

THE ROYAL ENTRY
Matthew 21:1-11

A few days can make so much difference! The events of this passage transpired on Sunday of the last week of our Lord's life. How the events could change so much from Sunday to Friday is quite a commentary on the human heart.

Surely this event must be viewed as the beginning of the climax of our Lord's earthly ministry. His hour had come. Whereas before He had always shied away from attracting any public attention, here He deliberately creates the situation that would bring much acclaim. What is involved in this entry into Jerusalem?

THE ROYAL ENTRY IS A REVELATION OF THE PERSON OF THE KING

Many kings had ridden into Jerusalem before, but never one like this. The circumstances of the entrance was really a parable of His person and program. The morning began with the two disciples being sent for the ass and her colt. Some see in this a sign that our Lord had pre-arranged everything for the entry into the city sometime before. Others see this as a revelation of the supernatural knowledge of our Lord. Whichever is right, the key thing is the animal which was brought for Him to ride.

Kings returning in triumph from their military conquests rode into the city on their white steed of victory. They would ride proudly astride of their beast. But Jesus chooses the lowly ass to ride into the city when He is to be presented as the king of the Jews. Really He did not ride the ass, but rather the colt on which no one had ever ridden before.

All of this contrasted Him with the kings of earth. They were always concerned about pomp and finery, but He is totally unconcerned about the things of earth. He comes as the lowly One. This should serve as a reminder to us that He is not like the kings of earth. The glory of His kingdom is to be righteousness, not the purple worn by royalty.

The appearance was designed to reveal Him as the prince of peace. Jerusalem was not expecting a Prince of Peace. They were looking for a mighty warrior who would defeat their Roman enemies. They were expecting one riding on the horse of military conquest. Instead Jesus took the stance of peace. The riding on the lowly donkey was the symbol of the prince of peace. Jesus then is the King of righteousness and the Prince of Peace.

THE ROYAL ENTRY IS A REALIZATION OF THE PROPHECY OF THE KING

Jesus made no reference to prophecy when He entered the city. It was the witnesses of the event who knew the words of the prophets that recognized this as the fulfillment of the promises. Matthew sees it as the fulfillment of two different words of prophecy. First He quotes the word of Isaiah, "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. " (Isaiah 62:11). Matthew says this entrance is as the coming of Salvation to the city of Zion, Jerusalem.

Even more remarkable is the prophecy of Zechariah. Matthew quotes the

prophet, "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Zechariah 9:9). The fulfillment of the prophecy in detail is most remarkable. Surely this is a sign that God was showing to Zechariah more than he knew.

Was Jesus aware of this word of Zechariah? Without doubt. Was He deliberately seeking to fulfill the letter of this prophecy? It may have been an unconscious fulfillment on His part, or again it may have been a deliberate attempt by Him to indicate to waiting Jerusalem that He was the Promised One, the Messiah they had been awaiting.

One would think that such a remarkable fulfillment would have led the entire city to fall before Him in submission. Instead after five days they nailed Him to a cross in final rejection.

THE ROYAL ENTRY IS A CONFRONTATION WITH THE CLAIMS OF THE KING

Through three years of ministry our Lord had refused to make any open claim of being the Messiah. When someone was healed, they were often forbidden to tell others who did it. When the crowd recently fed by the loaves wanted to crown Him as their king, He slipped away from them to spend the night in prayer. Even the twelve were not allowed to openly proclaim Him as the King of the Jews.

Things are different now. Everything about the entrance marked it as an open claim to the rightful place in Jerusalem as their promised King.

To their credit, it must be noted that a group of people did recognize His claim, and did acknowledge it. They were probably Galileans. There does not seem too much evidence that many of the proud citizens of Jerusalem joined the throng that accompanied Him into the city. They were citizens of Galilee that had come to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Their actions acknowledged Him as King. They took their garments from their back and used them for the animals to walk on as they carried their Precious Burden. They cut from the palm trees nearby branches to lay before Him and to wave in the air. This was the kind of reception that was reserved for One acknowledged to be a King. They added to their actions words. They were crying aloud in chorus, "Hosanna". The word means "Save", "Save now". It was considered in the Old Testament to be a prayer. It may have been a prayer here, or it may have been more of an exclamation that identified Him as the Saviour. To this they added the Messianic title, "Son of David." This identified Him as the One to take the throne of David according to the promise God had given to David.

Then they proclaimed, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This is the language of the Psalms. It was to be used at the approach of the Messiah. These people were vocally acknowledging Jesus to be the Promised Messiah. They added, "hosanna in the highest."

This group so enthusiastically accepting His claim were mostly peasants. Herod was not in the group. The High Priest was not in the group. Indeed, evidently there was not one of note in the group.

The confrontation shook Jerusalem. Matthew says that all of the city was moved. The word "moved" was used to describe the tremors caused by an earthquake, or the kind of sway that a city felt when shook with tornadic winds. This was such an occasion for the city of Jerusalem. Many recognized this as being a claim to be the Son of David. Their first question was "Who is this?" Is it not a strange thing that the City of David did not know the Son of David, her own King?

On the following Friday morning Jerusalem gave her answer to His claim. They marched through the streets of this same city shouting, "We have no king but Caesar." We have no King but Caesar." It was an eloquent denial of His claim. To add insult they chanted, "Away with Him. Crucify Him." They would not be quiet until God turned the lights out in the universe to cover the earth with the shame of darkness while Jerusalem's King died on the tree.

The dimensions of the tragedy is seen when it is remembered that He came to Jerusalem bringing salvation. Both of the prophecies quoted by Matthew called attention to the fact that He was coming with salvation. The consequence of this fateful choice is seen in the destruction of the beloved city a few years later when Titus laid seige to her.

The confrontation is not over. Jesus is no longer riding into our community astride a colt of an ass, but is rather seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavens to wait until every foe is made His footstool. He will ride to earth again someday, but not as the prince of peace. The next time He will come riding the white horse in conquest and judgment.

What have you done with His claims. If you will acknowledge Him as your King, He will bring salvation into your life. He is both Lord and Savior.