



# MATTHEW

## THE VICTORIOUS KING

The King Arrives  
Matthew 21:1-11

**Sunday, April 3, 2022**

**Ethan Ezikian**

### **I. Introduction**

Let's pray. *Lord you are the great God. The great King above all gods. In your hand are the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains and the vast seas. You know us, God, because you made us. You know our deepest needs. You know what needs to be confronted in us and what needs to be comforted. So lead us by your Spirit, Lord Jesus. Perk up our ears and soften our hearts so that we might hear your voice. Amen.*

Well good morning. If you haven't already gotten your eyes on the text of scripture, I'd love for you to grab your bible and get over to Matthew 21. If you don't have a bible, we have some for you over at the connection station. And if you don't own a bible, we would love for you to take one of those home!

Here's a question for you. Anybody a movie-ending-googler? Like you sit down to watch a movie and you just can't deal with the stress of what might happen or might die so you just google it and then you can relax? I'm not usually that guy, but recently Dana and I were working our way through a show. It's an exciting drama with crime and espionage and one of the main characters of this show is a mystery. Pretty much from the beginning the story leads you to believe this character is not who he says he is. So as we're watching, we're trying to figure it out and Dana says to me, "I have a theory." So instead of watching and puzzling it out with her, I googled it! And turns out she was right! Now I didn't tell Dana, but I was impressed at how early she called it. We watched two or three more seasons after that where the episodes would kind of tease you with finding out who the character really is and because I knew the end all of a sudden I was seeing every little detail that hinted at what was to come.

Now as we have journeyed through the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew has basically done the movie googling for us. He's telling us from the very first line of the book, "This is about Jesus and this Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah, the promised king!" So as we've walked through the life of Jesus, we've known the ending and been able to key in on every detail that points forward to the cross and the resurrection and the kingdom of God. But imagine if you were a galilean fisherman two thousand years ago who took a day off of work to go hear this teacher everybody was talking about. You don't get googling privileges if you're in the crowd listening to Jesus first hand. And as Jesus teaches with authority, as he heals diseases, as he casts out demons, and does other wonders you begin to wonder - could anyone do these things if he wasn't from God? Could this be the one we've waited

for? The people he's healed have called him the "Son of David," and he's commanded them to be quiet about his power. Even when Peter says to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" Jesus strictly charges his disciples to tell no one (16:20). But finally, here in chapter 21, it's time to be done with hiding. And what I want to do today is to help you hear Jesus' announcement about himself. Jesus deliberately, intentionally, powerfully announces himself as the Messiah-King. And I want you to hear and see out of Matthew 21 that Jesus is saying to you, "I am your King and I have come." And then, rooting ourselves in this story in chapter 21, I want to look ahead and just brush Jesus' teaching in some of the coming chapters of Matthew to help us see the urgency behind this declaration. I want us to see that Jesus is not only saying, "I am your king and I have come" by "I am the king and I am coming again." So that you and I might be a people ready for our King's return because our King has come and is coming again.

## II. The King Has Come

So look at Matthew 21 with me. "1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem..." Stop there and cue the tense music! This is the first time in Matthew that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem. In the book of Matthew, even though Jerusalem is the center of the religious life of Israel, even though its a city with incredible biblical significance, it's also being painted with an ominous brush because Jesus has been teaching his disciples in ch. 16 and again in ch. 20, that the Messiah must go to Jerusalem and be killed and raised on the third day. So Jesus has finally arrived in Jerusalem and we are beginning to dip our toes into the passion narrative. This is why this story is traditionally preached the Sunday before Easter, because Jesus' time in Jerusalem (which in the book of Matthew is chapters 21-27) probably spanned about one week leading up to the cross and the resurrection. (Now, we've chosen to preach another text because there's so much in Matthew between chapter 21 and chapter 28 (Easter Sunday), so count yourselves as lucky you're getting this story a week before everyone else this year!

So let's keep looking at the passage. Still in verse one: "1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives..." Now just a minute ago I said that Jesus deliberately, intentionally, powerfully announces himself as the Messiah-King here. This passage is pregnant with the deliberate, intentional fulfillment of the scriptures... The mount of Olives was situated to the east of the city and several prophetic predictions from Zechariah 14, Ezekiel 11, and Ezekiel 43 all predict the Messiah coming to Jerusalem from the east, from the Mount of Olives.

Now if you look at verse 2, Jesus directs his disciples to go and acquire this donkey's colt and he rides it into the city. And just in case you forgot, Matthew reminds us that this is happening to fulfill a specific promise from the Old Testament scriptures. He quotes Zechariah 9:9, "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.'" This whole scene is meant to hyperlink us back to several parts of the Old Testament. For the Jewish reader this scene is so filled to overflowing with biblical significance. It's linking us back to prophecies about Judah's descendants back in Genesis 49, it hearkens back to the kings of Israel, David and Solomon. In all these things Jesus is, in a calculated way, saying, "Here I am! I am him! I am your king!"

And Matthew makes sure to point out that Jesus is not only saying that he is the king of Israel. Why do I say that? Because he quotes Zechariah 9:9 and in quoting that little bit of the chapter, he means to bring to mind Zechariah's whole prophecy. And in Zechariah 9, the very next verse says,

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, **and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.** [emphasis added] (Zech. 9:9-10)

Jesus is embodying this Old Testament prophecy to show he's not just the king of Israel he's the king of the nations! Which is good news for you and men! I'm guessing not many here Jewish. Jesus isn't just the king of Israel, he's the king of the nations! And he's a king who speaks peace to the nations.

### III. The Kingship

Later in chapter 21 Jesus will tell the parable of the tenants. <sup>33</sup> There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard ...and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. <sup>34</sup> When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. <sup>35</sup> And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. <sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them" Jesus is the Son! And he has every right to come in guns blazing to these rebellious people. And he has every right, as the Son of God, to look down on the nations and bring down the hammer of judgment because the heart of humanity is so opposed to the kingship of God. We have all turned our own way. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all declared war on the king of the universe.

But the king doesn't come riding a war horse with a sword, ready to go to war against his enemies. He comes humbly, riding a donkey. He didn't come as the judgment-bringing king that the world deserves. He didn't even come as the sort of anti-Roman insurrection leader that the Jews expected and <sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly...your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation ...and he shall speak peace to the nations... (Zech. 9:9-10)

He came bringing salvation and speaking peace. In his death he bore the wrath of God for our sin, in shedding his blood he purchased peace with God for us. In his resurrection he invites us into life with him. Right now Jesus is the King who extends salvation to you and invites you to switch sides. To cease from being his enemy and be welcomed in, if you will humble yourself and look to him as your God, your savior, your king, your leader.

### IV. The King Coming Again

Here in Matthew 21 there are two groups of people who interact with Jesus as he rides on the donkey's colt into Jerusalem. There are the crowds outside the city: Galileans traveling to Jerusalem for Passover, who celebrate Jesus as the Son of David and honored him with extravagant gestures, laying down their coats for his donkey to walk on and heralding his coming by "shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (21:9)

And then there are the people of the city. Verse ten says, “And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’” (v.10) Unlike the crowds outside the walls, the people of the city are “stirred up.” The Greek word there, as it’s used in the Bible, usually has something to do with agitation - causing people to quake with fear or tremble.<sup>1</sup> The people of the city were not welcoming Jesus as the blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord! They don’t even know who he is! They are totally unprepared for Jesus’ coming! Two groups of people encountering King Jesus: the ready and worshipful and the unready and agitated.

And the one thing that struck me as I studied this week is how Jesus interacts with that unready people in Jerusalem. Over the next few weeks, we’ll be taking large leaps through the rest of Matthew so that we can come to the resurrection in Matthew 28 on Easter Sunday. And to do that, we’re not going to hit every chapter or verse between 21 and 28, but one thing I do want to do today is look ahead and just brush Jesus’ teaching in some of the coming chapters of Matthew because they tie in to what we’re seeing today. There are two themes that characterize Matthew’s telling of Jesus’ week in Jerusalem (chapters 21-26). One of them is Jesus’ authority coming into conflict with the religious leaders of Jerusalem (and Pastor Kyle is going to draw that theme together next week when he preaches on chapter 23) and the second theme is Jesus’ teaching about his second coming! Through all of Matthew chapter 24 and 25 Jesus is teaching about his second coming and his constant refrain to this people who were unready to welcome him into the city is, “Watch... for you know neither the day or the hour” (25:13) Be ready for the king to come back because the second coming of this king will not be like the first.

Jesus came first to Jerusalem riding on a donkey, bringing salvation and speaking peace, but the day is coming when there will no longer be an opportunity to switch sides. There is a day coming - and no one knows the day or the hour. It could be this afternoon - when the kingship of Jesus will be different than it is right now. Listen to the apostle John describe that kingship in the book of Revelation:

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. <sup>14</sup> And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

On that day, when King Jesus returns it will be too late to accept his offer of peace. This is why the bible says, “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2). This is what I want you to see in Matthew this morning as Jesus declares his kingship: He is the long-awaited king of God’s people; he is the king who brings salvation and speaks peace to the nations. He will allow his own body to be broken to save all who will accept his free gift of amnesty

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Letter Bible: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4579/kjv/tr/0-1/>

and come over to his side. And there is an *urgency* to his invitation because he is coming again on a war horse and he will make war on his enemies and his robe will drip with the blood of those who have set themselves against his kingship. And you do not know that day or the hour of his coming and you will be like a blade of dry grass before a wildfire, completely unable to withstand his righteous judgment! So when he comes again will you be like the crowds outside the city who celebrated his coming or will you be unready like the people of the city and tremble at his coming?

## **V. Readiness for the Coming King**

So that is the weight of the text this morning. The king has come and is coming again and when he comes, will you be ready?

I want to take the rest of our time and talk about what readiness for the coming king looks like. Of course readiness for the coming king looks like giving your life to Jesus. I don't know that I have words to convince you. That is a work that God has to do. All I can say is that the King is inviting your war-torn, heavy-laden heart into peace with him. And I would love to talk with you more about what peace with King Jesus looks like.

And what about those who have accepted his gift of peace? Life in the kingdom isn't a set-it and forget it deal. Coming into the kingdom of God means conforming your whole life around ways of the king. So what does readiness for the coming king look like?

### **Readiness for the coming King looks like pursuing Christ-likeness**

When you become a follower of Jesus the framework for understanding the world that you are accepting is that all have sinned. And the promise of the gospel is that Christ has paid for our sin on the cross! And because of Christ's blood that covers us, disciples of Jesus are free from the penalty of sin! But one of the errors that we often make in celebrating our freedom from the penalty of sin is believing that we somehow don't need to conform the patterns and behaviors and attitudes of our lives to the image of Christ. We live free from the penalty of sin, but we still live under the power of sin. Living in readiness for the king means letting the Spirit reveal our sin, confessing sin to God and to your community - walking in the light - it means putting sin to death and cultivating your love for God by engaging in the disciplines of time in the word and in prayer and regular gathering with God's people. Some of you see Christianity like one patch on your boy scout uniform. You're content to take on that label alongside a few others, but you need to see that to pursue Christ-likeness before the coming king means to change the whole uniform!

### **Readiness for the coming King looks like being on mission with the King**

The same king who speaks peace to the nations commissions his people to the nations saying, "go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt 28:19).

The crowds shouted "hosanna!" outside the city were heralds of the king! And in the same way, we the gospel transforms us and propels us into our homes and our neighborhoods and into the nations as heralds of the king who offers salvation and peace!

Friends, the time is short! No one knows the day or the hour! And while we sit in our homes cultivating anxiety with our media consumption and pacifying ourselves with our screens, the King has invited us into royal work as heralds of the gospel! What are we doing?

## **Readiness looks like security and hope in the coming King.**

Listen, the coming of the coming of King Jesus should give us urgency. Urgency to surrender to Christ. Urgency to put sin to death. Urgency to engage in spiritual practice. Urgency to take the gospel to everyone we meet. But fixing our eyes on the coming King also gives us an unshakable security and hope.

Listen, whatever happens in Ukraine... if world war three breaks out in our lifetime, we have a fixed future. No matter how high gas prices go. If the culture around us graduates from agitation at biblical christianity to real persecution! If following Jesus puts us in jail. If every piece of comfort and security and happiness is stripped away from us, we have a sure and steady anchor: no matter how dark the world gets, our hope doesn't rest on how palatable our circumstances are. We have a hope that Christ our King will return on a white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth and a tattoo on his thigh and every evil and injustice left undealt with will be judged by the only righteous judge.

Everyone who's scoffed at and ridiculed and persecuted the bride of Christ will bend the knee before the king of kings. Every tear will be wiped away! Every sorrow and grief and pain will be seen like a light momentary thing. Because the King is coming to renew and restore all things and will live forever with him.

This is why no matter how bad it gets, the people of God are a people made for the moment.

Because we can't be crippled by our circumstances when our eyes are fixed on the hope of the coming King! Take heart!

## **IV. The King Coming Again**

So let me end by trying to be a herald like the crowds who were with Jesus. King Jesus has come once and he is coming again! He is the Savior! He is the King of kings! And until he comes again he is declaring his Kingship to you and inviting you into peace with him! And one day he will come again!

So when he comes again will you be like the crowds outside the gates of the city: ready for him, or will you be like the people of the city: caught unawares and trembling?

Prayer:

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;

<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.

<sup>8</sup> And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

(Psalm 130)