" (John 1:49-51).

Was Jesus taking the opportunity to point out the connection between himself and the LORD's amazing promises to Jacob? The son of Isaac, and the grandson of Abraham, was on his way to find a suitable wife from within the 'Covenant' family. The promises are so lavish that their true fulfilment must be found only in Jesus himself!

Elizabeth Clephane expresses this well in one of my (many) favourite hymns: "Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take my stand - the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land: A home within a wilderness, a rest upon the way, from the burning of the noontide heat and the burden of the day. O safe and happy shelter, O refuge tried and sweet; O trysting-place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet! As to the exiled Patriarch that wondrous dream was given, so seems my Saviour's cross to me a ladder up to heaven."