

The King We Need

Matthew 21:1-17

Palm Sunday, April 13, 2014

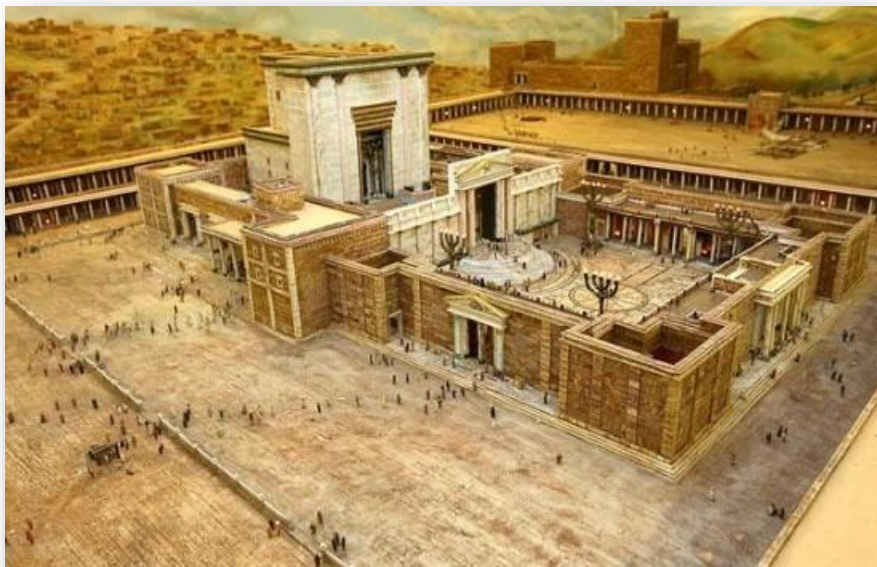
Main Idea: Jesus is the Messiah who defies human expectations and preferences in order to be the Savior King that we need.

This passage is a brief narrative recording the public presentation of Jesus as the Messiah. It may be divided into four parts, each of which is tied to the fulfillment of Scripture: **1)** The preparation for the ride into Jerusalem and the reference from Zechariah 9, **2)** The ride into Jerusalem and the cries of the people from Psalm 118, **3)** The cleansing of the temple and Jesus' references to Isaiah and Jeremiah, and **4)** The report of the healings and the children, and Jesus' use of Psalm 8. These events, and the prophecies that they fulfilled, together declare that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Background

There are three short passages that form a transition from Jesus' final parable (the workers in the vineyard) and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

- 1. Matthew 20:17-19** – Jesus tells his disciples of his immanent death. This is the third time Jesus stated clearly that he was about to suffer and die so there should have been no questions in their minds concerning the purpose of his trip to Jerusalem. It is clear that Jesus fully understood his mission. His entire life and ministry was leading up to this point where he would suffer and die as the atonement for the sins of God's people.
- 2. Matthew 20:20-28** – Jesus teaches about suffering and service. The occasion of this instruction was the request by the mother of the sons of Zebedee that her sons sit on either side of the Messiah in his Kingdom. Despite Jesus' clear words of his immanent death, at least two of his disciples are still focused on status and rank in the kingdom. Greatness, Jesus points out, is based on service. Since Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah's prophecies, his disciples must also be ready to lay down their lives.
- 3. Matthew 20:29-34** – Jesus heals two blind men in Jericho before entering Jerusalem. His healing is portrayed rather simply as an act of compassion. There is rich symbolism here as Israel was spiritually blind. They did not recognize Jesus for who He was. This blindness is self-imposed and the result of stubborn unbelief. That it happened in Jericho, a city under a curse since the days of Joshua, is deeply symbolic of the fact that Jesus came to remove the curse of sin.



The King We Need

1. A sovereign king who suffers and saves.

Vv. 1-11

- Jesus is fulfilling prophecy that was made concerning him at least 500 years earlier. He sent two disciples (Peter and John according to Luke) ahead to Bethpage to get the animals for the ride into the city. The disciples were instructed to go and find the donkey and its colt tied there in the village. They were to loose them and bring them to Jesus, and if anyone asked what they were doing, they were to say that the Lord needs them and then they would be sent right away. This little preparation was designed by Jesus to demonstrate His authority: He knew the animals would be there, and He knew that if they said the Lord needed them they would be given to them.
- This was a planned sequence, designed to be an acted parable, a revelation for those who had eyes to see. After the resurrection the disciples could look back and see how Jesus had demonstrated in this and the other events that He had authority, that He was in control of the events, and not losing control to wicked men or evil times. Jesus is sovereign over time and space. He fulfills all prophecies concerning himself.
- Jesus refers to Himself here as “Lord.” While earlier in his ministry Jesus commanded people not to spread word that he was the Messiah, he increasingly accepted that title and began to use it Himself. He clearly was claiming authority as the Lord, even over what appeared to be the possessions of people.
- The crowd cries out “hosanna” which is a Greek adaptation of the Hebrew verb, “Save!” (Hebrew *hosi'ah-na'* [pronounced *ho-she-ah-nah*]). It is a cry for help. In time it became an acclamation, much like the Hebrew word *hallelu-yah*, which is an imperative (“praise the Lord”). The crowd directs its cry to Jesus as “Son of David.” There was no doubt in the minds of the faithful that this Jesus was the Messiah, the heir to the throne of David.
- “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD” (Psalm 118) was a priestly blessing for the king who led the people in procession to the sanctuary to offer praise to the Lord. It came to be a praise to God for the coming of Messiah--Jesus had been widely recognized by His followers as “the Coming One.” The people repeat their “Hosanna” to God in the highest, which is like saying “Glory to God in the highest” (in Luke). It is a call for deliverance. They are praising God for sending them the Messiah, the Savior of Israel.
- Jesus is the sovereign King who nevertheless comes in peace. He comes not to defeat the Romans but to die for our sins. And in this way, more than any other, Jesus frustrates the expectations of so many who had longed for the Messiah. They anticipated that the Messiah would be an earthly kingdom-builder; one who would drive out the Romans and establish an eternal throne in Jerusalem. Instead Jesus came to give his life as a ransom for many because our chief problem is not earthly oppressors but captivity to sin.



2. A holy king who is jealous for his glory.

Vv. 12-13

- Jesus possesses authority over the temple. The temple represented God’s presence with his people. It was, literally, holy ground. Here Jesus demonstrates his jealous zeal for the Father’s glory. He is not committed to the glory of Israel or any nation. He did not come to establish a great name for Israel. He came to uphold the great name of God. So instead of entering the city and driving out the Romans, Jesus first act is to drive out those who had corrupted the house of the Lord.

3. A compassionate king who cleanses sinners.

Vv. 14-17

- What was moments before a den of robbers has once again become a holy place where the compassion of the King is put on full display. This is the final mention of Jesus’ healing ministry. It occurred almost certainly in the Court of the Gentiles. This is the place where the outsiders and unclean were allowed to gather. Jesus met the unclean where they were and made them fit to enter the temple, the place of God’s special presence. Jesus is God’s remedy for our ruin. He came to bear the sins and infirmities of the world.