

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 11:1-11 (ESV)

Joanne Cunningham





“1 ¶ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples

2 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.

3 If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’”

Mark 11:1-11 (ESV)



“4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it.

5 And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.”

Mark 11:1-11 (ESV)



“7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it.

8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields.

9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Mark 11:1-11 (ESV)





“10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.”

Mark 11:1-11 (ESV)



THESE ARE THE INSPIRED WORDS OF GOD

THANK YOU JESUS FOR DEMONSTRATING THAT YOUR KINGDOM
IS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD!

AMEN



Most of us have read this passage of Scripture many times. I know I have personally heard it when I was attending the Roman Catholic Church as a young boy and teenager. This passage of Scripture was read on Palm Sunday.

As we enter the holy week, many of the Christian churches are highlighting the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem riding on the donkey's colt.

This event is recounted in the 4 Gospels, in Matthew 21:1-17, Luke 19:29-40 and John 12:12-19.

Although I have read the Scriptures many times, there are

some things I never knew nor thought about.

This morning, we are going to look briefly at the historical background. The entry of Jesus riding on a donkey's colt fulfils prophecy. It also demonstrates how different the kingdom of God is to the kingdom of this world.



Historical Background

From Pastor Robert Hurst <https://hurstrobert.wordpress.com/2015/03/29/into-Jerusalem/>



Historical records tell us that Pontius Pilate, who governed Judea (including Jerusalem) on behalf of the Romans, lived in a palace built by Herod in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast, some 50 miles northwest of Jerusalem. But during the time of the Passover--a festival celebrating the liberation of the Jews from foreign domination--Pilate took up residence in Jerusalem where he could quickly put down any uprisings that might occur with so many Jews gathered in one place.

Perhaps just a few days before Jesus entered Jerusalem from the East, Pilate, travelling from Caesarea, entered Jerusalem from the West. Mark's account tells us of the very humble circumstances of Jesus' entrance (riding a donkey!), in marked contrast to how Pilate would have entered--no doubt accompanied by Roman cavalry in full military regalia, Pilate riding in the front on a powerful-looking war horse. The goal of this military demonstration was to intimidate--it was a show of military might. (From <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2021/03/>)

In the biblical account, horses are associated with military activities.

In the Old Testament, God's Israel the king's chosen to rule would have to be from the Israelite nations. They were not to have many horses. **“15 you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your**

brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 16 Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’” (De 17:15-16 ESV)

Solomon went against the Lord’s command and acquired many horses. Solomon disobeyed this commandment. **“And Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.”** (2Ch 9:25 ESV)

In the Old Testament, it is clear that the Israelites were to trust in the Lord’s protection rather than in military power. **“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”** (Ps 20:7 ESV)

The prophet Isaiah denounced and condemned Israel’s trust in military power as idolatry.

Israel came to a point rather than trusting in God, they trusted in military might as they adopted the customs of the nations.

“5 O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD. 6 ¶ For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. 7 Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. 8 Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.” (Isa 2:5-8 ESV)

What does this world trust for security? It is obvious that this world trusts in military might. This has been true for ages. Kings have ruled over people for centuries oppressing them and building their empire on the back of the oppressed.

To this day, we see nations displaying their military power, their nuclear bombs, their powerful killer airplanes, their military drones. In the past, people idealized powerful armies mounted on horses. The heroes were often pictured as riding on

a horse with a spear in their hand.

When Pontius Pilate entered Jerusalem from the west, he came with military might. His purpose was to suppress any revolutionary uprising that might have occurred. He came to Jerusalem displaying power and might. He was accompanied by numerous trained soldiers dressed in protective Roman armour.

Rome's purpose in displaying this military might was to have peace in order, Pax Romana as they called it back then.

From :
https://www.christianbiblereference.org/story_PalmSunday.htm

“9 ¶ 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. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” (Zec 9:9-10 ESV)



Jesus came to Jerusalem riding on a donkey from the East rather than from the West. He fulfilled the prophecy found in Zechariah as we have just read on the PowerPoint slide. Zechariah lived during the time of King Cyrus when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon. This prophecy was written about 500 years before Jesus and his entry in Jerusalem on a donkey's colt.

Cyrus changed the Babylonian law or decree that the Jews would be in exile in Babylon. Cyrus, inspired by God, changed this decree and invited the Jews back to Jerusalem. The Jews realized the importance of worshiping in the temple in Jerusalem.

“The emphatic call (of Zechariah) was directed towards the place of God's house in the future and glorious age, when the blessing of God would be extended beyond the particular limits of his own people and reach out to the rest of the nations.” (From the international Bible Commentary, F. F. Bruce, General Editor page 964).

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, there was quite a stir.

“And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’ (Mt 21:10 ESV).

We can understand why the Pharisees were concerned. This was the type of demonstration that the Roman army came to prevent. Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt not to please the grounds but to be obedient to his Father's will.

39 And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples.'
40 He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.' (Lu 19:39-40 ESV).

Before his entry in Jerusalem, Jesus did not want to publicize that he was the Messiah. This time he did.

Jesus knew very well that he would be rejected. He was not the kind of ruler the Jews expected. In Luke 19:41-42 we read, **"41 ¶ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'** He knew that the Jews would suffer greatly at the hands of the Roman armies when Jerusalem and the temple would be completely destroyed. In that horrific war, thousands of people would die.

Jesus' entry in Jerusalem on a donkey's colt is in stark contrast to the entry of Pilate in Jerusalem with his military might. Jesus entered Jerusalem not on a mature donkey but on a donkey's offspring. *Jesus' triumphal entry was the anti-military parade. It was a mockery of Rome's intimidating show of military power. Imagine a mock military parade where peace protestors are riding tricycles instead of tanks and you get the idea.* Zahnd, Brian. *Postcards from Babylon: The Church In American Exile* (p. 82). Spello Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus fulfilled this prophecy of Zechariah. His character is so vastly different than the kings of this world.

Unlike the kings of this world,

- Jesus was prophesied to be completely righteous.
- He would present salvation.
- He would be humble.
- Instead of riding on a horse, he would ride on a donkey's colt, the foal of a donkey.
- His method of ruling would be hugely different. There would be no chariot and no warhorse or instrument of war in Jerusalem.
- In the fullness of God's kingdom, there will be no opposition party. No one will try to destroy anybody else with their accusation and verbal attacks.
- Instead of the battle bow to oppress, kill and subjugate people, it was prophesied

Jesus would speak peace to the nations—not only to the Israelites but to the nations of the world.

- His reign, it was prophesied, would be worldwide.
- Prisoners would be free.
- He calls the prisoners, prisoners of hope!

Contrary to the Roman armies, contrary to the armies of this world who bring about destruction, misery and death, the kingdom of God led by Jesus is the only one that can and will bring peace.

From the Peloponnesian War (**431–404 BC**), one author lists 147 wars. This is not a complete list as there are numerous wars that we do not know about. Military powers and human governments cannot bring peace. We do not learn this lesson. We continue to be impressed by power, force, and by the extravagant amount of money needed to support these destructive powers.

What Jesus represents and offers appears to the world to be ineffective and insane. It is important to realize that the church will not bring about God's kingdom on the earth. Jesus will establish it at his return. We are called to be witnesses of Jesus and witnesses of the kingdom of God to which we belong.

The King approaches on Palm
Sunday
Forsaking the glorious warhorse
To ride a ridiculous peace donkey
Gentle as the wings of a dove
Inaugurating the reign of love
Conquerors come with hubris,
blood, and violence
Riding stallions of famine, war,
and pestilence

The Prince of Peace comes without
breaking a bruised reed
Swords are now for plowing, spears
are now for pruning
If Hosanna praises rocket's red
glare:
Weep over Jerusalem
If Hosanna acclaim kingdom
come: Let the rocks cry out!

(From Zahnd, Brian. Postcards from
Babylon: The Church In American Exile (p.
91). Spello Press. Kindle Edition).



In acclaiming Jesus as he rode in Jerusalem, the crowds shouted Hosanna. Hosanna means, “Save, we pray”.

As they were shouting Hosanna, the Jews had no idea how Jesus would save them. They were expecting a warrior king who would restore Israel to prominence in the world. Instead, Jesus came to the world not as a conquering King as the world sees it but to die as a victim of sin to be victor over sin, death and all forms of evil.

Jesus did not come to this earth to kill people. He was given to us by God the Father to save and not to condemn. Everyone who would place their faith and trust in him will be saved and have eternal life.

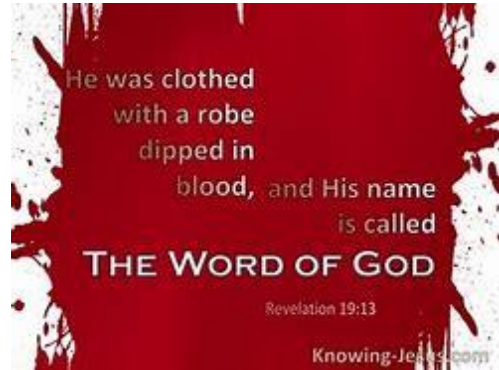
Sometimes, even the churches have been glorifying war. In fact, we see it every day when churches get behind leaders who promote wars, dissent and division.

In the book of Daniel, when Nebuchadnezzar was promoting himself as the great one and the spiritual leaders of the time were endorsing him, Daniel was the only one who stood up to him. **“Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the**

oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”” (Da 4:27 ESV)

Can we imagine the courage that must have taken Daniel to stand against the military power and its method of rulership.

We are so impressed by military power that we think Jesus is going to establish his kingdom through the use of force.



How Do We Perceive Jesus Coming to Earth As a Conquering King?



“¶ ¶ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”

(Re 19:11-15 ESV)

Jesus is not coming back to this earth like Alexander the great riding on a horse with a sword in his hand. He is not riding like Napoleon, Caesar, Alexander the great, Attila the Hun or any of the great conquerors and warriors of this world.

The passage of Scripture is a description of Jesus in his triumphant return. It has too much in it to fully develop. The following are some of the important points Jesus is making to John in his revelation.

The book of Revelation is a book of imagery. We are not to take it literally because it was not meant to be. It was written to first-century Christian who understood apocalyptic literature. It was common in their day.

As we read this passage of Scripture, we need to remember that Jesus won every battle against evil during his perfect human life on the earth during his ministry. He conquered and defeated every evil and enemies through his death and resurrection.

In the imagery of Revelation, Jesus is riding on a white horse. His name is quite different from the names of human rulers. He is called Faithful and True. When he ascended to heaven in full glory, Jesus did not change his character. When he came to the earth, he

“came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”. (Mt 20:28 ESV). His heart for humanity has not changed.

His robe is not pictured as having the blood of others but his own blood.

He is called the Word of God.

He does not have a sword in his hand but from his mouth comes a sharp sword which is his word. The Bible describes the sword of Jesus in the following verses.

Eph 6:17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

In Revelation 19:15 when we read that Jesus will rule them with a rod of iron, the word rule comes from the word **poimainó: to act as a shepherd** (from [Strong's Greek: 4165. ποιμαίνω \(poimainó\) -- to act as a shepherd \[biblehub.com\]](#)).

This is truly not an image of a dictator. Jesus remains a great Shepherd.

Do we begin to see how different God's kingdom is from the kingdoms of this world?

Which kingdom will we choose to live in? The kingdom of this world or the kingdom of God?

Jesus revealed himself as “the Way”. Being the way implies a different way of being and a different way of living. We can have a good idea of the way we are to live in the kingdom of God by reading the sermon on the Mount and biblical chapters such as Romans 12.

Our great Shepherd has not left us on our own. In fact, as we read in God's word and as we saw in previous sermons, Jesus through the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. It is by his power and his presence that we can live by the values of the kingdom of God.

Let us thank him that he pictured his humble and servant role by riding in Jerusalem on the small colt of a donkey! Let us think about God's character completely represented in Jesus as we enter holy week and as we remember his death on the cross and celebrate his resurrection.

Let us pray!