

## **What Kind of a King?**

Matthew 21:1-11

### *Seven characteristics of God's Promised King*

What kind of leader do you want? As you know, this is a hot topic of discussion in the world right now. As I pointed out in a [recent post](#)<sup>i</sup> on our blog, “The Teabag Principle” is on full display. When people get into hot water, what they really believe comes out. The boiling water of the most current crisis has brought out the real character of the leaders of the nations. Some have responded in humility, but most have responded with arrogant pomposity that people despise. So the question is this: what kind of leader do people really want?

More than one of you have commented to me about the situation in the world recently. If a winsome leader with real answers for this crisis were to emerge on the world scene right now, people would follow him. If he were so powerful that he could restore their health and wealth, they would almost worship him. The Bible testifies that such a deceptive individual will ultimately emerge to lead a one world government. I explained this in a recent message on [“The AntiChrist”](#) from 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

But this does not mean that the next phase of this current pandemic will lead to the time of tribulation prophesied in Scripture. There are a number of people already speculating that this is the very end of the current church age. But the Scripture gives us careful advice about how to respond. In the recent [“Wait for It”](#) series, we answered *this* question from a number of Biblical passages: *“Since Biblical prophecy is true, what should we do?”* Even if we knew with certainty that Biblical prophecy would be fulfilled very soon, Daniel’s example shows us how to respond.<sup>ii</sup> We should greet such knowledge with humble prayer and fasting.

All of this gives us a fascinating perspective on this event that fulfilled several Biblical prophecies in today’s text in Matthew 21:1-11. You can see the language of fulfillment in verse 4:

**“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon a donkey, and a colt the foal of a donkey.”**

We commonly refer to this event as “The Triumphal Entry” and we celebrate this on Palm Sunday.<sup>iii</sup> But it raises the question: “What kind of King were they seeking?”

Why, for instance, did they cheer for Jesus early in the week? But why did they jeer at Him and demand His crucifixion later that week? And this will lead us to ask, “What kind of a King are we seeking?” Palm Sunday is the beginning of what we commonly call “The Passion Week.”<sup>iv</sup> In the crucible of the Passion week, we learn what kind of a king they were seeking.

### **Historical Context**

About one hundred years before this event, the Romans had invaded and conquered Israel. And the people of Israel still resented this Roman intruder. The Roman occupation led to three Jewish revolts.<sup>v</sup> The question of how to throw off Roman rule was on the lips of the people. They fervently hoped that the Messiah would come to liberate their nation. But Rome took a dim view of outliers, especially if they were called kings. In Matthew 2:1-18, Herod murdered the babies in Bethlehem in an attempt to destroy the newborn King. After the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15), the people recognized Jesus as a prophet and wanted to make him their king. But according to John 6:22-71, Jesus confronted them with the question we are facing today: What kind of a leader were they looking for? What kind of king did they seek? Of course, in the popular thinking, Jesus would have been the ideal king. After all, He could heal anyone who was injured in battle; He could feed an army with a miracle; He could even raise the dead if one of them died in battle! Shouldn't He be their king?

### **Significant Events Leading Up to the Passion Week**

**The Raising of Lazarus of Bethany from the Dead:** According to John chapter 11, Jesus raised Lazarus of Bethany from the dead after he had been dead for days. According to John 11:45-53, that wonderful miracle triggered the hatred of the Jewish leaders; they sought ways to murder Him. Jesus left that area, but made plans to return at the Passover (John 11:54-57) despite the danger.

**The Festival Atmosphere at Passover:** Jesus traveled to Jerusalem, leading His disciples. They did not travel the direct route through Samaria (Luke 9:51-53). Instead they took the more common route with the Jewish people of Galilee. They crossed the Jordan River and traveled down the east side of the Jordan River valley. By this route, they descended down to Jericho, back across the Jordan River and climbed to Jerusalem. They were surrounded by people making the regular pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. During this journey, we know that they sang “The Songs of Ascent” (Psalms 120-134). This would have created a holiday feel much like we experience at Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter. We have some favorite holiday hymns that we love to sing during those seasons.

**What Jesus Prophesied:** As they were traveling, Jesus took His disciples aside to remind them of what He had taught them. (Matthew 20:18-19) “<sup>18</sup> **Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, <sup>19</sup> And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.**” But unfortunately His disciples seemed to be blind to what He was teaching. According to Matthew 20:20-24, His disciples got into an argument about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus was describing His passion, but His followers were jockeying for position! This frames the question for us again: What kind of King were they seeking? What kind of leader were they looking for? We know that this was the issue because of what Jesus taught them about servant leadership in Matthew 20:24-28.

**What the Blind Men Saw:** Some blind men saw what the disciples did not see. And what they saw brought Jesus to a standstill. According to Matthew 20:29-34, they cried out to Jesus, “Lord, Son of David!” This title is a reference to the Messiah. This brought Jesus to a halt and He healed their blindness. These events thrilled the crowd of pilgrims, and the news spread like wildfire. This Jesus – the One who had raised Lazarus from the dead – was the Lord, the Son of David. Was this the kind of leader they were looking for? What did they have in mind? What kind of King did they want? Would He throw off the Roman domination?

Our text in Matthew 21:1-11 brings all these events into sharp focus, the way a magnifying glass brings together the rays of the sun. This helps us to understand what kind of a King Jesus is. And then each of us is faced with the question: *Do you want Jesus as your King?*

**“And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem . . .” v.1**

- 1. Jesus is the King who obeyed His Father’s will, at all costs, knowing full well what it would cost Him.**

He had told His disciples this. He knew He would be put to persecuted, tortured and put to death by the greatest classes in society.

- 2. Jesus is the King who assumes that you will follow Him as He obeys His Father’s will.**

The phrase includes with word “they.” Jesus led His followers into this situation in Jerusalem.

Is this the kind of King that you are seeking in these dark days? One who may lead you into danger? Five chapters earlier in Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus put it this way: *“<sup>24</sup> Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. <sup>26</sup> For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

This last question should cause every one of us to pause. If you had to stand before God in His heaven, and He were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” What would your answer be? Most people would tell you that they have tried to live a good life, or tried to do some good things. Others would tell you that they are depending on their baptism, or the donations they have made to good causes.

But what would you give in exchange for your soul? This is one of the most important questions you will ever answer. [For a full discussion of the Biblical answer to that question, click here.](#)

Suffice it to say, that this is what Jesus described to His disciples on the way to Jerusalem in Matthew 20:18-19. He described Himself as the Sacrifice who would go to the cross for the sins of men: **“ . . .and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again.”**

This is what Jesus offers to all who will follow Him as King. He is the King who obeyed His Father’s will, at all costs, knowing full well what it would cost Him. But notice that Jesus said, “If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” He is the King who assumes that you will follow Him as He obeys His Father’s will. Is this the kind of King you seek to serve?

“ . . . were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,  
<sup>2</sup> Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find a donkey tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. <sup>3</sup> And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.”

**3. Jesus is the King who expects that you will obey Him even if what His commands seem unusual.**

Jesus commanded His disciples to do something that seemed a little strange. They were supposed to walk into the village of Bethphage, untie a donkey and colt and bring them to Him. Wouldn’t someone object? Wouldn’t someone say that they were stealing those animals? But Jesus added, “If anyone says anything to you, tell them the Lord needs them.” So they did exactly what He said. When you follow Jesus as King, sometimes your actions may seem unusual or out of place in society. But you can count on the fact that King Jesus has everything under control. So how did He know that the owner of the animals would allow them to be used?

**4. Jesus is the King who assumes that He has the right to use any of your possessions at any time.**

Doesn’t Jesus seem a little presumptuous here? Well, this is what He knew about the owners of the donkeys. He knew they followed Him. When you call Jesus “King” you give Him ownership of everything. And you become the steward of His possessions.

<sup>4</sup> All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon a donkey, and a colt the foal of a donkey.

**5. Jesus is the King who has fulfilled many of the Biblical prophecies about Him.**

This event was prophesied in Zechariah 9:9-10:

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup> And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.”*

This prophecy testified to the meekness and mightiness of the Messiah. But it also testifies to His absolute control over future events. He would fulfill this Biblical prophecy.

According to MacArthur, “The date of this entry was Sunday, 9 Nisan, A.D. 30, exactly 483 years after the decree of Arataxerxes mentioned in Dan. 9:24-26.”<sup>vi</sup> That passage had prophesied that Messiah would be “cut off” or put to death – which happened that same week.

These are only two of the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah. Moments after man’s fall in the Garden of Eden, God began to give prophecies about the Messiah. Beginning with Genesis 3:15 and extending through Malachi 4:2 various estimates number these prophecies in the hundreds. These would include well-known prophecies such as Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 53, and Micah 5:2. Jesus is the King who fulfilled many of the Biblical prophecies about Him.

But what about the rest of those prophecies? The Bible prophesies that Jesus Christ will return to the earth to rule and reign as the Sovereign King. Rest assured that every Biblical prophecy about the Messiah will be fulfilled in Him. Zechariah 14:4 testifies that His feet will one day stand upon the Mount of Olives, and it will be divided in two.

**<sup>6</sup> And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, <sup>7</sup> And brought the donkey, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon. <sup>8</sup> And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed *them* in the way.**

How did Jesus ride an untamed donkey? How did that little donkey respond meekly with all these things going on around him?

**6. Jesus is the King who controls nature itself – even the nature of the most obstinate beasts.**

Who would have thought that an untamed donkey would be the instrument of God's fulfillment? But the One who calmed the winds and the waves stilled the heart of the obstinate beast. Recognizing that Zechariah 9:9 was being fulfilled before their eyes, the people responded to Jesus as royalty. When Jehu was anointed as king in 2 Kings 9:13 this is exactly the way the people responded. They honored him as king by carpeting the way with their outer garments.

**<sup>9</sup> And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. <sup>10</sup> And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? <sup>11</sup> And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.**

**7. Jesus is the King who was rightly praised by the Scriptures, even when those using those Scriptures do not honor Him as Lord and God.**

On that Sunday before Resurrection Sunday, the people used Psalm 118:24-26 to exalt King Jesus following these words: *<sup>24</sup> This is the day which the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. <sup>25</sup> Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. <sup>26</sup> Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.*"

The words, "Save now, I beseech Thee, O LORD" are transliterated as "Hosanna!" So the people were using excellent Scriptures to exalt Him. And He was rightly praised by these Scriptures.

They were mouthing the words, "Save now, I pray, Yahweh!" But what did that mean? What were they thinking? Save us from the Romans? Or save us from our sins?

Those of us who know many Christian hymns, including Thanksgiving hymns, Christmas hymns and Easter hymns need to think about this. Do we mouth the words "the Savior" and never let the reality of the words sink in? They were addressing Jesus with words devoted to God in the Highest. But did they really believe that He was God? The whole city trembled before Him, yet what did the people say? In answer to the question, "Who is this?" The people said, "This is

Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.” He was that, but He was much more than that. Jesus is God Most High. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Calling Him only a prophet missed the point.

So what kind of King are you seeking? Are you seeking one who will bring back your wealth on the stock exchange?

Do you want one who will be like a good health insurance and help to make you well?

Or are you looking for the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth? Do you want the King who will bring you forth alive on the day of resurrection?

Are you looking for the One who came to obey His Father’s will and expects you to do the same?

Are you looking for the One who will lead you to live in an unusual way in a usual world?

One who owns all your possessions and makes you His steward over them?

The One whom Old Testament prophecies proclaimed, and the beasts of the earth obey?

Now that you know that the Scriptures rightly praise Him, will you obey this King as your Lord and your God?

In Philippians 2:9-11, the Apostle Paul applied the words about God, the Just God and Savior (Isaiah 45:21-23) to Jesus Christ when he wrote, “<sup>9</sup> Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: <sup>10</sup> That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; <sup>11</sup> And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Is this the King you are seeking? Be sure, this is the King who is seeking you. In the words of the hymn writer:

*Bow down before Him*

*Love and adore Him*

*His name is Wonderful*

*Jesus my Lord*<sup>vii</sup>



When you make this Lord your leader, you will find life eternal.

*Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio*

[www.cbcbfindlay.org](http://www.cbcbfindlay.org)

[g.dickson@cbcbfindlay.org](mailto:g.dickson@cbcbfindlay.org)

Calvary Baptist Church, 2000 Broad Ave. Findlay, Ohio, 45840

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<sup>i</sup> "Glory vs. Shame" <https://www.cbcbfindlay.org/glory-vs-shame/>

<sup>ii</sup> Note the way that Daniel responded in Daniel 9. In verses 1-2, Daniel realized that Jeremiah's prophecy about the return of Israel from exile would be fulfilled shortly. How did he respond? Daniel gave himself over to prayer and fasting and he prayed for his nation.

<sup>iii</sup> Based on the description from John 12:12-13 when the people laid down palm branches.

<sup>iv</sup> The Passion Week draws on the description of Luke in Acts 1:3

<sup>v</sup> Beginning with "The Great Revolt" [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman_War)

<sup>vi</sup> John MacArthur, MacArthur Study Bible, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997. P. 1431

<sup>vii</sup> Audrey Mieir, "His Name is Wonderful" 1959