

March 27/28, 2021

Behold Your King is Coming

Matthew 21:1-11, 1 Samuel 17

Pastor Bryan Clark

We're taking a break this weekend from our study in the Book of Acts. This weekend and next, we'll talk about Palm Sunday and Easter. So, I'd like to begin this Sunday with reading Matthew's version of what we call Palm Sunday from Matthew, Chapter 21.

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

**"SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION,
'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU,
GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY,
EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.'"**

The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,

**"Hosanna to the Son of David;
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
Hosanna in the highest!"**

When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."

(*NASB, Matthew 21:1-11)

So, what do you suppose happened that would turn this crowd from such excitement and celebration on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, in such a way, that in a matter of days, they would be so angry, they would cry out for Him to be executed? And what does that have to do with us today? I think to understand what happened on that first Palm Sunday, which turned to such anger, it's helpful to go back and understand the history that leads up to that moment.

If we go back about a thousand years, the nation of Israel is coming out of what was known as the time of the Judges. The Judges period was just short of four hundred years, and it was probably the darkest period in the history of the nation of Israel. A judge in that time was a political and military leader, not what we think of as judges today. Samuel was the last of the judges. Samuel also functioned as a prophet and a priest, and he was a godly man. Samuel, through his leadership, called the nation back to God, and, through the duration of Samuel's leadership, the people flourished. But, as Samuel was growing old, the people saw that his sons did not follow in his ways, and they decided to demand a human king. You have to understand, in the history of the nation of Israel, they had never had a human king. God was their king. God Himself said to

Samuel, “They have rejected Me as King for a human king.” The nation actually said, “We want a human king that will fight our battles for us,” and, specifically, defeat the Philistines who constantly caused the nation to fear. So God said to Samuel, “Let them have their way.”

So, the first king of Israel was Saul. Saul was what I have referred to as a *show king*. Saul is described as tall, dark, and handsome, and head and shoulders taller than any other man in Israel. From a human point of view, from an external point of view, he seemed like the ideal king. But Saul was defined by his deep insecurities and fear. Saul never really figured out what it meant to trust God. He had a few glimpses of greatness but, mostly, he struggled. And through the duration of his forty years as king, the people never experienced freedom from the conflict with the Philistines. And the people, again, longed for that ideal king.

But God was busy raising up a different kind of king: a young shepherd boy by the name of David. When God wanted to illustrate what made David so different from Saul, he tells the familiar story that we refer to as *David and Goliath*. The army of Israel was on one side of a mountain; the Philistine army was on the other side of a mountain, with the Valley of Elah in between. (I’ve actually been in this location. From that spot on the mountainside, you can see all the way back to Bethlehem, about fourteen miles, which was the home of David, and all the way out to the coastal plain, which is where the five cities of the Philistines were located.) They came to this middle ground in order to do battle.

The Philistines sent forth their champion, a giant by the name of Goliath. Goliath not only taunted the armies of Israel but mocked and taunted the living God of the people of Israel. And day after day, he taunted and defied both Israel and their God. The idea was that they would send forth their champion, Goliath, and Israel would send forth their champion—one-on-one, Winner-take-all! This was not a common practice in the ancient Near East, but it did happen. Many scholars believe that, when the Philistines landed on the coastal plains, about one hundred fifty years before this event, they brought this practice with them. So, with this seemingly invincible champion, they put forth their guy. The logical champion for Israel would be their king. Saul was described as head and shoulders above all the others. It’s as close as they had to a giant. This was what they wanted from a human king: “Someone to fight our battles for us!” But day after day after day, Saul cowered in his tent, controlled by his insecurities and his fears.

David was a young shepherd boy. His father asked him to take supplies to the battlefield, to his brothers. He had three brothers who were in the army of Israel. So David, probably about fifteen years of age, takes the supplies, drops them off, goes to the battlefield to visit his brothers. About the time he gets there, this pagan windbag from the Philistines is unleashing his mockery of the God of Israel. David hears this and he is deeply offended and jealous for the reputation of his God. So, the first thing he asks is, “Who’s going to step forward and silence this uncircumcised Philistine?” What he learns is this has been happening for forty days, and no one has been willing to step forward and defend the honor of their God. So, David decides, as a young shepherd boy, “I’ll do it. I can’t take it... I’ll do it!” So, he goes to the tent of King Saul and tells Saul he will fight the giant. Saul’s not so sure about this. Remember, this isn’t just whether or not David wins the battle; this is Winner-take-all. So, if David loses, the whole army loses. But David convinces him that, as a shepherd boy, he has killed both a lion and a bear with his bare hands and this Philistine will be no problem. So, Saul agrees.

David steps forward to do battle with this giant, armed with nothing more than a slingshot. Goliath looks at David and laughs and makes fun of him—that the army of Israel would send a little boy with a stick to fight Goliath. But David does a little trash talking of his own. He says, “Listen, fellow, you have defied the armies of the living God one too many times, and my God is going to give your flesh to me and I’m going to feed you to the birds.” Well, Goliath’s not real excited about that trash talk, so they both head into battle. David puts a rock in his slingshot, drives the rock into the forehead of Goliath, and he falls to the ground. David pulls Goliath’s sword, runs him through, and cuts off his head.

So that day Israel won a great battle, and the people got a glimpse of the king they had longed for. It would be another fifteen to sixteen years of misery before David would actually take the throne, and he would be a great king! The people flourished under David. They lived in a peace and security they had never known before. But David was not a perfect king and David made some significant mistakes that caused the people to suffer dearly. Their excitement turned to disappointment and, once again, they longed for the ideal king who would finally set them free.

The promise was that a descendant of David would eventually come, and he would be that long-awaited king. When David died, his son, Solomon, became king. Solomon had moments of greatness and moments of disaster. And, once again, the people longed for that ideal king who would set them free. After Solomon, the kingdoms split. It was one king after another, a few of them good, most of them bad. And for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, the people suffered under one bad king after another, oppressed by one nation after another.

By the first century, Israel was under the domination of the Roman Empire, and most of the Jews had given up hope that there would ever be this ideal king who would set them free...until Jesus of Nazareth showed up on the scene. He began to do signs and wonders and miracles. He began to teach like no one had taught, and they began to realize this may be the long-awaited king. On that very first Palm Sunday, that’s why they are crying out, “Hosanna to the son of David.” They are identifying Jesus as the long-awaited king who would set them free. And so their hearts were filled with excitement!

On one hand, they were absolutely right. This *was* the long-awaited, promised King. On the other hand, they did not understand the mission for which He had come. They wanted revolution; Jesus had come for reconciliation. They wanted to be saved from Rome; Jesus had come to save them from their sins. They wanted relief; Jesus wanted repentance. Right King; wrong agenda. And once they realized that Jesus was not going to deliver what they wanted, their celebration turned to disappointment, and their disappointment turned to anger and, in a matter of days, they wanted Jesus executed.

Here we are some two thousand years later, and it’s not so different. Many in the world are wanting that ideal king that will fulfill their agenda and solve the problems of the world. The problem is most people in the world are looking to a human king to set us free. “Maybe it will be Samuel.” “Maybe it will be Saul.” “Maybe it will be David.” “Maybe it will be Solomon.” And so, there’s great excitement, but the excitement turns to disappointment and the disappointment turns to anger. How many times have we seen that cycle in the last hundred years? Can’t we, as the people of God, agree that we’re never going to find the answers to the problems that concern us in our world

through a human king? The answers are never going to come from Washington, D.C. They're not. Wrong king! This weekend and next weekend, millions of Christians from around the world will gather in churches to celebrate Jesus. But for many of them, much like the nation of Israel two thousand years ago, right King...wrong agenda. We all live in a context, in a culture, in a country, where lots of things concern us. It is so easy to get so caught up in what we want in our agenda—that we so want this King to fulfill in our agenda—that we end up losing sight of what it means to be surrendered and submissive to the mission of our King. Honestly...honestly...over the last twelve months, in your conversations with the people around you, have you spent more time talking about politics or more time talking about Jesus? If, ultimately, Jesus is the only answer, shouldn't that be reflected on what we focus on day after day in our lives?

Now, please don't misunderstand me. A couple of weeks ago, I talked about part of the responsibility of the church is to raise up disciples and disciples becoming good citizens. That's part of our vision of the gospel and flourishing. I am not criticizing people getting involved. We need more people involved. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not criticizing that at all. But here's what I am saying: It is entirely possible that what we want and what God wants may be two completely different things. We may be wanting to save America; God is wanting to save Americans. Those are two different things. We may want relief; God wants revival. And God's going to do what is necessary to get people's attention and turn their hearts back to Him.

And if you study history, revival has always required that people go through very difficult times. The Apostle Paul, in Philippians, chapter 1, sitting in a Roman prison cell, said that he has learned to view every circumstance as an opportunity to advance the gospel. While we may wish things were different, what a tragedy it would be if we're so caught up in our own agenda, we miss what it means to be the church, surrendered and submissive to the mission of our King in times such as these. The sun is setting on our culture. It is getting darker and darker. And there's never been a more strategic time in my lifetime for the Church to be a city on a hill, whose light shines in the darkness and shows people the way. What we all want is the ideal kingdom, ruled by the ideal King, and we are going to have that. It is coming...and it will be everything that we've longed for! But the only reason we have today for hope, is based on what we will gather together to celebrate this next weekend. And I really hope you will join us for that!

Our Father, we are thankful that, no matter what happens in this world, we do have hope. Ultimately, we will dwell in the ideal kingdom under the perfect King. God, we understand Your heart is that as many people as possible share in that kingdom. So, God, we acknowledge You are going to do what is necessary to get people's attention. Lord, may we be faithful to be Your church in times like these. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988,
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2021 – Bryan Clark. All right reserved.
Copyright 2021 – Pastor Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.