

# COUNTDOWN TO THE CROSS

## MARK 11:1-10

Tensions were the highest anyone had ever known. People everywhere were talking about Lazarus who was dead and now he is alive, Bartimaeus who had been a blind fixture by the roadside as predictably as the morning. And now he could see and was he ever sure how he regained his sight. And then there were the crowds who had witnessed miraculous feedings and healings . . . Well it is Sunday, March 29th AD 33. Jesus Christ is leaving a small village 2 miles outside Jerusalem called Bethany.

His departure is precisely what had been predicted 1,500 years before by Moses (our Passover Lamb who had to enter on the 10th of Nissan). The way He would come was exactly stated 500 years before by Zechariah (our King riding on a colt). Both stated how He would come: as a Lamb and as a King!

The events of that Sunday (or Monday) deeply touch our lives today. Let me explain why:

1. Jesus Christ will not force His Kingship upon anyone. He Reigns.
2. His entrance can often be mistaken for that of a lowly servant. He Waits.
3. His Omniscience encompasses every detail of the lives of all who surround Him. He Knows.
4. His warnings of Doom will come to pass exactly as He promised. He Judges.
5. If you won't praise Him He will find someone who will!

Open in your Bibles please to the start of the greatest week in the history of the universe since spoken into creation by the Creator.

Every since God flung the endless myriads of solar furnaces into space, and whispering to each their name, creation has watched, shouting the glory of God !

From the moment Satan rebelled and drew the third of the angelic heavenly hosts along with him into war against the Most High Creator, and the toll of death and decay echoed about the Cosmos, creation has groaned for the redemption of God .

And on this day if the voices of countless Jews had not cried Hosanna to God in the Highest, Jesus said the rocks and the creation would have cried His praises.

Why? Because the King of Glory, the Creator, the Redeemer and Judge was coming home to His town ! Mark 11:1-11 gives the traditional account of what we call today, Palm Sunday. To best understand this day, and to most respond to

what Jesus calls us to do this day . . . we need to look at the events of this passage and organize our thoughts around seven truths: the day, the donkey, the disciples, the display, the dirge and the desolation. First in Mark 11: 1 the day.

- I. The Day (11:1-7) What day is this in the life of Christ ?
  - A. John 12 tells us it was six days before the Passover that Jesus went to Lazarus, Mary and Martha's home in Bethany on Friday and Saturday. Then the next day He marches triumphantly into Jerusalem on Sunday.
  - B. This was a prophetic day. It was part of that irresistible countdown to the cross. What do I mean? Look at Daniel 9:24 " Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. (NKJV). Many Bible teachers believe God has a 490 year plan for Jerusalem. It started on 3/4/444BC in Nehemiah 2:1 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, [when] wine [was] before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. (NKJV) when Artaxerxes decreed the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Exactly 483 years later Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the 14th of Nissan AD33.
  - C. Secondly it was a Pathetic day. Why ? Because it is so sad to see what the people of Israel missed that day. Jesus rode in meek and mild and sitting on a donkey on the very same day the people were to select their Passover lamb and take it into their homes as Ex. 12 instructed them.
  - D. Have you stopped and thought about it? Here is Christ paraded into the Eastern Gate of the Temple. He was the Lamb of God. On that day 260,000 lambs would be selected and purchased and taken home. Following the 1,476 year old tradition of Passover the countdown to the cross ticks on. It was the day of the Lamb of God.
- II. The Donkey (11:7-8) waited
  - A. Look at Genesis 49:10-11 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him [shall be] the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. (NKJV)
  - B. Now at Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He [is] just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. (NKJV)
  - C. Your Shiloh, your King, your Redeemer is going to come riding on a donkey. And He did and they missed it! He was such a contrast to other kings who marched to town with swords held high, cruelty

- filling their eyes, captives trudging in their wake. No the King of Kings comes quietly on a humble donk
- III. The Disciples (11:2-6) went
- A. Historian Josephus of the 1st century tells us that at that time 256,000 lambs were sacrificed for the number of pilgrims in Jerusalem. Because the Bible instructed one lamb per family and up to ten could partake.
  - B. There must have been as many as two and a half million people in Jerusalem that week! They overflowed the walls, spilling out the gates, lining the hillsides with tents. There was no room in the jammed city. Just as at His birth there was no room!
  - C. Through this crowd streaming into Jerusalem, the disciples entered as village and found exactly what Christ said.
  - D. Remember His omniscience encompasses every detail of our lives!
- IV. The Display (11:6-10) of the crowds, they worshiped
- A. Coats, branches, shouting of Hosannas. It sounds so grand, it was but not to the Roamns.
  - B. After all the Romans were experts at parades and official public events. They called this event "the Triumphal Entry," but no Roman would have used that term. An official "Roman Triumph" was indeed something to behold. When a Roman general came back to Rome after a complete conquest of art enemy, he was welcomed home with an elaborate official parade. In the parade he would exhibit his trophies of war and the illustrious prisoners he had captured. The victorious general rode in a golden chariot, priests burned incense in his honor, and the people shouted his name and praised him. The procession ended at the arena where the people were entertained by watching the captives fight with the wild beasts. That was a "Roman Triumph." Our Lord's "triumphal entry" was nothing like that, but it was a triumph just the same. He was God's anointed King and Saviour, but this conquest would be spiritual and not military. A Roman general had to kill at least 5,000 enemy soldiers to merit a triumph; but in a few weeks the "gospel" would "conquer" some 5,000 Jews and transform their lives (Acts 4:4). Christ's "triumph" would be the victory of love over hatred, truth over error, and life over death<sup>1</sup>.
  - C. Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838 saw a 309 carat Star of Africa diamond crown encrusted with jewels of smaller diamonds, rubies and emeralds. The Scepter was topped with the 519 carat Hope Diamond.
  - D. The tombs of the Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians with the Romans show scenes of triumph with chariots crushing their foes! But He comes quietly and will be praised even if overlooked!
- V. The Depths of His Sorrow (11:10-11) He wept

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe,

- A. Suddenly over the excited chants of the throng Christ stops, as the city came into view a loud lament throbs from Christ as He weeps over the city. What did He weep over? The same as He does today!
  - 1. The Shallowness of their committment
  - 2. The Blindness of their Spiritual Devotion
  - 3. Their lost opportunities.
- B.
- VI. The Dirge (11:42-44) He Warned
  - 1. Jesus<sup>2</sup> saw in the vision the camp of the enemy, a bank cast up round about with palisades and a rampart hugging the city closer and closer in deadly embrace. The curtain falls for a moment, then rises again on another scene. The city is razed to the ground, not a stone is left upon another, the gory bodies of her children are scattered among the ruins. The silence and desolation of death reign supreme. The fact that this picture was literally fulfilled just three decades later, when the tenth Roman legion encamped just where Jesus was standing when He uttered these memorable words, would be sufficient evidence in itself, apart from any other, to substantiate the Messiahship of the one who uttered the prophecy.
  - 2. When Jesus broke out into the wailing dirge of funeral-like lamentation, the voice of the multitude was hushed into silence. The ecstatic vision of the Messianic Kingdom, which had inspired the souls of these pilgrim multitudes as they sang the praises of the Messianic King and had led them to the most extravagant expressions of a fealty, vanished before the dirge-like lamentation of Jesus like a fog before the morning sun. They began now to recognize that their hopes and fond illusions were vain and were not shared by Him whom they boldly acclaimed King. He, from the hill, saw the splendor of the beloved city fade in the twilight and the shadow of irreparable moral disaster darken into deepest night. He had offered Himself as the King of Peace, sitting on the before-unridden colt of an ass, as Zachariah had said the Messiah would come.'
  - 3. Matthew recorded the effect that this presentation had upon the city of Jerusalem: "The whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" (Matt. 21:10). Controversy ranged around the question of the person of Christ. It would be sheer insanity for any mortal to make so clear a claim to be the Messiah as Jesus has just done in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy were He not the Messiah. The crowd responded to the question by identifying Jesus as, "the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (v. 11). Since the Jews believed that prophets

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<sup>2</sup> Shepherd quoted in Pentecost, Words and Works.

were men from God with His message, this may infer that He on this occasion was recognized as the Prophet whom Moses promised to Israel (Deut. 19:15).

4. In fact, in all the Gospels as soon as the dust has settled from the Palm branch strewn road to Jerusalem, Christ is talking about things to come. Note what Matthew records:
  - a) Matthew 21:41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease [his] vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." (NKJV)
  - b) Matthew 22:13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast [him] into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (NKJV)
  - c) Matthew 23:33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (NKJV)
  - d) Matthew 24:51 "and will cut him in two and appoint [him] his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (NKJV)
  - e) Matthew 25:30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (NKJV)

## VII. The Desolation

- A. You see Palm Sunday's Hosannas faded quickly away. Christ went to the cross and Jerusalem was desolate 40 years later.
- B. Of the final destruction<sup>3</sup>, Josephus says: Caesar ordered the whole city and the temple to be razed to the ground, leaving only the loftiest of the towers, Phase 1, Hippicus, and Mariamme, and the portion of the wall enclosing the city on the west; the latter as an encampment for the garrison that was to remain, and the towers to indicate to posterity the nature of the city and of the strong defenses which had not yet yielded to Roman prowess. All the rest of the wall encompassing the city was so completely leveled to the ground as to leave future visitors to the spot no ground for believing that it had ever been inhabited. Such was the end to which the frenzy of revolutionaries brought Jerusalem, that splendid city of world-wide renown.<sup>12</sup>
- C. Jesus saw all this in prospect and wailed in grief. This was the heart of a new kind of king. Jesus' sorrow indicated his humanity, but it was also a revelation of the heart of God. Fix this in your thoughts. This is how Jesus Christ and God the Father and the blessed Holy Spirit sorrow over hearts that miss their "day" and "what would bring . . . peace"-namely, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As your life stands right now, what

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<sup>3</sup> Hughes, Mark 11

does Jesus Christ see in your future? Judgment? Your towers pulled down? Desolation?

The Son of God in tears,  
The wondering angels see.  
Be thou astonished, O my soul,  
He shed those tears for thee. 13

The tears of Christ measure the infinite value of your soul. Christ wept and lamented over Jerusalem, as he always weeps over the souls of the unrepentant.

This is our King. Let us worship him with all that we have!

VIII. We have opened our Bibles to the start of the greatest week in the history of the universe since spoken into creation by the Creator.

- A. Every since God flung the endless myriads of solar furnaces into space, and whispering to each their name, creation has watched, shouting the glory of God !
- B. From the moment Satan rebelled and drew the third of the angelic heavenly hosts along with him into war against the Most High Creator, and the toll of death and decay echoed about the Cosmos, creation has groaned for the redemption of God .
- C. And on this day if the voices of countless Jews had not cried Hosanna to God in the Highest, Jsus said the rocks and the creation would have cried His praises.
- D. Why? Because the King of Glory, the Creator, the Redeemer and Judge was coming home to His town !

IX. The events of that day (Sunday or Monday) deeply touch our lives today. Let me explain why:

- A. He Offers: His entrance and offering of Himself in our lives can often be overlooked.
- B. He Waits: Jesus Christ will not force His Kingship upon anyone
- C. He Knows: His Omniscience encompasses every detail of the lives of all who surround Him..
- D. He Judges: His warnings of Doom will come to pass exactly as He promised.
- E. PREPAREDNESS. How do we prepare? Try answering these three questions:
  - 1. Do you know Christ personally ?
  - 2. Do you serve Christ constantly ?
  - 3. Do you love Christ completely ?

Let us sing #328 "Have you any room?"