

# HUMBLE KING

Mark 11:1-10

Before we take up the actual story, let's consider circumstances surrounding this event. First, Jesus was at the end of a long journey which had begun many months before zigzagging through Galilee, Samaria, Perea, and finally Judea.

During this final journey he had ministered, according to one Bible teacher, in at least thirty-five localities, timing the journey so he would end up in Jerusalem for Passover. In the course of this journey He had come to Bethany previously and raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11). News of this miracle spread and many believed in Him. But the Pharisees, chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin reacted by counseling together how they might kill Jesus (John 11:45-53; 12:9-11). After raising Lazarus, Jesus withdrew from the area until He returned in time to celebrate this Passover in AD33. So the tensions were already high between Jesus and the religious leaders before Passover AD33.

One estimate places the number of worshippers in Jerusalem to celebrate this Passover at 2.7 million. The Passover was only a few days away. People were wondering if Jesus would make some kind of move? And if He did, what would their leaders do?

As we discover, Jesus indeed made a move that was very calculated and clear in its meaning.

## PREPARATIONS (11:1-6)

Mark 11:1-6 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup> and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.' " <sup>4</sup> And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. <sup>5</sup> And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.

Bethphage was a little village between Jerusalem and Bethany. A traveler approaching Jerusalem from the east, coming from Jericho, would first come to Bethany about two miles from Jerusalem on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. As he rounded the south side of the Mount of Olives, he would pass by Bethphage before entering Jerusalem.

On this day, what we call Palm Sunday, Jesus, His disciples and pilgrims going up to Jerusalem were somewhere between Bethany and Bethphage when Jesus sent two of His disciples into Bethphage to fetch a donkey's unriden colt. As to how Jesus knew the donkey and its colt were there, the Scriptures are silent. Perhaps Jesus prearranged this or maybe it was revealed by the Father. Whatever the case, the owners loaned Jesus the colt perhaps because they had heard of Him and reasoned they could trust Him with the colt.

Why the choice of a young donkey? Because over 500 years before, the Old Testament prophet, Zechariah had prophesied that the Messiah would come riding on the foal of a donkey:

**Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**

**<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

Jesus deliberately fulfilled this prophecy in order to clearly present Himself as Messiah to His people. Those pilgrims and worshippers who witnessed this event would have recognized it as the fulfillment of the Zechariah's prophecy. What is more, riding a donkey (contrary to what we think today) was a kingly act which identified him with the royal line of David. The donkey was a royal animal during King David's reign (1 Kings 1:32-35). After him, the Hebrew kings switched to horses, and the donkey was considered unsuited to the dignity of kings.

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing when he rode that donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. By fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy, Jesus was declaring Himself to His people to be their Messiah and King. He was openly declaring Himself to be the Messiah.

By fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy and riding on a donkey, Jesus was also proclaiming what He is like: "...righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey..." Unlike the kings of this earth who are obsessed with power and control, Jesus is humble (gentle) and righteous. Jesus invites each and every one of us to

**Matthew 11:29 (ESV)**

**<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

Having secured the donkey, Jesus presented Himself as Messiah to His people.

## **PRESENTATION (11:7-10)**

**Mark 11:7-10 (ESV)**

**<sup>7</sup> And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. <sup>9</sup> And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! <sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"**

No doubt, everyone in the vicinity was aware of Jesus' presence on the road that day. As the pilgrims along the road observed Jesus' disciples returning to Him with a donkey they recognized the significance of the moment; they remembered Zechariah 9:9 and understood what Jesus was doing.

In response, they "rolled out the red carpet" for Jesus by sacrificing their own clothing to lay on the road along with leafy branches. This was an intense, heartfelt response of the people celebrating Jesus as their Messiah and King.

As they traveled along and perhaps when they first caught sight of their beloved city, Mark tells us they began to shout or rather chant. This was actually a customary part of

their celebrations of the Feasts of the Lord; as pilgrims approached the walls of Jerusalem they would chant portions of the Hallel Psalms of Psalms 113-118. From the structure of the Psalms, they were written to be chanted in an antiphonal manner – the pilgrims would chant a phrase and worshippers on the walls of Jerusalem would answer with a corresponding phrase. What a wonderful, joyous way to be welcomed to Jerusalem to worship God in each of the Feasts!

So in joyous celebration the crowds around Jesus broke out in joyous celebration chanting the words from Psalm 118:

“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! <sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

As Mark says in verse 9, “And those who went before and those who followed were shouting.” This was an antiphonal chant between those in front of Jesus and those behind. Some scholars suggest that it went like this:

*First group:* “Hosanna!”

*Second group:* “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

*First group:* “Hosanna in the highest!”

The line, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” is from Psalm 118:26. This was traditionally chanted as a greeting to pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem to worship the Lord. But on this day it perfectly fit the Lord Jesus. Their reference to the coming kingdom of their father David was an expression of their belief that Jesus was the Messiah coming to reestablish the kingdom of David.

The word “Hosanna” is very significant; it means “Save!” or “Save us!” It had become a customary religious greeting at Passover, but on the lips of this crowd it was rich with prophetic meaning. In addition to being righteous and humble, what did the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 foretell of the king:

**Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This king comes *having salvation*.

As the crowd celebrated and chanted “*Hosanna!*” over and over again they were literally chanting, “Save us! ... Save us! ... Save us!”

This was Jesus’ moment: the donkey He rode revealed His identity, the “Hosannas!” of the crowd revealed His mission.

Here, O Israel, is your King come to save!