sunday, march 28, 2010

Sacrifice, Monogamy and Altruism

Excellent sermon this morning on the need for humility in leadership ("a king, riding on a donkey"). For the OT reading we had Psalm 118 and I noticed that there is a fascinating variant reading given for v27: instead of "With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar." it can be read as "Bind the festal sacrifice with ropes and take it to the horns of the altar."

The Septuagint has συστήσασθε ἑορτὴν ἐν τοῖς πυκάζουσιν which means "celebrate the festival with the close covering": my version has "celebrate the festival with thick branches, binding the victims even to the horns of the altar".

The point of course is that not only is this the triumphal entry but it also points to Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross.

I've been meaning to blog for a while about a couple of papers:

"Altruism, Spite, and Greenbeards" Science 327 (1341-1344) points out that "strict lifetime monogamy, in which females only mate with one male in their entire life, is crucial for the evolution of eusociality." This provides a very natural scientific basis for understanding the critical importance of "thou shalt not commit adultery"

"Markets, Religion, Community Size, and the Evolution of Fairness and Punishment" Science 327 (1480-1484) shows that adherence to a Major World Religion (Christianity/Islam - they don't distinguish) correlates positively with increased altruistic behaviour across many societies, and had by far the highest effect of the variables studied.

posted by starcourse at 4:54 pm Resolve
labels: altruism, jesus, psalms, religion, science

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