

Meet Jesus: The King who rides a donkey!

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd like to open your Bibles, we're in Mark's Gospel, chapter 11, and it's page 847. Mark chapter 11, page 847.

And it's about the king who rides a donkey, as you'll see on the sheet in front of you.

And Billy Bradford said, I should have brought a donkey in with me today. And I said, just look out, Billy, I'll buy a donkey suit and you'll be at the front. And John, who was painting with him, will be at the back.

Was he Brian Suter at Christmas? He had some camels over in Perth for part of the celebration of Christmas. There was a play on or some event. But we won't be doing that today.

So, let's put our heads down and we'll look at Mark chapter 11. And I'll read from verse 1 to verse 11. Now, when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples 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.

[1 : 20] Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, why are you doing this? Say, the Lord has need of it and we'll send it back here immediately. And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street.

And they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, What are you doing untying the colt? And they told them that Jesus had said.

And they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it. And he sat on it. And many spread their cloaks on the road.

And others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the field. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at evening, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

[2 : 29] Well, as Christians, we look forward, don't we, to the return of Christ. When he'll come in to bring in the new creation. John says, doesn't he, the Bible ends, doesn't it, in Revelation.

And he said, I looked. And there was a new heaven and a new earth. For the former things had passed away. Well, let's go back in time, friends, if you can do that.

Just think what it would be like before Jesus came. More specifically, before he died on the cross.

And the expectation of God's people was not this total cosmic inauguration of God's kingdom, but a kingdom based upon what?

This creation, do you see? And they expected the Christ to be the king of this kingdom that was coming in, in his name.

So, when Jesus explained to Peter that he was going to die, well, Peter rebuked him, didn't he? Do you remember? He takes Jesus aside.

[3 : 39] He says, what do you mean? Are you going to die? You can't do that, Jesus. The Christ doesn't do that sort of thing. So, Peter rebuked Jesus when it came to the matter of suffering and dying.

To the Jews, it was incomprehensible that the Christ should die. And here's their thinking. They want liberation from Rome and they want it forthwith, immediately, do you see?

And the king had arrived, hadn't he? Jesus, in a tangible way. Walking around, performing miracles. And God's people are expecting the same with the kingdom.

They know the king is here and they're expecting the kingdom to come in, in the same tangible way. It's perfectly logical. And whoever's here has never sort of put two and two together and got five.

So, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, what are they thinking, the Jewish people? They're thinking it's liberation from Rome, aren't they? Just like with Moses, it was liberation from Egypt.

[4 : 47] That's sort of what's going through the thinking. What's more, it's Passover time. So, all those memories about Moses and the escape out of Egypt are all there, compounded in their thinking.

Everything's sort of synchronised, if you think about it. For D-Day, let's just get a feel for their excitement. We read it in the passage, didn't we? It starts in verse 8.

And many spread their cloaks on the road. And others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. So, here was Jesus entering Jerusalem.

Nothing, think about it, nothing before on planet Earth had seen such good news. It's an amazing event. No longer a promise, but the event itself, they were thinking.

[5 : 52] Like when the British troops liberated France. You know, everyone's lined the streets, aren't they? Celebrating at the liberation.

There's the joyous soldiers sat on the tanks as they rumble through. People throwing flowers at them. Just listen to those shouts. They're shouting, Hosanna!

Aren't they? As Jesus goes through towards Jerusalem. Hosanna! Hosanna! Which means save. Save. Save. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the coming kingdom, verse 10, of our father David. So, Jesus is entering Jerusalem. And it seems like the inauguration of his kingdom.

Are you with me? And we're going to leave our first point now. At this sort of fever pitch level of excitement. And we've thought, haven't we, about the anticipation of God's people.

[6 : 54] And our second point is the plan of God. The plan of God. And we'll look at a few interesting things here that are going on in our passage. Firstly, friends, the scale of God's plan.

The scale of God's plan. Verse 11. And what do we expect Mark's first readers will think that Mark's going to write here? Well, I'm going to rewrite it.

This is verse 11, rewritten. According to the expectations of the first century Jewish people. Here it is. And Jesus entered Jerusalem.

And just as he approached the temple, legions of angels came out. An army. They were armed with swords. Some of them were riding chariots.

And they put to the sword the whole Roman army. Is that what it says? Verse 11. Look at verse 11, friends. And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple.

[7 : 54] And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. What an anticlimax, isn't it that?

All that anticipation and excitement, it just seems to sort of fizzle out. Just imagine there's a dad somewhere on the edge of Jerusalem and he's trying to put the wanes to sleep that evening.

You know, it's dusk and he just can't get them to sleep. They're so full of excitement. It's been such an exciting day, hasn't it? They're asking dad all sorts of questions.

One asks, you know, now that the Christ has come, this Jesus, will we have Jesus on our coins instead of that Caesar, that Roman Caesar?

Another one asks, will there be a big ceremony tomorrow, dad? And then a little Wayne climbs up and looks out of the window and his little heart sinks.

[9 : 01] There's Jesus on the donkey, wobbling back up to Bethany. He wobbles along up the hill.

The twelve disciples straggled along behind him, exhausted. No fanfare, no singing. All you can hear is the donkey's hooves, cloppity-clop as it walks the two miles back up to Bethany on the cobbled road.

Yet amidst all this disappointment, the eyes of Jesus are sparkling. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him.

No beauty that we should desire him, says Isaiah. Jesus was in total control. And I think that this is nothing less than majestic.

For him, verse 11 wasn't a disappointment. It was mission accomplished. Have a look with me. You know, as regards Jesus, he could go straight from verse 7 to verse 11.

[10:11] Just look there, verse 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it and he sat on it. Verse 11. And he entered Jerusalem and went around the temple. And when he had looked around at the temple, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Do you see? Do you see how you can put those together? The acclamation of verses 8 to 10. Well, Jesus seems to be sort of passive in the whole thing. So, friends, think about this.

Listen. There's two things underway, isn't there? In the same event. It's the same event. Jesus going to Jerusalem to the temple. There's two things underway. There's the expectation of God's people and then there's the plan of God.

They're both underway. They're in the same event. It's the same event taking place. Are they at cross purposes? Well, no. It's simply the timing that's the issue.

The crowd think. What do they think? They think it's Jerusalem and a throne. But Jesus knows it's not a throne that awaits him, is it?

[11:18] But a cross. Not an earthly kingdom now, but a total cosmic recreation when he returns to this world.

So, yes, the king had arrived. But he'd come to bring in more than people knew. There's a theological expression to describe jumping the gun like this.

It's called over-realized eschatology. And it's basically God's people being impatient. You know, wanting things that are reserved for the new creation. Now, chasing after them day after day.

Things that are reserved for the new creation. Yet, nonetheless, these shouts proclaim what God has underway.

So, the crowd, think about it, were shouting more than they knew. Two realities entwined together. As a church, we can try and understand, can't we?

[12:24] What God is doing from his word, as best we can. We can try and align things to his will that's revealed to us through his word. I guess our building down the road is an example of such a thing.

And as we do that, friends, God is at work. And listen, there's usually more going on than meets the eye. And it's the same in our own individual lives.

There's more going on than meets the eye. A decision about a career. A relationship. An area of service in the church.

There's more going on than meets the eye. A fortnight ago, we heard from a guy called Jan Hensel. And Jan is from Slovakia.

And Jan had learned how to preach from listening to cassette tapes of Eric Alexander. And he was mentoring a young student who's actually going to come over here to Glasgow.

[13:28] He's going to live in Glasgow for a year and find a job and learn better English. And then he's going to be at Cornhill Training Course and learn how to preach here at St. George's Tron.

Someone's ministry, think about it, was recording cassette tapes. Wasn't it? Sending them out and selling them. And unbeknown, God had something else on the go.

God's revelation, listen, though it's sufficient, friends, for us, is limited. He colours in the bits that are withheld from us.

The scale of God's plan. Now what about the donkey in God's plan? You know, what an odd form of transport, isn't it?

For a king. It's like something from Blackpool Pleasure Beach. You can visit the British Museum. I think it's down sort of in the basement of the British Museum.

[14:27] I've been a few times. And there's the stone walls of King Sennacherib's palace from about 700 BC. You can actually watch as if you're inside the palace and engraved, carved into the stone as pictures of the various Assyrian kings.

And they're riding on horseback, looking very victorious with long spears. There's Sennacherib.

He's in a chariot, actually throwing a spear at a lion. But here's Jesus on a donkey.

It's not what kings do, is it? Until, that is, you read the Bible. Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, 520 BC. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.

On a colt, the foal of a donkey. Alexander McLaren says this, Our Lord then deliberately dressed himself by the mirror of prophecy.

[15:38] Isn't that beautifully put? Our Lord then deliberately dressed himself by the mirror of prophecy and assumed the very characteristics which the prophet had given long ago as the mark

of the coming king of Zion.

So, that's Jesus on the way into Jerusalem on this donkey. And we've looked at the scale of God's plan.

We've looked at the donkey in God's plan. Let's think now about the temple in God's plan. verse 11. What was Jesus doing in the temple?

Well, friends, think about this. The temple is the place, isn't it, where man, what, met with God.

Where sin was somehow atoned for by the shedding of blood.

He looked around verse 11 at everything and returned to Bethany, says Mark. That's it. It seems such a letdown, doesn't it?

[16:40] takes the wind out of our sails until we think, friends, that it's the interface between the Old Testament and the New Testament. One temple, think about it, was looking at another.

Man was to no longer meet with God in the temple building but through the person who was looking around inside it.

and changeover day was within the week. Awesome. God is in total control of his unfolding plan and it's woven into human history.

The scale, the donkey, the temple. Let's think now, friends, about the people in God's plan, finally.

The people in God's plan. Why is it such a public entry into Jerusalem?

Jesus would normally retreat away, wouldn't he? From public acclamation. Yet here, he seems to have deliberately orchestrated a public event.

[17:50] And from here on in, think about it, right up until the cross, it's all, friends, in public view. Do you see? Have you ever thought about this sort of transition in visibility?

It's like the covers are off, isn't it? What does it all mean? J.C. Ryle says this, he drew the attention of rulers and priests and elders and scribes and Greeks and Romans to himself.

It's as if, friends, all of creation are gathered around to witness these last few days of Jesus as he approaches Jerusalem.

We sometimes take it for granted, don't we? This isn't one of the world's made-up religions. This isn't some sort of weird maverick in a cave somewhere writing weird things.

No. This is God in his mercy giving a public revelation of himself. etched into history.

[19:01] Verifiable. And the whole world, it's as if the whole world are looking on at this particular week, this event. Listen to what the early church prays for.

Acts chapter 4 from verse 27. For truly, they say to God, in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Yes, they're all there, aren't they friends? All of humanity represented, gathered around, something that all of world history, think about it, would never be able to erase, never.

tis mystery all, the immortal dies, who can explore his strange design? Here he is then, it's the Christ entering Jerusalem.

Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. And John looks, doesn't he?

[20:21] He looks what the events of this week achieved. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Listen, and I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, from God, prepared as a bride, adorned for a husband. And just listen to this as we close.

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb. There's more going on, friends, than meets the eye.

Shall we pray? Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for sending your Son into this world.

That unlike us who falter and are often sinful and turn and turn away from your will revealed to us.

He was faithful and went to the cross and died for us so that he could be the herald of the new creation. We thank you for that certainty that we have in our lives.

[21:36] And we pray, Father, that we trust in you and that we'd understand through what you're doing through us. there's a lot more going on and often meets the eye.

We pray that we wouldn't seek the things of this world for our satisfaction, that we would be confident in your purposes and that we would cleave to you in all that we do.

So go with us now, we pray. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now this day and forevermore.
Amen.