

“SEE, YOUR KING COMES TO YOU”

Matthew 21:1-22

Key Verse: 21:5

“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

Matthew 21-28 covers Jesus’ passion week. It started when Jesus entered Jerusalem as King. After his entry, Jesus told many parables and gave many teachings. Through these he revealed what kind of king he is and how his kingdom would come. Then he suffered and died for our sins and defeated the power of death through his resurrection. In this way he became our Savior King. Today’s passage is Jesus’ triumphal entry. Jesus deliberately demonstrated that he came as the King sent by God. When you hear the word, “king,” how do you feel? Some may become nervous and anxious, feeling that he will violate all our human rights and oppress us. But Jesus is not that kind of king at all. Jesus is the Savior King. He never forces anyone to submit to him. But he embraces all who accept him as their Savior King. It is very important to know who is the king of our life. Is Jesus your king? Or does another king sit on the throne of your heart? Many people want to be their own king. But when we honestly examine ourselves, we are terrible kings of our own lives. We really need our Savior King Jesus to rule over us. Let’s learn what kind of king Jesus is and accept him in our hearts today.

First, Jesus is a gentle and humble king (1-11). Jesus had repeatedly told his disciples that they were going up to Jerusalem where he would suffer, die and rise again (16:21; 20:18). According to prophecy, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in Jesus’ name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem (Lk 24:47). Now Jesus came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, about five miles from Jerusalem (1). Jesus prepared to enter by sending two disciples with instructions: **“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. 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”** (2-3). This teaching shows us Jesus’ omniscience and lordship. Jesus knows everything and is the owner of everything. Indeed, Jesus is the Creator God. John 1:3 says, **“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”** All things belong to Jesus. We are just stewards of what he has given us. When he wants to use something entrusted to us, we should offer it willingly and joyfully. It is a great privilege. To serve the upcoming ISBC, my wife and I would like to host coworkers from Latin America in our home. We discussed the practical arrangements with our youngest son, Joshua. When asked if he could give up his bed for a few days, he hesitated because his beloved stuffed

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animals are well arranged there. It is a good time for us to learn the Lordship of Christ and practice good stewardship.

Jesus' entry would have deep meaning. Verses 4-5 say, **“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, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.””** This is a quotation from the prophecy of Zechariah, which was made several centuries before Jesus' coming. Jesus intended to fulfill this prophecy of the coming king. The author Matthew reveals that Jesus is the Messianic King through his genealogy, and by fulfilling fourteen specific prophecies (1:22; 2:5,15,17,23; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9). This testifies that Jesus is the authentic and legitimate King sent by God. Therefore, those who oppose him are opposing God and will face serious consequences.

When we see the contents of this prophecy, we are amazed at the nature of his kingship, which is essentially spiritual, and different than that of worldly kings. He came to save his people from their sins (1:21). He is Immanuel, **“God with us”** (1:23). He rules as a shepherd who nurtures, protects and guides his people (2:6). He defeated our enemy, the devil and his temptations, to give us victory over him (4:4). He has authority to forgive our sins, and removes all kinds of guilty feelings from our hearts (9:6). He has power to heal the sick, drive out demons and even raise the dead (8:17,32; 9:25). Though Jesus is so powerful, he is also so gentle and humble in heart that he gives us true rest (11:29). According to Matthew 12:20, he does not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick; in his name we can have true hope. He is full of compassion, especially for those who are weak and marginalized (15:32). There are so many beautiful aspects to his kingship that we cannot describe them all. It was about this King that the prophet said, **“See, your king comes to you.”**

“See” is from the Greek word *“idou,”* which means “look, listen, pay attention.” In this world, so many matters try to turn our hearts away from Jesus and steal our joy, peace and spirit. Sometimes we are just distracted by petty pleasures or unnecessary things. Sometimes we are tired and weary and lose our focus on Jesus. Sometimes practical problems arise that we must deal with urgently and desperately. Yet, even in those moments we need to see Jesus, pay attention to Jesus, listen to Jesus, fix our eyes on Jesus, and hold on to Jesus as a matter of life and death. To do this, we need faith. For example, when the Israelites grew impatient in the wilderness, they spoke against God and Moses. Then the Lord sent venomous snakes to bite them. Some people died. The others came back to their senses and asked for mercy. The Lord instructed Moses to make a bronze snake

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and put it on a pole, promising that anyone who was bitten could look up at the bronze snake and live. It seemed to be a strange solution and hard to accept. It was not easy to turn away from the desperate reality and look up. It was unreasonable. They really needed to trust God and his promise. Referring to this event, Jesus said in John 3:14-15, **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”** Humanly speaking, to look up at Jesus on the cross seems foolish. How can this help anyone? Yet all who have trusted in him have received eternal life. Here eternal life is not just something we need in the future, but it is the beginning of a new, vibrant, dynamic life here and now. It is full of wisdom and power to overcome challenges. All we need to do to experience this amazing life is to see Jesus and accept him as our King.

“See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Most kings enter their capital city with great pomp and ceremony. But our King Jesus is so humble that he comes to us riding on a donkey’s colt. He is approachable by everyone. Most kings sit on their thrones and wait for their subjects to come to them. And without an appointment, there is no chance to meet them. However, our King Jesus comes to us knocking humbly at the door of our hearts. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”** In verse 5, the pronouns “your,” “you,” are singular and personal. Jesus wants to be King of each one of us personally. Let’s look up at Jesus and accept him as our King personally. **“See, your king comes to you.”**

As we began this new year of 2018, I felt that I am personally at a crossroads. I will turn 60 in August. Though I want to do many things, my remaining ministry time is limited, and I am not sure how the Lord will guide me. The ISBC 2018 is coming, and there are hardships and challenges ahead. My family members need my personal care. I am concerned about the spiritual lives of many growing leaders. I often wake up in the middle of the night with an urgent need to pray. Yet at this moment, I hear the words, **“See, your king comes to you.”** Jesus has come to rule and reign in my heart. All I really need to do is to look up and see Jesus and accept him as my King daily.

Jesus’ preparation to enter Jerusalem was very meaningful. However, to his disciples, the instruction to go and get the donkey and colt might have sounded strange. They could have thought, “How does he know where the donkey and colt are? Why does he need them at this moment? Will the owner give them to him?”

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Usually, we don't obey what we don't understand. However, the disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them (6). It was because they trusted Jesus. They brought the colt and the donkey, which cannot be separated from its offspring, and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on (7). According to other gospels, Jesus sat on the colt (Mk 11:2; Lk 19:30). Jesus' entry into Jerusalem became a big event. A very large crowd gathered, and as they realized who was coming, they spread their cloaks on the road. Some cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road (8). They did not have a red carpet to roll out, so they used their own cloaks and tree branches. It was their best expression of welcoming Jesus with reverence and honor. Soon, sounds of praise began to rise. 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!”** (9) They welcomed Jesus as the promised King sent by God, with joy and praise from willing hearts. When we see Jesus and accept him as our King, we are filled with joy, thanksgiving and praise.

When Jesus' disciples and followers praised him with all their hearts, the whole city was stirred. People asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, **“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee”** (11). Here we learn that when we praise and worship Jesus in public, many people are drawn to Jesus. For example, in the Christmas season of 2010, a gifted and carefully arranged chorus sang “Hallelujah,” by Handel, in a shopping mall food court. Many people joined them until the whole shopping mall became like a worship service. Later, more than 51,000,000 people viewed the event on YouTube. Even non-Christians were moved to tears.¹

Second, Jesus is a righteous and merciful king (12-17). Upon arrival in Jerusalem, the first place Jesus went was the temple courts. This was the place set apart for women and Gentiles to come and pray. Jesus' visit tells us that he came for all people of all nations. When Jesus arrived there, he found people buying and selling. Zeal for God's house consumed Jesus (Jn 2:17). He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves (12). He said to them, **“It is written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers’”** (13). God established the temple as a place for people to meet him, listen to his word, receive the forgiveness of sins, and pray. Through this fellowship with God, their souls could revive, and they could find grace, strength and wisdom to serve others. But the religious leaders had turned the temple into a business for their own profit. They were so powerful and well

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

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established that no one could challenge them. But Jesus boldly confronted them with strength and truth. Jesus is not only gentle and humble, but a righteous King. We can learn that our church should be a place that honors God and maintains a good spiritual environment for people to receive his blessing.

When the spiritual atmosphere of the temple was restored, many blind and lame people came to Jesus there. Jesus welcomed them and healed them one by one. This shows us that Jesus is a merciful king. Mercy is an important attribute of the Messiah which Matthew emphasizes. In 9:13, Jesus told the legalistic Pharisees, **“Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’”** Jesus wants us to have mercy on others.

Little children and all kinds of marginalized people came into the temple and were praising Jesus. When the chief priests and teachers of the law saw this, they became very indignant (15). They thought it was blasphemy and a desecration of the temple. They wanted Jesus to stop them, saying, **“Do you hear what these children are saying?”** Jesus replied, **“Yes, have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise’?”** (16; Ps 8:2). Jesus boldly proclaimed to them that he is the Lord, who is worthy to receive praise. In doing so, he defended those who needed mercy. Then he left there and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night (17).

Third, King Jesus works through our faith and prayer (18-21). Early the next morning Jesus went from Bethany back to Jerusalem; it was about two miles. Jesus had not had breakfast and he was hungry (18). Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, **“May you never bear fruit again!”** **Immediately the tree withered** (19). Did Jesus do this just because he was hungry? No. There is a deeper meaning to this event. Jesus saw this fig tree as a symbol of the nation Israel. Though they had the trappings of religious life, he did not find the fruit he was looking for. The religious leaders were proud, greedy, legalistic, merciless and hardhearted. As a result, the temple became like a den of robbers and the whole nation was badly influenced. This provoked God’s judgment, which came in A.D. 70. Jerusalem was destroyed, and Israel scattered. Here we must acknowledge that God judges nations and people based on their fruit. What kind of fruit does God want us to bear? Micah 6:8 says, **“What does the LORD require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”**

The disciples were amazed. They asked, **“How did the fig tree wither so quickly?”** (20) Jesus planted faith in their hearts: **“Truly I tell you, if you have**

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faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to this fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (21-22).

King Jesus wants to empower his disciples to do great things in the sight of God. This power comes through faith in God. It is not something that human beings can control for their own purpose, like magic arts. It comes from God alone, through prayer based on his will (1Jn 5:14). God’s power can move mountains. This is what the disciples needed. They faced the mountain of Jewish establishment power, which would be a great enemy of the gospel. Jesus’ disciples looked powerless, like little ants. Yet, as we see in the book of Acts, when the disciples were devoted to prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they became powerful witnesses of Jesus. They boldly challenged the religious establishment to repent and overturned Jerusalem. Later, they went to Judea and Samaria, and moved the mountains of prejudice. And they went to the whole world. Eventually the Roman Empire was overcome by the power of God and became Christendom. This encourages us. We face mountains in our society: anti-Christian bias fueled by the devil’s hatred, that influences the powers of this world against Christ. We also have mountains in our own hearts: sinful desires, anxiety and fear, the devil’s temptations and the power of death. How can we move these mountains? Jesus said, **“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”** Let’s remember this promise as we prepare the International Summer Bible Conference. **“See, your king comes to you.”** Let us see Jesus and accept him as our King.