

## “BLESSED IS THE KING!”

Luke 19:28–48

Key Verse: 19:38

“...saying, ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”

How do you feel about having a king? Many would say, “No thanks. What’s the use of a king, anyway? Kings only want their own honor and glory, and they’re very expensive.” In the Bible, God actually warned his people about this (1 Sam.8:10–18). But some people still like to admire kings from afar. Some like to follow the British royal family. Some like to watch the rich and famous, especially their lavish lives, fantasizing that they could be like them. But most of us are not so ambitious. We’re just trying to make it from day to day and take care of our own. What does it have to do with us that Jesus came to be King? Why should we get excited about that, and even start shouting praises?

His previous parable mentions his kingship. In it Jesus describes someone who goes to a far country to receive a kingdom, then returns to find some who do not want him to reign over them (19:12,27). Now, in reality, Jesus himself enters Jerusalem as King. But he’s not your typical kind of king. What kind of king is Jesus? Why do we need him? What does it mean to receive him as King? What happens when we do? May God speak to us through his word.

**First**, Jesus our King raised disciples. As a king, it’s unheard of. Jesus was last seen passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem (19:1). After making friends with a tax collector, Zacchaeus, he taught his followers how to use their unrighteous wealth to serve him.<sup>1</sup> Now, he comes back to his personal direction. Since 9:51, Jesus has “set his face” to go to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> where he knows rejection, suffering and death await him (9:22; 17:25). Look at verse 28 (ESV). Here it says Jesus goes “on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.” Earlier he said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (9:23). Jesus didn’t just teach the way of the cross; he showed us how to do it through his own example. If we’re going to raise disciples like he did, first we’ve got to lead by example, especially in carrying our own cross daily.

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<sup>1</sup> 19:2–27; cf. 16:8–11.

<sup>2</sup> 9:51,53; cf. 13:22,33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11.

What happens next? Look at verse 29a. Jesus and company have just traveled from the Jordan River valley on this famously steep road up into the mountains, east of Jerusalem. It's the day after the Sabbath, a Sunday, and it's a 17-mile-long road. With a crowd, the trip likely takes about seven hours. For one day, that's a lot of walking! The villages of Bethany and Bethphage are up in the mountains, just two miles more to Jerusalem. The mount called Olivet faces the city. And the week-long Passover Feast is about to begin (22:1ff.). During this annual Feast, Jerusalem's population would double, with all the out-of-town pilgrims coming for the holiday. Over the next several days, while in Jerusalem, this Mount of Olives is where Jesus and his disciples will stay each night (21:37; 22:39). They don't have enough money to stay in comfortable lodging; they'll be resting outside under the stars in an olive tree orchard (9:58).

Look at verses 29b–30. What's going on? Jesus is planning to ride into the city on "a colt." It can be either a horse or donkey, but here, it's a young donkey. It says "on which no one has ever yet sat," implying it's been born recently. Jesus is so poor he has to borrow it. But why does he want to ride into the city on a borrowed colt? He's intentionally fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus is showing not only that he's come to fulfill all the prophecies, but also the *kind* of king he is. Unlike any other king who ever lived, Jesus is fully righteous and having salvation. In fact, Jesus our King is the Son of God, in whom there is no sin, and he appeared to destroy the works of the devil and to take away sin (1 John 3:5,8).

At the same time, Jesus is so humble, he's willing to be seen riding on a newborn donkey. It's a powerful visual statement about his character. In today's world, it's like he's riding into a big capital city on a children's bicycle, or even a skateboard. What's Jesus doing? He's identifying with "all the people" (2:10), especially those too poor to make an impressive appearance, and all the outcasts. Anyone is welcome to approach him. Who ever heard of such a humble king? But Jesus is. In coming to his people riding on a baby donkey, Jesus is humbling himself. His humility is not staged; it's authentic. His humility is that he's not aloof; he's coming close to us, in person, to give himself to us. His humility is a source of peace.

As we know, this world is filled with conflicts. So much of it boils down to just one thing: a lack of humility. In nations and societies, marriages and families,

at work, school, even at church, we get into trouble because of a lack of humility. In dealing with our human pride, our soul gets so weary and troubled. The only answer is to come to Jesus, our humble King. His profound humility can melt any hardened heart. His humility can lead us to repentance, and renew us to follow him again.

Read verses 30–31. Why doesn't Jesus just go and get the donkey himself? Why send two disciples? He's not just enjoying bossing them around.

But he's not doing everything by himself, either. He's *including* his disciples in the work. When they simply do what he says, what happens? Read verse 32. Jesus knows everything in advance. In Greek, the word for "those who were sent" is related to the English word "apostles." It means Jesus will send these men out soon. For now, in the course of helping him, they learn faith. What kind of faith do they learn? Read verses 33–34. It's a dangerous moment when they might get arrested as donkey thieves. But when they just say what Jesus told them to say—"the Lord has need of it"—it works! These two men learn the faith that God provides, that we should just trust and obey the word of Jesus, and especially, the faith that Jesus is Lord.<sup>3</sup>

To really accept Jesus as our King, we've got to make him our Lord. We can't just say the words. He's got to be Lord of our whole lives: our direction, our career, our talents, our time, our family, all our possessions. Spreading his good news all over the world doesn't happen magically. Jesus still needs servants who listen to him, trust and obey him, and serve him. To truly make him Lord, we need to get active doing what he wants, and learn to make him our top priority. Instead of constantly thinking, "What do I need?" we need to learn to think, "What does my Lord Jesus need right now? What's he calling *me* to do in serving *him*? What can I possibly do or give to help his cause?" May God grant us this faith.

**Second**, "Blessed is the King!" (35–40). Look at verses 35–36. Putting their cloaks, their own outer garments, on the colt and on the road is their way of honoring Jesus. It's a personal, practical, active expression of their faith. Look at verse 37. Now Jesus is drawing near Jerusalem. On this donkey colt, he's starting to go down the Mount of Olives. At this moment, the city of Jerusalem comes into full view. And this is when the multitude of his disciples go wild.

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<sup>3</sup> To emphasize this element of Christian life, Luke frequently refers to Jesus as "the Lord" (1:43,76; 2:11; 3:4; 5:8,12; 6:5,46; 7:6,13,19; 9:54,59,61; 10:1,17,39–41; 11:1,39; 12:41–42; 13:15,23; 17:5–6,37; 18:6,41; 19:8; 20:42,44; 22:33,38,49,61; 24:3,34).

They've been walking uphill all day, over many miles, some perhaps with their little ones (Matt.21:15). This late in the day, they all must've been exhausted. But following Jesus, they're full of spirit. What a scene! They're rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they've seen.

What are these mighty works? As Jesus said earlier, the blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, and the dead were raised up.<sup>4</sup> It was *so amazing!* Put together, these mighty works prove that Jesus really is the Son of David, the Messiah God promised.<sup>5</sup> Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Of course, it's not always the ideal time to celebrate (Eccles.3:1–8). But in Jesus it's always the time to rejoice, because God, in keeping with his promises, has sent us all such a wonderful Messiah.

What does the crowd of disciples say? Read verse 38. They're blessing Jesus and praising God. Their words are taken from a famous section of Scripture called the Hallel, Psalms 113–118. Every year at Passover, the Jews would sing these Psalms on their journey to Jerusalem. This specific verse is from Psalm 118:26, which begins: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" But here, the people say, "Blessed is the King!" Luke has already told us that Jesus is our King.<sup>6</sup> In describing his trial and crucifixion, Luke will tell us more about Jesus our King.<sup>7</sup> But here, the people are shouting that Jesus our King "comes in the name of the Lord." He didn't grab this position with his own ambition, like fallen men do; God himself sent him. "In the name of the Lord" also suggests that he has the very character of God (cf. Ex.34:6–7).

Luke emphasizes how Jesus our King brings us God's forgiveness.<sup>8</sup> We experience his forgiveness through the new covenant in his blood poured out for us.<sup>9</sup> What a King we have! Only his blood draws us near to God (Eph.2:13). Only his blood purifies our conscience (Heb.9:14). Only his blood cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7b). Only his blood sets us free from our sins (Rev.1:5). No one and nothing else can do that for us. In heaven they'll be singing a new song to Jesus our King: "Worthy are you...for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed

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<sup>4</sup> 7:22; cf. 4:18–19; Isa.35:5–6.

<sup>5</sup> Sam.7:12–16; Isa.9:6–7; 16:5; 22:22; Jer.23:5–6; 33:15; Eze.34:23–24; 37:24–25; Mic.5:2.

<sup>6</sup> 1:32b; 18:38–39.

<sup>7</sup> 23:2–3,37–38,42.

<sup>8</sup> 1:77; 3:3; 5:20–24; 7:47–49; 23:34; 24:47; see also Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18.

<sup>9</sup> 22:20; cf. 1 Cor.11:25; Matt.26:28.

people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev.5:9). Humble Jesus who shed his own blood for us is fully worthy to be the King of us all. Here, today, right now, he's inviting each of us to trust him, welcome him, celebrate him, and devote our whole lives to him, shouting: "Blessed is the King!" Receiving Jesus as our King fills us with joy and praises. Only he can fill us with such joy.

Look at verse 38b. "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" What do these words of praise mean? Jesus our King brings peace in heaven. He finally accomplishes God's long-awaited plan of salvation. Jesus entering Jerusalem as King brings glory in the highest. He reveals God's greatest glory, his redemptive love to save sinners. We need to experience this heavenly peace and glory in our King Jesus until we can really praise him.

**Third**, the heart of Jesus our King (39–48). Despite all the rejoicing, there are some unhappy people present. Look at verse 39. The Pharisees' legalism is so toxic, they think the disciples are blaspheming and might even cause a riot. They want Jesus to silence the praises. They are spiritually blind. How does Jesus respond? Look at verse 40. To Jesus, his entrance into Jerusalem as God's promised King is the time to praise God wholeheartedly. If people don't do it, the stones will. But no praises come from the Jerusalem temple to welcome Jesus (Psalm 118:26b); the building and its leaders only give off a stony silence.

Read verse 41. Only Luke tells us how Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. The Greek word literally means he's sobbing. It's stunning. It's not how we usually think of him. Jesus is the humble King. He's the King who brings salvation and real joy. But he's also the weeping King. Why? It's because he knows what his people's rejection of him will mean. He's not weeping for himself, but for their future (42–44; cf. 23:28–31). He's grieving, even for those who will kill him, because they don't know the blessing of God's peace they could have through him (Acts 10:36). Jesus our King isn't vengeful in the least. He's shedding brokenhearted tears for all those who bring God's judgment upon themselves.

In the last part of the passage, Jesus our King goes straight for the temple (45–48). Mark's Gospel tells us it's the next day (Mark 11:11,15), Monday of Holy Week. Jesus makes the temple his first priority. He's most concerned, not with popularity or politics, but with the quality of people's worship of God. He teaches from Scripture to use God's house as a house of prayer and not ever let it be turned into a den of robbers. Then he himself sets up shop in the temple,

teaching the Bible daily to the people. He's again modeling discipleship. It's a very hostile environment. Jesus will be killed in just four short days. But he's not intimidated or distracted; he's a good shepherd, seeking to save the lost (19:10) to the very end. He can do this even in the face of death because he trusts in God. It shows us how Jesus our King wants us to use our church. He wants us to focus on making it a house of prayer and a place for the ministry of God's word (Acts 6:4), not a place for personal benefit. May God help us to do so.

Actually, if we open our hearts to receive Jesus as King, we become more like him. It's a miracle! With Jesus in our heart, we become humble, peaceful and full of praises to him. We learn his faith "the Lord has need of it." We experience his forgiveness and learn his broken heart for those who reject him. We learn his zeal for God's house, his prayer, and his diligent Bible teaching for the lost, even in the midst of rejection and hostility. Let's read verse 38 again. May God open our hearts to receive humble Jesus as our King, so that we can truly experience his forgiveness, his peace and his heart for the lost.