

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
March 29, 2015

Lesson Text: Mark 11:1-11

Lesson Title: Coming in the Name of the Lord

Introduction

The last week of Jesus' life, known as Passion Week or Holy Week, began as He and His followers started the long three thousand foot climb and seventeen mile walk uphill from Jericho to Jerusalem. Several months earlier, according to Luke 9:51, Jesus "*stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*" He planned to present Himself in the capital city as the Messiah, but he knew what the outcome would be.

This is the week that our Lord would go to Jerusalem to suffer and die for our sins. And the disciples seem to be unaware again of the significance of the things taking place these days. Jesus deliberately moves toward the city of Jerusalem. All of Jesus' actions are deliberate. Now more than ever more, there are indications that every single action that He takes during this final week is filled with significance for the disciples and for us. The end was quickly approaching. Within just a few days, the religious leaders would have their way and Jesus would be crucified. But before that happened, Jesus had some important truths to teach His disciples, as well as you and me.

The Preparation for Jesus' Coming to Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-6)

Verse 1-2

"And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him."

First, Jesus prepares *personally* for His coming in his travel and his lodging. Jesus and His disciples "came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany." "Bethpage" was a small district between Jerusalem and "Bethany." The name "Bethpage" means "the house of unripe figs." "Bethany" means "the house of dates."

It was common for a traveler approaching Jerusalem from the east, to come by the way of "Bethany" which was about two miles from Jerusalem on the slopes of the "Mount of Olives." From the south side of the Mount of Olives, the traveler would pass by "Bethphage" before entering Jerusalem. Once again, while our Lord's movements may be consistent with the traveling procedure of

the day, these particular movements were all deliberate. Everything must be in keeping with prophesy and the Father's will.

We also know from the gospel of John that Jesus stayed with his friends Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, who lived in "Bethany." He probably arrived there on Friday evening before sunset, a week before the Passover supper. After a quiet Sabbath rest, He rose on Sunday morning and began His entry into Jerusalem.

Second, Jesus prepares for His entry to Jerusalem with *authority*. He issues a four-fold command: "go, find, loose, and bring." The One who came to this world robed in human flesh now speaks with authority. The One who owns a cattle on a thousand hills is calling for "a colt" to be His ride. His hidden and veiled identity is about to be fully revealed.

The "colt" that Jesus is about to ride upon is a small donkey "whereon never man sat." No one would dare attempt to ride a donkey that had never been ridden. But Jesus can because He has authority over His creation and the animals He created. The possible bad reaction of an unriden donkey is under the power and authority of its Creator!

Verse 3

"And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither."

Jesus' authority is again demonstrated in how the disciples are instructed to respond if they are asked "why" they are taking the animal. Their answer is to be "the Lord hath need of him..." This is the first time, last time, and only time in the Gospels where Jesus calls Himself, "Lord." Jesus has chosen his time, his transportation, and his title by which He will present Himself in Jerusalem. He is in control.

Verse 4

"And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him."

"And they went their way, and found the colt..." reminds us that there are always those who obey the Lord. That has been true for over two thousand years and it is still true today. They never asked one question. If Jesus commanded it, it must be all right. They had trusted Jesus in the big things and now they must trust him in the little things. Oh, that we could live with that kind of trust and obedience today.

Because of their obedience to the Lord they “found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met.” In Jesus’ day, the better class of houses were built upon an open court, from which a passageway under the house led to the street outside. It was at this outside opening to the street that they “found the colt tied by the door.”

The details of this verse, such as “they went their way...found the colt tied by the door...in a place where two ways met...and they loose him” tells us that what we are reading is the report of an eyewitness. It may have been Peter or one of the disciples who related these events to Mark. Again, every detail is important when it relates to Jesus. And these details are extremely important now that the Messiah is about to be presented in the nation’s capital.

Verse 5-6

“And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.”

Because of the nature of what Jesus had commanded the disciples to do, He anticipated their actions would be questioned. When they “loosed the colt” it would have the appearance of stealing. But the people in the area knew Jesus and His disciples very well. So, when someone asked, “What do ye, loosing the colt,” they answered as Jesus commanded in verse 3, “and they let them go.”

Perhaps these bystanders whom Mark refers to as “certain of them” were also disciples. Perhaps they had met Jesus somewhere along the way or heard of His miracles and mission. Either way, when they heard the words, “the Lord hath need of him,” they willingly did not interfere. Christ had the authority then and He has the authority now to control events both large and small. Things that might seem insignificant to us are often significant with Lord.

Question: Do you know Jesus well enough to trust Him and believe Him when He asks something of you or from you? In this text, both the disciples who went after the colt and the bystanders witnessing the disciples getting the colt were willing for the Lord’s will to be done.

The Procession as Jesus Comes to Jerusalem (Mark 11:7-11)

Verse 7

“And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.”

Why did Jesus need to ride into Jerusalem? And if He is going to ride, why a “colt?” Was it simply because He was tired? That’s not likely since all of Jesus

travels were by foot. What Jesus does in this verse is filled with symbolism and meaning. It was a custom in the eastern world that a conquering king would ride a mount that had never been ridden by another. This is the only time in the gospels that Jesus is ever mentioned as riding on anything. He *walked* in Galilee, in Samaria, and into Jericho. But now, He is coming as “King.”

The “colt” is a beast symbolic of peace. Almost 1,000 years before this date, another son of David, Solomon, whose name means “peace,” had ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey (1 Kings 1). Now, a greater than Solomon has come to bring peace through the salvation of the cross. The “colt” is also a beast of burden. The donkey symbolized that lowly animal that carried heavy loads. Jesus said, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). Other kings burden their subjects. This “King” will bear the burdens of His subjects. Other kings oppress. This “King” comes to relieve oppression. Other king’s tax. This “King” comes to be taxed. Other kings take life in order to reign. This “King” gives His life in order to reign. What a strange but glorious “King!”

Note: It seems inappropriate that any king should make His triumphal entry riding a donkey. Can you imagine Alexander the Great riding a donkey? Can you imagine how the first readers of Mark’s Gospel, which were Romans, responded when they read about Jesus entry into Jerusalem on a donkey? Who would want a King who rode on a donkey?

Verse 8-10

“And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”

This is indeed a strange king and an even stranger parade. The “spreading of garments” on the colt and in the roadway emphasized the enthusiasm of the people. King’s horses were often covered with rich clothing and beautiful colors. For this “King,” Jesus, the colt and the roadway was covered with the normal unattractive “garments” of the people. But don’t be fooled. While most of the crowd spread their “garments” in the roadway there were many others who went about life as usual. The “King” came riding into Jerusalem that day and some never knew it. Has anything changed? The majority never saw, never knew, and never cared. The majority today have missed the “King” (Matthew 7:14).

As Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, shouts of “Hosanna” rang out from the crowd. “Hosanna” means “save now.” The crowd lining the streets wanted a deliverer from Rome. But that was precisely what Jesus could not do. He

couldn't save them now politically. He could not save as a royal earthly king riding into the city. He could only save as a bloody "King" on a cross. Most earthly kings have soldiers and swords. This "King" has "branches off the trees." He is a "King" honored with old clothes and broken trees!

The "Hosannas" on this Sunday would change to "crucify" on Friday. The crowd also shouts "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord..." It is taken from Psalm 118:26. God had promised David that his kingdom and throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16), and the people expected Jesus to be the one to fulfill that covenant. What they don't understand is that it must take place on a cross, not just by a ride into town.

What is happening here is also a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*" Why is our Lord's reference to prophecy so significant? For five centuries, the prophecy of Zechariah that a king would come had lain forgotten in the hearts and minds of God's people. During that time, Alexander the Great came and went leaving Jerusalem in a bloody conquest and still the promise of a king went unfulfilled. But now, the "King" has come!

Zechariah 9:9 prophesied that the "King" would come, "*lowly, and riding upon an ass...*" "Lowly" means "humble, afflicted, weak, or poor." Jesus will no more force Himself on you than He did on Jerusalem. He presents Himself as the humble King, and then awaits your decision.

At just the precise, exact, moment in history, the hinges on the gates of Jerusalem began to squeak and Jesus Christ, the "King" came riding into Jerusalem on "a colt, whereon never man sat." That's good news in more ways than anyone can imagine. For this same Jesus which fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy on the Sunday before Jesus' death on the cross is the same Jesus who was on the Mount of Olives a few weeks later after His resurrection and said, "*...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:9-11). This promise is not five centuries old, it is over twenty centuries old. It has been buried beneath the apathy and indifference of the day and pushed to the back burner of theology. But rest assured child of God. Just as sure as Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, so our Lord will "*come in like manner*" as He promised the apostles on the Mount of Olives.

Verse 11

“And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem ends in “Jerusalem” and in “the temple.” The “temple” is in the heart of Jerusalem and is the focal point of Israel’s worship. He would return to cleanse the temple, but for now He must go “out unto Bethany.” Although the crowds had shouted “Hosanna” and “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” Jerusalem wasn’t a safe place for him to sleep. Doctor H.A. Ironside writes, “By going out unto Bethany with the twelve, Jesus presents to us a self-imposed banishment. He did not spend a night in the holy city during Passion Week. He recognized already that He was to suffer outside the gate (Hebrews 13:12-13). There was no place for Him in the city of the great King (Matthew 5:35). He found a refuge among the poor and the lowly and with those who waited for the consolation of Israel.” (H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary-H. A. Ironside Commentary-Mark.)

Conclusion

Jesus came to Jerusalem at the beginning of His final week. He came to present Himself as “King.” He came to give hope to the people who were gathering for Passover. He came to confront the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the religious establishment who had always opposed His teaching and His claim to be God. He came because this was the time the Father had appointed for Him to come. He came to fulfill prophecy. He came to show everyone that what they expected and what they needed were two different things entirely. He came so you would know what you really believe about Jesus!

I’m not sure that our Lord’s triumphal entry was very impressive to those in Jerusalem. I’m sure it would not have been impressive to anyone who had been in Rome at a time when one of the Caesars returned from a war and had a great triumphal entry, or a victorious return of a Caesar. It is said that so much spoil and so many captives were brought back that the parade would go on for two or three days and nights. That would be considered a hero’s welcome.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, it was no hero’s welcome. It was just a few Galileans and peasants. But the impressive thing and the important thing is that the Lord Jesus didn’t come for a hero’s welcome. He came for sinners and He came in the name of the Lord!

Amen.