

## Your King is Coming

### Matthew 21:1-11<sup>1</sup>

If you've ever encountered a famous person, you may have felt somewhat intimidated, especially if that person seemed arrogant. People of status and image can easily make us feel inferior, as if we have nothing to offer by comparison. No wonder we long for the traits of compassion and humility in society's leadership.

Jesus became famous among His own people. But as He entered Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, He modeled a new style for handling acclaim from the crowd. The city was wild with excitement during its peak season of tourists and celebration. What a moment for Jesus to bring His campaign to a climax! He even had the prophecies of Zechariah and Isaiah to bolster His confidence.

But instead of chariots and trumpets and a well-orchestrated ceremony, Jesus chose to ride into town on a donkey, a common beast of burden; no prancing war-horse for Him! And instead of walking arm-in-arm with powerful city officials and other celebrities, He was accompanied only by a small band of common fishermen, rural Galileans, and even a former tax collector. For once, the common folks had a parade! (From the *The Word in Life Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, page 90.)

In our scripture today Jesus and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem from the east as they came up the road from Jericho. When they reached the town of Bethphage on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to find a donkey and its colt. Jesus told the disciples to bring the animals to Him. If anyone questioned their actions, they were to say the Lord needed them. As king He had the right to request whatever He needed.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Mt 21:1-11

Since it was Passover, there were probably about 2 million people in and around Jerusalem. Thirty years later a Roman governor took a census of the lambs slain in Jerusalem for the Passover and found that the number was about a quarter of a million. It was the Passover regulation that there must be a minimum party of ten for each lamb which means that at that Passover time more than two and a half million people had crowded their way into Jerusalem. The law also stated that every adult male Jew who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem must come to the Passover; but not only the Jews of Palestine, Jews from every corner of the world made their way to the greatest of their national festivals. Jesus could not have chosen a more dramatic moment; it was into a city surging with people keyed up with religious expectations that he came.

This was the only time in His ministry that it appears that Jesus actually planned and promoted a public demonstration. Up to this time, He had cautioned people not to tell who He was, and He had deliberately avoided public scenes. In the religious history of Israel, when a prophet felt that words were of no avail against a barrier of indifference or incomprehension, he put his message into a dramatic act which people could not fail to see and to understand. So it was the custom of the prophets to express their message in dramatic action when they felt that words were not enough. And that was what Jesus was doing when he entered Jerusalem.

So the question can be asked: Why did Jesus plan this demonstration? For one thing, He was obeying the Word and fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.<sup>2</sup>

This prophecy could apply only to Jesus Christ, for He is the only One with credentials that prove He is Israel's King. We usually do not associate the lowly donkey with kingship, but this was the royal animal of Jewish monarchs (1 Kings 2:32ff). Jesus sat on the colt with the mother walking beside.

The disciples had used their cloaks to make saddles. This colt, a symbol of peace, had never been ridden (Mark 11:2), yet he meekly bore his burden. The animal seemed to know that his rider was the King who had dominion over...all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.<sup>3</sup> The fact that Jesus rode this beast and kept him in control is another evidence of His kingship.

The people in the large crowd spread their cloaks (cf. 2 Kings 9:13) and tree branches on the road. Most of these people were pilgrims from Galilee on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They were familiar with Jesus and the many miracles He had performed in Galilee. Others were Jews who lived in Jerusalem, still others were the people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17–18). Some people wanted to see this miracle-worker for themselves. They were probably singing some of the pilgrim psalms. They shouted the words of Psalm 118:26, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. To Him they shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna is translated: "Save us, we pray." While the crowd did not fully understand the significance of this event, they seemed to be acknowledging that this One is the promised Seed of David who had come to grant them salvation. Both their actions and words bestowed honor on this One coming into the city, at last presenting Himself publicly as their King.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Zec 9:9

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989, S. Ps 8:6-8

But so many of the Jews still did not recognize Jesus as their King; they remained spiritual blind. They were so entrenched in their tradition, power and position that even Jesus' miracles did not convince them.<sup>4</sup> However this event marked the official presentation of Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel as the rightful Son of David, their King.<sup>5</sup>

These actions were a part of the second reason for Jesus' public presentation: It forced the Jewish leaders to act. When they saw the spontaneous demonstration of the people, they concluded that Jesus had to be destroyed (see John 12:19). The prophetic Scriptures required that the Lamb of God be crucified on Passover. This demonstration of Jesus as King and his popularity incited the rulers to act.

Jesus knew that his triumphant entry into Jerusalem would lead him to Calvary. But we learn some things about the character of Jesus, the king:

This passage shows us Jesus courage. Jesus knew full well that he was entering a hostile city. However enthusiastic the crown might be, the authorities hated him and had sworn to eliminate him; and with them lay the last word. Almost any man in such a case would have considered discretion the better part of valor; and, if he had come to Jerusalem at all, would have slipped in under cover of night and kept prudently to the back streets until he reached his shelter. But Jesus entered Jerusalem in a way that deliberately set him in the center of the stage and deliberately riveted every eye upon him. In this act he threw down of the gauntlet, a deliberate challenge to the authorities to do their worst.

This passage shows us Jesus' claim. Certainly it shows us his claim to be God's Messiah, God's Anointed One. Jesus was not content to be called a prophet; he

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<sup>4</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Mt 21:1

<sup>5</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:67

was and is the King and this lead to his death. With Jesus it is all or nothing. People must acknowledge him as king, or not receive him at all.

Lastly, this passage shows us Jesus' appeal. It was not the kingship of the throne which Jesus claimed; it was the kingship of the heart. Jesus came humbly and riding upon a donkey. In western lands the donkey is a despised beast; but in the east the donkey could be a noble animal. Often a king came riding upon a donkey, but when he did, it was the sign that *he came in peace*. So when Jesus claimed to be king, he claimed to be the king of peace. Jesus showed that he came, not to destroy, but to love; not to condemn, but to help; not in the might of arms, but in the strength of love.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus came to be King in your life. He explained in word and action that he is the bread of life, living water, the light of the world, and now King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He wants us to give him our lives, our hopes, our dream, our will, and live for him. He will only be King of your life if you are willing to accept him and invite him in! Thanks be unto God for His great love for us! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, for he is Lord and King.

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<sup>6</sup> Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume 2*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible, Rev. Ed), S. 237