

How shall I claim this King?

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[0 : 00] I'm going to ask, is there a picture there, Dean, of that one number check? Just for a few moments.

There should be an image there of two numbers. Perhaps not. Thank you.! Do you have those two numbers? There we are.

I'll just make sure you have to take the attention. Okay, I'll go ahead and give you a chance. Drew said that the box, he did more than 2,500 years ago.

I'm sorry, 2,100 years ago. Of course, I moved away from the microphone, sorry.

It's a bit unfair, so I'll answer my own question. For 46 years, I have been listening to Palm Sunday Services.

[1 : 07] 46 years. And I wonder, I'm sure that there are some of you in church today who have heard Palm Sunday Services more than 46 times.

And you might say, well, what's the 21 represents? Is that the 21? Is that when I fell asleep? Well, hopefully the congregation didn't die there. That's when actually I was leading worship.

So it's not that you add the numbers together, but all that 46, 21 of them is when I was leading worship. And it's not that I want to change the story today about Palm Sunday, but I'm thinking of approaching it from a slightly different direction.

And I want to do that with what I would suggest to you are certain key verses or way markers in the Bible. And I'm going to do that, first of all, by taking examples from other stories of Scripture.

I'm sure that most of us here today know the story of Samson, the man who wasn't allowed to cut his hair because if he had his hair cut, then he would lose all his strength.

[2 : 18] And we know during the story of Samson that the Philistines, time and time and time again, try to get Delilah to persuade him to reveal his secret so that he would be weak enough to capture and to kill.

And there comes a point in time where Samson gives in and his hair is cut and the Philistines overcome him. And they do a terrible thing with his eyes.

They gouge out his eyes. And everything looks lost for Samson. He's disobeyed God. What's going to happen to the nation of Israel?

Everything seems to be dark. And then we read these verses. But the hair on Samson's head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

And this is a wee key verse, a wee marker of what's to come. Because Samson is now in prison. He can't do anything for the nation of Israel. And yet there is this wee hint that God is still at work.

[3 : 29] And I'm sure that most of you here know the story of Samson. But the Philistines, high on alcohol and their own self-esteem, invite Samson into the temple, their temple.

And Samson prays to God and his strength returns. And the temple collapses.

Just another wee example. The story of Ruth and Naomi. Which again I'm sure everybody here is probably very familiar with. And it starts off with this family.

Naomi and her husband and sons going off to Moab, looking for barley. And the harvest has failed. And while they're there, her two sons marry.

But during the number of years that they're there, both her husband and her sons die. And so Naomi says that it's time to return to Israel. And she can't persuade Ruth to stay behind.

[4 : 38] Even though she should go back to stay with her own family. And so they come back together. And at the end of chapter one, there's this, again this key verse, a way marker I'm suggesting to you.

The barley harvest was due to be taken in. In other words, the famine was over. And there were better things ahead for Naomi and Ruth.

And what about Palm Sunday? Well, I'd like us to look at it using such key verses as that, but not the same ones. To think of it as, first of all, the rejected king.

So the rejected king is coming into Jerusalem. And then we're going to look for a short period at the promised king. The promised king is coming into Jerusalem.

We're going to take a wee moment to look at that king's character. Because it's all about the character of the king. It's one thing to say that Jesus is the king of kings and lord of lords.

[5 : 51] Well, what sort of king is he? What sort of lord is he? Is he a lord that will welcome me? That will welcome you into his kingdom?

And then finally, you'll be glad to hear, finally, recognizing our king. Because remember, the text says, your king comes.

Your king comes. And it's your king, our king, that we're looking at today.

In the book of Samuel, up until this time, Israel has been ruled by judges. Samson was one of them.

And in 1 Samuel, chapter 8, we hear this verse. A verse of rebellion. And the people of Israel come to Samuel, who is their mediator between themselves and God.

[6 : 56] And they come to Samuel and say, we want a king over us. Then we will be like other nations. I'm going to repeat that. We want a king over us.

Then we will be like other nations. And so Israel, who was a theocracy, whose king was God, who had established this particular relationship with this people, who had said to the one who had said to the one who had brought them out of Egypt, the one who had rescued them.

And they're now turning around and saying to the prophet, Samuel, we no longer want you. We no longer want God to rule over us. We want a king so we can be like the other nations.

I wonder, does that have a little bit of an echo in the 21st century? Are we a church that has decided that we want to be like the people in our community?

We want to be like the people or like other people who don't claim any allegiance to Christ? And I would suggest to you, my friends, that it doesn't matter what denomination that you're from, but we can all be guilty of that.

[8 : 22] I'll give you a wee example from long ago. Days gone by, there used to be a young man who had to fix his own cars. He worshipped in church every Sunday, in fact twice every Sunday.

He led services through Bible studies. He became an elder, visited. And each year he came round to go on holiday, and the day before they went on holiday the car would break down.

And he would spend the day before going on holiday having to fix the car. And instead of turning round and saying to God, thank you Lord, thank you Lord, that I'm able to fix the car.

That I have the means to fix the car, both financially and in my own hands. He would look round at the world round about him and say, oh God, why can't I have a car like that?

That doesn't break down. That's less than ten years old. And so forth and so forth. And that's a very small way of what Israel was doing.

[9 : 25] Israel was looking round and saying, God, God wasn't good enough. God wasn't protecting me. We want a figurehead. Forgetting, of course, that human kings can be good and bad.

And so we have the example of David and Solomon, both good kings. And of course David was preceded by Saul. And then just one of many bad kings that ruled over Israel.

We think of Ahab and Jezebel the Queen. They wanted to be like other nations. Has a church become a place, and I'm not talking here about this particular congregation.

I'm talking about the denomination. I'm talking about the Christian faith. Have we become that we want to be like the people around us? This rebellion, of course, continued.

That prophecy was written 500 years before the birth of Christ. 500 years or so. But we hear it echoed in the Easter story, do we not?

[10 : 45] On the day of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Pilate asked the question of the crowd that is gathered round. Here is your king, Pilate said to the Jews.

Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asked. And then this terrible indictment, which the chief priests answered. We have no king but Caesar.

You see, they wanted to be like other nations. So that's the rejected king. But the rejected king, who is that king that we read of in Psalms, awesome and terrible.

And that king that we read about in the story today from Matthew's Gospel, the account. The one who comes riding on a donkey, gentle, with all the hallmarks of peace around him.

They are rejected. Rejected by the chief priests, by the people he came to save. Again, we are reminded of a different picture, are we not? Of Jesus standing above Jerusalem, weeping.

[11 : 50] And saying how often he would have gathered the inhabitants as a mother hen gathered her chicks. But they would not. Now what about this promised king?

What are we to see in him? First of all, we are to rejoice greatly according to the prophet, Sederiah, who he calls to church, her daughter of Zion.

Shout, daughter of Jerusalem, see your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation. Righteous and having salvation. We read earlier, where it says, who can ascend the hill of the Lord?

He who has clean hands and a clean heart. How can I have that clean hand and clean heart? It's not by any righteousness that I have. It's not by my ordination vows. It's not by the clothes I wear.

It's not by the things that I do. But any righteousness that I or you have comes from the right works of the king. The right works of Christ. And so we see this king is to be righteous.

- [13 : 00] And how do we know that Jesus was righteous? Well first of all, let's just take a wee picture into the background of Jesus these way markers of verses that I've selected for today.
- How about at Jesus' baptism? Again, I'm speaking to a congregation who are well used or well familiar with their scriptures, with their Bibles.
- And as Jesus comes up out of the water, we know that the dove descends upon him. But there's also a voice heard. And that voice says, you are my son whom I love.
- With you I am well pleased. We know that Jesus is righteous because the Father is pleased with him. And then as the time comes for Jesus to make his way towards Jerusalem.
- And remember, I said already at the children's talk, is that this was not Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem. Not as first as a Jewish man. We know that he went to the Passover regularly.
- [14 : 12] We hear about it from the age of twelve at least, that he went to Jerusalem. And then of course, or I'll stop using the word of course, I went into a bad habit there.
- And then as the time came for Jesus knowing what was about to happen to him, he sets his face resolutely towards Jerusalem.
- We read of in Luke chapter 9. In other words, he's saying, I know what is ahead of me. I know what needs to be done. I know what's going to happen to me.
- But there's something I must do to please my Father. To please God, my Father. And then in the Garden of Gethsemane, we have these well-known verses.
- Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. Yet not my will, the Jew's, be done. So our King full of righteousness and salvation.
- [15 : 17] If you're counting the number of pages, there's three more to go. But it's very big writing. I said it's getting poorer and poorer.
- But what about the King that comes with righteousness and salvation? But he also comes humbly and in peace. And you've heard it year upon year about the reason why it was a donkey and not a horse.
- So we'll not go into that. But we know the reason why. God is extending his hand. He is saying to Jerusalem, to the Jews, he's saying, I haven't come to do battle against you.
- I haven't come to pass sentence on you, the judgment that you surely desire. I come. I come with the offer of peace, of righteousness and salvation.
- I come with the offer of peace, of righteousness and salvation. Recognising the King. Or recognising our King.
- [16 : 26] Here we have a mixed picture. A mixed picture of that they recognise who Jesus was. And there are two texts there.
- There's the psalm, the help from the Hallal Psalm. And then there's the announcement in the very last verse of our reading from Matthew. Where the question is asked, who is this?
- And the crowd respond, this is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. Now there's no doubt that the crowd saw someone coming in.
- Possibly have heard of his ministry. Probably, in fact, have heard of his ministry. And yet, and yet, they're not absolutely certain he is the Messiah.
- They hope he is the Messiah. That's why they say the words, Hosanna O save. That's why they call him son of David. They either recognise or hope that he is of the lineage of David.

[17 : 27] He's come from Bethlehem, so he probably is. That's where he was born. They would know that. Although they recognise that he now came as an adult from Nazareth in Galilee.

They know he's a prophet. And there haven't been many of those in the last 400 years in the life of the people of Israel. Until John the Baptist appeared first. And then Jesus himself came.

So they know that much. They know that much. But have they recognised Jesus as their king? Well, if they do, it doesn't last long.

From Julius Iscariot who betrayed Jesus in the upper room. To Peter who denied knowing Jesus even though it was prophesied.

Of course, Peter repents of that. A story for another day. Rejected by the people who came to save. We have no king but Caesar.

[18 : 32] However, none of these statements are now the right and the knowledge and the certainty that Jesus is the king.

The king coming to be crowned in Jerusalem. The one who will sit forever on David's throne. I'm tricking you now.

I'm hiding pages behind pages. Coming towards a kind of conclusion here.

How shall I know? How shall I become? How shall I claim this king?

Because Jesus offers everyone here to be our king. How can I acknowledge that I will be a subject of the king?

[19 : 33] Well, first of all, there are key scriptures again. Key scriptures. There is Jesus himself as he begins his ministry.

Repent and believe the good news, he says. We are told that in Mark's Gospel. And then when the jailer, Paul and Silas are in prison.

And the chains fall off after they have been singing. And all the doors open and the jailer, the jailer thinking everybody has escaped, is planning to do harm to himself. And Paul calls out, but no harm takes place.

And the jailer comes and asks that very same question. What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we place him as our Lord and King.

How can I demonstrate that? How can I be that in my life? As I progress, either as a young Christian or as a mature Christian.

[20 : 43] How can I be that? And I've suggested just a couple of things here. But by no means are they completely conclusive. You know how, you know, when you became a young Christian you were told you need to read the Bible.

You were told that you need to pray every day. And your vows you promised to gather with your fellow believers at worship.

You made those vows. Each one of us is a member of this or another congregation. But these are doing things. They're good things.

I'm not by any means denigrating them in any way. They are good things. But I'm suggesting that there is a place or a time when we stop doing the doing and we become the becoming.

You were saying that doesn't make sense, Michael. I'll repeat it again. We cease doing the doing and we become the becoming. We become a people who desire, not because we have to, but we choose to read the word of God.

[21 : 56] Because we have chosen to be subjects of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And how else is he going to communicate with us and speak of his kingdom if we don't read his word?

How about prayer? I must be very careful here. I don't want to set myself up as some pinnacle to follow. And by no means that. And by no means that.

But what I'm trying to do is encourage us as men and women who believe in God or are seeking God to know that we can find that God. And having found him, we can be the subjects that God wants us to be.

But perhaps there is one thing most of all. That is saying, as Jesus said, not my will, but your will be done.

In other words, we are making way in our lives for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. So the King was rejected.

[23 : 03] For 500 years, he waited his time. All sorts of things happened to the people of Israel. But God had a time and place set in his mind.

And Jesus would come. And on that Passover week, on the first day of that Passover on Palm Sunday, the King of Glory did write it.

We didn't look much like our King of Glory. But the rejected King came to claim his throne. To offer to be your King and mine.

To be our Saviour and our Redeemer. Our Master and our Friend. Amen.