

# Coronation Street

Matthew 21:1-11

12 September 2021 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

**Big Question:** Who is Jesus?

**Big Idea:** Jesus reveals himself as the king who comes to bring peace.

## Introduction

Cities around the world are known for what they're home to.

There are particular things that put the city on the map and make them great.

For example, the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre make you immediately think of Paris.

Dubai is known for the Burj Khalifa – the tallest building in the world at 828m and with 156 floors.

While you enjoy your lunch in Cairo, you can view the four-and-a-half-thousand-year-old Great Pyramid of Giza which stands at a humble 138m.

Athens is the home to the Parthenon of Greek gods.

Closer to home, you can find the world's largest copy of Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' in the Queensland town of Emerald.

The Big Barrel immediately makes you think of Bundaberg. Well, it makes me think of Bundaberg anyway.

Nyngan in the Bogan Shire of New South Wales which is remembered for the Big Bogan.

And of course there's a campaign to put Dunedoo on the map with – yes, you guessed it – a giant dunny.

Not every city's known for things which are quite so trivial though.

On the Corcovado mountain overlooking Rio de Janeiro stands the statue that we know as Christ the Redeemer – one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

It's a testament to the city's Roman Catholic heritage.

In Bible times, the city of Jerusalem was also known for something iconic.

In chapter five of Matthew's account of his life, Jesus is recorded as telling his disciples not to swear "by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King."

He's picking up on the description of Jerusalem in Psalm 48:2 which talks about this city on top of a holy mountain as home to God himself who is worthy of praise.

Jerusalem is great because it's home to God the Great King.

In today's passage, we read about the Great King entering his city.

## Outline

We're still in the same section of story in Matthew's gospel which I'm sure you're sick of me saying is about heading towards the cross.

Jesus and his disciples left the area known as Galilee at the beginning of chapter nineteen and travelled through the Trans-Jordan region and cutting back over the Jordan River near Jericho.

Our passage this morning describes the last phase of their journey, when they finally reach their destination of Jerusalem.

After this, Jesus will still be headed towards the cross, but with a new emphasis.

The rest of chapters 21 and 22 are filled with the confrontations that will ensure that Jesus, although he made it to Jerusalem, will make it to the cross that awaits him.

In fact, the whole rest of the book covers just six days, mostly in the city.

Our passage this morning is spectacular because it unambiguously shows Jesus declaring himself to be king, THE king.

He's THE king that Jerusalem is known for.

He's the king who's coming home to be crowned in his city.

Instead of a crown of gold and precious stones though, it'll be a crown of thorns because he's the king who comes to serve rather than be served.

He's the king who comes to bring peace.

In these verses, we see **Jesus reveals himself as the king who comes to bring peace.**

Jesus has come to rule by saving, not slaying.

He's the one who wins over hearts and minds by changing them.

- Enter the King (vv1-7)
- All Praise the King (vv8-11)

## Enter the King (vv1-7)

Jesus and his little gang of disciples are getting very close to Jerusalem at the start of chapter 21.

It's only about 24km from Jericho to Jerusalem (Israel really is quite a small place), but it's all uphill.

They started down near Jericho which is below sea level before climbing over one thousand metres to the Mount of Olives.

From the Mount of Olives you look down across the Kidron Valley to Jerusalem below.

It looks something like this. I'd like to see it in for reals, in the flesh one day.

There's a dirty great big mosque in the middle of it now – the golden dome in the middle.  
In Jesus' day though, you would've looked down on the splendour of the temple.

As they climbed up towards the Mount of Olives, they would've come to the town of Bethphage.

It means "House of Figs" and it's a bit like the Forest Lake of Jerusalem – the very last suburb before you leave the city limits.

Being so close to the city made it a convenient place to stay when all the motels in Jerusalem were booked out during the big festivals like the Passover that's about to happen.

We'll see Jesus go in and out of Jerusalem a few times in the next few chapters.

In verse two, Jesus sends his disciples on an errand.

He sends them on to the next village, probably Bethany.

Bethany is somewhere that Jesus knows well because his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus live there.

John describes Jesus staying there in his gospel.<sup>1</sup>

When the disciples get to Bethany, they'll find donkey tied up with her foal next to her.

"Untie them and bring them to me," Jesus says.

We've got no way of knowing whether Jesus made arrangements by sending a messenger ahead to secure these donkeys beforehand.

Either way, Jesus seems to know exactly what's going to happen.

This was planned, calculated, not a whim in the heat of the moment.

As we're about to find out, this was all very deliberate on his part.

The disciples are even told what to do if they're busted helping themselves to their neighbour's ass.

Jesus doesn't want them to pimp his ride, but at first it seems like he's happy for them to pinch it.

If they're caught, they're to say that the Lord needs the animals.

In Matthew's gospel, the term 'the Lord' usually refers to God himself, Yahweh, rather than Jesus.

Jesus is playing the ultimate, "Do you know who my father is?" card.

It's not really stealing because God owns everything and Jesus is openly working in the name of his father's authority.

It still seems a bit weird that Jesus would even need a ride though.

They've been walking for days by this time, including walking up a mountain.

Indeed, this's the only time in his whole life that Jesus doesn't travel on foot and that includes before he was born.

The Scriptures don't tell us that he rode on a donkey when he was in Mary's tummy on the way to Bethlehem.

It could be that Jesus was simply tired at this point, but Matthew tells us that he does this to make a statement rather than because he's tired.

Riding up to Jerusalem on a donkey was a deliberate choice, carefully planned to show something.

He doesn't plan to just slip into Jerusalem via the back door without anyone noticing.

This was all planned to fulfil what was said by the prophet, verse four.

Actually, it was two prophets because Matthew squashes two Old Testament quotes together.

The start of the quote comes from Isaiah 62:11 and the rest of the quote comes almost word-for-word from Zechariah 9:9.

You can see it in verse 5:

**Matthew 21:5** NIV11 <sup>5</sup> "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey

Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey was a sign that Jesus is the king.

And not just any king. THE king that Zechariah looked forward to.

He's the king they've been waiting for.

Zechariah looked forward to the day when Messiah, God's chosen one would come to shepherd his people.

There are echoes of this connection between kings and donkeys throughout the Old Testament.

It brings to mind Solomon, King David's son, coming to his coronation in 1 Kings 1 riding on a donkey.

And David himself riding into Jerusalem on a string of donkeys in 2 Samuel 16:1-2.

Riding a mule isn't being a fool, it's an action that's loaded with royal expectation.

By choosing to enter Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus is very deliberately making a declaration to all of Jerusalem that he's the king of Zechariah 9.

This move is a deliberate revealing of himself, letting the world know who he is.

Any secrecy about who Jesus really is has now been removed, the time for concealment is over.

A fact that's not that surprising because we've already seen the change in the way Jesus shows himself to the world.

Back in chapter nine, when Jesus healed two blind men, he told them to keep schtum and not to tell anyone about who he is.

At the end of chapter twenty though, he healed the blind men showing exactly who he is.

Earlier this week, the Chief Health Officer of NSW, Kerry Chant spoke at a press conference.

For the first 51 minutes of the presser, things were fairly normal.

Then she was asked whether there would be contact tracing after the state reopens.

She replied:

*"We will be looking at what contract-tracing looks like in the new world order – yes it will be pubs and clubs, and other things, if we have a positive case there [but] our response may be different if we know people are fully vaccinated."*

She said three words that lit up the internet.

The three words "New World Order" have been used to describe the belief that there's a conspiracy to bring the world under unified, totalitarian rule.

I'm not across the exact details of this kind of stuff, but it's said that the Illuminati are trying to bring in a New World Order.

As you can imagine, there are a significant number of people who sincerely believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is being used to achieve exactly that.

And here, they say, is proof.

Many think that the NSW CHO is in on it and let the cat out of the bag.

I think that Kerry Chant probably used the phrase in an ill-advised way, meaning something more like the "new normal", but it was a mistake that triggered people all around the world.

Jesus didn't make a mistake when he claimed to be king but the implications were just as big.

What he's doing here is clear and emphatic.

See, Jesus isn't just coming as the king of Jerusalem.

Jesus is coming as the king of the whole world.

Jesus came to bring in a new world order.

I think that's actually a fairly good description of what Jesus means when he speaks of his kingdom.

The kingdom describes people from all over the world being ordered under his rule once again.

As Jesus' kingdom breaks through in the now but not yet, his kingdom is wherever people come under his rule.

I'm hearing lots of Christians at the moment saying that current events are a clear sign that Jesus is coming back really soon.

A worldwide pandemic of pestilence, wars and rumours of wars.

Coronavirus and the threat of new and ongoing disputes with China.

I think that these are all signs that we're in the last days and we need to be ready for Jesus to come back.

Just like God's people should've been for the last almost two thousand years.

I'm far less convinced that things are getting worse or that this is a sign of something new.

The reality is that we've experienced one of the longest runs of peace and prosperity in the history of the world.

Our experience during our lifetime has been exceptional rather than normal through the rest of history.

Don't get overly concerned, friends, because Jesus is king.

His reign began two thousand years ago and it continues today.

We're living in the now but not yet.

People can be found in his kingdom all around the world, not just in certain place.

And we look forward to the day when his kingdom is fully established.

He's the king who comes to bring in peace.

Matthew actually leaves something out when he quotes Zechariah.

He leaves out the words "righteous and victorious."

I don't think that Matthew's having a senior's moment or he's being deceitful or anything like that.

Matthew's probably doing this quite deliberately.

Jesus comes in humility and this's highlighted by the fact that he leaves out these words.

There's no sense of Jesus saying, "Oh, shucks. Stop it!" when the crowds cry out.

He doesn't have that kind of humility.

Kings rode donkeys because they weren't fast, sleek or impressive but because they didn't need to show their strength since they were in control.

When the king is stage-managing his big entry, you might be expecting him to come charging in on a warhorse.

You might be expecting him to be taking the capital in his Leopard 2A7 tank.

Instead, it's more like he's planning to coming into the city riding in a mini.

This really makes a statement about who Jesus is and what kind of king he is.

Donkeys were a sign of peace.

A king riding on a donkey meant that the war is over, rather than a sign of him riding into battle.

Not only is coming on a donkey a sign of being Messiah, but also a bold statement that he's the prince of peace.

Jesus is the one who'll bring universal peace and domination.

It's a reminder of David coming back after Absalom's rebellion.

He's like the triumphant king in 2 Samuel 19-20 who comes in peace because he's one victory.

We often call this the triumphal entry without any hint of irony.

He's the meek one who chooses to come in on a donkey because he really is in control.

Jesus is the one who comes to bring us peace.

Not just peace with each other, but also peace with God.

Jesus has justified us by faith, not by our own doing, so that we can have peace with God himself.

In Romans 5, Paul writes:

**Romans 5:1–2** NIV11 <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained

access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

The Bible also tells us that one day, his we will experience his peace fully.

In the second last chapter of the Bible, John shares a vision that he sees of Jerusalem.

**Revelation 21:10** NIV11 <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

In this city there is no tears, sickness or sadness because there is peace between all of humanity.

And they dwell in peace with God.

That's the hope we have as Christians, all brought about by the coming of King Jesus.

The disciples followed Jesus' instructions to the letter and they come back with a donkey and her foal.

They place their cloaks on the foal for Jesus to sit on.

People get hung up about exactly how many donkeys there were.

The quote from Zechariah uses a typical device called parallelism where you say the same thing twice in two different ways.

Matthew shows that it's fulfilment was literal here though, with not one donkey, but two.

Mark tells us that it had never been ridden.

This foal was an unbroken, unused animal.

At a practical level, it was an animal that had probably never had anyone on its back, which's why it's mother was along for the ride as well.

Even still, unbroken animals can be unruly and dangerous, yet even this animal doesn't have a problem with the prince of peace.

This incident very clearly shows that Jesus is the king.

He's revealed as the king who's come to bring peace.

## **All Praise the King (vv8-11)**

In our second point, we see that Jesus is the king who deserves praise.

The focus shifts from the donkey to the crowds.

The crowds grown from being large to HUGE.

The crowd comes, possibly out from Jerusalem to join them, and they form a procession.

There are people in front and behind Jesus.

Jesus receives royal treatment as they were spreading their cloaks out on the ground.

They're rolling out the red carpet, if you will – once kept for heads of state and now used by celebrities.

They also put branches on the road to make way for him.

It's exactly what the people did for King Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat in 2 Kings 9.<sup>2</sup>

In John's gospel, we're told that the branches came from palms.<sup>3</sup>

The palms would've reminded them of another infamous king who came into Jerusalem.

There was a bloke named Simon Maccabaeus who lead a revolt against the Greeks in the time between the Old and the New Testament.

He was famously known for riding into Jerusalem with palm branches and to the sound of hymns.<sup>4</sup>

As Jesus come in, there would've been the feeling that revolution was in the air.

If you're unfortunate enough to be anything like me, you're guilty of sometimes thinking something like, "Isn't it cute that Jesus is fulfilling something in the Old Testament, but let's move on?"

After all, Matthew's particularly into showing show how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament and he's been doing it from the very start of the book.

There's something more going on this time though because they're quoting from a particularly interesting psalm.

There's a group of psalms – numbers 113-118 that are known as the Great Hallel or Great Praise because most of them start or end with the word "hallelujah" which literally means "Praise God."

Tradition says that they were sung on the way up to Jerusalem for the Passover or as they went up the steps to the temple.

The crowd are quoting from the last Psalm in this set – just as Jesus enters Jerusalem.

It probably wasn't uncommon for them to sing that line at this point, but what was uncommon was that this time they were bang on.

This time they see the fulfilment of it in front of their eyes as the royal procession welcomes in the Son of David, the king.

The crowd was calling out Hosanna to the Son of David.

The footnote in the NIV says that it'd become a more generic term of praise but originally, it was an Aramaic words that meant, "Save!"

Hosana was originally a cry for help.<sup>5</sup>

Next week, we'll see the truth that comes from the lips of children and infants.

Here we see the ironic truth on the lips of the crowds that came with him.

They need him to save them.

They need the Son of David – the king – to bring healing to them.

Something that Jesus will do at the cross, rather than with the sword.

The fanfare continues when they shout:

**Matthew 21:9b** NIV11 "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

This will come up again in chapter 23.

Jesus was coming the name of the Lord.

He doesn't come on his own authority, but according to the plan of God himself.

The psalm asks the Lord to grant them success by shining his light on them.

And in verse 27 of the Psalm, the people join the procession with branches in their hands.

They're praising God for sending Messiah.

And for that, God should be praised to the highest heaven.

This was a distinct honour, saying that all praise should be to Jesus, all the way up to the very heights of heaven.

They're full of excitement that Messiah has come.

But as the next few days and chapters unfold, we see just as clearly that they missed that he's the suffering servant.

Jesus came to Jerusalem to bear the Cross not sword.

He came to die and not to kill.

Jesus is the king who came to give his life so that sinners can be saved and set free.

Jesus came to die so that sins can be forgiven.

He entered Jerusalem to save people like you and I.

This points to what's about to happen.

Jesus is in town to bring about deliverance and victory, but it's going to come through suffering and death.

All of this seems to have happened outside the city.

When Jesus comes into the city, he causes quite a stir though.

People were asking, "Who is this?" "Who is this bloke?"

It's unlikely that they hadn't heard of Jesus at all, even in the big smoke of Jerusalem.

Who is he really?

They want to know what the crowds who have seen Jesus in action have to say.

Aren't you expecting that people will say, "This is the Messiah!"

I'm itching for them to shout out, "God's king has come!"

And yet they don't and I think it's meant to be a bit of a let down.

They know that he's Jesus – the one who's mother was told all the way back in chapter one to call him that because he'd save his people from their sins.<sup>6</sup>

Instead they give a disappointing answer in verse eleven.

He doesn't really belong in Jerusalem, as if it's not really his home.

He's welcomed in as a guest, but not really as the king of the city.

The crowds think that he's a prophet from a nowhere place:

**Matthew 21:11** NIV11 <sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

We wonder how they could miss that Jesus is king.

As the city of Jerusalem welcomed her king, what will we do with him?

If Jesus is king, then what would that mean for people like you and I?

It means that you and I need to submit to him.

We need to bow our knees to king Jesus.

We don't tend to value our kings and queens all that much.

They're far off and Lizzie really has very little to do with how we live our lives day to day.

But it wasn't always that way.

In the ancient world, kings were the supreme rulers.

What they said went.

If Jesus is our king, then that means that we owe him our complete allegiance, our whole life.

Will you be known for Jesus as your king?

If that's what you claim, then we are required to follow him in all that we say and do.

"His is the right to rule my life. Mine is the joy to live for him."<sup>7</sup>

All praise the king!

## Conclusion

Coronation Street is the world's longest running soap.

It's been showing on British screens for more than sixty years and over ten thousand episodes.

No one can accuse the Brits of not being dedicated, even though there are only two new episodes each week now.

It's a TV show that has affected generations.

What we've seen this morning is the road to a coronation that has had a much bigger impact.

These are the events that ring right through history down to us today.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to be king.

Jesus is the king who came to bring in a new epoch of history.

Jesus reveals himself as the king who came to bring peace.

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<sup>1</sup> John 12:1-10

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 9:13

<sup>3</sup> John 12:12

<sup>4</sup> 1 Maccabees 13:51; 2 Maccabees 10:7.

<sup>5</sup> For two examples in the OT, see 2 Samuel 14:4; 2 Kings 6:26.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>7</sup> Michael Morrow, *This Life I Live*, Emu Music (2009).

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**Big Question:** Who is Jesus?

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## Discussion Questions

1. What are our expectations of royalty today and how does that compare with the past?
2. What does the specificity of Jesus' instructions to his disciples tell us about him?
3. What is the significance of Jesus choosing to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey?
4. How would you describe the way the crowds treated Jesus?
5. Why were the crowds shouting the words of Psalm 118?
6. What effect did Jesus have on the city of Jerusalem?
7. What difference does it make that world that Jesus revealed himself as the king who comes to bring peace?
8. If Jesus recognise Jesus as your king, how will that affect you personally?