

Here Comes the King

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[0 : 00] This is the AM service on the 15th of February 1998. The preacher is Phil Muleman.

His sermon is entitled Here Comes the King and is from Matthew chapter 21 verses 1 to 11.

Amen. Well, over the past two weeks, we've heard about the conversations that Jesus has had with the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem.

And by and large, they weren't very pleasant conversations because Jesus had exposed to these religious authorities their hypocrisy and he had also exposed their plot to kill him, which Jesus had told his disciples about some months before.

Well, this morning, those were in chapters 22 and 23, I think, and this morning we're going to backtrack a little to the story of Jesus' entry to Jerusalem, which Jonathan read for us.

[1 : 35] And what we're going to do is look at the celebration that accompanies Jesus' entrance to the city. And this all occurs while it's leading up to the Jewish Passover.

And the Jewish people celebrate this event annually to recall the saving work of God as he delivered Israel from the hands of the Egyptians.

And they celebrate this festival every year and thousands of Jews from all over the Roman world travel to Jerusalem, the focal point.

They travel to Jerusalem each year to celebrate it. Well, Jesus, being of Jewish descent, of course, is one of the thousands who is making this pilgrimage to Jerusalem to enter into the Passover festivities.

However, he is heading there with a mission. He is focused on a task before him, and that is to accomplish his Father's will. And up to this point, only his closest disciples have been allowed to enter into that purpose that he is going to, the reason that he is going to Jerusalem.

[2 : 47] And one of the occurrences, he tells them three times in the Gospels, and one of the occurrences occurs in Matthew chapter 20, where Jesus says to his disciples, We are going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death.

Then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. And on the third day, he will be raised.

Well, friends, Jesus is focused, and he's heading to Jerusalem for the Passover and to fulfil his Father's will. Well, as he leaves Jericho for his final ascent to Jerusalem, the Gospels record that there is a large crowd following him.

And no doubt, pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem, these people are pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem to also celebrate the Passover festival. You might like to turn to your Bibles in Matthew chapter 21 and follow along.

It's 21 verses 1 to 11. And as Jesus is going along, when he reaches one of the outlying suburbs of Jerusalem, Jesus then goes on to give some instructions to two disciples about what to do.

[4 : 10] And he says in verses 2 and 3, Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

If anyone says anything to you, just say this, The Lord needs them, and he will send them immediately. Well, Matthew then gives us the reason in verse 4 why he gives these instructions to the disciples.

And that is in verse 4 it says, To fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus has a purpose in mind here, as with all his actions, to fulfil what the prophets have said will happen. And this act of delusion that we read here, of Jesus on the donkey, is also prophesied in

Zechariah 9, is now coming to a head as Jesus enters Jerusalem.

And what it seeks to do is fulfil several understandings for us. Let me give you a couple. Firstly, that prophecy will be fulfilled.

[5 : 28] The prophecy will be fulfilled. The long-awaited Messiah is arriving in Jerusalem in the manner that is prophesied. He is triumphant, victorious, humble, and riding on a donkey.

Now, a donkey is an animal which symbolises peace, as opposed to a horse, which was used in times of war. And secondly, we learn and are reminded about the notion of kingship in Israel. What does it mean to be a king in Israel? Often, we think of kingship as powerful, and having a reign which is full of pomp, and ceremony, and so on.

Full of glamour. All you have to do is think of the royal weddings that have been on, or even a funeral. There is a great deal of fuss made about it, isn't there?

The monarch is only given the best, and they are set above all common life. They can virtually get whatever they want. They would have no problems at ever getting a front row ticket to the Swans in the grand final.

[6 : 39] They would have no problems, whatever, getting tickets to go to the Olympic Games, which we'll all be clamouring for in a couple of years' time. I couldn't get tickets to the Swans' grand final two years ago.

So, I'm sure the Queen would have. Well, in days gone by, the monarchy was regarded by many people as the final authority on many matters, on any matter, really.

However, the opposite is what is expected of Israel's king. The king was established in Israel, yet, under the divine appointment of God, and was to be a servant to God and for the people.

That's what the Israel kingship's about. So, when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, he is fulfilling prophecy and taking on the deliberate and active role of a king that is fit for Israel.

Well, the disciples go and do what Jesus has directed them to do. And they bring back the donkey and the colt. And then they place their outer garments on them and place Jesus on the young colt.

[7 : 55] And the very large crowd now, in these verses, it says a very large crowd, they are now gathered, they spread their cloaks out on the road, they wave branches, throw them in front of him, and in doing so, are acknowledging Jesus' kingship.

So, this very large crowd that is now gathered helps to fulfil the prophecy by acting out this story.

Now, up to this time, Jesus' ministry has been one where he has not really tried to draw attention to himself.

He has had a ministry of healing where miraculous signs and cures are happening for people. But on a number of those occasions, he tells those whom he cures not to tell anyone about what has happened.

And he has also had a ministry of teaching where he is not so much talking about himself but about his father. And he is teaching people about the good news of the kingdom of God.

He is here to tell the good news of the kingdom of God. He is teaching them from the scriptures about what the prophets have said in the past and that the time is now at hand.

[9 : 11] And he is not so much teaching about himself but about the one who sent him. Well, as he enters Jerusalem, though, the attention by all who witness his entry is clearly pointed at Jesus.

To those who know him as Lord, there is great joy as they sing and shout their praises. And they say, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest! We summed the words just then. For them, for this crowd that is following Jesus, this very large crowd, Jesus is the Messiah, the one they have been waiting for, the anointed one from God.

He is the Messiah, the anointed one from God. But do they really know what that means? Do they really believe that this Jesus is going to bring about the decisive victory for all of humankind?

Do they really know that this Jesus is going to be King and Lord over everyone? Well, perhaps some do, but not in the way that his victory came about as a result of his death on the cross.

[10 : 30] This crowd looks at him as king, perhaps, but not as a king who has to suffer so that we might be able to enter into his kingdom.

And how deflating it must have been for some of the crowds to see him suffering on the cross just a few days later. How humiliating. For sometimes we are the same.

We see Jesus as king when things are going well in our life. But we forget that he is king even during the hard times at home, at work, at school, at university, even here at church on Sundays.

We forget that as we turn to Christ, we also are entering into his sufferings as well as his glory. Sometimes, if things are tough, we want to take the easy option because that seems like the right way to go.

And besides, there is no suffering this way. No suffering emotionally or physically. But being a Christian doesn't mean, though, that there is no suffering.

[11 : 46] We're still human beings and we live in a fallen world where suffering happens continually. We see it all the time.

The joy of being a Christian, though, is that we can begin to understand a bit more about suffering because Jesus, God in the flesh, has been through it. He's been the way of suffering.

And sometimes, God is calling us to greater obedience to him. And the path of obedience can be quite painful. In our modern world, some will say that it's ludicrous to go the way of suffering if we are to follow God.

And the sad thing is that it sometimes comes from your closest friends who will say those sorts of things. It's fine to say that we don't need to suffer. But if we decline to do something that may involve a bit of suffering, we need to be clear that God is the one who is steering us away from it and that it's not our own feelings because we just don't want to have a bit of hardship at this time. Let me read to you a story about a lady called Dr. Eleanor Chestnut. And she had a life of service which illustrates the way of suffering. She was a missionary serving with the American Presbyterian Board working in China earlier on this century in the 1900s.

[13 : 15] And during her time in China, she's an American, remember, foreigners were viewed with hostility. And even those who worked in the front lines where she worked, they were viewed with hostility even if they were offering sacrificial service.

Well, this story is written about her. Soon after she arrived in China, she built a hospital buying the bricks with her own money. But even before the hospital was completed, she was performing surgery in her own bathroom for want of a better place.

One such operation involved the amputation of a coolie's leg. Complications arose and skin grafts were needed. Later, the doctor was questioned about a leg problem from which she herself was suffering.

Oh, it's nothing, she answered, brushing off the inquiry. Later, a nurse revealed that the skin graft for the good-for-nothing coolie, that's in quotes, had come from Dr Chestnut's own leg while using only a local anaesthetic.

During the Boxer Rebellion, Dr Chestnut remained on her post longer than most missionaries and she returned to China the year after the rebellion was over. Then in 1905, while she was busy working at the hospital with four other missionaries, a mob stormed the building.

[14 : 42] Although she got away in time to alert authorities and in fact could have escaped, instead, she returned to the scene to help rescue her colleagues. It was too late.

Her colleagues had been slain. But there were others who needed help. Before she herself was killed, her final act of selfless service to the Chinese people was to rip a piece of material from her dress to bandage the forehead of a child who had been wounded.

she could never repay the debt she owed for her own sins, but she could share in Christ's suffering. In gratitude to him, she took up her cross and followed him to China to endure a life and death of suffering in order to further his kingdom.

will we be never called to suffer in such a dramatic way as Eleanor Chestnut did, but are we willing to go where God sends and do that which God calls us to do obediently, even if it's going to cost us?

[16 : 01] Christ willingly paid the ultimate price for us. Are we willing to share in his sufferings also?

Well, the crowds welcome and praise Jesus as he enters Jerusalem and in verse 10, we have a look at the back of the passage, the focus turns back to Jerusalem.

When he entered Jerusalem, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil asking, who is this? Matthew records that when the wise men or the magi came looking for the king of the Jews, all Jerusalem in chapter 2 was troubled, all of Jerusalem was troubled.

Now, when the king arrives in Jerusalem, the whole city is in turmoil. It's stirred up. Who is this man? The people of the city don't know what to make of this dramatic arrival and it seems that the very large crowd that accompanied him enlightened the city.

The crowd in Jerusalem asked, who is this man? And this other crowd that is following Jesus say in verse 11, this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

Yet this Jesus, he's more than a prophet. He's the Messiah. And they have a witness that this crowd has witnessed his authority over nature.

[17 : 38] People in that crowd have witnessed him calm storms. They have seen his authority over sickness by healing people who can't walk, who can't see, by healing people who have died.

He's fed thousands with only a tiny amount of food. This crowd know who this Jesus is, all right.

And they welcome him to Jerusalem. They welcome him as king and testify about him to a city that is in turmoil. They're in turmoil over this person who enters on a donkey in peace as a king.

Well, just as Jesus' entry to Jerusalem creates turmoil for the people of Jerusalem and great joy for the crowd that has followed Jesus, we need to ask, where are we at with Jesus?

Do we welcome him as king with praises and with great joy entering into his sufferings? Or are we like Jerusalem? Are we stirred up?

[18 : 49] Are we all in turmoil inside? And are we asking that question, who is this man? Who is this man? Well, if we have welcomed him, then let us keep praising him and letting him dwell within us, no matter what the cost might be.

We need to keep sharing that love whenever and wherever we can. And let us tell people how Jesus has fulfilled what the scriptures have said about the coming king.

him. On the other hand, if we're a bit like Jerusalem and are asking, who is this? Then can I encourage you to look at what the scriptures have to say about this Jesus, the king.

Don't turn your back on him. Don't avoid the subject, but investigate for yourselves about the love and the new life he has to offer for all who turn to him.

Amen.