

Commentary on Mark 11:1-11

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, April 17, 2011**, is from **Mark 11:1-11**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary* below.

Mark 11:1-11

1 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples

In the Old Testament, for testimony to be accepted, there must be two or more witnesses. The Bible contains sufficient witnesses for us to believe what the Bible says, especially about God's acts and words in history. Even in our courts today we usually accept the testimony of two or more witnesses, not just one. Perhaps for these reasons, Jesus sent two disciples to borrow the colt He needed for Palm Sunday.

2 and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it.

Jesus told them exactly what to expect. God told people what to expect when Jesus was born, before He was born. Jesus told us what to expect when He comes again, before He comes again. Fulfilled prophecy gives good evidence of God's nature and power as described in the Bible. Perhaps the person who owned the colt had a heavenly dream or vision or visit by an angel that told him what would happen and what he was to do the next day. If he had, he might have told others what he was doing and why he tied the never before ridden colt where he did. He did this in order to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy. The events that day would convince him and Jesus' disciples that God was involved in the events.

3 If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'"

Jesus told these two disciples what they would see, where they would see it, and what to say when they were questioned. Perhaps the owner and bystanders knew from their dream or vision that the Lord Jesus would be the One to ride his colt. We see here that Jesus sometimes needs us to do things by choices (His choice and ours in how we want to respond to Him), because He had the power to acquire a colt in many ways without resorting to borrowing one through His disciples. Though He could have done this by Himself, Jesus chose a way that could build up people's faith in God the Father and Himself.

4 They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it,

The colt was tied where the owner or keeper of the colt could observe what was happening or might happen to the colt. Mark recorded specifically what happened. A colt that had never before been ridden might not be easy to ride for the first time – but Jesus had no problem doing so.

5 some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

The disciples are not identified by name, and the bystanders are not identified by name or title. Their question and the response they received from the disciples indicated, perhaps, what they expected for some reason. Perhaps they were also concerned about how a colt that had never been ridden could be handled by strangers coming to get it to take it away.

6 They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.

These two disciples obeyed Jesus explicitly. Perhaps He selected them for their demonstrated faithful obedience. The response of the disciples to the bystanders' question satisfied the bystanders, though perhaps neither they nor the disciples understood why the Lord needed the colt in order to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. The disciples would learn this later, and perhaps also the bystanders.

7 Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.

After the colt was taken to Jesus, the two disciples threw their cloaks (outer garments) on the colt for Jesus to sit on (similar to a saddle). The colt never having been ridden and having been tied probably had no saddle and had never been saddled. Jesus tamed the colt immediately, even as He could tame a storm or cast out demons and bring peace to troubled souls.

8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

Jesus received what we would call today the “red carpet treatment” or “ticker tape parade” as He entered Jerusalem. Movie stars, brides, and royalty often enjoy the honor of not walking on common ground; but instead, on valuable material that no one else has walked on or no commoner is honored to walk on. This treatment was spontaneously given to Jesus as a King, who came in the name of the Lord, who came to bring peace, for He came riding on a colt and not a warhorse.

9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Jesus received His welcome as a hero might be honored today. Jesus was honored for Who He represented to the crowds at that time: Jesus was “God sent!” They knew His words and teachings, and though most did not know that He was the Son of God, they knew He was coming in the name of the Lord and not in the name of a conquering Roman emperor to oppress them.

10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

The crowds also knew that Jesus represented in some way the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom and the defeat of their enemies. If Jesus were the Messiah, as they expected or suspected, they had high expectations that He would save them. Their political expectations of Jesus would be shattered in the days ahead when the religious leaders arranged for Jesus to be murdered on a cross.

11 Then 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 did not record everything that Jesus did on Palm Sunday and afterwards. We do not know why Mark omitted some things that Matthew, Luke and John included. Mark did write the essentials of Jesus entering the temple after He entered Jerusalem. We have the record that all twelve disciples were with Him at this time; they all left Jerusalem together, and all of them went to Bethany.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think God wants us to do some things that He could easily do all by Himself?
2. What are some of the things that God expects us to do?
3. What qualities do you think God considers in a person prior to asking them to do something as important as borrowing a colt for Jesus?
4. What qualities do you think an employer considers before hiring a worker? What different qualities might a church consider in a person before ordaining them as an elder or hiring them as a minister? How do these qualities differ?
5. How can you tell whether or not someone is coming in the name of the Lord?

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