

Sunday A.M.
April 9, 2006

A Kingly Coronation
Matthew 21:1-11

Introduction:

Today is what we have traditionally called, “Palm Sunday.” It is the beginning of Holy Week. Jesus’ triumphal entry was on Sunday, Maundy Thursday – the last Supper, Good Friday – the crucifixion, the darkness of Saturday, and then Resurrection Sunday – Easter morning.

Let’s begin this morning with Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Notice that Paul says Jesus came when the fullness of time had come. What does that phrase, “fullness of time,” mean? Does it mean that Jesus couldn’t have come until all the necessary properties were in place for the spread of the gospel, like Roman highways, a nearly universal Greek language, etc.? Or, does it mean that when Jesus came time reached it apex? In Jesus, everything reached it climax.

- In Jesus, the ultimate boy was born – that Seed of the woman promised and sought since Genesis 3:15.
- In Jesus, the ultimate king was born – promised and sought since David – worshiped at his birth by kings from afar.
- In Jesus, the ultimate priest was born – the ultimate lamb – the final sacrifice, the final Day of Atonement, the ultimate Passover, the ultimate Pentecost, etc.

All pointers pointed to this man – all symbols found their final substance in this man – All roads ended here at Jesus Christ. He is the end of the run. With the coming of Christ, time was fulfilled.

It is fun, I think, in light of this, to see the many ways in which Jesus fulfilled the OT pointers. One of those fulfillments is found in the coronation Jesus’ received on that very first “Palm Sunday.”

John MacArthur opens his commentary section of this text by writing:

Most people today have little first-hand knowledge of a genuine monarchy. Those who hold the title of king or queen in modern societies are often rulers in name only, having little if any governmental power or responsibility. An elaborate coronation is often the only notice they will ever have of any consequence. But until modern times the coronation of a monarch involved the

display of great splendor and pageantry. The king would be dressed in the most expensive robes and jewels and would be driven through his capital city in an ornate carriage drawn by stately horses. Accompanying him would be his courtiers and foreign dignitaries, and following that would be a large retinue of the nation's finest soldiers. In many countries high-ranking religious leaders would also participate.

At the climax of the events, the king would be presented with a scepter or would stand on a sacred stone or participate in some other ritual signifying the transfer of power and authority into his hands. Musicians would play and sing, and the crowds would break into spontaneous choruses of praise to their sovereign. Every part of the ceremony was designed to highlight the majesty, glory, power, and dignity of the king.

At her coronation in 1838, Queen Victoria of England wore a crown encrusted with giant rubies and sapphires surrounding a 309-carat diamond. Her scepter was capped with an even larger diamond, cut from the Star of Africa and weighing 516 1/2 carats.¹

Matthew 21:1-11 portrays the most significant coronation the world has yet seen, but it was a coronation in marked contrast to the kind just described. It was a true coronation of a true king. He was affirmed as King and was, in a sense, inaugurated into His kingship. But there was no pomp, no splendor, just a nondescript sort of pageantry.

Matthew 21:1-11 (ESV)

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth-phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’” ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Traditionally, this coronation has been called Jesus' *triumphal entry*.

It was his last major public appearance before his crucifixion and was an extremely

¹ MacArthur, John. “Matthew 16-28” *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Chicago: Moody, 1988. p. 256.

important event in his divine earthly ministry, an event that is often dramatized but seldom carefully studied for its true significance.

With this passage we enter into the last six days of Jesus' life on earth. This account is misnamed the "triumphal" entry. While Jesus appears to be at the height of his popularity, the people had no appreciation for his suffering and death to which he must submit himself. Only five days later, the same crowd clamored for his crucifixion.

Within our passage we will notice three characteristics of our King.

1. Jesus Christ is a humble King.

After healing two blind people (cf. Matt. 11:29-34), Jesus made his final journey to Jerusalem. He joined the hundreds of thousands of people who were also entering the city for the Passover. As the multitudes followed along with Him to celebrate the Passover, little did they know they were accompanying the Passover Lamb itself.

In fact, to give you an idea of the sheer magnitude of these events, there was a census taken 10 years later that would indicate 260,000 lambs were sacrificed during that Passover. Since 1 lamb was sacrificed for every ten people there would have been close to 2 million people in Jerusalem, even during the time of the crucifixion.

John tells us that six days before the Passover, Jesus went to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 12:1). No doubt He wanted to spend some quality time with quality friends as he knew what lay ahead. This visit would have placed Jesus in Bethany on Saturday, the Sabbath, and one week before Passover.

But even during this brief respite, the stabs of hell continued to afflict Him. As Mary wiped Jesus' feet with expensive oil, Judas made some hypocritical comments about selling it for the poor, and the Sanhedrin were approaching the city to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death (cf. John 11:53; 12:9-11).

Probably on the next day, Sunday, a great number of Jews came to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus. (In all likelihood, they would not have traveled on the Sabbath.) Because Lazarus was a living testimony of Jesus' authority and messiahship and a threat to Jewish authority, they sought to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. Therefore, it was probably on Monday that Jesus came to Bethpage and prepared to enter Jerusalem.

This chronology that I share is crucial for several reasons. First, it means that the triumphal entry was not on Sunday but Monday - "Palm Monday". But also, and most importantly, it meets the requirement found in the Mosaic Law for sacrificial lambs slain in the Passover sacrifices.

Read Exodus 12:2-6

²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on *the tenth day of*

this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and *you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month*, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

The Law says these animals were to have been selected on the tenth day of the first month and kept in the household until sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the month.

In the year Jesus was crucified (tradition holds to the year AD 30), the tenth of Nisan falls on Monday of Passover week. If Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphally on Monday, He was received into the hearts of the Jewish people much as a Paschal lamb into the home. In so doing the Lord would have fulfilled the Passover symbolism even in that small detail. Continuing that perfect fulfillment, He was then sacrificed on the cross on Friday the fourteenth of Nisan, as the true Passover Lamb.

This king who came into town on this day was no ordinary king. His own welfare was the furthest from his mind. He had not come in royalty but in humility. He had not come to reign but to suffer. How many kings do you know who are like that? Jesus Christ was a king clothed not in the most expensive robes but with the purest humility and that is why we call Him Savior.

2. Jesus Christ is a gentle King.

Next, Matthew points out that Jesus fulfilled another prophecy when He sent two of his disciples to procure the mount on which he would ride. Jesus knew right where the donkey would be.

How many kings made their triumphal entries on coronation day on an unbroken colt from a donkey, draped with men's outer cloaks? NONE! That is the point.

Zechariah 9:9 said some 500 years earlier that the Messiah would come into the city as a gentle king and mounted on a donkey. Listen...

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

How inappropriate that any king, much less the king of kings should make his grand entry on anything less than a beautiful white stallion or in a regal chariot all decked with royal tapestry. But that is what God's prophet predicted and that is what God's Son did.

Because He was a king like no other king, his coronation was unlike any other coronation. In earth's standards it was not triumphant. By God's standards it was precise and exact - just as it was planned. God was hinting at something.

Jesus was not at that time supposed to come in splendor to rule and reign on the earth. Jesus' incarnation was never meant to be wrapped in wealth, but poverty; not in dominion but in humility; not in grandeur but in meekness; not in glory but in suffering. The life of Jesus on earth was characterized by gentleness and humiliation not glorification. In fact, John tells us that the two disciples who went to get the donkey did not understand the significance of their errand. But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered what had been written and that he had done just as it was said (John 12:12).

3. Jesus Christ is a peaceful King.

Next we see two distinct acts being accomplished by the crowd: laying their outer garments in the path of the donkey and placing palm branches on the road. The first act of placing their garments on the path as Jesus rode into town was an ancient custom which symbolized the submission of the people for their king's authority. They were in essence saying, "We place ourselves at your feet, even to walk over if necessary."

The other group was placing palm branches in the path as Jesus rode over them. This too was an ancient symbol for peace and victory. This was often accomplished when the king would come back into town with his army after obtaining a military victory and ensuring a time of peace.

The entire multitude, however, seemingly with one voice was crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!" The Hebrew for *hosanna* is an exclamatory word which means "save us now". The salvation that this crowd wanted, however, was not the salvation of their souls but the salvation for their nation. They wanted Jesus to come into town, overthrow Rome and re-establish Jerusalem as the world's capital city. They wanted geo-political deliverance today, Monday the 10th day of Nisan, AD 30.

My, how quickly their hopes were dashed and their loyalty turned aside when it became evident that Jesus did not have that kind of deliverance in mind. Just five short days later, and the same crowd will be calling out, "Crucify Him! If He cannot deliver what we want, then kill him". Little did they realize that Jesus was not coming to establish an earthly kingdom made up of a physical nation; He was coming to reign over a spiritual nation. He came to be the suffering servant that Isaiah had predicted.

Oh, but my friends, Jesus Christ is a peaceful king. His first coming did indeed procure peace. Not world or national, political or military peace but personal peace. By His suffering and death, man is made at peace with his God. King Jesus did deliver what we needed.

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

I hope that salvation is something you want.

The death of Jesus Christ brings justification – the cancellation of sins curse. The benefits this death secures in our hearts are numerous:

- We have peace with God.
- We have obtained access into grace
- We have hope.

There is only one response given – rejoice!

Sing Hosanna!