

History's Call: Jesus Is Lord Matthew 21:1-11

Intro: Palm Sunday has always been one of my favorite days of worship. When I was a child we celebrated by waving the palm branches and re-enacted the entrance into Jerusalem. It helped me make sense of the message of the bible both old and new.

Concerning the two great testaments, The Old Testament and the New Testament, someone said, "The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is by the New Revealed." The New Testament is in the Old Testament if you know where to look. In fact, the term "new testament" is an Old Testament term from the prophet Jeremiah 31:31 that Jesus picks up at the Last Supper to describe the covenant which is instituted in his blood.

This day is about Jesus, his role and his royalty. This is a message, therefore, about Jesus—who he is and what his coming means for us. This historical event may help you, more than any other event, to get a sense of the continuity the New Testament has with the Old. That continuity is in the person of Christ.

A big question mark hangs over Jerusalem on this day. The city is in an uproar. A crowd has gathered in the very heart of the city to welcome the prophet from Galilee. People are calling him the Son of David, giving him messianic titles. What is going on here, and who is this fellow on the donkey?

I. Get the Connection: *This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet—v21:4*

A. The People—These are the children of Abraham, the descendants of the patriarchs. They are gathered in Jerusalem on this day because of the upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread. God promised that Abraham's seed would become a mighty nation. Here are the thousands of people.

B. The Place-- As they approached Jerusalem—the royal city, the seat of power and the capital—v1. We are in the vicinity of Bethlehem which is only seven miles away. We are in the vicinity of Jericho where the walls collapsed.

C. The Time—Passover; Feast of Unleavened Bread; great celebration of God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The Jewish nation has been rehearsing all that God did in the great act of deliverance in the OT.

D. The Lineage—"son of David." Last week we noted that Ruth and Boaz become the great-grandparents of King David.

1. Son of David in that he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah

2. Son of David in that he is the hero who delivers his people

3. Son of David in that he is the heir to the Throne

E. The Scriptures—Quoting of OT texts and their explanation, "to fulfill what was spoken" (v4). Matthew is very careful throughout his

Gospel to help us get the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He finds evidences everywhere in the

OT for the authenticity of the claims of Jesus. He records many of the KINGDOM sayings of Jesus because he wants us to know that Jesus is the King who was promised.

II. Note the Distinction: *See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey—v21:5.* This is a different kind of Messiah than the religious authorities were expecting. We all need to be careful about this distinction. We do not want to remake Jesus in our own image. Jesus is called the “Son of David.” This means that:

A. Jesus is the Gentle Warrior. “Your king comes to you, gentle.” Jesus is not the Military Hero many of his contemporaries were expecting the Messiah to be. He never carried a sword, as far as we know. David was a “man of blood,” but Jesus does not follow in those footsteps. Jesus does not lead a revolt to liberate Jerusalem and Judea from the rule of the Roman Empire.

B. Jesus is the Humble Servant, not your typical social reformer. He comes into Jerusalem, the City of David, with a grand entrance like a King, but he is *riding on a donkey*. It is a picture of humility. He has no need to assert himself. He came from the throne of heaven to live on this earth. Nothing here—not a palace or a throne—could impress him at all. He will pick up on the teaching in Isaiah about the “suffering servant.” He will quote these scriptures and teach that this is his role.

The core teaching of Jesus about servanthood is in Matthew 20:25-26: *Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. No so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.*

C. Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Matthew 20:28, “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*”

Only after the death and resurrection of Jesus did the apostles and prophets of his day begin to understand this truth about the “ransom” that was accomplished for us sinners through the death of Christ upon the cross.

D. Jesus is the Merciful Savior. “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us” (Matthew 20:30). He cares for and ministers to the poor. He brings change to the social structures of his day by elevating the position of the widow and orphan. He loves the dispossessed.

But his approach is oblique, not the typical strategy for social activists. Instead, he is a prophet and a teacher who confronts the authorities of his day on matters of injustice and hypocrisy while emphasizing the good news of deliverance through faith in God.

Jesus stays centered in the word and will of his Heavenly Father.

III. Answer the Question: “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee” (v11). You will never have a more important question to answer.

We believe in the Savior who paid the price for our sin and accomplished our rescue through his death on the cross. We are alone among the great religions of the world in holding to this view of our leader and founder. We make these confessions:

A. Jesus is the High Priest—Cleansing of Temple—v12. This means Jesus is the Priest, the High Priest. He is cleansing the temple

because that is his position, power, and prerogative. The idea of “cleansing” has to do with making something HOLY, as we have seen in our OT readings.

The concern of Jesus is that the house of worship be a “house of prayer,” as the OT prophet declared (Isaiah 56:7). Mark quotes the entire phrase, *a house of prayer for all nations*, as Isaiah said. It is the nations to whom Christ is reaching out in this cleansing.

The Jewish religion needed to be cleansed of its parochialism, its tribalism, and its racism. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob intended to bless “all nations,” as the covenant with Abraham explicitly stated. The message of God’s faithfulness in the OT belongs to all the nations, and the promised MESSIAH also belonged to all nations.

B. Jesus is the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15: *The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken*), to whom they will listen.

1. Triumphal entry as prophesy—a dramatic statement that the king has come to Jerusalem; the Promised One is here.

2. Cleansing of the Temple as prophesy—a dramatic statement that God’s judgment would fall upon a decadent religious system that supported and fostered hypocrisy.

3. Cursing of Fig Tree as prophesy—v21:19. This is a dramatic statement of judgment upon Israel for her unbelief.

4. Jesus is the Supreme Prophet: *Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach* (Matt. 23:1-3).

C. Jesus is the King like David just as this spontaneous coronation event indicates. In the next chapter the rulers are questioning his authority—v21:23. He is the Promised King, but his kingdom is not of this world. He is the Son of David, falling heir to his ancient ancestor’s devotion and love for God. He is full of faith and good works like David was. But he is not going to depose Herod or Pilate or Caesar.

Jesus is not a political candidate. He is not running for office or seeking to depose those who are already in office. He confronts Herod and Pilate with the truth about their sin. But he is not working to supplant them.

Jesus is the culmination of the line of David. He sits upon the Throne of David to order and establish it. He is the Appointed One and the Anointed One.

Conclusion: Pilate asked the religious authorities of the day, “What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” (Jesus is his given name, meaning Savior. Christ is his titled meaning anointed one.) They answered, “Crucify him!” (Matthew 27:22).

You must answer this same question, “What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” What is the authority of Jesus Christ in your life? In your world?