

The King of the Kingdom Arrives

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[0 : 0 0] well how often have we heard politicians say something like we need to send a message we need to send a message and often it's in the context of military action so a political leader will command their country's army, navy or air force to do something to show their displeasure at what an enemy may have done as you would know a bit of that has been happening this week in the Middle East and in today's Bible reading from Matthew Jesus also does something to send a message to the people of Jerusalem and to us so we'll shortly come to what this thing is that he did and what the message was that he wants us to hear it would be helpful if you had your Bibles open at the passage it's on page 988 and it's Matthew's Gospel chapter 21 so page 988 and it's the start of chapter 21 of Matthew's Gospel and because we're looking at God's word and we want him to speak to us let's pray that that would happen

Heavenly Father thank you that you're a God who speaks to us through the Bible your living word Lord God we pray that we would understand it but further than that help us to apply it in our lives so that we might bring glory to you and we pray this in Jesus name Amen Okay so let's just get a bit of context put ourselves in the picture over the previous few chapters Jesus has been travelling south if you imagine a map of the land of Israel and Palestine the Sea of Galilee is sort of up the top that area is called Galilee and he's been travelling south towards Jerusalem which is an elevated city Jerusalem's on a mountain often called Mount Zion and Jesus is approaching Jerusalem from the east so he's come down south he's approaching Jerusalem from the east this map might just help you get a bit of a picture here

I'll just point out a couple of things I just got this off Google Maps and you can have a look at it again at home so Jerusalem you can see is right on the left hand side there you might see the Jewish court of the old city and you'll see just to the right of it is the Mount of Olives you've heard of that that appears in the Bible a number of times in between is quite a steep valley called the Kidron Valley the map's only about two kilometres across it's not a big map right down the bottom on the bottom right hand corner is a little town now known as Azaria in biblical times that was Bethany Bethany we'll talk about in a moment and there was another village nearby called Bethphage which is mentioned in the first verse of today's reading so just visualise those places there Jerusalem, Valley of Kidron then the Mount of Olives about two kilometres this way

Bethany and another village called Bethphage which would be just off the map we'll leave that up so you can make reference to it let me read the first verse as they approached that's Jerusalem and his disciples as they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives Jesus sent two disciples saying to them go to the village ahead of you and at once you'll find a donkey tied there with her colt by her so Jesus is with his disciples in this place called Bethphage we're not exactly sure where Bethphage was and he says you go to the next village and you'll find the colt and the donkey there we think that was that village Bethany right down the bottom right hand corner we don't know which two disciples he sent but he said go there 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 now you may remember that this village Bethany is a place that Jesus had been to before he had a dear friend there called Lazarus who he raised to life

Lazarus had two sisters Mary and Martha Jesus probably knew a number of people there and it seems that he had pre-arranged the obtaining of this donkey to the point that he had arranged kind of a passphrase with which to get permission to get the donkey so you can imagine the two disciples we don't know who they are they go into Bethany and they start untying the donkey the owner says to them excuse me what do you think you're doing that's not in the Bible that's just me making that up and they come back with this little passphrase the Lord needs them and the owner says no worries that's not in the Bible either I just made that up but that was the pre-arranged password and the owner will allow the donkey and the colt to be taken this is this whole event this whole entry into Jerusalem do not think it's a last minute spontaneous thing this was something planned by Jesus we'll come to more of that later now Mark in his gospel tells us that the colt the colt is the the baby donkey the younger donkey had never been ridden previously so the mother is brought as well to reassure the young donkey so there are two animals in fact it's the younger one that Jesus rides now as Jesus rode into Jerusalem we'll just have the picture thanks Aidan which is next one next now interestingly these slides are nothing to do with me that's the one they were actually reasonably relevant but they were nothing to do with me so this is obviously not the view exactly that Jesus would have had but we are from this photograph is taken from the Mount of Olives you can see there's a valley and then up to Jerusalem of course the temple the dome of the rock mosque wouldn't have been there that big structure that you can see was the base of the temple a magnificent huge structure and Jesus is making his way down the valley up into the city of Jerusalem

[6 : 57] Matthew sees in verses 4 and 5 that what is about to occur is a fulfillment of a prophecy from the book of Zechariah chapter 9 which was also read for us earlier read it again verses 4 and 5 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 now Zion is a reference for our purposes to Jerusalem and the daughter of Zion means the inhabitants of Jerusalem so here's this picture Jesus on a baby donkey on the colt riding into Jerusalem now he knew that he was God's long promised messianic king prophesied in the Old Testament even the prophecy here from Zechariah is a messianic prophecy it's about the Messiah the one the anointed one that

God was going to send but remember that in New Testament times the dominant world power and the occupying force in this part of the world was the Roman Empire the dominant Roman Empire the Jews were hoping that this Messiah that God had promised would come as a political military conqueror to boot out the Romans establish God's kingdom by force and give the Jews a bit of a chance of self determination now if you expected that that's what Jesus was on about he wouldn't be coming into Jerusalem on a donkey he'd be riding a war horse or driving a chariot or something the donkey was a lowly animal it was the animal of a man of peace and this is what I was alluding to at the start to use the phrase I used earlier

Jesus is sending a message to the people by choosing to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey not a war horse it's as if Jesus is saying yes I am the long promised Messiah but don't misunderstand what that means I'm not a political military saviour I'm a king of peace I continue to bring in God's kingdom not by war and conquest but by an invitation to be reconciled to God through me he communicates the nature of his kingship by riding this donkey he's making a statement about his kingdom now often in the Bible in the Old Testament God's prophets as well as speaking God's words which was their role often they acted them out as well you might know some stories from the Old Testament where prophets actually acted out their message as well as spoke it from God and Jesus is doing something similar he's actually acting out the type of king he's going to be in fact he is now it was coming up to

Passover time you know the Passover was the great festival when we the Jewish people celebrated the God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt and Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem for this huge festival one estimation is that two and a half million people came from the known world to Jerusalem for the Passover now even today the population of Jerusalem is only about 800,000 and this is three times that number more than three times that number coming to Jerusalem for the Passover it was packed with people that is why Jesus timed this event for maximum exposure he knew there'd be lots of people there and look at the welcome he got in verse eight a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road so the cloaks and the branches were kind of like a red carpet a ceremonial carpet to welcome

Jesus and it's only in John's gospel we're told they were in fact palm branches often palm branches were used in national celebrations of military victories so maybe that suggests that people did have the wrong idea about Jesus they thought he was this military conqueror people were incredibly excited and in verse nine Matthew tells us there were crowds ahead of him and there were crowds behind him there were crowds everywhere and specifically around Jesus there may have been pilgrims who'd come down from Galilee they'd seen the miracles and stuff that Jesus had done up north in Galilee and they knew what he was capable of and maybe there were people who'd actually known Lazarus and know that he died and know that this guy Jesus had raised him to life again so Jesus had a bit of a name with some of these people and they thought maybe when he gets to Jerusalem he'll declare his kingship maybe they didn't notice it was a donkey he was riding not a war horse and look at what the people shouted

[12 : 20] Hosanna to the son of David Hosanna is an expression from Psalm 118 and as Jeff mentioned before it means save us or save now so Hosanna in the highest might mean something like let all the angels in the highest heaven cry to God save now Hosanna in the highest it's also one of those words that people probably used and a lot of them didn't actually know what it meant they just knew it was a cry of acclamation Hosanna I was trying to think of a contemporary English equivalent of a word like that and I thought of bravo if you go to a concert and the performer does a great job you might go bravo bravo but no one knows what it means it actually means it's Italian it means bold or brave but that's like Hosanna it's a word you say just for acclamation so the expression blessed is he who comes in the name of the

Lord means they did acknowledge that somehow this guy was from God somehow he was God's representative even if they didn't fully understand him or acknowledge him as God and in verse 10 Matthew tells us that the whole city was stirred and the word stirred in Greek is where we get our word seismic from so the whole city was shaken it doesn't mean an earthquake occurred but just the fervor and all the excitement it was really all happening in Jerusalem the whole city was stirred and asked who is this verse 11 the crowds answered this is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee so prophet was probably the highest accolade they could bring to their mind they could think of and the pilgrims from Galilee who Jesus was from Nazareth in Galilee that's where he grew up he was born in

Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth he was known as Jesus of Nazareth the locals who knew him from up there were probably very proud of their local hero we know in hindsight that Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem as king a special king king over sin king over death and over evil but the key question is this is Jesus question to the people then as it is to us now have you made him your king or are you your own king from my own experience let me tell you I would much prefer Jesus to be the king of my life than for me to be the king of my life he does a much better job of it than I have ever done and it's great today to be able to witness with

James and Megan wanting to dedicate their son Joshua to God and that Joshua we pray would grow up and have Jesus as his king as he grows up into adulthood if Jesus isn't your king you're not in his kingdom being subject to Jesus as king means you you know his forgiveness you know that you have an eternal future with him you know that God calls you his child what a wonderful thing to be known as God's child it's not a thing which happens to every human being it's a thing that happens when we trust in Jesus we become God's children it's the most important decision you will ever make so we come to the second part of the passage where Jesus enters the temple area and if we just go back to that photo that I had up before so the temple is in ruins now in the year 70

AD the Romans came and just raised it to the ground you can go to Jerusalem now there are magnificent marble columns still lying there from 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the temple they're still there you can see them I've seen them with my own eyes it must have been a magnificent structure huge raised to the ground and you probably know the only remaining part of the temple that's still there is the wailing wall or the western wall the only part that's left but that whole big wall there you can see on the right that was part of the bottom part of that's where the temple was so let's have a look at a diagram of the temple just in the next picture thanks Aidan keep going keep going you're going backwards I think so the temple had different areas and the outermost part was called the court of the Gentiles now that was an area that anyone could go to a

[17 : 35] Gentile simply means someone who is not a Jew so the court of the Gentiles anyone could go to beyond that there was like a wall and only Jews could go into the next part beyond that there was an area only Jewish men could go so the women couldn't go to the next area inside that was an area where only the priests could go no lay high priests could go on one day of the year so that big open area at the top and a little bit down the bottom there that's called the court of the Gentiles that's where you could go so most of us would be classified as Gentiles we would be allowed in that part of the temple now people came to the temple especially at Passover time to make offerings of money but the money had to be in a particular coinage Tyrian coinage so people had to change their coins like you do when you go overseas and you go to another country you might have to change your cash people also brought animals to be sacrificed as part of the whole sacrificial system now I know those of us who love animals don't like the thought of animals being sacrificed but this was part of their worship and their sacrificial system but seeing that a lot of these pilgrims had to come from all parts of the

Roman Empire to Jerusalem for the Passover it would be a hassle to bring your animals with you it was easier just to buy them when you got to Jerusalem and they could buy them at the temple the issue was though that the animal sellers the traders had set up all in the court of the Gentiles that's where they were selling the animals that's where they were doing the money changing now remember this area was the only place a non Jew could go to worship God at the temple you can imagine what it might have been like it wouldn't have been very conducive to prayer or worship I suppose it would be a bit like trying to pray in the middle of the Queen Victoria market I'm not saying it's not possible I couldn't do it maybe you could but it'd be very noisy it'd be hard to concentrate and think of the smell

I was trying to imagine what would it be like to be in the court of the Gentiles with all these stall holders and anyway I thought of the chicken pavilion at the Royal Melbourne show now I don't know if you've been to the Royal Melbourne show and the chicken pavilion the animals the birds are lovely but it stinks let me tell you I've got nothing against chickens but I think it would be hard to pray in that sort of environment and you can imagine you're a Gentile you're searching for God you're not a Jew but you're trying to find meaning and purpose and you know is this God the Jews worship is he the one and you're trying to get as close as you can to this place of worship but I only go in the court of the Gentiles and it's full of animals and smell and noise not really fair to those people who are not Jews and even some of that smell and noise would carry over into the Jewish areas anyway so it was a bad deal for most of them

Jesus protest was about where the money changes and traders were working and it shouldn't have been in the temple precincts what they were doing was reasonable yes the money had to be changed yes animals were required but of these traders were ripping people off no wonder Jesus got angry this was Jesus temple he had the authority to do what he did to upset all the stalls and the seats it was another way of him declaring his kingship it's quite perverted isn't it when you think about it here is the temple this was the place where the Jews regarded as God's dwelling place on earth was in the temple this is where they understood whether rightly or wrongly that God dwelt here and right pretty much in the temple itself worshippers were being ripped off and God's worship was being perverted at

God's temple no wonder Jesus was angry and with the stalls reset up the next day we don't know probably but Jesus had made his point some argue in fact from the gospels that this event possibly occurred twice we're not sure but it certainly occurred once but maybe Jesus did repeat it so I was thinking we need to be conscious of things that we might do as a church that hinder the worship of other people of visitors perhaps as we worship Jesus together are we subconsciously putting up barriers to people here at Holy Trinity I thought about this and this is the learning and the application I was trying to think about from this passage I can't think of where we do I think we are pretty open and we do want to welcome visitors to our church and introduce them to the love of Jesus but it is something to keep tabs on and to be aware of well let's look at the final verses this morning verses 14 and 15 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

[23 : 37] Hosanna to the son of David they were indignant it's it's wonderful to see Jesus exercising his kingly rule and bringing healing to people right in the temple it's the only time I think that we have a recording of healings that Jesus does in the temple he was continuing to extend his kingdom I always found it amazing that the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw these healings these wonderful things that Jesus did and their response they were indignant they were angry I don't know about you but if I saw someone give sight to someone who was blind or healed a lame person I'd be so happy for them I'd be in awe of the person who'd done it I'd want to find out more about them but despite this the chief priest and the teachers of the law were indignant

I mean how spiritually blind can you get you may know people like that people who just don't seem to be able to see Jesus for who he truly is you might be related to them they might be your children it could be your parents your siblings your neighbours your work colleagues you might love them a lot keep praying for them keep praying for them don't stop don't give up pray that they would see Jesus for themselves and accept all he offers them God can soften their hardest hearts keep praying for them and the kids we are told were shouting in the temple area

Hosanna to the son of David they may have not fully understood what they were saying but they were praising Jesus I think it's a lovely thought that Jesus accepts the praises of very young children my mind actually turned to our dear brother Oliver Oliver Gamble who's with us this morning and I spoke to his mum about this Oliver is nearly 40 years old and he has Down Syndrome and he often says to me and you may have heard him say this he says I love Jesus you say that a lot don't you Ollie and I know he means it what of a wonderful God we have who accepts humble worship from all who trust in him whether young children people who are differently abled like

Oliver or ourselves we do have a gracious and kind wonderful heavenly father and he just longs for us to have him as our king so let's pray Lord Jesus thank you that whether people acknowledge it or not you are the king of the universe please help us to let you be the king of our entire life and not simply parts of it help us here at Holy Trinity and as a worldwide church to do all we can to help people to worship you and not to erect any blockages or hindrances we pray for those who are yet to see you as you really are please open their eyes especially those known to us those we love and thank you that you accept all sincere worship no matter who offers it up to you we pray in your name amen