

Mark 11:1-10

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 11 and verse 1, it's on page 847. Following the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks executed! Nicholas II. They executed! Nicholas II including his whole family, including his youngest daughter, the! Grand Duchess of Russia, Anastasia. At least that's the claim of reliable historians and now the result of reliable DNA testing. However, history and science didn't stop Fox Animation Studios from producing that film, did they? The animated motion picture of the legend, Anastasia, emerging in the film. And it increases this kind of possibility that Anastasia survived. She survived the killing of her father and the family. And the movie tells the story of this orphan. An orphan who's got no recollection of the past. And through a number of different circumstances, she discovers her true identity. She is the lost Russian princess.

She is Anastasia. She lives her life not knowing who she is. Now there's one similarity between, and one great difference between Hollywood's movie about Anastasia and Mark's account of the Lord Jesus.

The similarity between Jesus and Anastasia is that they're both of royal blood. Anastasia was the daughter of the Russian Tsar. Jesus is the son of David. He comes from a royal bloodline of King David. But the great difference is to do with their identity. Anastasia, at least as the legend goes, for most of her life, did not know who she was.

She didn't know. She didn't know that she was the Grand Duchess. Jesus, on the other hand, knows precisely who he was and what he was doing. So he called himself, and the text is still read to us, the Lord. He didn't dismiss the people's claim of him in verse 10, that he had something to do with the coming kingdom of David.

And in the next chapter, in chapter 12, verses 35 to 37, he claims to be David's Lord. You see, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that donkey, on the first Palm Sunday, he knew who he was, and he knew exactly what he was doing.

[2 : 29] He knew who he was, and he knew exactly what he was doing. So look with me at verses 1 to 7. And we're introduced to that theme of fulfillment.

It's a big theme. The theme of fulfillment. This is what, that is, what Jesus says will happen, happens. And it happens precisely. So look at verse 2.

In verse 2 of chapter 11, Jesus says, go into the village. And in verse 4, what do they do? They go into the village. In verse 2, Jesus says, you will find a colt tied.

A colt is a baby, a young donkey. And in verse 4, they find a colt tied. In verse 2, Jesus says, untie it. And in verse 4, they untie it.

In verse 3, Jesus predicts that someone will question their action. They will say, what are you doing? And in verse 5, someone questions their action. And says, what are you doing?

[3 : 30] Jesus said, provide them with a response. And in verse 6, they told them what Jesus had said. In verse 2, Jesus says, bring the colt to me. And in verse 7, they bring the colt to Jesus.

So very deliberately, Mark is showing us that all of Jesus' words were fulfilled. It's one thing to notice that Jesus' words are precisely fulfilled, but it's another thing to see the significance of what he desired and received.

Jesus desired a colt, a young male donkey. Verse 3, he even takes that further, that the Lord has need of it. Why does Jesus have need of it?

Did Jesus need this animal because his legs were tired? Was he so worn out that he refuses to walk the last two miles to Jerusalem?

He's just had enough of walking and so he needs the donkey, but that's certainly not the reason. Was it that Jesus was kind of arbitrarily testing his followers, kind of displaying his authority and testing their loyalty?

[4 : 40] Was he like some mad dictator dictator, sending him on a fool's errand just to show how powerful he was, just to see if his subjects would comply with him?

Of course, that's not the reason either. Jesus asked for a specific animal to reveal who he was and what his mission was about. There is fulfilment of his words and there is fulfilment of their words. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we are told that Jesus died according to the scriptures and that he was buried according to the scriptures and that he rose again according to the scriptures.

Well, here in Mark's gospel, as in all the gospels, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt of all animals because it was according to the scriptures to fulfil prophecy.

What Matthew states in Matthew 21, this takes place to fulfil what the prophet had spoken, saying, and say to the daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming. He's coming to you humble, mounted on a donkey, on a fold of a beast of burden.

[5 : 48] Matthew states that openly in his gospel, but Mark just assumes it. Now that quote that I read to you from Matthew is actually from Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9.

I want you to turn there. Let me give you the page number. You'd all be able to find Zechariah very, very quickly, but it's on page 797, okay, in the church Bibles. And while you're chilling there, let me say to you, Zechariah is a very, very important book.

Do you know how many quotations there are from Zechariah in the New Testament? There are 71. 71 quotations from the book of Zechariah. 31 of those come from the book of Revelation.

But in the four Gospels there are 27 quotes from the book of Zechariah. 27. And most of those quotes come at the end of Jesus' life, the final week.

So what does this prophet say about Jesus? He foretells, he predicts that Christ will come in loneliness. He talks about his humanity.

[6 : 57] He talks about his rejection. He talks about how Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah talks about his crucifixion, his priesthood, his coming reign, just to name a few of the things he spoke to.

So in Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9 and 10, if you turn there, page 797 if you're not there already, listen to what it says. It says, Zechariah 9 verse 9, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king has come to you, righteous, and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a coat, the foal of a donkey.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem and the battle boat shall be cut off and he shall speak peace to the nations and his rule shall be from sea to sea and from river to the ends of the earth.

Verse 9 of Zechariah chapter 9 shows us the character of the coming king. It tells us of his character.

[8 : 04] It tells us that he is righteous, that he will do what is right. It tells us that he is holy. It tells us that he is powerful. He is a righteous king and a saving king but he's also a humble king.

And then verse 10 tells us what he's going to do. What will he do? What will be his achievement? Well he will establish a peaceful universal kingdom and as we reflect on those verses I don't find it extraordinary to think that if God was going to raise up an earthly king to bring divine victory that if God was going to inaugurate a universal king over everywhere that such a ruler would be righteous. That God would give such a ruler who would possess the ability to save. To bring salvation. It's a contrast isn't it to the myriad to the loads of kings of the Old Testament who failed.

You would only expect God's divinely appointed king that he would conform to God's law. He would obey God's law and he would bring with him redemption for all of God's people.

But what is striking is that this awesome king this powerful king this righteous king this holy king this magnificent king would come in humility. He would come as the text says isn't it humble and mounted on a donkey.

[9 : 31] And the context of the book of Zechariah as well as the rest of the prophets the word humble does not just mean gentle but lowly and bowed down.

The word humble in the book of Zechariah means actually one who will suffer. One commentator says all of the lowly miserable suffering condition as is depicted in Isaiah 53.

You know that passage? The man of sorrow is acquainted with grief. So you see in contrast with the arrogance and the showiness that was usually associated with a ruler any ruler in the ancient world any king in his day as in ours this king will be poor.

And he will be afflicted. And he will be a servant. And yet he will be a glorious lord. It's one thing isn't it to struggle in our minds with this notion of a humble king.

And yet what is even more bizarre in this passage is this king who is strong enough to bring about world peace who is the magnificent ruler of God will come riding on a coat to the foal of a donkey. [10:47] And these words don't strike us as strange do they because we're so familiar with them. We made palm branches when we were little. We waved at them. The cute little donkey. And yet they are so odd aren't they?

They must have appeared so very odd to Zachariah's first audience as they appear odd to anyone. Maybe you were unfamiliar with Christianity. It's true isn't it that some of the judges some of the distinguished people in judges they rode on donkeys but from the time of Solomon in 1000 BC he introduces the breeding of horses.

There's not another occurrence in the Old Testament of someone riding on a donkey. Even today in the Middle East donkeys are used as kind of beasts of burden they pull things.

In some Islamic lands there are actual laws in the books of Islam regarding that Christians and Jews are allowed to ride only on donkeys and Muslims must ride on horses so the Muslims must be above the Jews and Christians because to ride on donkeys is a humble and lowly thing.

So a king during that age would come into his capital city after a military campaign and what would he be riding? He would be riding the biggest most glorious horse wouldn't he?

[12:08] Or at least he'd be marching in front of all his troops it would be quite the parade quite the spectacle but the king on an ass that's a contradiction in terms isn't it?

Can you imagine the queen came to Ealing? The queen came to Ealing we're all lined up there we're expecting the head to logicate or whatever it is and suddenly the E1 pulls off and off she trots with a little trolley we'd be shocked wouldn't we?

Or even more shocked where Ealing Broadway waiting her on Ealing Broadway and we expect to see the chariot the kind of carriage come through or the motor gate and her and Prince Charles are on a donkey it's unthinkable isn't it?

E-or it would just be astonishing wouldn't it? Absolutely astonishing the king on an ass it's a contradiction in terms that Zechariah envisions for you and I a humble king riding into a capital city mounted on a crude and common beast this king was to be different from all others not only in what he brought he brings righteousness and salvation but also in his humility and in his loneliness Jerusalem's king will come riding on a donkey as verse 10 predicts he will likewise wage war against all welfare he will usher in an age of peace of universal dominion beginning with the divided kingdoms of Israel being represented by Ephraim and Judah in our passage and this character will transform the worldly character of Israel into a spiritual kingdom of which you and I part the chariots the war horse the battle boats all these weapons of warfare they will be rendered useless when this king establishes world peace through his dominion verse 10 informs not only will there be peace in Israel but the messianic king he will speak peace he will proclaim peace shalom to the nations a fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him well that is Zechariah chapter 9 verse 9 and 10 flip back with me to Mark 11 to Mark 11 and for 500 years 500 years after Zechariah's prophecy there were hundreds of leaders who failed to come close there were hundreds of leaders who failed to come close to 500 years to fulfilling one part of these promises there was no man in the history of the world or Israel who fitted this messianic mold who fulfilled this precise and even bizarre prophecy until Jesus of Nazareth trots into Jerusalem the Sunday before Passover 2000 years ago and all four gospel writers testified to the triumphal entry in Mark's account the first seven verses emphasize premeditated act of humility he knows what he's doing it's a premeditated act of humility and then the second thing of the passage is a deliberate exhibition of himself it's a deliberate showing of himself that he is the king of Israel as promised by Zechariah he shows himself you have a deliberate act of humility and you have a deliberate exhibition of himself people say you're making an exhibition of yourself and that's what Jesus is doing here you see

[16:03] Jesus orchestrates doesn't he the specific entrance into Jerusalem in order that they and in order that we might identify who he is that he is the very fulfillment of Zechariah's words every step that Jesus took here was accomplished with pain staking premeditation and isn't that obvious as we quickly went through the first seven verses the time of his entry when did it happen at the time of the Passover and the mode of his entry he came riding on a donkey listen at this point Jesus in Mark's story had walked all the way from Galilee down to near Jerusalem and surely he didn't

need to go into town on a donkey did he the use of this donkey is the only time Jesus recorded as not walking he walks everywhere and it can only be a deliberate gesture he's emphasizing something he's announcing something he is self-conscious he knew who he was his self-conscious understanding of his lordship as well as his self-conscious understanding of what he's come to do and to

Jesus and probably to Jesus alone at this time Palm Sunday is no victory celebration he knew who he was and he knew what his mission was going to be this is no glorious procession of the king rather he knows that it is a death march doesn't he ride on ride on in majesty ride on to die he knows this is a death march and as a symbolic act Jesus mounts this undignified unpretentious beast to show that he is the Messiah but a Messiah whose triumphal route will end at the cross an old rugged cross and as Jesus looks around at the crowd in verses 8-10 you see they spread their cloaks and their palm branches down before him and they surround him with some before him and some after him and they shout Hosanna which means save us save us save us son of David you are Israel's promised king save us he could easily have whipped up their political aspirations couldn't he he could have brought about well interaction a rebellion a frenzy but what did he do look at verse 11 yes he rightly puts it in this section it's probably one of the great anticlimactic verses in the whole of the bible look at verse 11 if riding on a coat didn't boggle their minds and start to squelch their worldly hopes for Jesus here in verse 11 we're told that he entered Jerusalem and he went to the temple if this was a video there'd be music what is going to happen when he gets to the temple well he looks around it's quite late so he goes home goes to bat and it's late what did Jesus do when he gets to the temple he does nothing at all but he looks around and we've got this great anticlimax and Mark's account is not worthy because of what didn't happen the whole scene of the king coming to his temple well ends in nothing the climax of course comes the next day doesn't it the next day of the week

Jesus returns to the temple and those who are there and not only just he says ride into Jerusalem on this lonely donkey one of the first things he does when he gets off the donkey is he purifies the palace doesn't he the palace of Caesar of injustice but he doesn't do that but he cleanses the temple he cleanses the temple of God of irreverence and a spiritual presumption Jesus comes to town to claim his capital city and his temple but he does it in a way that is incomprehensible and is even offensive to the people of God at this time and frankly it is incomprehensible and offensive to most people of our time the Jews would not accept the notion of a saviour they would not accept his role as a messiah who would be a saviour they want a military messiah don't they but he refuses to identify himself as a worldly conqueror indeed he sees himself as

God's king who will reign in glory and peace but only after he has suffered in loneliness and sorrow and affliction and that is how Jesus in God's own divine plan would conquer the world but this was and is Israel's promised king and yet as the gospel unfolds to us the only anointing that this king would receive was an anointing for burial and the only crown that this king would wear would be a crown of thorns and the only robe that he would wear is a robe adorned with mockery and thus anointed and robed and crowned before his people he is presented as their king behold your king they were told and the same crowd that blessed his name and raised high his name was the same crowd that shouted crucify him crucify him we have no king we have no king but Caesar they say so today is Palm

[21 : 54] Sunday what do you make of Palm Sunday what does Mark make of Palm Sunday well here is what I make of what Mark makes of Palm Sunday I think most people in our culture most people have some kind of admiration for Jesus they perhaps admire him for his fearless criticism on the establishment that's what people think of him they champion his cause of the poor that Jesus was a friend of outcasts of society I think the Muslim Imam when we had the meeting with the mosque the Muslim Imam began by saying how much he appreciated Jesus how much he says he loved Jesus he loved him for his compassion for the despised and rejected they love his moral teaching love your neighbour they admire him for the fact that Jesus practised what he preached and to add to this list people admire

Jesus because they see that he is genuinely humble his washing of the disciples feet even his riding into town on donkey he is humble he is approachable his character is commendable but however one might admire Jesus for his humble actions and attitude you've still got to come to grips with certain things he said and certain things he did there are claims and there are actions that seem to be quite the opposite of humility there are claims and actions that are extraordinarily

audacious by Jesus so do you know what surprises me about Luke Mark 11 verses 1 to 11 it's not actually Jesus' humility but it's self-promotion and Jesus' self-promotion of his humility do you see that paradox I don't know what else to call it

Jesus self-promotes his own humility his actions here they are all premeditated he rides into town and in the way that he rode into town he receives the praise he received it and there's no personal protest is there there's no Jesus saying no no no who me not me no stop that he's announced into the world the king has come indeed he is the son of David so the irony of the triumphal entry if you will is our lord's promotion or our lord's publication of his humble reign it's the audacity of his intentionality no matter how you look at it by mounting that particular animal by riding into Jerusalem on it Jesus is making a very bold statement he is claiming to be the messiah he is claiming to be the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy and for those who do not want to accept his claim and submit to it you may be tempted to brush this off this particular incident off as an oversight but he's a good and otherwise humble teacher from

Nazareth and yet actually as you go through the gospels you can't do that because this pattern however you want to call it of self promotion is everywhere in the gospels he said for example I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall never hang there whoever believes in me will have thirst really who talks like that can you imagine if the pope went out onto his balcony and said I am the bread of life it's audacious isn't it Jesus said I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but they will have the light of life what audacity to say that the world is in the dark and that he alone is the light and that one must follow him to get out of the darkness even the Dalai Lama would say that would he well if the Dalai Lama does say and people love the Dalai Lama don't they are media love the Dalai Lama even if he said that he'd get into trouble they'd cheer him up

Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die yet he shall live would Bill Gates say that Billy Graham say that would Bill Clinton say that would Nelson Mandela have made such a claim it's one thing for a man to say isn't it that we are to love the Lord our God with all our soul and mind and strength but it's quite another thing to say whoever loves their mother and father more than me is not worthy of me whoever loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me even Muhammad Ali would not get away with saying that we usually don't we in our culture we don't like people who talk that much about themselves we are repelled by someone who demands our love or obedience or total allegiance and yet what is it that makes Jesus not only likeable but also believable that is why this is so remarkable perhaps nothing is so remarkable about Jesus than the fact that he advanced himself and I am the object of faith and love and obedience and yet as you read

[27 : 34] Jesus' life he comes across as the most humble man trying to walk on the face of the earth it's the paradox of Jesus isn't it he covers himself with disturbing claims disturbing claims because they are so self focused and yet as we look at him we see in him someone who is clothed in utter humility it's a profound paradox and we see it in this passage and it's one of those things that you could easily not find that you would not notice unless you pay careful attention that Jesus arranges the whole scene here it's not so clear he determines every detail of what will happen he decides to ride slightly above the crowd into Jerusalem on a donkey it's an action that's little different from the start of his ministry in Luke's gospel he goes to the temple and he takes up the scroll of the synagogue he goes to the synagogue and he reads it and he sits down to teach and then he expounds it saying in essence if you want to know what the prophet is saying he was writing about me and Jesus wrote in

Jerusalem that Palm Sunday and he announces that he is Israel's Messiah and had arrived just as that Zechariah said he would and so by mounting on this donkey Jesus says if you want to know to whom the prophet was referring to he's writing about me and that is the paradox of Jesus and it is mind-moving and it's one of the reasons I'm a Christian it's one of the reasons I hope you are a Christian because Christianity is scripturally reasonable that is as I test the words and the actions of Jesus against the Old Testament the prophecies fit what he does fits with the prophecies of the Old Testament they are the right match Jesus fulfills the scriptures and another reason I'm a Christian and I hope you are a Christian is because I love this paradox the wonderful alluring paradox of Jesus that two truths that seem to be against each other are true in the person of Jesus the audacity of his intentionality for the Son of God to intentionally ride on a donkey and it's these two distinct features scripture reasonableness and the paradox of Jesus and so I want us all to

recognise afresh and respond to his day with our minds hopefully filled with a deeper understanding of part of Sunday and hopefully our hearts touched afresh with the person of Jesus he knew who he was and he knew what he was doing and he knew where he was going and so we can join in the crowd can't we echoing and expanding their voice from Psalm 118 that we saw earlier Hosanna Hosanna to the Son of David save us save us blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord blessed is the kingdom of our Father David Hosanna in the highest let's pray God