

THINKING ABOUT PALM SUNDAY

Rev. D. R. Simons

Lesson: Mark 11:1-11

(Note: Parents may wish to pause and ask some of the following questions or they may proceed directly through the talk. Questions and responses are vital ways of leading children to more deeply understand and appreciate the truths of the Word.)

Children, everyone should know that the Lord is a King—the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. When the Lord was on earth, He taught people this truth by riding into Jerusalem as had the kings of Israel in ancient times. It is this ride, this coronation procession, which we celebrate on Palm Sunday.

(Children, do you know what a coronation ceremony is?
It means to crown a king.)

But in order to make this majestic journey, the Lord had to ride on a special animal. Do you know what kind of an animal carried Him? Can you see Him riding in your mind?

(The animal was a colt, the foal of a donkey. It may well have been white.
How many animals can you name that are compared to the Lord or that He spoke about?)

The Lord used many animals in His teachings. He spoke of a sheep that was lost. He taught we are of more value than the sparrows for which He cares. He spoke of how difficult it would be for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. He called Herod a fox and sent a legion of devils into swine. Yes, the Lord used many animals in His teachings. But only once in the Word are we told that He used an animal to ride upon and this occurs in the Palm Sunday story. By His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the Lord proclaimed that He was a King—especially by riding a colt, the foal of a donkey; and more than this, “a colt, on which no one has sat” (Mark 11:2).

You can understand this better when you know that from ancient times it had been the custom for kings to ride on colts to their coronations, that is, to the ceremony at which they were crowned king. The donkey is a lowly animal, a beast of burden, and not nearly so impressive as a horse. Yet kings and judges rode these lowly animals to show they were humble and would rule by law.

(What is the difference between a horse and a donkey? Which gallops the fastest? Which is a more lowly kind of animal?)

It was because the people outside of Jerusalem knew this ancient custom, because they remembered the prophecy of Zechariah: “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” (Zechariah 9:9), that when the Lord came riding into Jerusalem a multitude gathered around, placing their garments before Him in recognition of His majesty, and put palm branches in the way in honor of Him, crying “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Mark 11:9). This was the day every Jew had looked forward to. This was the day when a true Son of David would become their King to deliver them from their enemies.

(What does “Hosanna” mean?)

“Save now, we beseech you”.

From whom did they want the Lord to save them?

Their external enemies, the Romans.

What enemies did the Lord come to save men from?

Internal enemies of selfishness and greed - the evil spirits from hell.)

Like all other animals in the Word, the donkey means something in our minds. A donkey means our power to think and reason—to come to conclusions. As we grow up our ability to think and reason develops. We not only learn things, but we begin to put them together to find answers and to make arguments. At first, our reasoning powers center around self. We first become skilled in adding reason to reason to show why we shouldn’t do something we don’t want to do, like going to bed, or getting out of some kind of work. When we reason this way, we are like a stubborn donkey that does not obey its master.

However, when we start to think and reason from the Word, when we learn to use our minds to see reasons why we should serve the Lord and our neighbor, then this new kind of reasoning, like the colt which no man had ridden, can be the means whereby the Lord can ride into and rule our minds. For when we learn to think and reason from the Word, then the Lord becomes Ruler over our lives to protect us from our spiritual enemies, and establish His kingdom in our hearts.