

The King's Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-11

Introduction

In Matthew's gospel we have seen the revelation of the King (chapters 1-10); the rebellion against the King (chapters 11-13); the retreat or the retirement of the King (chapters 14-20) and now we enter into the section of Matthew that highlights the rejection of the King (chapters 21-27). The chapter begins with three definite signs to the nation of Israel followed by three parables. Matthew will present the King (vv.1-11)—speak of the purifying of the Temple (vv. 12-16); followed by the cursing of the fig tree (vv.17-22). The chapter reveals the sins of Israel and provides in part an explanation for the religious leaders rejected Jesus and the message of Jesus.

How could the religious leaders have missed the Messiah? How do we explain such spiritual blindness?

Jesus cautioned His disciples and others from bringing undue attention to Jesus—cautioning them “tell no one” and avoiding public confrontations. What's changed? Jesus must obey His Father and fulfill prophecy. Jesus must go to Jerusalem. Jesus must fulfill the Messianic prophecies. God had placed this event on Christ's calendar hundreds of years earlier.

Jesus will allow for the first time in His ministry for the crowds to publicly declare that He is God's Anointed One (v.9).

All King's deserve a coronation ceremony—but for Jesus a cross will precede a crown. Earlier in His ministry the crowds made an effort to make Him king (John 6:15) by force. Jesus is King—Jesus does not come to Jerusalem to be made King—but rather to be welcomed and honored and obeyed in the Temple which is His House.

This day was planned and prepared and prophesied. No wonder there was a parade.

The Preparation For The King (vv.1-3)

Matthew 21:1 (NKJV) Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

Jesus has spent the last nine months traveling. He has stopped in about 35 places along the way. He began His last trip from Jericho to Jerusalem.

2saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

3And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”

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Jesus gives the disciples an answer to anyone who says anything about their mission—simply say; “The Lord has need of them”.

Why would Jesus need a donkey and a colt? In context they will fulfill prophecy!

But think for a moment that God by His power and majesty and perfect wisdom prepared these instruments to be in the right place at the right time in order to fulfill His perfect purpose.

But would it surprise you to find out He needs you as well?

The Lord seeks sinners.

What an illustration of grace! Most people will not appreciate being compared to a donkey and her colt.

We often find human beings compared to animals in the Scripture. We are compared to a sow or pig for uncleanness (2 Peter 2:22) and sheep for our ability to go astray and seek our own way (Isaiah 53:6). Sinners are compared to dogs as objects of contempt (Matthew 15:26) and to a wild ass in our ability to be willful and wild (Job 11:12). In this text the donkey is tied (v.2) with her foal. The sinner is tied to sin—in bondage to sin (Gal.3:22). Mark's gospel tells us they found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it (Mark 11:4). Both donkey and colt were outside—not in some comfortable stable—just like the sinner outside the covenant of God—in a place where two roads meet—the broad way and the narrow way.

In Mark's gospel we discover the colt or foal had never been ridden and therefore useless (Mark 11:2-3). “Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat—Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this? say, “The Lord has need of it,’ and immediately he will send it here.”

How like the sinner! Useless—to God—because in our flesh we cannot please God (Romans 8:8).

Both donkey and colt were known by the Lord—before time began—before the ministry began—before the prophecy was ever made or ever fulfilled! **Jesus knew exactly were they could be found—and exactly how they could be used.** Both donkey and colt were prepared—and then released by a power—and then brought to the Lord Jesus Christ (see v.7)! And so the Holy Spirit is the power that releases us—and brings us to the Lamb of God—who takes away our sin. Jesus will use this colt—and so it is—that all who are brought to Christ—are given permission to use them!

One more thing. Instead of thinking of yourself as a donkey—how about asking yourself the question—“Do I have a donkey?” By that I mean something—that you and I have—which if given back to the Lord—given back to Jesus—might move Jesus and His story a little further on

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down the road. It might be a gift—a special talent! It might be natural or supernatural. It might be artistic or the ability to learn languages or some technical or athletic ability—that you could use for Jesus.

Jesus needs all His people to carry out His purpose—to act and fulfill His will.

Jesus has carefully prepared everything!

The Prophecy Concerning The King (vv.4-5)

4All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

5“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”

Why a donkey—and why specifically a colt—never ridden? In the Jewish culture an animal devoted to a sacred task must be one that is separated from ordinary work. Genesis 49:10-11; “The scepter shall depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes.”

Saul Israel’s first king—was a keeper of donkey’s! David rode a donkey! It wasn’t until much later that riding a donkey was beneath the dignity of a king! The donkey Jesus rode speaks to his person and character. This was a moment ordered and orchestrated from the foundation of the world.

One Bible scholar writes; “Look at Him! He rides no stallion, which is a war animal, and he comes not with fearful pomp and power, but sits on a donkey, which is no war animal but which is ready for burdens of work that will help human beings. Thereby he shows that he does not come to terrify people, to drive them or oppress them, but to help them, to carry their burdens and take them on himself. Jesus did not come to destroy, but to love, not to condemn, but to help, not in the power of force, but in the strength of love” (see Barclay’s Matthew—p.243).

Humble—lowly—a suffering servant. But the next time He comes—it will be as conquering King! The next time—robes dipped in blood—a blazing sword—a celestial horse from heaven.

Jesus has carefully ordered everything. It would seem the donkey’s owner was a Christ follower. This exact date was selected from eternity past. The prophecy in part is found in Zechariah 9:9; “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”

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Matthew omits “rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!” **When Jesus approached the City he wept! How could he or the people rejoice since judgment was coming?**

Matthew omits “He is just and having salvation”—because Christ’s coming—at this point—is not with justice and salvation (victory) for Israel—that awaits fulfillment in Revelation 19:11-21—where Jesus rides on a white horse.

Jesus did have salvation—but they refused to accept it (see John 1:11).

The prophecy of Daniel predicted this moment—to the very day. Daniel 9:25-26; “Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street will be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.”

Sir Robert Anderson did the math. 62 weeks = 434 years. 7 weeks = 49 years. 483 X 360 (lunar year) = 173,880 days. The only decree given in the Scripture that authorized the rebuilding of the city and its walls takes place in Nehemiah 2; dated in “the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes” (i.e. 445 B.C.). The date is well attested in ancient history.

In summary Sir Robert Anderson’s book chronicles the span of time to begin March 14, 445 B.C. and conclude April 6th, 32 AD. This day.

Predictive prophecy proves divine intelligence behind both Old Testament and New Testament scriptures. Prophecy proves the existence of God (but not to everyone’s satisfaction). Prophecy authenticates the deity of Jesus. Prophecy demonstrates and illustrates the inspiration of the Bible. The OT contains over 300 references to the Messiah specifically fulfilled in Jesus! Some people might object and say, “those prophecies were written at the time of Christ or afterwards! These are self-fulfilling prophecies that Jesus and His disciples manufactured in order to appear to fulfill prophecy!” The stubborn facts are—the Old Testament was complete in 450 B.C. The Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was initiated in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.). It is rather obvious that if you have a Greek translation of a Hebrew text translated prior to 250 B.C.—this is sufficient to prove the existence of the prophecies well in advance of the birth and life of Jesus (see Evidence that Demands A Verdict pp. 144).

The Parade For The King (vv.6-11)

6So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

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7They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.

8And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds welcome Jesus. The people spread their garments and cut down branches—palm branches from nearby trees. **They prepare His path (vv.6-8)! They proclaim His praise (vv. 9-11)!**

John's gospel reminds us that the crowds are there in part because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead!

In the ancient world throwing clothes on the path of a monarch was a custom that dates back at least to the times of 2 Kings (9:13). It symbolized respect and submission to authority. This was the ancient way of saying "We place ourselves completely in your control, you can do whatever you want to us, even walk all over us." The branches were cut down from near-by Palms which symbolized joy—deliverance—salvation. This is the Rabbi from the Galilee who healed the sick, raised the dead and taught with authority!

9Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!"

The crowds cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David" and 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'! The people quote Psalm 118:26.

The expression "hosanna" means "save now".

These are shouts of praise. There was a group shouting from the front, and then a group shouting from the back. This is known as an antiphonal procession!

10And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"

Who are in the crowd? Jews living in Jerusalem. Jews who have come from the Galilee. Jews who have heard and witnessed the teachings and miracles of Jesus.

11So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

The crowds cheer! For one brief moment—there is joy—celebration. Jesus is met with enthusiasm, praise, honor, respect.

The people call Jesus a prophet but do not call Him king! The Jews missed the time of their visitation (Luke 19:41-44) and rejected their King!

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Do the crowds believe Jesus is the long awaited Messiah? I suspect they believe that Jesus is a fulfillment of the prophecies. That He is in fact the Messiah. But they believe Jesus will be the instrument of salvation from the rule of Rome and Israel's best chance for an independent Kingdom. They were praising God for giving them a prophet-King—a national leader who will restore the nation's glory and fulfill the promise given to David. But they were deaf—to the prophecies—and prophets—and blind to the real mission of Jesus to save sinners.

In just a very few days—the sentiment and mood will turn dark and hostile. These same crowds will shout “Crucify Him, Crucify Him”!

Can you imagine being the Grand Marshall at the Rose Parade—on New Year's Day—only to be killed the following week by the same adoring crowd?

What caused the spiritual blindness? It could be—that the religious leaders were blinded by their own positions and ambitions. They substituted the Words of Jesus for the traditions of men (Luke 11:52). The people were interested in protecting preserving themselves.

The prophecies concerning Jesus did not convince them.

The words of Jesus did not convince them.

The miracles of Jesus did not convince them.

The character of Jesus did not convince them.

Their stubborn resistance to the truth would lead to a denial of the truth.

Later they will say; “We have no king but Caesar”.

We are apart from Christ—blind to our condition before God (see Rom. 3:11)

We are blind to the beauty of Christ (Isaiah 53:1).

We are blind to the grace of God (Rom. 11:8).

We are blind to the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 2:9-14).

We are blind to the presence of Christ (Rev. 3:18-19).

We are blind to the need of the new birth (John 3:3-7).

We are blind to the evil all around (Eph. 2:2-3).

Conclusion

What is it that you see?

Who is your king?