

INTRO | Rejection of the King (Book 4)

This is the beginning of the end of the beginning for the story of Jesus that Matthew tells. The last ¼ of Matthew is the record of the last 8 days of Jesus life. Chapter 21 begins with Jesus approaching and then entering Jerusalem for the first time in Matthew. For 20 chapters, Jesus has journeyed in and around Northern Israel, away from large cities, and localized around the Sea of Galilee. All of the action and teaching in chapters 21-23 occurs as Jesus comes and goes from the temple. The last two chapters, 24 and 25, represent Jesus final section of direction teaching which takes place atop the Mt. of Olives. The last three days of Jesus life are represented by chapters 26, 27, and 28.

Jesus arrival in Jerusalem coincides with the Passover. This annual feast is the most important celebration for the Jews, serving as a remembrance of their release from slavery in Egypt and their redemption through the blood of a lamb. Even though they could celebrate locally, many would make the spring pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The city to swell with a population five to six times normal. The crowds that would have welcomed Jesus are huge. This well-known passage is often titled the “triumphal entry”, a title used by none of the gospel writers. Typically, it is preached on the Sunday before Easter, on what has become known as “Palm Sunday,” because of the Palm branches reference *only* in the gospel of John.

This text has little to do with triumph and even less to do with branches. What is most important is how it marks a shift in Jesus’ approach to His mission. This is no more evident than when we consider the two healings of the two sets of blind men in Matthew. The first set of blind men Jesus healed occurred in **Matthew 9.27-31** *And as Jesus passed on from there [Capernaum], two blind men followed him crying, ‘Have mercy on us Son of David.’ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to him, ‘Yes Lord’. They he touched their eyes saying, ‘According to your faith be it done to you.’ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus STERNLY warned them, ‘See that no one knows about it.’* We learned about the second healing of two blind men last week. Again, two men cry out in the same way and again, Jesus heals them. This time, Jesus gives no warning.

In chapter 21-25, we experience a different Jesus. He is no longer wandering the countryside incognito. He dives head first into the center of Jewish life and plans some bold steps to confront the Jewish leadership. Jesus is picking a fight. Jesus no longer hides his identity but makes a full public challenge to those who claim to be waiting for Him. **At the beginning, Jesus is fully revealed and, by the end, Jesus is fully rejected by those He came to save.**

Who is the King? | THE KING IS JESUS

We must never forget that, all four gospels were written for four different men for four different purposes. **MARK** was a young Jewish Christian who writes like a preacher. He wrote to Romans, who valued conquest, proving Jesus to be a powerful ruler who conquers through dying. **LUKE** was an educated doctor who wrote like an investigator to uneducated Gentiles proving a divine Jesus was the Son of Man. **JOHN** is a Jewish Christian writing to educated Greeks. He writes as a theologian to prove that a human Jesus is the Son of God. **MATTHEW** wrote as a Jew to reach Jews by arguing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah Israel expected. **He wanted to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The phrases “for so it is written...” or “...this took place to fulfill” appears in the gospel over 20 times.** His gospel is an apologetic for the Jews to prove who Jesus is long awaited THE KING. They rejected the teaching Jesus before he died because of his “arrogance”. They rejected a dying Jesus because of the shame of identifying with a naked rebel who died like a criminal on a cross. It goes without saying that they rejected a resurrected Jesus. This is why, more than other gospels, Matthew takes pains to show that every aspect of Jesus birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection was foretold:

• 1.22 | Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7.14)

• 12.17 | Do not let other know (Isa 42.1-3)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.15 Hide in Egypt (Hos. 11.1) • 2.17 Killing of Kids by Herod (Jer 31.15) • 2.23 From Nazareth (Isaiah 11.1) • 4.14 Lived in Capernaum (Isa 9.1,2) • 8.17 Healing of Peter's Mother in law (Isaiah 53.4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13.14,35 Speaks in parables (Isa 6) • 21.4 Donkey (Zechariah 9) • 26.54,56 At arrest "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" • 27.9 Judas' betrayal (Zech 11.13) |
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Jesus instructing his disciples to go get a donkey is more than a symbolic gesture. Fulfillment of Prophecy is a key aspect of Matthew's portrait. It can be argued that Matthew's primary and deliberate purpose is to demonstrate how Christ fulfills ALL of the Old Testament Prophecies. Not only was this a fulfillment of a prophecy in Zechariah, but it also points to an older prophecy in last chapters of Genesis 49.8-12. As Jacob is blessing his 12 sons, He says to Judah: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you...the scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute come to him...binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine..."

What kind of King is He? | THE KING IS LOWLY

Having developed Samson-size calves hiking the countryside for three years, Jesus doesn't need a ride into town. Predictably, but surprisingly, the Son of God chooses to ride a donkey. Contrary to popular opinion, in ancient times donkeys were signs of great wealth and position. In Judges 10, one of the leaders is acclaimed as a man who had thirty sons who rode thirty donkeys. In time, the horse supplanted the donkey, and was soon regarded as the 'beast' of burden for the poor. This would have been true even at the time that Zechariah would have written his prophecy.

More than just declaring Himself to be King, Jesus intends to define just what kind of King He is by riding a donkey. Unlike the triumphal entry of a Roman Emperor worshipped as a god atop a war-horse, Jesus is literally **God on a donkey. Our Lord is a King who triumphs by getting low. He could not be any more different than men who believe their triumph is dependent upon self-promotion, self-reliance, and self-pride.** Three times, Jesus said he must go to Jerusalem. And even though His disciples, the crowds, even the religious leaders believe this is where he will establish his kingdom forcefully—he intends to do it through his death. Even his disciples, who argued over their respective positions in the Kingdom, failed to understand this. On the night Jesus was arrested, Peter cut off a man's ear in defense of Jesus, to which he responded: "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ **But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"** What kind of King was Jesus? He was a King, the only King, devoted to doing the will of His heavenly Father **out of love for mankind** regardless of what it cost Him on earth. "...I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." (John 6.38).

What will the King do? | THE KING WILL SAVE

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds begin to lay out the ancient version of the "Red Carpet." The innumerable crowds begin to shout out different acclamations most derived from the songs they have been singing in celebration of Passover. Thousands, if not millions, of people would be celebrating all week which would include a regular singing of the *Hallel*, a Jewish prayer which include a verbatim reciting of Psalms 113-118—which most of these verses come from:

- **Hosanna to the Son of David.** The Word "Hosanna" means "save now". **The King has come to save.**
- **Blessed Is He come comes in the name of the Lord.** The Word blessed means to praise. **The King has come to uphold the name of God.**

- **Hosanna in the Highest.** The word “highest” means **The King has come to do God’s highest work...save in the best way.**

By the end of the week, Jesus saves and glorifies, but not how anyone expected. Jesus falls well short of the expectations of his disciples, the crowds, and the leaders. Everyone cries out “Save us” or “Save me”, but we **often expect Him to save us according to our form, our time, and our way. We define peace; we define freedom; we define salvation. When our expectations are not met, it is unlikely for us to believe GOD IS SAVING, or to feel GOD IS WORTHY OF PRAISE, or to imagine GOD IS GIVING US HIS BEST.** Jesus is not doing more than we can SEE...we naturally begin to believe Jesus is less—less loving, less in control, and less present.

The truth is, God is always doing the “highest” form of salvation. When Jesus fails our expectations, the problem is not with Jesus. The problem is that we have begun to **believe him to be less than He truly is. We make Jesus less than he is when we base our expectations of him on unbiblical assumptions about Jesus rather than biblical revelations from Jesus himself.** We make him less by making him LIKE US—acts like us, thinks like us, dreams like us, understands like us. In essence, wrong expectations come from believing in “another Jesus”. We create a savior shaped by our experiences, our culture, or our desires that we expect to do what we want. And when the real Jesus doesn’t meet our false Jesus expectations, we reject Him. **As Matthew writes to Jews, He says that IF Jesus falls short of your expectations for life, know that the problem is not with Jesus.**

How can we respond? | THE KING’S MEN

How can we respond? As much as the disciples don’t understand what is going on completely, there are a few things they do rightly. At the beginning of our section, we see Jesus give specific instructions. In his Gospel, John says **His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had to be done to Him. John 12.10.**

- **The disciples trust His commands more than their power to understand of them.**
- **The disciples trust His power to overcome any hindrance to what he asks us to do.**
- **The disciples trust that their obedience contributes to fulfilling his mission.**

Unlike letters to individuals like Timothy, or apocalyptic visions like John’s Revelation, gospels deal primarily with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They are more than a biography, more than a character sketch, more than even a narration of miraculous events; **the gospels give us proclamations and instructions for response.** The term gospel, literally evangel-ion means “good news”. Historically, heralds would walk into towns and proclaim news of events that had occurred which changed the listener’s condition or situation—like the **coronation of a new King.** Certainly, the gospel of Matthew contains all kinds of moral, ethical, and theological teachings of Jesus. But these are not THE gospel—they are the results of the gospel. Christianity is not the explanation of a way of life, but the proclamation of one man’s life. **The gospel is primarily a declaration that God has done something to change everything.**

- *And, as revealed in the Great Commission, **Matthews writes FIRST to declare who Jesus is and, SECOND to call us to respond to that declaration: Jesus has received Lordship by what He has done, therefore, we must obey.***

CONCLUSION | THE KING RETURNS

The gospel of John tells us that the crowd has followed Jesus into Jerusalem because of the resurrection of Lazarus. The whole city is stirred, literally quakes with the noise. This is the original JESUS QUAKE. The

crowd's expectations of his coming Kingdom have been ignited by the reality of the Resurrection. We too gather for because of another Resurrection—His. And we, like the crowds, continue to bear witness to Him in EXPECTATION and HOPE for this return to establish a New Heavens, and a New Earth, and a **New Jerusalem where we will be his people, and He will be with us as our God.**

Jesus first came as a lowly peasant on a donkey, but he returns as a conquering King on a war horse:

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation 19.11-16