



## Hosanna!

*Series: Matthew: The King and His Kingdom*

Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:39-44

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James Montgomery Boice once said, "The most important life ever lived was that of Jesus Christ, and the most important part of that life was the momentous week that ended it." Fully ¼ of Matthew's gospel is devoted to describing the week leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

We need to understand the setting for this scene of what we call the triumphal entry. It is Passover season; everybody is coming to Jerusalem. Jesus would have been in a large crowd of pilgrims, all on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with their families. Some are true disciples and followers of Christ, but others are merely curious, excited about the possibility of this powerful preacher and miracle worker striding into Jerusalem, taking the throne, hoping that He will display messianic power and bring glory to the Kingdom of Israel and make them a great nation again, driving out the Roman occupational army.

The truth, of course, is that He's headed to the cross. He's travelling to Jerusalem to face the horror and agony of death on a cross as God's chosen sacrifice for sin, as the last Passover lamb, the one who will die to set those who would believe in Him free, not from slavery to a nation like Rome or Egypt, but from slavery to sin. He heads to the death for which He became a man, a ransoming, redeeming, reconciling, peace-forging, life-giving death. He comes as the sinless one to endure the wrath of God for sinners and to satisfy God's law, to fulfill all righteousness, to extinguish God's wrath against sin and to make the way of forgiveness for all who will repent of their sin and by faith, receive Him as Lord. He comes to die, conquering sin and hell and death for all who place their faith in Him and then to rise from the dead, ascending into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God in heaven until all His enemies become His footstool and He comes for His church and He is glorified over all.

Make no mistake, He is God's King, but He is an altogether different kind of King and His Kingdom is not of this world. It is not a geographical kingdom. It is not an earthly Kingdom. It is a cosmic one. It is an invisible kingdom now, made up of all who bow to King Jesus as Lord

and King and one day it will be revealed as Christ in all of His glory is revealed. Yes, he is the rightful king of Israel – Matthew clearly shows that -- but He is more. He is King over His church, over all the redeemed, and King over all of Creation. He is the King who must die to fill His kingdom of righteousness. He is the King who must die to create a new humanity, a new people composed of the redeemed from every tribe, nation and tongue. This is God's King who would die to fill His Kingdom, the King who would die to save His subjects, the King who would die to deliver His people from the tyranny of sin and the reign of death, making rebels into worshippers of God, whose Kingship will be revealed one day for all to see. This is the great King; this is God's King, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The King who is worthy of worship, of praise of adoration and love.

Up until these events that we read about in the text this morning, Jesus has never permitted; He has never allowed this kind of public display of worship and praise. Even though He is God's rightful King, Jesus had never allowed this open worship because it was never the right time and never the right place. But now it is. After

3 ½ years of powerful preaching, of miraculous works, and of opposition from the lost religious leaders of Israel -- this was the right time and the right place according to God's timetable and sovereign plan for Jesus to present Himself as God's chosen King, to make a clear, public declaration of who He is.

It was the right time for Jesus to present Himself as King to the nation of Israel, to be mocked and rejected by unbelieving men and women, the religious leaders, and the nation of Israel as a whole, and for this King, God's King, to be put to death on a cross as the sacrifice for sinners. As JC Ryle said: It was not fitting that the Lamb of God should come to be slain on Calvary privately and silently. Before the great sacrifice for the sins of the world was offered up, it was right that every eye should be fixed on the victim. It was suitable that the crowning act of our Lord's life should be done with as much notoriety as possible. Therefore it was that He made this public entry. Therefore it was that He attracted to himself the eyes of the wondering multitude. Therefore it was that all Jerusalem was moved. The atoning blood of the Lamb of God was about to be shed. The deed was not to be "done in a corner." Beloved, we worship and serve a God with redeeming wounds and how important is that truth to everything.

Jesus had set his face like a flint for this day, knowing that this entrance would lead to His death, because He would orchestrate it. As Jesus, the true King, advances upon the capital city

of Jerusalem, there is heightened sense of expectancy around Him. So as we look at this text this morning, we start with

A Discreet Display of Divine Sovereignty and Prophecy Fulfilled (v. 1-7) Matthew tells us, starting in verse 1: “Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”” (Matthew 21:1–3, ESV)

I don’t want to take long on this but I want us to notice this discreet display of Christ’s sovereignty here. Jesus demonstrates such power here. He sends two of His disciples into the village to go and get a donkey with her colt, that they have not seen, which Mark tells us in his gospel, had never had anyone sit upon it, and to untie it and bring it and his mother to Him and if anyone asks to just tell them that the Lord has need of it. Does that strike anyone else as pretty amazing? It is amazing because Jesus knows exactly where to find it. It is amazing because Jesus knows no-one has ever sat upon it. It is amazing because Jesus expects that the declaration that “the Lord needs them” will be all that is necessary to ensure the success of the mission. It is amazing because in a moment, Jesus will ride a colt that is unbroken. This is evidence of divine omniscience – that Christ is all knowing -- and of divine sovereignty and power – that He has all power and might to bring His will fully to pass. The disciples go get this one little colt of a donkey that's never been broken, never been ridden and bring it an its mother to the Lord Jesus Christ. And all of this is absolutely necessary to fulfill prophecy.

Matthew records: “This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’ ” The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.” (Matthew 21:4–7, ESV) This entire scene, Christ riding on a colt into Jerusalem is the fulfillment of prophecy. The prophet Zechariah, in one of the prophecies of the coming Messiah wrote: “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. ” (Zechariah 9:9, ESV) This is all in keeping with the prophetic plan of God and the words of Zechariah are significant. See what is being said here. The first thing that the prophet is emphasizing is that the king that is coming is the people’s

king. He is not a conquering oppressor from another land; He is their king coming for their benefit and blessing. Then the prophet emphasizes that He comes to them in humility and in gentleness, riding upon a donkey, not a battle horse. He comes in gentleness, peace, and graciousness, not to enslave them but to set them free in the greatest sense, to bring them the salvation that they truly need, though they really do not know.

His entry into Jerusalem is exactly according to Scripture. It's exactly what the prophet said it would be. Because He was a king like no other, His entrance into Jerusalem was like no other royal procession. Jesus' entry was not, by the standards of men, triumphant, but it was exactly what it needed to be. His entrance was according to God's sovereign will and according to the will of the Son, who came as the Servant Savior King. He did not come in earthly splendor to sit on an earthly throne and to reign over an earthly kingdom. The King came the first time in humility and in meekness to die and to give His life a ransom for sinners and to rise from the dead in power and majesty. He did not come into the city on this occasion in wealth and in grandeur. He did not come to slay Israel's enemies but to save a people. He didn't come to kick the Romans out of Jerusalem and make the nation of Israel a force to be reckoned with, but to save sinners. Nothing was more appropriate than for the one who would bear the burden of sin to enter Jerusalem on a beast of burden.

And though He is coming into Jerusalem in humility, Christ, as God's King, deserves every bit of true worship that can be given to Him, every bit of adoration, every bit of praise, every act of reverence, every honor, all acclaim – He deserves sincere worship. There's never been one so supreme, so glorious, so splendid, so mighty, so sovereign, so praiseworthy, so wonderful as Him, so deserving as Him -- none comes even close. Even in these humble circumstances, His glory shines. And that fact leads to

A Mixed Bag of Sincere and Superficial Worship (v. 8-11, Luke 19:39-40) Matthew describes the scene: "Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Matthew 21:8–9, ESV)

Get this scene. Jesus is riding on a colt, on the foal of a donkey. And people along the route are exuberant and filled with excitement. It is important that we understand the make-up of this crowd. It is filled with basically three kinds of people. There are the faithful disciples, the true followers of Christ who desired to follow Him and submit to His righteous rule, even if they didn't fully understand all that He taught and all that He did. Then there were the curious and fickle, the nosy and the indecisive, the ones who wanted a king or a messiah that would be a political deliverer or who would feed their bellies or would make them prosperous -- a messiah they could manipulate for their own purpose. This group would hang around as long as Jesus did what they wanted. But there were also the Christ rejecters, the Christ haters who wanted Him silenced because He was a threat to them.

So you have a mixed crowd that day that is advancing with Jesus toward Jerusalem. There were some in this throng who were truly worshipping Christ, who truly believed that he was God's Son and God's King sent from heaven, who though they may not have understood all that Christ was doing, truly trusted Him. But there were others who were merely caught up in the excitement, caught up in the prospects of Israel being a glorious nation again. So some, on this day, worshipped Christ from sincere and faith-filled hearts and others hypocritically and superficially and falsely – which explains why they were so fickle and after the cheering died down would join in another chorus at the end of the week, crying out “Crucify Him.” But on this day they are taken up by the moment, excited, as Christ makes his entrance into Jerusalem. They start hailing Him as a King. Look what happens.

They start spreading the cloaks before him on the ground so that the donkey walks over them. What does this mean? It is symbol, a declaration of submission to majesty. It is the same as kneeling before a throne, or prostrating yourself before a King. The people who watched as Christ came into Jerusalem were throwing their garments before Him as if to say we bow before you, we submit ourselves to you, we honor you. They cut branches – palm branches – and they lay them in His path. Palm branches were a symbol of joy and of the victory of God's people.

So excited are they that they begin to call out: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” These are spontaneous cries for sure, but they are not arbitrary. They come from Psalm 118: “Save us, we pray (That is the word, Hosanna), O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.” (Psalm 118:25–26, ESV) Whether they realized it or not, they were speaking the truth. Christ did come in the name of the Lord – in divine

authority and power. They are saying in essence “Blessed is God’s King. This is God’s King! Hail to the Messiah! He is to receive the highest praise!” They start shouting and rejoicing and glorifying and magnifying Jesus for all of the wonderful things he had done. And Jesus doesn’t stop them. He’s demonstrated that He is King countless times. Jesus is known for His magnificent power. He’s a miracle worker who really heals people. He raises people from the dead, multiplies loaves of bread and fishes and feeds thousands, casts out demons, has power over the winds and the waves. He has phenomenal cosmic power and even more, He has the truth of God and He proclaims it with authority and passion and power like no-one has ever done. He really is King and there is a great fever of excitement around Him.

This whole thing, of course causes a great uproar, as you can imagine. Matthew tells us: “And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”” (Matthew 21:10–11, ESV) The word for “stirred up” is a word that is better translated as “shaken”. It is the word from which we get the word “seismic”. Christ’s entry into Jerusalem is like an earthquake in its effects, shaking everything loose. It shakes loose enthusiasm and praise, curiosity, and disdain and opposition. It makes people take a side.

And the response of the Pharisees is predictable. Here’s where I want for us to look at Luke’s gospel. He tells us in chapter 19, starting in verse 39: “And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”” (Luke 19:39, ESV) As Christ is being honored and praised, the Pharisees could not stand it. Of course they were. Christ rejecters can’t stand to hear Christ praised or honored or spoken well of, even by those who do not know what they are doing. They are angry at Him being praised and at Him for receiving it. It was blasphemous to them. How could Christ receive this worship as if He were God’s King? They want Him to shut the crowd up but verse 40 says: “He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”” (Luke 19:40, ESV)

What does Jesus mean by this? Well the obvious response is this: The whole design of the universe is that Christ be praised. And therefore, if people won’t do it, he will see to it that rocks do it. We know that the whole creation declares Christ’s glorious greatness and magnifies the Lord. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.” (Psalm 19:1–3, ESV) That much is true, absolutely true.

But there is more to this and I do not want you to miss it beloved and that something more is found in what takes place next as we see Jesus both weeping and giving a solemn warning.

The Weeping Warning of Christ (v. 41-44) The scene is startling: “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” ” (Luke 19:41–44, ESV)

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, grieving over the hardness of her heart, grieving over the blindness of their spiritual eyes, grieving because they had made themselves willingly blind and refused to see whom Christ really was. They refused to see the things that made for peace. If you only knew, if you only would hear and care about and believe the things that make for peace – repentance from sin, faith in the Messiah, obedience to the gospel. If you only believed what really makes for peace with God, but they didn’t. Unbelief made them blind all along. They were willingly unbelieving, hard of heart and self-exalting and self-righteous. Though they had heard Christ speaking over and over again, they would not receive Him.

There would be grave consequences for their rejection of Christ as God’s True King. The immediate consequences were fearful to say the least. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.

Because in the hardness of their hearts, the arrogance of their hearts, they would not recognize when God was coming to them in Christ, they would suffer judgment like they could not conceive. In AD 70, Rome would lay siege to Jerusalem and they would do it exactly like Christ described here. They would wall off the city, hem them all in, starve them by setting up a barricade and at the end of 5 months would tear Jerusalem to the ground. Roman soldiers went the streets of Jerusalem cutting everyone to the ground – men, women, children, priests, the religious leaders – all of them, sparing only a few for death in the gladiatorial games. The

emperor ordered all of Jerusalem destroyed. Except for the highest towers and a portion of the wall on the west – what is aptly known today as the wailing wall – all was destroyed so thoroughly as to make it look like no-one ever lived there.

Now, let me show you how this ties in with Christ's statement: I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. It has a deeper meaning. The key is the tense of the verbs— they are future tense. In other words, Jesus is saying: If and when these people go silent, the stones will cry out. It is future tense.

Now follow with me. As a whole, the praise of these people who met Jesus on the road to Jerusalem did go silent, didn't it? After the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, the praise went silent, the worship went silent and the rocks did indeed cry out – the word means croak out or scream – the emphasis is on the unpleasant nature of the sound. In the OT book of Habakkuk, there is a reference to stones crying out. Habakkuk speaks of the judgment of the Chaldeans. They were a wicked people. As a nation they had gotten rich by wickedness and bloodshed, at the expense of other nations. Habakkuk was given a message from God of the judgment against them. In it he says: "For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!" (Habakkuk 2:11–12, ESV) God was saying that the stones and the woodwork of their houses cried out their wickedness and sin and the way that they built their nation by shedding the blood of others. The stones cried out their guilt.

Jesus was saying the same thing. As Jerusalem was torn to the ground and destroyed in AD 70, just as Christ had predicted, the stones did indeed cry out. They cried out that Jerusalem was guilty of rejecting God's King. They wanted a king that would magnify them and make much of them and glorify them and make their name great. They wanted a king that would do their will, a king that would give them a name among the nations and judgment was the result. The fulfillment of prophecy only magnifies the guilt of those who either refused to honor Him as Messiah altogether or those who praised Him one minute and called for His death the next. The judgment of Jerusalem is just picture of the judgment that awaits all who reject God's King.

Rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and King, rejection of the gospel, an unwillingness to repent and place your faith in Christ as Savior from the wrath of God against your sins, unwillingness to



submit your life to Him as Lord and obey His commands is eternally disastrous. That is the sober message here. So the great question is this:

What Kind of King Will You Have? What kind of King do you want? If we are honest, so often we long for a king who will do for us exactly what we want for Him to do and be, not necessarily what we need Him to be. There are so many that want a king that will give us peace, prosperity, victory over our enemies. So many will welcome Jesus with “Hosannas” if they believe he will make them healthy, wealthy, influential, successful, and happy, if He will fix all things and make my life easy, and solve all of my problems. There are still a great many who claim to be disciples of Christ who want just that from Him – that is their primary desire.

The idea that the Son of God, the Son of David, should suffer in bearing the shame, the rejection, the physical suffering of the scourging and the spiritual torment of the full cup of God’s wrath poured upon Him, the horror of the cross, which is what all of us deserved, is unimportant and uninteresting to the vast majority. They want something flashier, something more “useable”. They don’t want Savior who comes humbly and gently to them, righteous beyond measure with salvation in His hand – that is not what they need. They need a better marriage, a better job, a better house, a nicer car, health, influence, position, power, success, every pleasure this world has to offer. If they are more high-minded they want equality and justice for all and the end of poverty. It is for this reason that so many “so-called” churches manufacture and market, and people lap up, a King Jesus who does all of those things primarily and only secondarily, if ever, in a minimizing and incomplete way do they mention the real work of the King. It’s because that’s what the people want!

But listen, Jesus did not come to give us what we want, but what we need. We needed peace with God, forgiveness of our sins, eternal life – far more than we needed anything else. Only He can give this to us. Only He can win this for us and so He entered the battle, He entered Jerusalem, not at the head of a great army, not in a chariot or on the back of a great warhorse riding toward a battlefield. He rode on a donkey and rode to the agony of the cross.

For the proud and self-seeking, for those who are looking for Jesus to pump them up a little and give them some little trinkets and give them something more “usable” that will magnify and make much of them – for our “selfie” generation – that is a great disappointment and not

worth too much if anything at all. But for those who are convinced that they are sinners; those who are convinced of the holiness of God and of the fact that He judges every sin; for those who know that they need a Savior, the only Savior; who know that He alone can win heaven, and that having an inheritance in heaven and forgiveness from God is the most important thing in this universe – Jesus Christ, riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, to suffer and die for the sins of His people is a king that they will gladly follow, a king to put their hope in, a king to worship. This is a king to kneel before, now, in humility so that you may kneel before Him in joy on the day when He is revealed from heaven as He is: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:11–16, ESV) That day is coming, but first things first. Daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

Is He your King? Is He Your Lord? Does He reign in you? Can you say with an honest heart: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

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