

# How Happy His People Must Be!

Jesus' Last Days (Mark): Part 1

Mark 11:1-10 (Mt.21:1-11; Lk.19:28-40; Jn.12:12-19) 8/8/2020

When the craziness of this world has you worried or upset, this message will help restore your joy.

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**Mark 11:1** As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives,<sup>1</sup> Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" 4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"

## Introduction

### The Ideal Ruler

Last week the Seattle Chief of Police sent a letter to business owners letting them know that if the rioters come to destroy your business and beat you or kill you, you're on your own. Minneapolis PD is telling the public to just give up their money and cell phones to muggers, so there isn't violence. The Supreme Court ruled that Nevada can prohibit churches from meeting, while casinos are allowed to pack people in by the thousands. In Chicago, a group of police officers defending a Christopher Columbus statue were surrounded by rioters who threw bricks, frozen bottles, and explosives at the police from all

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<sup>1</sup> John's gospel describes what sounds like a longer-term ministry in Jerusalem—several months rather than just a few weeks. Some scholars think the triumphal entry might have happened five months earlier during the Feast of Tabernacles, which involved waving palm branches while singing hosanna. This would explain why the people had palm branches (mentioned only in John) near Jerusalem, which doesn't have palm trees. They would have had to bring them from Jericho. But John places the triumphal entry five days before the Passover (Jn.12:1,12). So, while it is possible that the synoptic gospels have compressed the events of several months into their accounts following the triumphal entry, I don't believe John allows us to place the entry itself earlier.

sides. The police had guns but weren't allowed to use them. All they could do was stand there and try to dodge the barrage the best they could. You can watch the video and see them just standing there helpless until finally one of the explosives goes off right in the sergeant's face, and he ended up with eye damage. What kind of society would do that to any group of people, let alone police officers? We don't treat animals that way. If you put a group of stray dogs in a pen and pelted them with rocks, you'd go to jail—and rightly so. That kind of cruelty to animals would be a sign of a twisted, perverted soul. So what kind of a society will take innocent men and women—men and women who put their lives at risk to protect others—and subject them to that?

The government's primary job is justice. It's great when they build roads and bridges and public utilities and all the rest, but their *primary* job is to protect people from suffering injustice at the hands of criminals and foreign invaders, and to punish evildoers. If you look at how God judges secular governments in the Bible, when they get into trouble with God, it's usually because of allowing injustice.

In our country, we get to pick much of our own government. The question of how to vote as a Christian is a very easy one for me—I just vote for whichever party I believe will do the best job at punishing criminals and protecting innocent people from criminals and crooks, violent people, and hostile countries. In other words—justice. If you can find a place to live where the government does just that—even if they did nothing else—that would still be a wonderful place to live. No more human trafficking, not more gangs, no more scams ripping people off, no more assaults, murders, no need to lock your doors anymore. If we elected someone who could pull all that off, we'd all be dancing in the streets on election day, right?

Now, if you can get leaders who are not only just, but who are also really wise and can figure out how to solve societal problems, that's even better. If we had leaders who could have figured out how to protect people from COVID without putting 40 million people out of work, that would have been nice. Economics, unemployment, infrastructure, healthcare, prosperity. For all those things to go well, you need more than just someone who is just and wise—he would also have to be powerful. He might have all kinds of great ideas, but if he isn't an inspiring enough leader to mobilize people to go along with those ideas, they'll never happen. So you need someone with enough power and influence to make all these things happen.

If you can manage to elect someone like that—that's a *great* day. But even better—what if you had a guy who could do all that and was also righteous and holy and honored God?

Now, I realize, the more I talk here the farther I'm drifting into fantasyland. Honestly, I'll be happy at this point if we can just elect someone who won't encourage rioting. Righteousness, power, and wisdom usually isn't on the ballot. Every election cycle, we have to choose between a super-flawed candidate versus an ultra-flawed candidate. But still, look at the emotions on both sides when the results come in on election day. Last election there were tears and wailing and outright panic on the losing side, and huge parties and celebrations on the winning side. When the queen of Sheba came to Israel to witness King Solomon's wisdom for herself, this was her verdict:

**1 Kings 10:8 How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!**

It's a happy day when a good leader gains power because he will use that power to bring all kinds of good things to the people.

My introduction is about politics because today's passage is super-political. The reason I brought all that up is because those emotions I was talking about—the big party we would have on election night if a guy like that won—the purpose of this passage is to provoke those very emotions. So all that introduction was to get our emotions ready to be able to receive what God wants to give us in this passage of Scripture.

## Super-David

We left off last time just outside Jericho where Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus, and I nicknamed him Binocular Bart because he has more insight than anyone in the whole book. And that account ends with

Binocular Bart joining the growing crowd of Jesus' followers as they began the 18-mile uphill hike from Jericho to Jerusalem. And I'm convinced that whole climb was a 6 hour masterclass taught by professor Bart on the topic of King David. I say that because look at what this crowd shouts in verse 10.

### **10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"**

David is never mentioned all through the book, then, suddenly, Binocular Bart calls him son of David, joins the group, and hours later that whole group is shouting praises to "**our father David.**" Our father? They often spoke of "our father Abraham," because the whole Jewish nation was descended from Abraham. But they weren't descended from David. A handful were in David's line, but most weren't. So in what sense was David their father? When they say that, they aren't talking about the old, original King David from 900 B.C. They're talking about the son of David—a descendent of David who would be a greater king even than David was.

You can imagine how this conversation went. They're all huffing and puffing, making that arduous climb up toward Jerusalem, and they're all watching Bartimaeus. He's not tripping over rocks like he used to, no cane, no one has to help him, he's looking all over the place taking in all the sights, and you catch up to him. "Hey Bartimaeus, I've got to ask—why do you call Jesus son of David?" "Well, he's obviously the Messiah. You heard John the Baptist's testimony, right? You've heard Jesus talk about being sent into this world to save sinners. You've seen the miracles—you saw what he did with my eyes. Clearly he's the Messiah, and of all the titles for the Messiah in the Scriptures, son of David is my favorite!" "Why?" "David's always been my hero. He took in outcasts, like me, and turned them into an unstoppable force no one could defeat. And he was a man after God's own heart. He wrote all those psalms—I love the one about the Lord is my shepherd—those psalms are what kept me going all these years. And so when the Bible talks about a descendent of David who will become greater than David—like a super-David—so great that David himself calls him "Lord" (calls his own offspring Lord), that blows my mind." He stops to catch his breath, wipes the sweat from his brow with his sleeve, then points toward Jesus and smiles ear to ear. "That's *him!* He's the super-David." Then Bart turns and looks at you. "Do you realize that the super-David will be so exalted that loyalty to him is synonymous with returning to God?"

### **Hosea 3:5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.**

The faithful will seek the Lord and David. In Zechariah, the phrase "the house of David" is used to describe all Israelites who are faithful to God (Zech.12:7,8,10,12, 13:1). Super-David will be so exalted that faithfulness to him will be synonymous with faithfulness to God."

You look up toward Jesus, and your mind is racing. You think, *I certainly can't deny the miracles, but I've never heard Jesus say anything about being the son of David. Is Jesus really claiming to be the super-David? Or is Bartimaeus just getting kind of carried away?* Well, you're about to find out.

As you start up the final hill, there's a murmur in the crowd, a new energy. Jesus picks up the pace. You know exactly why, but Bartimaeus looks lost. He looks at you with a questioning expression, so you explain. "This hill we're climbing is the Mount of Olives. As soon as we crest that ridge, you'll be able to see the whole city of Jerusalem—including the Temple."

Bart's new eyes get as big as half dollars, and he practically starts running. When you get to the top, he's standing there, looking out across the deep valley between the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem, lost in wonder. And you think, "It makes sense—he's never seen it before. In fact, prior to this morning, he'd never seen *anything* before."

Then Bartimaeus nudges your shoulder. "Jesus is calling you." "What?" You look up there and sure enough, Jesus is waving you up. And as you walk over to him, Jesus makes an announcement to the whole crowd. "Make yourselves comfortable everyone. We're going to stay here for a bit while before going into the city. There's something I need to do." Mark 11:1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives So he teases you there for just a second—you think

we're getting to Jerusalem—then he says, “Well, actually, not quite in Jerusalem, but in Bethpage and Bethany,” which are suburbs of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

**1 ... Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here.**

You exchange a quizzical look with the other disciple. Then you turn to Jesus. “Lord, I don't mean to be difficult or anything, I'm just curious—you're going to ride in to Jerusalem at Passover time? You know the tradition, that all able-bodied people who come for Passover<sup>3</sup> are supposed to enter the city on foot. Today begins Passover week,<sup>4</sup> and you're going to ride into town? You don't ride anywhere! We've followed you for years, and everywhere you go, you walk. We've never once seen your ride anywhere. And now, the one time when everyone is supposed to walk, you're going to ride? You realize this is going to attract a lot of attention, right?”

Jesus just smiles and says, “Trust me. This is important.” Some people have suggested that the whole triumphal entry was just the crowd getting carried away, even though it was really a non-event from Jesus' perspective.<sup>5</sup>

But I don't buy that at all because Jesus is the one who goes out of his way to stage this whole event. And if you question how important this is, just look at how much space Mark devotes to this thing about Jesus getting this donkey. One thing about Mark—he does not waste space in his gospel writing about extraneous details. In my Bible the whole book of Mark takes up 24 pages. And he compresses the whole story of the Triumphal Entry into just 10 verses. And yet, 7 of those 10 verses are about this donkey. That's a flashing neon sign telling us, “This part is important!!”

So Jesus sends you and one other guy on this errand. And you ask, “If we're going to pass through there anyway, why not just pick it up on the way through?”

“Just go get the colt.”

**3 If anyone asks you, `Why are you doing this?' tell him, `The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'”**

So you head toward the village, hoping you can just get this colt without anyone seeing you, and you get to thinking about the fact that Jesus told you right where this colt will be, then he throws in the fact that, “Oh, by the way, it's never been ridden.” Why does Jesus mention that?

Then all these passages from the Scriptures start coming to mind—passages about unbroken animals. There are only two reasons why an animal would be kept from normal use—if it was reserved for sacred purposes in the service of Yahweh<sup>6</sup>, or if it was the king's animal. No one besides the king could ever ride the king's mount.<sup>7</sup> And you think about your conversation with Bart about whether Jesus was the Davidic king.

Anyway, you go into town, and right where Jesus said it would be—there it is.

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<sup>2</sup> Some wonder why Mark mentions Bethpage first, since on the approach to Jerusalem one passes through Bethany first, then Bethpage. But that's the modern road. The ancient road of Jesus' time passed through Bethpage first.

<sup>3</sup> NIGTC.

<sup>4</sup> John 12:1. John's gospel describes what sounds like a longer-term ministry in Jerusalem—several months rather than just a few weeks. Some scholars think the triumphal entry might have happened five months earlier during the Feast of Tabernacles, which involved waving palm branches while singing hosanna. This would explain why the people had palm branches (mentioned only in John) near Jerusalem, which doesn't have palm trees. They would have had to bring them from Jericho. But John places the triumphal entry five days before the Passover (Jn.12:1,12). So, while it is possible that the synoptic gospels have compressed the events of several months into their accounts following the triumphal entry, I don't believe John allows us to place the entry itself earlier.

<sup>5</sup> They say that because it seems like such an anticlimactic ending in v.11, and because this same crowd proves fickle, shouting “Hosanna” on Sunday and “Crucify him” on Friday. But this crowd and the crowd in Jerusalem are two different crowds. And, as we'll see next time, verse 11 is not an anticlimactic ending.

<sup>6</sup> Nm.19:2, Dt.21:3, 1 Sam.6:7.

<sup>7</sup> Mishna Sanh. 2:5, cited in NIGTC.

#### **4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway.**

So, you say, “That’s our colt. Quick, let’s untie it and get out of here before anyone—”

#### **4 ... As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"**

You take a big breath and try Jesus’ answer that he gave you. “Um ... well ... the Lord needs it. And he’ll send it back soon.”

I always try to put passages I’m preaching into practice, so last week I was taking my break in a parking lot at a mall, and I noticed a really cool Jeep parked next to me. I went over to check it out, walked around it, then climbed in. The keys were above the visor, so I fired it up and was just about to put it in gear and take it for a drive when the owner came running from the store. He pulled me out of the Jeep and said, “What are you doing?” And I said, “It’s okay, God needs it.” And he said, “Oh, okay. Have fun.”

No, that didn’t happen. Nor would I try it, because I don’t want to get beat up or go to jail. But look what happens when they try it.

#### **6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.**

Now, some commentators say there’s nothing supernatural here—Jesus just prearranged this with the owners. And the phrase, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly” was a prearranged password.

It’s a password—like in the movies where one guy sits on the far end of a park bench, puts up his newspaper, and says something like, “The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain.” And the other guys responds, “The horse went around with his foot on the ground,” or something like that—something no one else would ever guess. But this—this doesn’t really sound like a password to me. “Why are you untying that colt?”

“Because the Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.” That sounds more like a straightforward explanation than a secret password.

Secondly, what would be the point of a password? This isn’t a spy movie. If this were prearranged, why wouldn’t they just say, “Hi. I’m James, this is my brother John. Jesus sent us to get this colt.” If it’s all prearranged, there’s no need for a password.

You know what this sounds like to me? It sounds like something Obi Wan Kenobi would say. “This isn’t the donkey you’re looking for ... move along.” When I read this story, it sounds supernatural. You just take someone’s animal and they say, “Hey, what are you doing?” “The Lord has need of it,” and they just let you go.

But either way, whether it’s miraculous, or it’s prearranged—the point is that it all happens exactly as Jesus said it would happen. And in doing this, Jesus is showing his sovereign, kingly authority. He’s behaving as a king. He just commandeers this colt. Kings could do that. They couldn’t just take whatever they wanted, but they could take an animal to ride. Jesus doesn’t tell them to ask, which he could have done. He could have just seen to it that when they ask, the owners say yes. But instead he says, “Just take it.” That’s Jesus’ prerogative as king.

And by the way, this is even more striking in the Greek, because the Greek word for *Lord*<sup>8</sup> means *owner*. That’s striking because Luke tells us it’s the owners of the donkey who confront the disciples.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Luke 19:33 As they were untying the colt, its owners (*kurios*) asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "THE Owner Lord (*kurios*) needs it."**

Jesus is the Lord over all lords—the Owner of owners. They own the colt; he owns everything.

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<sup>8</sup> *kurios*

<sup>9</sup> Luke 19:33. Some have suggested the owner of the colt might have been with Jesus, and that’s what he meant by “the lord (owner) needs it.” But Luke lets us know that the owners were not with Jesus. They were with the colt.

## 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

Now, what happens when you sit on an unbroken donkey? I'll tell you what doesn't happen. It doesn't just turn around and say, "Where to buddy?" When it says no one has ever ridden this colt, and Jesus sits on it, my first thought is, *Did he stay on the full 8 seconds?* Not only did he stay on 8 seconds, he rode all the way to Jerusalem without incident. Jesus is showing his sovereignty not only over the owners of the animal, but over the animal itself.

So Jesus climbs up on the colt and says, "Okay, on to Jerusalem." And Bartimaeus elbows you in the ribs and says, "You were wondering about whether Jesus thinks of himself as the son of David? You see him riding that donkey? Remember Solomon?" And suddenly it all makes sense. You think back to the transition of power when David was about to die. The throne was supposed to go to Solomon, but one of David's other sons, Adonijah, made a move to take the throne. He gathered a big following, recruited a lot of big shots in David's government, and put on this massive inauguration ceremony. David gets word of this, and he realizes he needs to set things straight. So what did he do to make sure everyone knew Solomon was the one inheriting the throne, not Adonijah?

**1 Kings 1:38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah ... and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David's mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. 39 ... all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.**

The way David made it clear which of his sons was the king was by having Solomon ride David's mule through Jerusalem. Jesus is reenacting that.

You look at Bart and say, "Wow, you're right. There's absolutely no question what Jesus is doing—a royal mount, sovereign authority, reenacting the crown passing from David to Solomon." And Bart says, "That's not the half of it. The reference to a colt being tied up—that comes from the prophecy in Genesis where Jacob talked about a King that would come from Judah and would be the owner of the scepters of all previous kings—the King of kings.<sup>10</sup>

And not only that, but don't forget Zechariah's prophecy."

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<sup>10</sup> Mark draws a lot of attention to the fact that this colt is tied up. Five times in 3 verses he mentions tying or untying. That's most likely a hyperlink to one of the earliest prophecies of the Messiah in the Bible, which mentions the king's donkey colt being tied up.

In Genesis 49, right before Jacob dies, he blesses each of his 12 sons, who were to become the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel, and prophesies the role each tribe would play. When he gets to Judah, he identifies them as the royal tribe—the tribe Israel's king would come from.

**Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet ...**

That had to sound strange, because this is way, way before Israel had kings. But the prophecy said there would someday be kings in Israel, and they would come from the tribe of Judah. And that will continue until a very special individual arrives.

**Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. 11 He will tie his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch.**

He'll tie his donkey colt to a vine. I take that to mean it will be a time of such peace and prosperity that he wouldn't even hesitate to tie his donkey to the choicest grapevines (even though the donkey will probably help himself to the grapes). So it's a picture of a time of glorious prosperity. Mark doesn't mention anything about Jesus tying this colt to vine, but the fact that the Messiah was connected to the tying of a donkey colt would have likely come to mind when Jesus mentions the tying and untying of this colt 5 times in 3 verses. It really does seem like he's going out of his way to use that word a bunch of times. For example, in verse two he tells his disciples, "**You will find a colt tied up ... Untie it and bring it here.**" Why not just say, "Bring it here"? Isn't it obvious enough that in order to bring it they would have to untie it? He seems to be taking every possible opportunity to mention tying/untying. Most scholars agree this is an intentional hyperlink to Genesis 49.

Genesis 49:10-11 prophesies that Judah will be the royal tribe, and out of that tribe will come one particular king who is the true owner of the scepter. All the previous kings will hold the scepter, but this king owns the scepter, which means he's the king over all those kings. And not only will he reign over Israel, but even the nations—the Gentiles will submit to him.

**Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you righteous, having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

There it is again—your KING comes to you. And you get to thinking about that chapter. The first half of Zechariah 9 was famously fulfilled by Alexander the Great—with amazing specific detail. But starting in v.8 you get a portion of the prophecy that wasn't fulfilled back then and hasn't been fulfilled since.

**Zechariah 9:8 ... Never again will an oppressor overrun my people.**

That's quite the promise, right? When would that promise finally be fulfilled? Zechariah explains in the next verse. Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you What does that mean? Their king would come to them? From where? You'd think their king would already be among them. But this king will come to them from somewhere.

And what will he be like? Four descriptions.

**9 ... righteous, having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

First and foremost he'll be righteous. He'll be a good king, benevolent, just—a law and order type. The ideal ruler.

Secondly, he'll come with salvation. He's the one who will bring deliverance and rescue God's people.

Third, he'll be gentle. He'll be strong enough to deliver you from your enemies, but at the same time he'll be a gentle king, which is unusual for someone that powerful.

And fourth, he'll show up on a donkey, which signified peace. He will come offering terms of peace.

**10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

"Nations" means Gentiles—the words are interchangeable in the Bible. This is a verse that a lot of ancient Jews had highlighted with a black highlighter pen. Verses like this just didn't seem to register. "The Gentiles are oppressing us. And a king is going to come and deliver us from them, but at the same time proclaim peace to them?" They couldn't make heads or tails out of that verse, so they did what we do when we don't understand how two things in the Bible fit together. They made much of the part they liked and ignored the rest. A king will come and bring deliverance from our enemies, and his rule will extend to the ends of the earth. As for that weird part about peace with the Gentiles—who knows what that means?

Someday a king will come who will bring an end to war, bring peace not only for Israel but for the nations, and rule the whole world—to the ends of the earth. He will be righteous and victorious, but also, strangely, he'll be humble. That threw the rabbis for a loop. They didn't know what to make of that, so in the Talmud it says, "If Israel behaved worthily, the Messiah would come in the clouds of heaven, if otherwise, humble riding on a donkey."<sup>11</sup> It seemed to them it has to be one or the other. Either he'll come in a meek, humble posture, or a victorious, mighty appearance. But that's not what Zechariah says. It says he will be victorious *and* humble.

## The Crowd's Reaction

Well, by this point the whole crowd is catching on to what Jesus is doing. These were famous passages of Scripture, so it wasn't hard to figure out what Jesus was doing. Look how they respond.

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<sup>11</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a.

## **8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.**

They start paving the road before Jesus with their own clothing, and a carpet of branches. What's that about? It's another hyperlink. In 2 Kings 9, Jehu has a meeting with a prophet, and the prophet tells him God has chosen him to be king. So he comes out of the meeting and the people want to know what the prophet said.

**2 Kings 9:12 Jehu said, "Here is what he told me: 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.'" 13 They hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!"**

The moment they realized he was to be king, they through their garments on his path and shouted their allegiance. These people do exactly the same thing with Jesus. And throwing the branches down—that's also something you would do for a king.<sup>12</sup>

And remember how that Zechariah passage starts: Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you This is an occasion for exuberant joy.

**9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" 10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"**

Hosanna originally was a prayer that meant “Save us,” but in this context it's more of an exclamation of joyful praise because God has provided deliverance.<sup>13</sup> It's an emotional exclamation—kind of like, “Yahoo! God has saved us! Hooray for God!” It's a very emotional expression of praise.<sup>14</sup> And probably an antiphonal one. When the people made their approach to Jerusalem for Passover, they traditionally sang the Psalms of ascent antiphonally, meaning one group would sing a line, and the other group would respond. And it sounds like that's what Mark's describing when he specifies, **those who went ahead and those who followed**. And what they are singing is from Psalm 118, which is one of those psalms of ascent that they were used to singing antiphonally. The group in front shouted, “Hosanna!” The group in back: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” In front: “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” In back: “Hosanna in the highest!” (I wish churches would use that more in corporate worship. Scripture says we are to speak to one another in psalm, hymns, and spiritual songs. It's a great way to add variety to our corporate praise, and to emphasize and draw attention to certain things—I think it's a neglected tool.)

## **Summary**

Jesus is revealing himself as the super-David. He approaches the city of David as the king, riding a Solomonmobile. He has supernatural knowledge of where a colt will be, the details about that colt, and the reactions of the owners when it's taken. He has the kingly authority to commandeer whatever he requires—and he has the power to see to it that people comply. He shows his dominion over the creation

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<sup>12</sup> This scene is also reminiscent of how the people welcomed Simon Maccabaeus when he entered Jerusalem after winning Jewish independence. In the time between the Old and New Testaments, Israel was subject to the Seleucid empire, which made Jewish worship illegal. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple, even putting a pig on the altar. Judas Maccabaeus and his family led a revolt against the Seleucids and won Jewish independence. This is the record of Simon Maccabaeus' entry into Jerusalem after the victory: "He entered into it ... with thanksgiving and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and viols, and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel." (1Ma\_13:51) He went on to cleanse the Temple of all the pagan abominations with which Antiochus had polluted it. His rededication of the Temple is an event that is still celebrated to this day (it's the event Hanukkah commemorates).

<sup>13</sup> This is clear in passages like Mt. 21:9, where the hosanna is directed “to” Jesus (“Hosanna to the Son of David!”), and here, where they say, “Hosanna in the highest” which wouldn't make sense if we take hosanna to mean “save.”

<sup>14</sup> Some suggest that these statements are simply the normal way Jesus spoke to one another on the approach to Jerusalem for Passover. But he is contradicted by the fact that the religious leaders wanted Jesus to rebuke the people (Lk.19:39, Mt.21:15).



when he mounts an unbroken donkey without incident. He knows the response of the owners of the donkey before it happens, which means he knows our thoughts before we know them. He's sovereign over what happens; he's sovereign over what *will* happen. He receives the homage due a king, the obedience due a sovereign, the honor due the Messiah, and the praises that belong to God.<sup>15</sup> Jesus is taking the Jewish throne as the Messianic king who will rule Israel and the nations. Jesus is going to dominate the world, but at the same time, he comes offering peace.

## Conclusion: Significance for Us

So what's the significance of this for us? I'll show you one more important hyperlink that will make all this come alive for us today.

### The Blind and the Lame

Remember, this all starts with a blind man calling Jesus the son of David on the approach to Jerusalem. In Matthew's account, he also connects Jesus' coming to Jerusalem with the blind.

#### **Matthew 21:14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.**

Here's why that matters—does anyone remember why Jerusalem is called the city of David? It wasn't his hometown—he was born and raised in Bethlehem.

It became the city of David when David was the first one to finally conquer it. When Israel came from Egypt to the Promised Land, Joshua led the conquest and they took over most of the land. But they never managed to take Jerusalem. It's such an easily defended city—it's next to impossible to take because of the way it's situated. So the Jebusites hung on to it, and for 500 years—from Joshua's time all the way to David, Israel couldn't take it. 500 years—that's like if the United States became a nation in the 1500's, and from that time until now, no one managed to take control of Denver.

Then along comes King David. And one day he says, "Jerusalem would make a great capital—I think I'll take it." And the Jebusites mock him.

#### **2 Samuel 5:6 ... The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off."**

They're so confident. "We wouldn't even have to use our military—all we'd have to do is send out our blind and lame." Of course, that was just trash talk. They did use their military. David doesn't return the trash talking right away. First he takes the city, then he does the trash talking.

#### **2 Samuel 5:8 On that day David had said, "Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft to reach those 'lame and blind' who are David's enemies. " That is why they say, "The 'blind and lame' will not enter the palace."**

Some people have taken that to mean that David had a bad attitude towards blind and lame people. But that's not what he's saying. What he's doing is nicknaming the Jebusites, "the blind and lame." "Taking Jerusalem was a piece of cake. You're right, it was like fighting the blind and the lame. From now on, I'm just going to call you Jebusites the blind and the lame."

So, one of the marks of how mighty David was as a king was the fact that he was the first one to finally take Jerusalem. And to do so, he had to defeat the "blind and lame."

That's the famous story of how Israel finally got Jerusalem, which is why it's called the city of David. Now, along comes the super-David, and he's making his approach to Jerusalem, and his "troops" are led in worship by a blind man, who was the first one to called Jesus the son of David. And when Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> It is a condescension, not an advancement for one who is the Son of God, equal to the Father, the Word through whom all things were made, to become king of Israel. It is an indication of pity, not an increase in power.

enters Jerusalem, of all the sick people he could've healed, who was it that he chooses to heal? The blind and the lame.

When the original David took Jerusalem, he had to defeat the people he called the blind and lame. When the super-David takes Jerusalem, instead of defeating the blind and the lame, he defeats their blindness and lameness and turns them into his mighty men of valor. Those are his troops with which he storms Jerusalem, and when you keep reading in the Bible, you find they become the New Jerusalem.

## Rejoice!

So what should we do? Rejoice! Three months from now, if your guy wins the election, you'll be happy. So how much celebration should there be over the sovereign reign of the King of kings and presidents?<sup>16</sup> How worried should we be about the chaos going on in the world right now? We're subject of super-David! He turns blindness into sight. He has the power and willingness to take all your worst weaknesses and turn them into strengths. He already won the election (there was only one vote—God), and he's promised to give you a crucial role in his administration.

The queen said to Solomon, "How happy your people must be because of what an amazing king you are!" If that's true, how happy must we be? We should be as happy as the crowd was that day, and we should learn from their praise. This passage teaches us the proper way to worship the King of kings.

## Our Glory for His

We should learn from the fact that they threw down their garments.

### **8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.**

In the Bible, clothes are the adornment of our glory. If someone is naked, they are shamed and humiliated. Lack of clothes is connected to shame because clothing is the adornment of glory.<sup>17</sup> When a person is described as glorious in the Bible, there's always a description of his or her clothing. Even God—the train of his robe fills the Temple. That's a way of describing his glory.

And it's the same in our culture. You would be embarrassed to show up at a formal occasion in your swimsuit, right? What's the most formal, most glorious you've ever been? For most people, it's at their wedding, when there is more fabric on their body than any other time in their life (indoors).

Your clothes are your glory. These people were saying, "We will take our glory, and throw it down to be trod under the feet of a donkey that you're riding on. Jesus, you are so magnificent that it is my highest honor to take what's most glorious about me belongs under the feet of your beast of burden as a kind of red carpet."

We're out of time, so we can't develop this now, but take some time to think through—after everything we've learned about human greatness vs. true greatness, what would it look like in your life for you to take your human glory and use it to bring honor to Christ instead of to you?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It's an exciting day if you get to meet the king—even if it's just Jehu, who's a nobody in Scripture. I mean, how many of you have ever heard someone say their favorite character in the Bible is Jehu? If someone said that, you'd say, "J ... who? Who's that?" He's a nobody, and yet the people who were there the day he was anointed were so excited they threw their clothes down on the ground in front of them. Even though just minutes earlier he was one of their buddies and they were joking around with him. As soon as they found out he was God's anointed king, it was the highest honor of their life to be near him. Why? Because they knew the kinds of things God would do through his anointed king. What of it someone better than Jehu? Someone like King David? That's really an exciting day. Instead of being overrun by the Philistines all the time, now you get to dominate. But this isn't Jehu or even David; it's the super-David.

<sup>17</sup> Even Adam and Eve were ashamed when they found they were naked even in a time when there was no such thing as clothes.

<sup>18</sup> I was trying to think of some ways to do that. The first thing that came to mind was how about when I have a chance to talk about me, I talk about him instead? When I have an opportunity to cause people to be impressed with me—the fact that I know some fact, or accomplished something remarkable, or did something noble—what if I pointed attention to God instead of me?

## **Joyful Praise**

Here's one idea: how about if during corporate worship, I was more concerned with glorifying God than about my own dignity? Notice it doesn't say they mumbled "hosanna." They didn't mumble it. It doesn't even say they sang it. What did they do? Exactly the same thing Binocular Bart did—shouted (same word). Up to this point in Mark only demons shout like this. For the demons it was fear. For us, it's excited, exuberant, reckless abandon in worship.

If you find yourself getting upset about the kingdoms of this world—the chaos across our country, the insanity in Washington DC and other seats of power—if all that get you down, try spending a little less time thinking about the kingdoms of this world, and more time thinking about the blessedness of the coming kingdom of our father David.

## **Summary**

Jesus presents himself as king with an elaborate living parable in which he reenacts the coronation of Solomon in a way that echoes numerous OT messianic prophecies connected to kingship. Jesus approaches the city of David as the "super-David." We have cause to rejoice!