

March 25, 2018
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Mark 11
Palm Sunday

Background

Palm Sunday, a day we have come to associate with anticipation and hope. From our earliest days, we have learned to wait for promises, which inspire us to look forward to the future with optimism and sometimes even excitement. As children, we eagerly anticipate Christmas, driven by the prospect of receiving presents. While the true significance of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, may not have been fully understood at that age, it gradually became a cherished tradition.

In essence, the concept of looking forward to something has been ingrained in us from a young age. This tendency to focus on what benefits us, fulfills our desires, and fulfills our dreams and hopes is a fundamental aspect of our human nature. This was also the case with the Israelites in the days leading up to the arrival of Christ. They yearned for deliverance from the oppressive rule of Rome, which had subjected them to cruel taxation and a sense of despondency. The Romans' establishment of a non-Jewish king to govern them further fueled their discontent. This king, driven by paranoia and a fear of losing his throne, was backed by the Romans and even appropriated a portion of the taxation for himself.

When wise men from the east informed him of a star and the birth of a king of the Jews, he reacted with incensed anger. This incident highlights the profound impact of the concept of looking forward to something on our lives, shaping our expectations and aspirations from an early age. The wise men, upon discovering the purported king, were instructed by God to return and inform him, enabling him to worship him as well. However, God cautioned them to take an alternative route. Consequently, they successfully navigated a different path, avoiding the return through Jerusalem.

The king, upon realizing his deception, was consumed by anger and paranoia, fearing displacement as king. In a fit of rage, he issued an order to eliminate every young male child under the age of two residing in Bethlehem and its surrounding areas. This tragic event, known as the Great Slaughter of the Infants, resulted in the loss of countless innocent lives. The king's lack of compassion extended even to the most vulnerable, driven by his maniacal tendencies. He was willing to resort to any means necessary to maintain his power over the people. As I mentioned earlier, Rome provided unwavering support to the king. Consequently, the Jews harbored dreams of that fateful day. In fact, clandestine gatherings began to form, and opposition grew in strength.

Throughout the years from the birth of Christ, beyond his death and resurrection, and into the early days of the church, a simmering resentment persisted. Eventually, around 70 AD, a profound eruption of hatred and rebellion erupted. The Jews sought to liberate themselves from Roman rule, but their efforts were ultimately crushed. One notable example of this resistance occurred at Masada, where approximately 900 individuals committed mass suicide to avoid the humiliation of being killed by the Romans. This tragic event remains etched in the memory of the Jewish people as a testament to their unwavering anger and determination. It serves as a poignant reminder of their aspirations and the lengths they would go to reclaim their freedom from Roman control.

However, God had a distinct perspective on how to utilize the years of Roman oppression. As I mentioned earlier, God had made promises to the Jews, which can be divided into two distinct groups. Firstly, He made promises that extend back to Abraham, as recorded in Genesis chapter 12, verses 1 through 2 and 3. These promises include the assurance that a Savior would be sent to deliver the Jews from their suffering. In verse 3, Abraham is informed that through him, all nations of the earth would be blessed. This blessing was to be delivered through a Savior, a concept that is further elaborated upon throughout the text. The Old Testament details become increasingly elaborate as the narrative progresses. For instance, Psalm 22 provides vivid descriptions of Christ's crucifixion, including the gambling for his garments, the parting of his garments, the piercing of his side, and the onlookers' astonishment as he hung naked before all men. The level of detail God provided regarding the events to come is remarkable. This prophecy foretells the arrival of a Savior who would take away their sins.

Two Motifs - Savior, King

However, God's intention extended beyond the Savior. He also intended to send a king to Israel to rule over them in a glorious kingdom that would ultimately extend worldwide. Thus, there were two motifs in God's plan: the coming of a Savior and the establishment of a glorious king. Unfortunately, the Jews were unable to reconcile these two concepts. They could not comprehend that a person who would die a sacrificial death could simultaneously be the same individual who would reign gloriously as king. Consequently, their rabbis divided the two ideas, presenting them as separate entities.

It is essential to recognize that, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 3, a veil remains unremoved over the Jews' hearts in the interpretation of the Old Testament. They continue to struggle to grasp its true spiritual message. This is because, according to Paul, when the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is lifted. In other words, I expect you, if you have received Jesus as your Savior, to comprehend the message of the Bible, not because of me, but because of the Holy Spirit working within you. I expect you to discern the prophetic indications,

types, and indications of God's plans, and to witness their fulfillment in the New Testament. After all, God has commanded you to do so. The one who was destined to fulfill both of these purposes, to be the Savior and the King, was known as the Messiah. The term "Messiah" translates to "anointed one to rule." However, it primarily signifies the anointed one. Notably, Jesus was anointed to both die for humanity and to rule as king. Therefore, he is the Messiah.

Occasionally, individuals compose songs, and I find myself singing them. While I rejoice in these songs, I sometimes reflect on how they emphasize the focus on Jesus as the king. It is true, and it is wonderful, and it is glorious, and he will indeed be. We should acknowledge this truth and praise him for it, finding joy in it. However, Jesus' journey began with his role as the Savior. He had to come, and in a humble manner, he lived his life, endured despising and rejection, offered up his life, was cruelly treated, hung on a cross, and ultimately died for us.

Interestingly, the people of Israel were not concerned about their broken relationship with God when Jesus was among them. They were not troubled by their sins, nor were they concerned about their need to repent, seek God's mercy, and center their lives on loving God. Instead, they were preoccupied with the present moment, their physical ailments, their pride, and their hatred of Rome. Their desire was for a military victory against the world's most formidable empire. That is what they aspired to witness.

However, God sent His promised Savior. God's plan was quite distinct. He was born as a human being, born of a virgin to a poor couple who were justly and humbly poor, yet godly. He was raised to manhood without much notice. Subsequently, at approximately the age of 30, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, he brought him to the nation. He presented him to the nation at the baptism of the prophet John, whom we refer to as John the Baptist. In Matthew 11, Jesus himself describes John the Baptist as the greatest man born of women, excluding himself from this description.

John the Baptist baptized Jesus. God demonstrated His presence by a voice from heaven. The Spirit of God manifested its presence upon Jesus in the form of a dove, resting upon him. This was God's anointing for his three years of ministry. After this presentation, Jesus departed, empowered by the Spirit of God for his ministry, performing signs and miracles throughout his journey. God provided him with all the knowledge and teachings he needed. Jesus emphasized that his teachings were based on what he had heard from his father. He followed his father's instructions and did everything he was given. This did not originate with Jesus but with his father.

Palm Sunday Mark 11

1Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He

sent two of His disciples; 2and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. 3And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here."

4So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. 5But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?"

6And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. 7Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. 8And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna!

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

10Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!"

11And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. NKJV

On this day, known as Palm Sunday, Jesus offered himself to the nation as their king and messiah. However, he did so on his own terms. Israel had different expectations.

Jesus' terms were clear: the people had to repent of their sins, just as John the Baptist had preached. They were to seek God's forgiveness and focus on Jesus as their Savior. John had pointed out Jesus, and they were to recognize him as the one sent by God to fulfill the prophecies. Jesus was to rule in their hearts.

God desired to rule over a righteous nation and a people who would love him and bring glory to him.

When we examine Jesus' presentation of himself and the events that unfolded, we realize that not everything transpired as God had intended.

Therefore, I will turn to Mark's Gospel for insight. While Mark's Gospel is often overshadowed by Matthew's, his direct and forceful writing style can provide valuable perspectives. In Mark chapter 11, we find that initially, the people seemed to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, it appears that way when we examine Mark 11:9, where the crowd began shouting prophecies from the Old Testament. They proclaimed, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our Father David! That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

As they uttered these words, it seemed as though they were acknowledging that this was the fulfillment of the prophecies, including those given to David, which foretold the continuation of his throne, the throne of David, into the future. Consequently, they could perceive that a new king was coming to reign on David's throne.

Naturally, this king had to be of David's lineage, which is why in Matthew and Luke, the lineage of Jesus is meticulously preserved, tracing back through David.

In Matthew, we find his public and legal lineage, tracing through the supposed father of Joseph and his actual bloodline lineage. In Luke, it extends through his mother, Mary, but both lines ultimately lead back to David. He is the son of David, fulfilling that prophecy.

Therefore, they seemingly accepted him in that manner and responded with their shouts. Subsequently, they threw their garments on the ground as a carpet for the donkey he was riding, the colt of a donkey. They also cut branches from palm trees and spread them before him in Mark 11.

Let me read verse 8 to you. It states, "And many spread their garments on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. We know from other gospels that these were palm trees. These are palm branches. I do not know if they are exactly like this one, but perhaps a little broader in their structure. I have been to Israel and have seen the palm trees there. They do not quite look this way, but you get the idea." Utilizing readily available resources, the people, who had previously considered palm trees as bushes, found growth beneficial. Consequently, they cut branches from the palm trees and laid them on the ground, creating a carpet for the donkey to walk on. Observing the events that transpired shortly after and over the following days, it is evident that the people were contemplating a scenario where Jesus would utilize his miraculous powers to annihilate Rome and establish Israel as the supreme power over the world, as foretold in the Old Testament. This interpretation suggests that they were combining political aspirations with their religious beliefs, applying them to their current situation. Their immediate desire was for Rome's destruction, not in accordance with God's divine timing.

Insights from Luke 19

To gain further insight into this matter, let us examine Luke chapter 19, which presents a similar circumstance. In verse 45, we find Jesus entering the temple and driving out those engaged in buying and selling within its walls. He declared,

“My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

Despite his daily teachings in the temple, the chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people sought to eliminate him, but their efforts were thwarted by the attentive crowd.

Luke provides an overview of these events, describing Jesus’s cleansing of the temple area. However, John provides a more detailed account, stating that Jesus overturned the tables of the buyers and sellers of sheep, goats, doves, and money changers. These individuals had transformed the temple into a place of profit and merchandise. Recognizing the opportunity for people to enter the temple for worship, they exploited it for financial gain. Notably, they even mandated that individuals seeking to contribute to God’s worship must present a specific type of coin. In contrast to the Roman coins, the priests provided more sanctified coins for exchange. However, to obtain these special coins, one had to pay a small tax, essentially an additional usury. This allowed the priests to make a profit from selling these coins. This practice became a lucrative business, and Jesus was deeply upset by it. He cleansed the area, declaring it a house of prayer rather than a place of business.

As Luke recounts, Jesus continued to teach daily in the temple. Throughout the next week, leading up to his death, he taught the people about the Old Testament scriptures and their fulfillment in him. He urged them to recognize their sins, repent, and turn to him as their Savior.

Despite the growing popularity and respect for Jesus, the chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people were determined to destroy him. They were willing to use Rome to achieve their goal, but they knew they had to act secretly. Jesus was aware of their spiritual blindness and the deep need of the people. In Luke 19, at verse 41, he expressed his sorrow as he drew near the city, weeping over it. He lamented that if the people had known, especially in their own day, the things that would bring them peace, they would have recognized them.

However, these truths were hidden from their eyes. In the days ahead, your adversaries will construct an embankment around you, encircle you, and confine you on every side. They will level you and your offspring within you to the ground. They will not leave in you a single stone upon another. This was their time, their time of visitation. Their Savior was present, yet their eyes were closed, unable to perceive it. Their hearts were closed, preventing them from

responding to it. And he wept for them. This reveals the heart of God. He wept for them.

Share the Gospel

When you observe unbelievers and witness their profound sin, you may feel a sense of resignation, believing that their fate is just. However, your heart should weep for them. They are overwhelmed by their darkness, their need is immense, and the judgment awaiting them is dreadful. God's love for them is so profound that he sent his son to die for them. Jesus died for them. God loves them and desires them to turn away from their sin. He will forgive them. Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved, delivered, and forgiven. This is the heart of God.

Observe this through God's eyes. When Jesus, on this day known as Palm Sunday, arrived, he was aware of their hearts. He recognized that their words, while seemingly scriptural and quoting scripture, did not reflect their true hearts. Many people quote scripture, but this does not guarantee that their hearts are righteous. Jesus knew their hearts were blinded and hardened to God. Nevertheless, he pressed on, determined to offer his life as a sacrifice for our sin, not just ours, but for the entire world. In a few days, in fact less than a week, he would be nailed to a cross.

He would await the Father's examination of his life, declaring his righteousness and victory over death. This declaration would be made public on Resurrection Sunday morning, revealing the victory over death. God raised him from the dead, proving that his sacrifice was accepted and that his life was righteous. God freely held him up before the world as the one who takes away our sin. Scripture is very clear. Through his blood, we are saved. We sang this morning that we praise God for his blood. His blood paid the price for us.

The King is Coming

However, one day, yet future, it has not yet happened. One day, he will return to be king over the world. And this time, when he returns to be king over the world, the world will have no power. Over him to take him and try to destroy him. He will come in great victory and majesty and will rule in this earth for a thousand years. The Jewish nation will have their Messiah. But you see, before they can have their Messiah, they need a Savior. It's that way with you. You must have a Savior. And there is only one. There is no other. Jesus, the Son of God.

And anyone who has him as their Savior can look forward to the day when he will reign in this earth. He will reign in glory. And by the way, you will be there with him. You will see it all. All thousand years of it. You will see it before we then spend the rest of eternity in heaven with him. Be sure that he is first your Savior. Then your King. First your Savior.

Lord Jesus, thank you so much for all the hundreds of prophecies of your coming. Thank you, Lord, that you have fulfilled them all in your perfect life, your offering up of yourself. And that there are hundreds and even Lord two thousand prophecies about your second coming. When you shall return as king, you shall reign gloriously in your kingdom, and all who love you will love your appearance. Lord, we pray for Israel today, those blind people, those hard-hearted people that you love so much. That you cry out to Lord, use us to bring the message to them and to the rest of the world. That your death has been accepted. Your victory is complete. Eternal life is with you, Lord. Resurrection promise will become resurrection power fulfilled in a day yet future. Our life is hidden with you and God. Thank you, Lord Jesus, Savior and King.