

The King Is Coming!

We have reached a pivotal point in the book of Mark. Jesus is on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. Jesus has been here many times, in fact, He has been in the city below many times. When He descends from the Mount of Olives on this day, He will be setting into motion certain events that will climax with His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

The events we are studying today took place sometime on a Sunday. Before the sun sets the next Friday, Jesus will have been crucified and buried. Before the sun rises on the next Sunday morning, Jesus will have conquered death, hell and the grave by resurrecting from the dead. The events of this day mark the beginning of our Lord's Passion Week.

Up to this point in the ministry of Jesus, He had always told His men to keep quiet about His identity. Often, when Jesus healed people, He would tell them to go their way and to keep quiet about what had happened to them, Mark 7:36; 8:30; 9:9. Now, there is a change in the Lord's strategy. On this day, Jesus begins to draw attention to Himself. Why? He does so because He is about to fulfill an ancient prophecy. He does so because He is about to present Himself to the nation of Israel as their King.

Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Zachariah penned these words, "**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey,**" Zech. 9:9. Jesus is about to fulfill that prophecy in detail.

Mark 11:1-11

- 1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples;**
- 2 and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it.**
- 3 And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."**
- 4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it.**
- 5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?"**
- 6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.**
- 7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it.**

8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

9 Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

11 And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

So our focus today is on that event usually known as Palm Sunday. I'm sure that many of us know the general outline of the story. But have you thought about the details? Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey? Why did the people wave palm branches? Why did they cry out "Hosanna!" as he passed by? What does it all mean?

I. THE PERSON OF THE KING v. 1-6

As we watch the Lord in action in these verses, we are allowed to catch a glimpse of His glory. Imagine the scene if you will.

It is early in the morning and Jesus is making preparations to go to Jerusalem. He is moving through two little villages near the top of the mountain. He is in Bethphage, which means "House of Unripe Figs" and Bethany, which means "House of Dates". Jesus had some dear friends at Bethany, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, with whom He stayed during His last days on earth. John records for us that Jesus had recently performed one of His most outstanding miracles when He raised Lazarus from the dead, John 11.

Now, Jesus stands on the top of the Mount of Olives, preparing to descend into the city below. From the top of that mountain, which stands some 2,600 feet above sea level, Jesus could see the beautiful city spread out before Him. Jesus had that look about Him of a man on a mission. No one else knew what was about to happen. No one—not even the most perceptive among His disciples—realized what was about to happen that day, let alone in the next few days.

Keep in mind that these events occurred during the week leading up to the Passover. Historians tell us that during the Passover, between two and three million people would crowd into the city of Jerusalem for the celebration. The people came in anticipation; they were looking for God to do something while they were there. God would do His greatest work of all during this Passover, but most people would miss it altogether.

Jesus chose this moment to reveal Himself the nation of Israel. He chose this moment to let Israel know that their King had arrived. As we consider this event, let me remind you of two facts. One is that the story of the Triumphal Entry is repeated—in detail—by all four gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. That fact tells me that something this event is critically important. The second fact

I point out is that as you read this story, one impression overwhelms you: Jesus is in complete control of everything that happens on Palm Sunday. Unlike other events in His life, He is not reacting to anyone or anything else. No one—repeat—no one expects Him to do what he does. There are no sick people, no Pharisees to confront, no storms to still, no dead men to raise, no puzzling questions to answer. What Jesus does, He does of His own accord. He has a plan and a destiny.

Jesus sends two of His disciples to a village to get a young donkey colt. He tells them exactly where they will find it and what the people standing around will say to them. He even gives them some details about the animal. When His men go out to complete this assignment, they find that everything is just as Jesus said it would be.

Nothing would have seemed more unlikely than for a king to come riding on a donkey. Jesus could hardly have chosen a more unlikely way to present himself to the nation. If the Scripture had not predicted it, no one would have dreamed it up. That explains why the Romans sat idly by on Palm Sunday while tens of thousands of people flocked to Jesus. From their point of view, the whole thing was a joke. A king on a donkey? You must be kidding. No self-respecting king would be caught dead on a donkey. If you wanted to make an impact, you would come in on a war-horse or surrounded by soldiers or mounted on a chariot. But on a donkey? No way.

It's not hard to imagine the Romans laughing as they watched the spectacle. A pauper king, riding on a borrowed donkey, his saddle a makeshift layer of cloaks, attended by an unruly mob whose only weapons were palm branches.

He didn't look much like a king that day. But that was the whole point. He's a king, but he's not like any earthly king. The Triumphal Entry was an "acted parable," in which Jesus was sending a clear message to the nation. "This is what I am! I am your King, but I am not the King you were expecting!"

II. THE PRESENTATION OF THE KING v. 7-10

We are allowed to see the Person of this King in this event. We are also allowed to see a Presentation of the King in these verses.

The disciples go and get the donkey. They return to Jesus and put their outer garments over the beast in place of a saddle. Jesus climbs on the donkey's back and starts down the mountain.

The King of Israel is about to present Himself to the nation.

A. He Is The Lowly One – As I mentioned earlier, Jesus is fulfilling the ancient prophecy of Zech. 9:9. Part of that prophecy says that the Messiah will be "lowly". That is what we see here. We see a humble Man on the back of a humble beast, making a humble declaration of His identity.

Imagine this procession. Jesus is on a donkey and He is surrounded by throngs of common people. It was, as one writer said, a "procession of paupers". The people are waving palm branches and not swords. He is sitting on old coats and

not a saddle. He is riding a little donkey and not a mighty stallion. He is surrounded by a ragtag rabble and not by strong soldiers. The Roman soldiers who saw this parade must have laughed at this Man Who would be King of the Jews.

B. He Is The Lofty One – As the crowd descended the slopes of the Mount of Olives, the people are praising the Lord. They are practicing “antiphonal” singing. The people in front would say a part and the people in back would answer them. We are told what they said in verses 9-10. The word “Hosanna” means “save now”. It was a cry for the Messiah to deliver His people. It had come to be used as a shout of praise, much like “Hallelujah”.

The people are praising the name of the King, just as the Psalmist predicted they would in Psa. 118:25-26. The people are exalting Jesus as their King, and they are right on the money!

As Jesus began the three mile journey from Bethany to Jerusalem, the people waved palm fronds. What does that mean? In the Old Testament, the Jews were told to wave palm fronds as a part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Two hundred years before Christ, during the Maccabean Rebellion, when the Jews temporarily regained control of the Temple from the Syrians, they celebrated by waving palm branches. Thirty years after the death of Christ, during the rebellion that led up to the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Jews minted coins containing an image of palm branches on one side. Taking this all together, we may say that in the time of Christ palm branches represented joy and celebration. They were also a symbol of national liberation for the Jews. Waving palm branches before Jesus was similar to giving him a ticker-tape parade.

When the Jews waved the palm branches as Jesus rode by, they were saying, “This is the man and this is the day!”

Jesus gladly accepted the praise of the people on Palm Sunday. What a change this was. For most of his public ministry, whenever he worked a miracle, he told people not to spread the word. He wanted people to see him as more than a miracle-worker. But not today. The time for silence was long past. If he once discouraged publicity, he now counts silence inconceivable. The time for truth had come.

Mark doesn't relate this, but Luke does. Luke tells us that the Pharisees are upset about this demonstration. They want Jesus to tell His followers to stop their shouting. Jesus tells them that if these people were to hold their peace, the very rocks would cry out, Luke 19:39-41. In other words, prophecy is being fulfilled and the Lord will have His praise. He is going to have praise on the earth!

The chief priests and scribes monitor the situation with increasing alarm. A public display of support for Jesus was the last thing they wanted. It appears to them that the entire world has gone over to Jesus' side. Their shock turns to dismay and then to anger as the reports keep pouring in. The minutes turn to hours on Palm Sunday while two streams of human emotion converge. On one hand there

is rising excitement as Jesus nears the Eastern Gate; on the other hand there is mounting opposition as the leaders decide that Jesus will not leave the city alive.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE KING v. 11

Jesus went through this procession to fulfill the Word of God, but He had another purpose in what He was doing. In fact, He had a double purpose. Look at what He did.)

A. To Examine The City –As Jesus neared the city, He saw Jerusalem. He saw their future.

He knew that in a few days the people of this city would reject Him and kill Him.

He knew that within forty years, the Romans would besiege the town; that over 30,000 Jews would be crucified as the Legions marched toward the city; that the city would hold out for months while the people succumbed by the thousands to disease and starvation; that they would throw the bodies of the dead over the walls of Jerusalem; that the Romans would conquer the city and that the Temple and the city would be utterly demolished.

Jesus knew all these things and more and Luke tells us that Jesus wept over the town.

Get the image in your mind! The people are shouting, dancing and singing. They are praising God and the Lord Jesus. They are excited and they are vocal in their excitement. Jesus, however, is a man with a broken heart. He knows that Israel will not receive Him, John 1:11. He knows they will reject Him and crucify Him. He knows they are slated for judgment and in the midst of jubilation, Jesus weeps!

B. To Examine The Temple – The last thing Jesus did on that day was to visit the Temple. He took the time to look “at all things.” He saw the beauty of the buildings. He saw the gold, the silver and all the trappings of religion. He saw the priests carrying out their rituals. He saw the people bringing their sacrifices to the priests. He saw the merchants in the temple court, buying and selling and cheating the worshipers. He saw it all, but they did not really see Him.

The King had entered the Temple and they knew nothing of it. The Lord of Glory had visited His house and they were ignorant of His presence. He saw they had no place for Him in their Temple so He left.

In the days to come some would look back and say, “If only we had known.” But after Palm Sunday no one could truly use that excuse. They knew! No one could ever say, “He didn’t make himself plain.” How could he have made it plainer? He made himself so clear that no one could miss it.

On Palm Sunday no one was under any compulsion. The nation had a clear choice to make. So did the rulers. The Romans did nothing to interfere. The priests stood by and watched it all happen. Every man had a choice to make that day; every man in Jerusalem made a choice. For better or for worse, the die was cast. Jesus called for a decision and the nation rendered its verdict.

Jesus was sending a message to Israel on Palm Sunday, a message that the time for decision had come. No longer would the people have the privilege of discussing His credentials in an abstract manner. On this day Jesus presented Himself to the nation, asking for an immediate decision. The answer He received was not encouraging. Although the crowds cheered, they did not truly understand Him. Although the leaders understood Him, they did not cheer him. Israel came close, so close on that day to embracing Him as God's Messiah. But close wasn't good enough.

After Palm Sunday the only thing left was Golgotha.

Nearly 20 centuries have come and gone since Jesus met his appointment in Jerusalem. And just like the people in Jerusalem that day, we too have come to a time of decision. And the truth is: Spiritual Opportunities Don't Last Forever.

Where Jesus Christ is involved, no one can wait forever. No one can sit on the fence forever. There comes a time when a decision must be rendered for or against the Son of God. In spiritual matters, not to decide is to decide. To say "not now" is really to say "no."

It's not enough to be interested in Jesus. Millions of people who are interested in him have no living relationship with him. The people of the first Palm Sunday were interested. The whole city was stirred to the point of discussion ... but not the point of action. Mere interest will never save you. The gospel saves only those who believe ... not those who talk about believing.

Will you receive Him or reject Him?