

The Presentation of the King

Mark 11:1 *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; ² and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. ³ "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." ⁴ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. ⁵ But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" ⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.*

⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' ¹⁰ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Three hundred kilometres to the east of us is the tiny country of Swaziland. We, in secular South Africa, may not realise it, but Swaziland is, in fact, a kingdom in the truest sense of the word. Swaziland is ruled by a king, Mswati III, who is Africa's last absolute monarch, in the sense that he has the power to choose the prime minister, other top government posts and top traditional posts. Only a handful of other countries on the world still have an absolute monarchy: Brunei, Oman, Qatar, Saudia Arabia, and Liechtenstein. All the other countries that have kings have them for largely ceremonial and figurehead purposes.

I daresay that if I had grown up there and if I were a pastor of a Baptist church in Swaziland, I, and the believers with me in that church, would have an easier time thinking about a king. To live under an absolute ruler is to know what it is when all authority is vested in one man. When he is a good and wise king, good for you, but woe to the land when it lives under a selfish, evil ruler.

But for us, kings belong in books and movies. They are somewhat romantic figures, but far removed from our lives. The authorities in our lives are bored-looking paper-pushers at the local tax office or department of home-affairs - metro-police asking for a Coke, and corporate climbers. The authorities in our lives are many, but the ones at the top of the chain are usually bureaucrats. I'm not sure we would know what to feel, or how to respond before a king.

Think about it. If our country had a king, how would you think of him? How would you speak about him? How would you respond to him, if you were in his presence?

I think we must be honest that we have been culturally conditioned to be very suspicious of the idea of a king. The idea that there should be an absolute ruler, to whom we bow, to whom we pledge allegiance, to whom we submit, to whom we praise - this is quite foreign to us.

We've been taught that the greatest freedom is self-expression. The greatest happiness is self-rule. The idea of someone being my king sounds oppressive, restrictive and even dangerous.

Today I want you to know from the Word of God that whether or not we realise it, there is a King. Not merely of South Africa, not merely of Africa, but of the world.

Psalm 47:2 *For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth.*

Psalm 95:3 *For the LORD is the great God, And the great King above all gods.*

If you take our modern political systems as supposed reflections of ultimate reality, you will come away with a false idea. As much as the relative freedom of some democracies has brought about

human flourishing, much in modern democracy enthrones human beings, puts us at the centre of our universes, makes man the measure of all things. If there is no King in the universe, then that is not a problem, then live your life as your own boss. Live as best as you see fit, because you belong to nobody and therefore have obligations to nobody.

But if there is, then if He is worthy, we should love Him and submit to Him. If there is a King, then not only do we owe Him our lives, but He is where our human hopes rest. Some of your deepest inner desires, feelings and longings are not found in a God who acts like a therapist, stroking you and affirming you to remain as you are, but in a King, who can conquer your own sin, who can conquer death, who can bring the world into the sunlight of a just and beautifully ordered reign.

In this passage, we will see the King presented. We will see His credentials, His claim to be the King and we will once again be confronted with the choice to go on in self-rule, to be sheep without a shepherd, continue in slavery to ourselves, or to submit to the King. If you claim Jesus as your King already, you will get to see Him again, and compare yourself to the people who saw Him on that day. Look with me at this passage as we see three things about the King's Presentation: the Promise of the King's Presentation, The Preparation of the King's Presentation, and the Praise of the King at His Presentation.

I. The Promised King

Let's set the scene here: Our Lord Jesus has been travelling with a group of pilgrims coming up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Along the way, He has been working miracles, teaching, giving parables, and heightening their Messianic hopes. On the Friday, He arrives in Bethany, spends the Sabbath there, and then on the Sunday, the first day of the week, he sets things in motion. He does it very deliberately, very strategically, because He wants everyone to know that He is the Promised King. He wants everyone in Jerusalem, which is going to be most of the nation, to know that He Himself is the Promised Messiah.

If things prophesied hundreds of years before come true in Him, if words spoken hundreds of years are fulfilled in Him, then he has supernatural credentials and not only would the Israelites recognise Him as Messiah-King, so should we. In fact, the prophets had foretold the day Messiah would present Himself to Israel and they gave three details: the manner of His presentation, the moment of His presentation, and the meaning of His presentation.

Zechariah 9:9 told of the manner of how the King would come:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."

Instead of riding in on a chariot, He will arrive riding the humblest of animals – a donkey. When Messiah arrives, Israel should expect a paradox: this great and glorious King, riding on a humble animal. What a strangely beautiful scene. G.K Chesterton wrote

*With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.*

*The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,*

I keep my secret still.

*Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.*

Perhaps someone objects - what's so special about this prophecy, if Jesus orchestrated it. If He planned it, then why should it amaze us as a supernatural prophecy? That would be true if there was no other prophecy regarding this event. But the Scripture in Daniel 9:25-26 tells us the moment of the King's presentation. Down to the day, this prophecy foretold *when* Messiah the Prince would be presented to Israel.

To summarise it: Gabriel told Daniel that from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, to the arrival of King Messiah would be 69 weeks. Those are literally 69 sevens. Each of those weeks is a set of seven years. If you take 69 sets of seven years, and you make them Jewish years of 360 days each, you end up with 173,855 days. The decree to restore Jerusalem was given on March 4th, 444 BC. If you add 173 855 days to March 4th 444 B.C. You arrive at exactly March 29th, A.D. 33, which according the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department, was a Sunday. It was Nisan 10, and five days later, on April 3rd, He would be hanging on a cross.

Now you can object that Jesus planned to ride in on a donkey. But how could he plan when he would be born, to be even in the region of Daniel's prophecy, made nearly 600 years before? How could he plan when Artaxerxes would give his decree, or when Passover would be? Only the most impossible of consequences could explain it.

You are looking at a miracle. Is there any other King, whose presentation was prophesied 600 years before his birth, down to the day? On this prophecy alone, we should give this King more attention than any other. For His kingship is authenticated by someone who rules not only over all time, but over all events. You need absolute sovereignty to accomplish such a precise prophecy.

This king had been promised. The manner of His presentation, the moment of His presentation, but also the meaning of His presentation.

Psalm 118:24-26 ²⁴ *This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.* ²⁵ *Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.* ²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*

In Psalm 118 we are told the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The one that the religious leaders had rejected was actually the centre, the foundation. He had come to save, and He came in the name of Yahweh. Messiah-King was here to do His saving work.

This is the promised King. Do we realise what we are dealing with? These pages are tinged with the supernatural. This is God flexing His muscles over time and space. Can you think of even a close competitor? Name the Great Kings of history, and ask which of them had his presentation promised and prophesied hundreds of years before to the day? Nimrod? Ramses? Nebuchadnezzar? Alexander? Caesar? Attila? Charlemagne?

II. The Prepared King

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His

disciples; ² and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. ³ "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." ⁴ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. ⁵ But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" ⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The Lord's Presentation as King was no accident, or spur of the moment decision. It was meticulously planned and executed by the Lord. It shows our Lord's masterful strategy, so that everyone would know who He was. How did he do it?

Bethany and the Mount of Olives are just around 2km to the east of Jerusalem. They arrived there on Friday, according to Luke. They spend Sabbath there. Probably during this time Jesus made some preparations with the owner of the donkey. "Colt" is a word which can mean young horse or young donkey.

But even before this, Jesus had been setting the stage for this event. He travelled for several weeks with a band of pilgrims; He worked miracles among them; He taught parables; He rebuked the Pharisees, and so these pilgrims had a heightened expectation of Jesus presenting Himself as Messiah.

When He stopped at Bethany, they went on to Jerusalem. This meant those pilgrims were going to spread the word in the city - that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem for the feast. This controversial, miracle-working Jesus was going to enter the city on Sunday, the word spread to his supporters and enemies alike. Excitement and fascination were heightened, laying the groundwork for their behaviour on Sunday, when he enters. He has also prevented his enemies from laying hold on him, because they always feared the people. By stirring up a popular reception, Jesus would be able to go to the Temple, teach, and further present Himself to the nation as their King.

Jesus prepared - He told his disciples to go into the village, find a colt tied, loose it, and, if asked, simply say, "The Lord has need of it". This happened exactly as Jesus said. Then they spread garments on the donkey for Jesus to ride on.

Many run ahead, and word reached the city long before the slow, plodding donkey covered those 2 kilometres. People cut down branches, because back in Leviticus 23:40, God commanded Israel to rejoice before Him at the feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:40 ⁴⁰ *'And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.*

This was also what you did for royal processions.

They are rejoicing in anticipation of Messiah saving them, so the preparation has worked - the eyes of the whole city are now focused on Yeshua. The preparation has gotten everyone talking about Him, thinking about Him, considering – is He the King?

God still does that, in a different way. He sends His Spirit ahead of His Son, to prepare us to receive the king. Sometimes he uses circumstances which crush us, or hem us in: the loss of a loved one, retrenchment, divorce, dread disease, rebellious children. Sometimes he uses the godly life of a

Christian, or the genuine love of Christians for one another, or for you, giving you a taste of something literally out of this world. Sometimes he uses the emptiness of life to become apparent, and lets the darkness of depression, self-disgust, guilt and despair become real. He may let the painful consequences of our sin, the fruit of a life lived as our own king prepare the way.

But what He is doing, is exactly what Jesus did for those people in Jerusalem – drawing attention to Himself. Here He is – the King! Here He is, the one who can lead your life out of this pit, if you want Him to. He can rule you for your good, and far better than you ever could. He will turn your tragedy for good, if you will come under His Lordship.

In this way, God draws us to His Son, pointing us to the good news. The good news that Jesus came to Earth the first time not to become King in Jerusalem, but to die and rise again to become King over all those who will turn away from their sins, and take Him, receive Him as their Lord and Saviour.

This promised King, prepared His presentation. But all of this had a point – a climax.

III. The Praised King

⁹ Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' ¹⁰ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The Lord rides in slowly, with people in front of Him, and behind Him, calling out the words of Psalm 118: Hosanna – save now! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. They refer to the kingdom of their father David, and recognise this is His Son.

They are praising Him, lauding Him. They understand the image. They know Zechariah 9:9. They know His claims. Many of them have seen His miracles. They know that He is playing the full part of Messiah and they respond with joyful praise. They understand – this is Messiah, coming to His capital city, the son of David coming to the city of David, and they give Him the welcome He deserves.

We might be deceived by these words and think that the nation had deeply accepted Jesus as King. But as we will see, for several reasons, they did not. These words were superficial, even hypocritical. Five days later, many of these same cheering crowds would be in Pilate's courtyard, calling for Jesus to be crucified.

Many in this crowd said Hosanna, meaning one thing, but Jesus came to Hosanna in another way. Some said, Hosanna, save now, meaning - save us from political oppression; save us from the indignity of having Roman symbols and Roman soldiers in our holy city; save us from their taxation, and from this political humiliation. Restore to us our national pride.

But as Jesus made it clear in the next few days, He didn't come to save the people from Rome and be King politically. He came to save them from their sin, from their rebellion to God and to be the King over their hearts and lives. He came to save them not from poverty, or grinding circumstances, or Gentile domination. He came to save them from themselves, from their lusts and greeds, pride, covetousness, lying, and thievery.

They should have got it from the image: a King riding a donkey. He has not come to smash, but to

submit. He has not come to crush His enemies, but to be crushed, in fulfilment of Isaiah 53. At His Second coming, He is on a white horse with a sword, but here He is on a donkey. 1st time, He presenting Himself for inspection, 2nd time people will be presented before Him for inspection.

Roman parades had a general in a golden chariot, with the defeated prisoners of war in chains, walking behind, while the leader stood proudly, decked in robes. Those Romans in Jerusalem must have been puzzled by this scene: an ordinary man, riding on a donkey with nothing but clothes on its back, make-shift branches thrown down. A rather home-made parade, they must have thought.

Five days later, He would be hanging on a cross, and Pontius Pilate, in contemptuous mockery of the Jewish people, would write an inscription in three languages to be placed above the head of the dying, and physically destroyed Jesus: This is Jesus of Nazareth; The King of the Jews. The Jewish leaders objected: Don't write, "This is the King of the Jews," but "He said, I am King of the Jews." Pilate said, "What I have written, I have written" Because, by Providence, that title above Jesus head was true, word for word. This is Jesus of Nazareth, he is King of the Jews. Here is David's Son, and David's Lord, hanging on a Cross, not for His own crimes, but for the crimes of others.

Some people reject Jesus as King outright, but others are like that crowd: Hosanna to the King! Save us, King Jesus! But from what? Save us from our poverty; save us from our unemployment; save us from our political opponents; save us from bad government; save us from disease; save us from depression and difficulty; save us from a standard of living we might find uncomfortable.

No, no. The King will not be used in that way. The King came to serve, not to be used. He came to save us from our deepest need, not our deepest greeds. The King comes first to save you from ruling yourself. He comes first to save you from the life of the man who says, I am my own god, my own ruler.

Today, He is presented before you again. Today, the Lord Jesus rides in front of you. What will you do with Him? Superficial praise? Shallow admiration? Selfish trust? If you have never done so, today is your day to receive the King.

Dear Christian, you call Him your King. Does He still have permission to save you from your sins, or have you put a padlock on some doors of your life? Are there areas of your life where the King – THE King – is refused entrance?

Jesus is an absolute monarch. He is Lord of all, or not Lord at all. But understand what happens when you come under the yoke of His Lordship.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Dear friend, you live in a non-democratic universe. Our God is in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all. It is only a matter of time before all the rebel kingdoms of men and nations will come to an end. Right now, give up the painful life of self-rule. Give up that freedom which is actually bondage. Come under the Lordship of Christ, which is true freedom.

Believer, give up this disjointed life, with its consequences, chastening, and lukewarm feeling. Re-present your life before King Jesus.