

Matthew Ch21v1-17 - The King has come

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- [0 : 00] Turn to Matthew's Gospel. If you need a note sheet this morning, no, they're all gone. So, are any of the younger people would like one and they haven't got one? If you're an older person, maybe you'd sacrifice and give it up because everybody got one. Nobody's... Anyway, fight amongst yourselves. Turn in your Bibles, please, to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21. We're going to read Matthew, chapter 21, verses 1 to 17. Let's hear God's word to us, starting at verse 1. As they, that's Jesus and his disciples, as they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there and her colt with her.
- [1 : 55] Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them and he will send them right away. This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet. Say to daughter Zion, See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven! When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, Who is this?
- [3 : 02] The crowds answered, This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written, he said to them, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers. The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were indignant. Do you hear what these children are saying? They asked him. Yes, replied Jesus. Have you never read from the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise? And he left them and went out to the city to Bethany where he spent the night. Well, let's keep our Bibles open and let's pray.
- [4 : 39] Oh, Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. you made us. You provide us with all that we have. And so we come humbly before you and ask that you would give to us more than we could ever imagine or ever consider asking.

That you would give to us all that we need this morning the help of your Holy Spirit the blessing that comes from you so that the words we hear today would radically change us and cause us to live lives of praise and worship as we follow Jesus the King.

So help us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Jesus is on the move and our text, Matthew chapter 21, is very clear about where Jesus is headed.

Jesus moves through three different stages. Verse 1, we're told that Jesus approached Jerusalem. And then in verse 10, we're told that Jesus then entered into Jerusalem.

[6 : 16] And then in verse 12, we read that Jesus entered the temple. So these three movements, these three stages of the journey, teach us three things.

The King's plan, the King's coming, and the King's work. So as we go through these stages, we're going to learn something about the King.

So first, the King's plan. Look at verse 1. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives.

Bethpage was an olive grove, an area just outside the city, a little bit higher, which you could look from and see all that was going on in the city.

And this is the first time that Matthew records that Jesus comes to Jerusalem. Up to this point, Jesus has been travelling throughout the whole region, visiting towns and villages.

[7 : 26] But now, Jesus approaches Jerusalem. He has his sights set on the capital city. This is the focal point of Israel, the seat of power and control.

This is the place where kings reside. Now, this shouldn't surprise us at all if we've been following through Matthew's Gospel because three times Jesus has specifically told his disciples where they are headed.

Look back at chapter 20, verse 17. chapter 20, verse 17. This is the third time Jesus tells his disciples.

Now, Jesus was going up to Jerusalem and on the way he took the twelve aside and said to them, we are going up to Jerusalem.

That's the plan. But what's shocking is what's going to happen in Jerusalem. because Jesus has come for a purpose.

[8 : 36] Look at verse 18 of chapter 20. He says, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man, speaking of himself, will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law.

They will condemn him to death, hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. and on the third day he will be raised to life.

Jesus is going to the place where he's going to die. Why would you deliberately and intentionally go to the place where you would be treated by torture?

If this were you or I, we would avoid Jerusalem at all costs. Why would you go to the place where you would be mocked, flogged and crucified?

Jesus is a dead man walking. Has he lost his mind? No, his purpose is absolutely clear. He's telling us, I have come to die.

[9 : 50] You see, Matthew is inviting us to slow down to see what is most important. Because the rest of the gospel from chapter 21 right the way through to the chapter 28, almost a third of the whole gospel is focused on the last week, the week of Jesus' death.

And as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he is only five days away from his crucifixion. Once he enters into the city, the clock starts ticking.

Yes, Jesus was a great teacher, he did amazing miracles, but we cannot miss the point, the purpose for his coming. I have come to die.

Now, while Jesus must die, Matthew wants us to see that this is all part of God's plan. Chapter 21, verse 1.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey there and her colt by her, her young foal.

[11 : 07] Untie them, bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, like what are you doing with that donkey, say that the Lord needs them and he will send them right away.

Now, what does Jesus want a donkey for? It seems rather strange all this detail about getting a donkey. Well, we'll come back to the significance of that in a minute, but for now, look at why Jesus said it.

We're given the answer, aren't we, in verse 4. This took place, the asking for the donkey and getting the donkey. This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet.

What did the prophet say? Verse 5, say to daughter Zion, see your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This quote comes from the prophet Zechariah, written 500 years before the death of Jesus. 500 years.

[12 : 19] So the events that are about to unfold before us have all been promised in eternity past. They've been planned by the Father and are now being fulfilled by Jesus.

In fact, scripture even tells us that before the world began, before the universe existed, God had planned the death of his son.

Get your minds around that. God knew that when he created humanity, they would need a saviour. So before we were even born, before we even sinned, before we even heard about the death of Jesus, God had promised, planned, and purposed the death of Jesus for you and for me.

In love, in eternity past, God designed a plan, a plan that would lead to your salvation. You see, with God there are no accidents or random events.

We don't live in a world where we're left to blind chance, trying to figure life out by ourselves. We live in a world under the sovereignty and authority of God who is working out all things for your good.

[13 : 48] In fact, God has purposed the events of your life right down to the second so that we might know and love him.

So this is the king's plan. Second, we have the king's coming. Jerusalem, the capital, was the nation's pride and joy.

It was here that their greatest king, King David, had ruled with power and might. They were the glory days, but sadly they were centuries of ago and a distant memory.

Now they lived under the iron fist of the Roman authority, a foreign power. Here they were as slaves living in their own land. Yet despite their situation, the people of Jerusalem were still hanging on to God's promises.

The promises that God would raise up a king, one with absolute power and supreme authority, one who would come and redeem and restore. It's not unlike the longing that each one of us have, is it?

[15 : 04] We all long for the desire for something, someone who would come and fix our broken world and heal our disordered lives.

Well, it seems that the waiting is over because here comes the king. Jesus comes into Jerusalem as a victorious champion.

Look at verse 4. this took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet, say to daughter Zion, see, look, here a king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on the colt, the foal of a donkey.

Now, to us reading that, it all seems very odd, doesn't it? But we need to remember that this is all part of a much bigger and greater promise.

What I'd like us to do is to go back to Zechariah. You go, well, where's that? Well, just keep going backwards, go to the beginning of Matthew, flick over a page and you come to Malachi, and flick over another couple of pages and you're in Zechariah.

[16 : 23] So it's not too far away. Zechariah chapter 9. So go back, Matthew, Malachi, Zechariah.

So here's the prophet, 500 years before the coming of Jesus. And here's what he proclaims, this is what he announces.

Let's pick it up in verse 9, chapter 9, verse 9. Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion. Shout, daughter Jerusalem.

See your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

I will take away the chariots from Ephraim. Ephraim is another name for Israel. The war horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken.

[17 : 29] I'm going to take away the military might and the wars. 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.

Verse 16. The Lord, their God, will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.

How attractive and beautiful they will be. Grain will make the young men thrive and new wine the young women.

It's what the people of Jerusalem longed for. And in a sense it's what we too long for. A king, a victorious champion who will end the suffering and all the wars and the disorder and rule the world with peace.

A king who will rule with justice and correct every wrong. It's the promise of the kind of world we all want. A world full of beauty and delight, prosperity and security.

[18 : 47] Well let's go back to Matthew chapter 21. No wonder the crowds responded the way they did when they see Jesus riding on a donkey.

It all comes to mind. They remember back to what God had promised. Could this be the longed for promised king? Well it seems it is.

Look at verse 8. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. He was receiving the royal treatment.

The red carpet was being rolled out. Here comes the king. Verse 9. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that follow shouted Hosanna!

Which means save to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! in the highest heaven.

[19 : 51] Here comes the king. The expectation was great but the victory that would come would come in a way that was least expected.

You see something doesn't quite fit. Something seems out of place. I wonder if you spotted it. Jesus is riding on a colt.

A foe of a young donkey. Eeyore. Hardly the sign of power and might is it? I mean stand back everybody.

Here comes the man on a donkey. Aren't you afraid? No a king with armour and with sword and riding on a horse.

That would be much more fitting for a victorious champion. With his armies strolling behind him. But no, Jesus comes humbly.

[20 : 58] Zechariah that we read just now makes it crystal clear. He says, see your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey.

Now I don't know how you view God. Maybe you think of God as demanding and harsh, watching for your next wrong move so that he can berate you and punish you.

A kind of head master figure who's always wagging his finger. The manager who's always showing you your faults. The coach who keeps telling you, your best is not good enough and you must try harder.

No. God comes to us in the person of Jesus, humble and lowly. The king and creator of the universe.

Listen to what Jesus has already revealed about himself. You can follow with me. It's just back in chapter 11 of Matthew. Matthew chapter 11. verse 28.

[22 : 18] Matthew chapter 11 verse 28. Listen to how this victorious champion, the king, comes to us and what he says.

Listen to his lowly, gentle voice. verse 28. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, weighed down because of your sin and your struggles.

Come to me and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

You see, Jesus didn't come in military might, but as a humble servant. He comes not to crush you, but to restore you.

He comes to you in your need. He sees how hopeless and helpless we are, how much we get weighed down and bogged down by our sin and our suffering.

[23 : 41] And Jesus invites us to take his yoke. You know the picture of the cattle with the bigger, stronger and older one with that piece of wood across its shoulder linked into the smaller, weaker one?

Jesus is saying, let me take the burden. Let me take the weight for you. He promises to carry us so that we might find rest.

You see, the rest that Jesus offers, the peace he comes to bring, the victory he has promised is not achieved through overthrowing political oppression with the sword, but it's all accomplished by bringing salvation to all through his death on the cross.

Because remember, Jesus is humbly coming to Jerusalem and lowly is he walking to the cross. He comes as the creator God, the almighty king, who comes to give up his life for you and me so that we could know peace with God and peace with each other.

He dies for you so that we could be forgiven and welcomed into his eternal kingdom, a kingdom, remember what Zachariah said, where we will sparkle like jewels in a crown, pure and beautiful.

[25 : 09] He is the humble, victorious champion who renews our disordered lives and restores our broken world and he does it all through his victorious humble death.

But let us not mistake his humility for weakness. Let's go back to Matthew chapter 21. Let's look third at the king's work.

Having entered Jerusalem, we read in verse 12 that Jesus now entered the temple courts. It was here in the temple that you could come and meet with God.

Sitting on the highest point of the city, the temple was a symbol of God's presence. But to gain access into the temple, you first, whoever you were, had to offer a sacrifice.

But it had to be a special kind of sacrifice. It had to be a Jewish sacrifice bought with Jewish money. So any outsider who came and wanted to go to the temple where they were immediately barred.

[26 : 45] The only way for them possibly to get into the temple was, well, first they had to go to this little bank outside and get their money exchanged and, well, exchanging money came with a hefty fee.

fee. And then they would go to the stalls further up and they would buy a sacrifice which were conveniently overpriced. So instead of the temple being a place of welcome which God had planned, it became a place to make money and keep people out.

Rather than access be given, access was now denied. And not surprisingly, Jesus was not happy. He came to purify and cleanse the temple of all its corruption.

Look at verse 12 with me. Jesus entered the temple courts and he drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of all the money changers, coins going everywhere, and the benches of those selling doves.

You could imagine the birds flying here, there, and everywhere and animals scooting about all over the place. The place had gone mad as Jesus threw them all out. Verse 13 It is written, he said to them, my house will be called a house of prayer.

[28 : 12] A quote from Isaiah which was a picture of the nations coming to God's temple, a place where they could come and commune with God. But he says, you are making it again quoting an Old Testament prophet, a den of robbers where the religious leaders were exploiting the foreigners and oppressing the poor.

people from every nation, no matter their language or their race, would be able to come to God to enjoy communion with God.

And so incensed with what was going on, Jesus booted them all out of the temple. He kicked out the rot and he began to welcome in the new.

Do you see it in verse 14? The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. Here was another group of people because of their disabilities they were also barred for entering.

They were excluded and shut out. So they probably didn't have any money anyway so they could never get in. But what does Jesus do? He heals them for the purposes that they too might enter in to the temple.

[29 : 37] You see Jesus was only doing what God had promised would happen. To help us understand just go back again to Malachi that was the middle book between Matthew and Zacharias so just keep turning back in your pages until you come to Malachi chapter 3.

Malachi is writing about 400 years before the coming of Jesus and he's looking forward to what will happen when Jesus comes.

Malachi chapter 3 verse 1 he says I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come says the Lord Almighty.

God but who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?

[30 : 58] He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap purifying and cleaning. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

He will purify the Levites. These were the religious leaders of the temple and refine them like gold and silver. Let's go back to Matthew chapter 21.

Do you see what was promised? One who would come to purify and cleanse? And that's what Jesus came to do.

To purify and cleanse people so that they might be able to come to God. And what Jesus was doing in the temple as he was kicking people out left, right and centre, he came to do this as a sign of what he would do through his death.

You see unless Jesus refines us, we cannot stand before God. We too must be made clean and pure.

[32 : 10] And that's what Jesus does. His death is the means by which we too can be cleansed of all of our sin, purified from all our guilt and shame, all the nasty things burnt off and washed away.

He heals us by taking all our impurity and in its place giving us his purity so that we might enjoy God now and forever.

He is the purifying and cleansing king. So the challenge is will we welcome him with joy? Because not everyone was happy with what Jesus was doing.

Look at verse 15. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things Jesus did and how the children were shouting in the temple courts, Hosanna, save, praise to the son of David.

They were indignant, furious, mad. Jesus was claiming to be God.

[33 : 28] Not only was he destroying their money earner, Jesus was making it possible for foreigners and outsiders to be welcomed in. Their exclusive religious club was now being dismantled before their eyes and they were the ones on the outside.

But what really infuriated them was that Jesus claimed to be God. Verse 16. Do you hear what these children are saying?

They asked him. They're treating you as if you were God. Well, yes, replied Jesus. have you never read from the lips of children and infants, you, Lord, have called forth your praise?

You may recognize that quote. It's how John began this morning as we read from Psalm 8. Psalm 8, remember, begins like this, Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

You have set your glory in the heavens. You see, Jesus is accepting and welcoming of the praise of little children. Jesus is declaring, I am God and I am worthy of praise.

[34 : 46] You see, these little children are significant. In the time and in the day, they were considered as nobodies and nothing.

But it's the little ones, these little toddlers, these infants, who get who Jesus is. I mean, think about it, these educated priests, who have all the knowledge, they cannot see who Jesus is.

But yet, these little toddlers, mucking about and playing about, oh, they've got it right. They know who Jesus is, and they welcome Jesus with joy.

I mean, even today, we don't think children can teach us much, can they? I mean, they're just pests, annoying.

No, that's not right. According to Jesus, we need to become like these preschool kids, as infants, dependent, hopeless, who need somebody, who need a saviour.

[36 : 00] they get it. They see Jesus as the majestic one. They see that in Jesus, he is God, and he deserves praise and worship.

So, here's the invitation. Welcome Jesus with joy. Have you ever personally welcomed Jesus with joy to be the king of your life?

Join in with the crowd filled with hope and expectation of the coming king who is going to come again and will restore all things and make everything right.

Like humble, dependent children, let us give our praise to our saving king. Not just today, but every day.

Live as followers of our mighty king, our victorious champion. Let's pray. our father God, we thank you for your plan from before the world began, your plan to send your son, your deliberate intentional plan to send Jesus to be our victorious champion, to humbly come and serve us by dying for us, coming to cleanse us and purify us.

[38 : 00] Father, what can we do but join with these little children and praise you and give you thanks and live our lives in worship to you.

Thank you for what you have done and we pray that we may go filled with encouragement and hope today because of Jesus, our great king.

We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. we're going to sing together a song that reminds us of yes, the humble lowly walk of Jesus to the cross.

From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, came amongst us to be our servant king. Let's stand together as we sing.

Amen. Amen.