

"He walked out of the Judean desert nearly 2,000 years ago, an unknown itinerant preacher, proclaiming to all who would listen that the Kingdom of God was at hand. It was said that he was a healer and a gifted teacher who challenged conventional wisdom and spoke with authority and wit. In the villages and hillsides of Galilee, curious crowds would gather to witness his deeds and hear his teachings. Some followed him, believing he was God's anointed one, while others dismissed him as a pretender and a troublemaker...Today, as in his own time, Jesus Christ remains one of history's most intriguing and enigmatic figures. The religion founded on his teachings counts nearly a third of the world's population as members, yet his words and deeds and the meaning of his life, death and Resurrection are subjects of intense debate and sometimes surprising interpretations. Many still ask the question of the ages: 'Who is Jesus?'"

With those words, Jeffery Sheler began his U.S. News & World Report cover story (Dec 20, 1993, pp. 58, 62) entitled, "The Last Days of Jesus: New Light on What Happened." His remarks reveal the truth that the world really doesn't know what to do with Jesus. That He lived is a fact of history. But Who was (and is) He really? At this time of the year, with Easter Sunday only a few weeks away, many ponder that question.

With this in mind, we are beginning a new series this morning entitled "The Passion Week of Jesus." Scholars commonly refer to the final week in Jesus' earthly life as the "Passion" week. I want you to know at the outset where we are going, so allow me to lay on the table three objectives for this study:

1) To grasp what actually happened to Jesus in the final week of His earthly life. Did you realize that the gospel writers devoted major attention to this period of Jesus' ministry? For instance, consider this. Jesus' public ministry lasted 3 years. In John's gospel, the apostle spent the first 11 chapters presenting Jesus' public ministry up to Palm Sunday, and the next 9 chapters dealing with the final week alone! The gospel writers were not writing mere biographies of Jesus' life. What they wrote was not only historical, but theological. Their aim was to help us understand the significance of Jesus' life, ministry, and redemptive work.

2) To appreciate more fully Who Jesus is, and what Jesus accomplished for us in the Passion Week. The climax of Jesus' redemptive work took place in the final week. In our study, our approach will be to use Mark's gospel as our text, and to study the key events in the Passion Week of our Lord. Since our time is limited, we will need to be somewhat selective, remembering our aim is to get to know Jesus better. Getting to know Jesus is lifechanging!

3) To allow God to use this study to worship Christ more intelligently and devotedly at this Easter season. Our aim is not merely to learn what happened to Jesus, but to learn so as to drive us to our knees in worship. He is worthy.

Our focus today--What kind of king was (and is) Jesus? Is He a brutal despot, a tyrant, a dictator who squashes people into submission? No, not that He isn't worthy of

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our reverence and complete deference. Then what kind of king is Jesus? We find out in Mark 11.

Proposition: In Mark 11:1-11, we learn that as king, Jesus' authority extends to three areas.

- I. Jesus has authority over His plan (1a).
 - He came to Jerusalem for 3 reasons...
 - A. He came to present Himself as King.
 - B. He came to investigate.
 - C. He came to challenge.
- II. Jesus has authority over events (1b-6).
 - A. He predicted the colt (2-3).
 - B. He prepared the circumstances (4-6).
- III. Jesus has authority over people (7-11).
 - A. He is worthy of honor (7-8).
 - 1. He came in peace.
 - 2. He came for peace.
 - B. He did not refuse honor (9-10).
 - C. He does not tolerate those who dishonor God (11).

Response: Because Jesus is king...

- 1. I must submit my life to His rule now.
- 2. I must know all will submit to His rule then.

An Overview of the Events of the Passion Week of Jesus:

Sunday	Triumphal Entry (Mk 11:1-11)
Monday	Cursing of Fig Tree; Drive out money changers (Mk 11:12-19)
Tuesday	Withered Fig Tree; Challenge of His authority by leaders; Olivet Discourse (Mk 11:20f)
Wednesday	Betrayal Arrangements (Mk 14:1-11)
Thursday	Last Supper; Upper Room Discourse; Gethsemane; Betrayal, arrest, trial (Mk 14:12-15:14)
Friday	Crucifixion (Mk 15:15-47)
Saturday	In the tomb
Sunday	Resurrection and appearances (Mk 16)

Key: Mark 11:1-16:8 covers what happened in one week, from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

I. Jesus has authority over His plan (1a).

Let's read the first three verses (Mark 11:1-3), "And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither."

We commonly call this Palm Sunday event "The Triumphal Entry." All four gospels include this episode from Jesus' life. But why? Up until this point in His ministry, Jesus has squelched public applause. He told those He healed NOT to tell others Who He was. Why now does He orchestrate this grand entrance into the royal city? And in light of the fact that a few days after this crowd shouted "Hosanna," another shouted "Crucify Him!", did Jesus' plan fail?

Some Bible students believe that Jesus came to offer Himself as king to the Jews, but since they rejected Him and His initial plan, He went to "Plan B." Is that true? No. The Triumphal entry reveals that as king, Jesus has authority over His plan. He came to Jerusalem for 3 reasons.

A. He came to present Himself as King.

Jesus operated by a divine plan. Notice v 1a says, "And when they came near to Jerusalem." The 33 years of Jesus' earthly life pointed to this week, to this climax, in this city. He had come to Jerusalem. Why? Because He hoped He could convince the crowds to accept Him? No. He came to present Himself as King, but not the kind of king the people were expecting. He was a king Who would lay down His life for His subjects.

Notice the mood of the Triumphal Entry. The crowds cheered, but Jesus' disposition was one of sorrow. Listen to what Luke wrote in Lk 19:41, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." Why did He weep on this day? Because He was afraid? No. Because He was stumped that His plan didn't work? No. He wept for the sake of the people, for He knew their hearts. He knew they'd reject Him. And He knew the consequences they'd experience for their fateful decision. He had come to present Himself as King, as we'll see more clearly in a moment.

B. He came to investigate.

V 11 tells us what Jesus did when He arrived in the city. He went to the Temple. What did He do there? The text says, "He looked round about on all things," and then left. My friend, that was no mere look of a tourist (this wasn't the first time Jesus had been in the Temple). That was the look of investigation, the look of a King inspecting the worship of His people. It's not insignificant that the first thing Jesus did when He returned to the temple the next day was to throw the merchandisers out of the temple (11:15)!

C. He came to challenge.

Challenge whom? The Jewish religious leaders who had made a travesty out of true religion. The dramatic showdown between Jesus and the leaders took place in the temple two days later, on Tuesday (Mk 12). Jesus came to reveal the true character of those who wore the mantle in Israel.

Please never forget this. The religious leaders didn't catch Jesus off guard. Neither did Herod or Pilate. Jesus didn't die because His plan went haywire. He died because it was His plan to die! In fact, He made this clear even before He went to Jerusalem. There's an amazing statement in Mk 10:32, "And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus...took the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him." What things? V 33 "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests...and they shall condemn Him to death...and shall kill Him; and the third day He shall rise again." Why would a king intentionally allow Himself to be killed? Jesus answered that in Mk 10:45, "For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." As King, Jesus has authority over His plan. A second area...

II. Jesus has authority over events (1b-6).

We've sketched the "big picture" to put the Triumphal Entry into perspective. Now let's look at the details themselves. From reading Mark's account, it sounds like this was Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem. It wasn't. John's gospel indicates He'd been there many times, and regularly went there for the Jewish feasts. V 1 says He came near to Bethphage (means "house of figs") and Bethany ("house of dates"). Jesus was about 2 miles away from Jerusalem. The elevation at this point is about 2,600 feet, and from there you have a breathtaking view of the Holy City (Wiersbe, 149).

Don't forget the setting. It's Passover season in Jerusalem. At Passover Jews from all over the world came to the City of David, and the population of Jerusalem more than tripled. Crowd control became a real headache for the Romans who put their units on special alert. It was then, with thousands of devout Jews in the city, and extra Roman soldiers on duty, that the Son of man did something He had never done before. He allowed His followers to give a public demonstration in His honor (Wiersbe, 149). Don't miss this. Jesus initiated the Triumphal Entry. Earlier He had avoided publicity. Not now. Why not? The time had come.

I want you to see Jesus' sovereignty here. Jesus demonstrated authority over events, namely two highlighted in the story.

A. He predicted the colt (2-3).

In v 1, Jesus sent two of His disciples into Bethphage on an unusual mission. He told them ahead of time what they would encounter when they got there--a tied colt that had never been ridden. Which two disciples? We're not told. What do you think went through the disciples' minds? "If we take someone's animal, won't he object?" Jesus addressed that question in v 2--"Just tell him that the Lord has need of the animal."

A sidelight: What a great picture of stewardship! What's mine is the Lord's. If He needs it, He can have it for His use. We need to see our possessions that way.

By the way, we don't need to understand completely in order to obey completely! Jesus was teaching these two disciples to trust Him. He sent them on a mission alone. It may have sounded strange to them, but they didn't need to figure it out. They just needed to take Him at His Word, and obey Him. Which they did.

How about you? Do you live like you believe Jesus is in authority in your life? Are you trusting Him, and taking Him at His Word? A second area of His authority over events...

B. He prepared the circumstances (4-6).

Guess what happened to the disciples? Exactly what Jesus said would happen! Notice vv 4-6, "And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loosed him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go." Do you see Jesus' authority over events here? He is the Sovereign Lord. He prepared the circumstances--the colt was there just as He said. So were those who objected. And when the disciples gave the answer Jesus told them to use, they were given the colt, just as Jesus predicted.

What kind of king is Jesus? He has authority when it comes to His plan. He came to give His life for His people. Nothing can thwart His plan in our lives. He also has authority over events. Listen. There is no circumstance in our lives untouched by His authority. Thirdly...

III. Jesus has authority over people (7-11).

V 7 continues, "And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on Him; and He sat upon him." Did you ever wonder why Jesus used an untamed colt? When I was about 12, I went to a friend's house. He lived on a farm that had young calves. That day we decided to have a little rodeo. We hopped on the animals and held on! One thing's for sure about a young, untrained animal. It does what it wants to do, not what you want it to do!

Why did Jesus use an untrained animal? For that matter, why did He sit on the colt? Why didn't He just walk the remaining 2 miles into Jerusalem? Was He tired? No.

We find the answers in Zech 9:9. Jesus rode the beast to fulfill a prophecy Zechariah wrote 6 centuries prior, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Matthew's account reveals that the colt was a donkey. In our day, we think of a donkey as a beast of burden, but not so in Jesus' day. The donkey was considered a noble animal, an animal fit for a king (1 Kg 1:33). William Barclay points out (264), "When a king went to war he rode on a horse, when he came in peace he rode on an ass."

When Jesus entered Jerusalem that day, He was revealing that as king, He has authority over people. How do you respond to a person who has authority? With honor. As you consider this scene, three truths about honor stand out.

A. He is worthy of honor (7-8).

Watch what the people did in v 8, "And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and spread them in the way." What were they doing? Giving Jesus honor. Don't miss this. When Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem on a donkey, He was revealing something about the type of king He was--two characteristics of his kingship...

1. *He came in peace.*
2. *He came for peace.*

He did not come riding a white horse with sword in hand. He did not come to take vengeance on sinners. No, He will come that way at His second appearing. At His first coming, He came in peace. And He came for peace. He came to give His life for our peace. For both reasons, He is worthy of honor.

B. He did not refuse honor (9-10).

Listen to what the people said in vv 10-11, "And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Many have misunderstood the term "Hosanna." It doesn't mean "praise" per say. It means "Help! Save, we pray!" and comes from Ps 118:25-26.

Why did the people spread their garments and palm branches in the street, and shout "Hosanna"? The scene is oddly reminiscent of an event that occurred 150 years earlier. Simon Maccabaeus entered the same city to the shouts of the people, and the waving of palm branches. Why? Because of a great military victory. A pagan king, Antiochus, had conquered and desecrated Jerusalem in 167 B.C. He instituted the worship of Zeus, and made it illegal to possess the Law of God (Barclay, 266-7). He did everything he could to wipe out the Jewish faith. In 163 B.C. Judas Maccabaeus drove

out Antiochus and repurified the temple (an event which Hanukkah celebrates). And the Jewish crowds rejoiced.

Don't miss this. When the crowds spread their branches and shouted "Hosanna!" it was not a cry of praise to Jesus, as much as it was a cry to God to save His people from Roman oppression. They believed the Messiah had come. They believed God's king had come to establish His kingdom. He had, but not as they thought. He hadn't come to save Jerusalem from the Romans. He had come to save His people from their sins.

By the way, on Sunday the crowd cheered. On Friday, the crowd jeered. It's one thing to cheer for Jesus on Sunday, to sing in the choir, to talk about Jesus in Sunday School. It's another thing to give Him honor when we're at work or school on Friday. I remind you of this. When the people gave Jesus honor, He did not refuse that honor. He deserves honor.

C. He does not tolerate those who dishonor God (11).

We find an unusual climax to Jesus' entry in v 11. The text says Jesus entered the city, went directly to the Temple, looked around, and left. What caught His eye? No one knew until the next day when He returned. Then, when He flipped over the cashiers' tables and drove out the merchandisers, Jesus made something perfectly clear. He does not tolerate those who dishonor God.

Jesus is king. As king He has authority over His plan, over events, and over people. That's clear from this story. But what difference should this make in our lives?

Response: Because Jesus is king... There are two responses we need to make...

1. I must submit my life to His rule now.

Jesus loved you so much that He gave His life for you. Have you responded to His love? Can people tell that Jesus is king of your life?

Last Thursday, I was making a hospital visit. While at the sink in the men's room, I heard the door open, and a man cursed behind me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a fellow about 40 years of age in a wheelchair. He was hurting. He wheeled over to the trash can and started vomiting. I didn't make eye-contact. In fact, I didn't do anything but leave the room. I thought, "What can I do?" The next day, God brought that fellow to mind as I thought of the kingship of Jesus. If Jesus is king of my life, then I'll want to bring honor to Him in everything I do. I'll want to represent Him. I'll ask myself, "What would Jesus do?" and do it. This I know. Jesus would not have walked out of the room without helping someone in need. May God help us to get serious about submitting our lives to His rule now.

2. I must know all will submit to His rule then.

In the hymn, "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna," Jenette Threlfall summed up the difference the Triumphal Entry should make on our lives: "Hosanna, loud hosanna the little children sang; Through pillared court and temple the lovely anthem rang; To Jesus, who had blessed them close folded to His breast, the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.

"From Olivet they followed 'mid an exultant crowd, the victor palm branch waving, and chanting clear and loud; The Lord of men and angels rode on in lowly state, nor scorned that little children should on his bidding wait.

"Hosanna in the highest!" that ancient song we sing, for Christ is our Redeemer, the Lord of heaven, our King; O may we ever praise Him with heart and life and voice, and in His blissful presence eternally rejoice!