

Behold, the King is Coming...

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[0 : 0 0] to the passage that we read in John's Gospel, John chapter 12, reading again verses 14 and 15. John 12. From verse 14, Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. Behold, your king is coming. Well, on this first Sunday of a new year, I want us to focus very much on the two comings of Christ. We focus, yes, on his first coming in humility, but I also want us to focus on his second coming in great power and glory. And we're going to be focusing on this as we look at him entering into Jerusalem at this Passover festival. If you're taking notes, we're looking at the passage, verses 12 down to 19 under two headings, the presentation of the king and then the perspectives on the king. The presentation of the king, then the perspectives on the king. First we have the presentation of the king. That's in verses 12 to 15. Here John records the triumphal entry of Jesus into

Jerusalem, this triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. As we come to this passage, I want to begin by noting the context. In John chapter 11, Jesus heals a man, Lazarus, indeed he raises him back from the dead. And following this, the religious leaders begin to plot the death and downfall of Jesus. In John chapter 12, Jesus is anointed by Mary, the sister of Lazarus. It was an act that expressed her personal devotion toward Jesus, but even more, it displayed her overwhelming conviction that Jesus was God's anointed king, that Jesus was the promised deliverer, that Jesus was indeed the Christ. And following this anointing, the religious leaders have begun to plot not only how they will put Jesus to death, but also how they will put to death Lazarus, this walking, talking, witness, testimony to the power of Jesus. We now come to verses 12 and 13, where John describes the acclamation of the crowd. We read, the next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. And so they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. We're told here that this crowd heard that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem. In verse 1, we read six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany. And now in verse 12, we read that the next day, Jesus left Bethany and made his way to Jerusalem. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem and he is coming specifically for the Passover. Now the Passover is significant. It was this great feast, this great festival that looked back to how the Lord had delivered his people from Egyptian slavery, but it did more than look back.

It also looked forward. It anticipated the day when the Lord would deliver his people from all their enemies through the one greater than Moses, the deliverer greater than Moses. And the population of Jerusalem would increase tenfold during this festival. And we witnessed the waving of the crowd at the beginning of verse 13. The crowd take palm branches in their hands and they go out to meet Jesus, waving the palm branches. Palm branches were a symbol. They were an emblem of righteousness. You see that in Psalm 92. But even more palm branches were a symbol, an emblem of Jewish nationalism. The waving of palm branches would have signaled the hope that the Messiah was near. God's appointed and anointed deliverer was near. He was on his way. He was soon going to be in their midst. And so they're waving these palm branches and they're saying, he's on his way. He is coming. He is soon going to be in Jerusalem.

And in the second half of verse 13, we hear the words of the crowd. They cry out, Hosanna. This literally means, save us now. It's taken from Psalm 118. Psalm 118 is that great messianic psalm where the psalmist speaks about the Lord saving his people through his appointed deliverer, the one who is the despised and rejected cornerstone, but has now become the cornerstone. And the psalmist the psalmist sings. He prays, Hosanna. Save us now, O Lord. And the crowd continue. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Again, this is a quotation from that 118th Psalm. The one coming in the Lord's name, the Messiah, is the blessed one who comes with the Lord's

blessing. And finally, the crowd would call out, even the king of Israel. Again, this phrase expresses a messianic hope. The people were expecting that the one who would come would reestablish the kingdom of David, the city of

[5 : 36] David. And once he'd reestablished the kingdom and city of David, he would in due course sit on the throne of David. And that throne would be a great channel of blessing for the people.

And so the crowd are putting all these things together, all these expectations, and they're applying them to Jesus, this man who has just raised a man back from the dead, this man who's been anointed in Bethany, and this man who's now walking into Jerusalem for the Passover.

And then in verses 14 and 15, John describes the actions of Jesus. We read, And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion.

Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. The action is recorded in verse 14. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all focus on Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a donkey.

But Matthew, Mark, and Luke focus primarily on how Jesus found the donkey. John isn't so much concerned with how Jesus found the donkey as the fact that Jesus rode on a donkey. He is coming toward Jerusalem, and there is all this singing and all this dancing, and he finds a donkey, and he rides on this donkey, and the explanation for what Jesus is doing is given in verse 15, where John now takes two Old Testament prophecies and predictions, and again applies them to Jesus.

[7 : 10] He begins with the words, Fear not, daughter of Zion. This is from Isaiah chapter 40, where the Lord comes to his people. The prophet of Isaiah speaks to the people, and he says to them, Do not fear. Do not be afraid. The Lord has blessing for you. And then the good news for Zion is that the long-awaited king is coming to her riding on a donkey's colt. This is now drawn from the prophecy of Zechariah in chapter 9.

In Zechariah chapter 9, Zechariah promises and predicts that the Lord is going to come and bring judgment on the Lord's enemies, the people's enemies. And the Lord calls on his people to rejoice because her king is coming, and this king is righteous, and this king is humble, and this king is bringing salvation, and this king is riding on a donkey, and this king is going to have an extensive rule, and this king is going to speak peace to the nations. And so all of this, all of the predictions, all of the promises, all of the prophecies are now being applied to this man, Jesus. Oh, it's quite a scene.

Jesus is entering Jerusalem to the cheers of the Jewish nationalists who see him as the fulfillment of all the Lord's promises of salvation. But he doesn't come into Jerusalem riding on a war horse. He doesn't come into Jerusalem as a great warrior, no. Instead, he turns everything upside down. He turns their thinking round about as he comes as a humble king. He comes riding on a donkey. He comes with the promise of peace. He comes with the prospect of an extensive, unconquerable kingdom. Now, friends, as we reflect on this presentation of Jesus, I want to consider the kind of king that Jesus is. He is the king promised in Zechariah chapter 9. He's the humble king. He's the righteous king.

He's the salvation-bringing king. He's the peace-speaking king. He's the reigning king. He is the unconquerable king. Earthly kings will rule for their own riches, their own glory, their own advancement. But this is the king who rules for the salvation and benefit and blessing of his people. Earthly kings will rule from above their subjects. But this is the king who comes down to his people's level and makes his dwelling among them.

[9 : 47] Great theologian Jonathan Edwards said of him, his condescension is great enough to become his people's friend, to become their companion, to unite their souls to him in spiritual marriage. Yea, his condescension is great enough to abase himself yet lower for his people, even to expose himself to shame and spitting. Yea, to yield up himself to death for them. Friends, what we see in Jesus is meekness and humility on clear display.

Notice the men he sent out to be as ambassadors, not the wise and the learned, but poor fishermen. Notice the company that he kept, not the rich and the renowned, but tax collectors and sinners, the rejected and the reviled.

Notice the miracles that he performed. He performed those great miracles and he doesn't demand expensive advertising or great publicity. He instead says to those whom he heals, tell no one about this. And notice now his entrance is the king of the king. He comes to Jerusalem. He comes riding on a donkey. In fact, it is the cult of a donkey.

It is almost a ridiculous image. It is the kind of image where we could almost see him trailing his feet along the ground because he is too tall for this little donkey. This little donkey is struggling to carry

him.

He is the king who could truly say, I am gentle and humble in heart. And he is the king who comes offering peace.

[11:29] He comes offering salvation. You know, it is significant that Jesus enters Jerusalem at the very beginning of the Passover week, the day when the sacrificial lambs would be brought into the city. Jesus is saying that he is the king who is coming to die. He is the king who is coming to be crucified. He is the king who is coming to lay down his life for his lost sheep. He is the king who is coming to be the lamb of God, the ultimate Passover lamb who takes away the sin of the world and secures peace, blessing, salvation for whoever, whoever, whoever will come under his reign. He is the king who comes to those who are angry with him.

And he says, I have good news for you. I have terms of peace for you. I have this offer of salvation for you. He is the king who comes to those who are apathetic toward him. Those who are bored with him. Those who say, I've heard it all before. And he says, I have good news for you. I have this offer of salvation for you.

I have terms of peace for you. And he is the king who comes to those who are afraid of him. Those who think, well he'll want nothing to do with me and he says ah my friend I have good news for you I have terms of peace for you I have this offer of salvation for you I have a gospel for you he is the one who comes to such people are you angry with him today friend are you apathetic toward him are you afraid of him he is the king who comes to you and he says I have peace I have salvation for the likes of you well as we consider John's presentation of Jesus in these verses the words we're hearing are behold your king behold your king behold the king who is altogether lovely behold the king who is chief among ten thousand behold the king who is like an apple tree among all the trees of the forest behold your king

I have nothing new to say to you this evening friend I have nothing startling I have nothing striking you're not going to go away from this service tonight thinking well he was deep tonight well I've never thought of that before I am simply saying to you this evening friend behold your king and I know that's probably what you get week by week in this place because I know the passion that Myrtle has for this congregation that people in this congregation and people in this community would behold the king and I simply echo what he says and I say behold your king but this brings us second to the perspective on the king the perspectives on the king that's in verses 16 down to 19 and here John records the various responses to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem verse 16 John gives the perspective of the disciples we read his disciples did not understand these things at first but when Jesus was glorified then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him we're told the disciples didn't understand these things at first oh it would have been wonderful to have been one of the disciples on that particular day they'd given up nearly three years to follow Jesus they'd left everything to follow Jesus left homes left families left sources of income and now there's thousands of people cheering Jesus into the holy city the disciples are thinking this is it this is great

Jesus is soon going to be enthroned and we are going to have places of honour in his kingdom but friends this is the first day of the last week of Jesus life it's a week that will quickly spiral downward within five days he will be crucified and buried within five days he will be banished and rejected outside the walls of Jerusalem and the disciples will fall away because they just don't get it however John isn't finished as he says in verse 16 but when Jesus was glorified then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him you know what I love about John is how excited he gets about his subject matter how excited he gets about his great theme he gets so excited he just gives spoilers throughout his book he gets so excited he just keeps running away with himself and here he speaks about Jesus even now being glorified that is John's way of speaking about

[16:13] Jesus' death the hour in which the glory of his grace and truth his goodness will most clearly be seen and following his death and resurrection then the disciples will finally get it then the disciples will finally understand then the disciples will finally realize who Jesus is and not only who Jesus is but what he came to do yes the disciples don't understand at first but eventually they get it then in verses 17 and 18 John gives us the perspective of the crowds we read the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness and the reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard that he had done this sign you know if you look carefully there's really two crowds in verses 17 and 18 in verse 17 we

have the crowd who had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus from the tomb and brought him back from the dead throughout John's gospel Jesus performs these miracles these signs and these miracles these signs are pointers to who Jesus is that he is the Christ and son of God that he is the majestic word who was in the beginning with God and was God that he is the one in whom God's glory has seen that he is the one through whom we receive grace added to grace and the crowd are bearing witness to this great sign this great sign that Jesus did and they're telling everyone about it just imagine it for a moment imagine it was here in Barbison and he came to the cemetery in Barbison and he called out to one of the graves and suddenly someone who had been dead for a number of days was brought miraculously back to life everyone would talk about it and everyone's talking about what Jesus has done at Bethany at the cemetery in Bethany and in verse 18 we have the second crowd who went out and met Jesus after hearing from the first crowd what he had done in Bethany and the crowds are excited and here is one who has swept death away and not only can he sweep death away he could also sweep Rome away as well and the crowd want to be with him they want to speak about him they want to welcome him into their homes and into their city they're shouting they're cheering they're singing they're dancing the king has come redemption has come victory has come the hour of liberation has come but within a week this crowd will be clamoring for his death you know if you go down to John chapter 19

Pilate will present Jesus to the crowd and he will say to them behold your king behold your king and the crowd will roar back we have no king but Caesar away with this man crucify this man finally John gives us the perspective of the Pharisees look at verse 19 we read so the Pharisees said to one another you see that you are gaining nothing look the whole world has gone after him we can note the exasperation of the Pharisees you remember who the Pharisees were they were the social and religious conservatives of Jesus day they believed in a doctrine of salvation by separation that is you were saved by God you were accepted by God on the basis of who you avoided and what you avoided many of them were scribes many of them were public teachers many of them were synagogue leaders and they've already embarked on a plot to kill Jesus they had cried out in John 11 what are we to do this man is performing many signs and if we let him go on like this everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and they will take away our place and they will take away our nation by our place they meant their privileged positions by our nation they meant their limited self-government quite simply

Jesus was a threat to their power a threat to their position a threat to their prestige and they're now saying to one another we are getting nowhere when it comes to silencing this man when it comes to subduing this man when it comes to stopping this man they're just exasperated Jesus is a problem they want rid of and they can't get rid of him but we can also note the exaggeration of the Pharisees look at the very end of verse 19 look the whole world has gone after him now at present Jesus is only known in a tiny backwater of the Roman Empire but if you look down at verses 20 and 21 we read now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks and so these came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and asked him sir we wish to see Jesus do you see what John's doing he's saying alright right now Jesus' ministry and influence is confined to the Galilee region the Jerusalem region but even now the Greeks are coming even now the nations are coming to him and then we move into Revelation chapter 5 and we have

John's great vision of the great heavenly chorus who sing worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and every language and every people and every nation oh the Pharisees are certainly exaggerating when they say that the whole world is going after Jesus but you know they speak far more truth than they actually know they're speaking prophetically a bit like when they speak with Caiaphas back in chapter 11 and they say to Caiaphas and Caiaphas says to them better that one man die for the nation than that the nation die for the one man and we're told that they were speaking prophetically and here the Pharisees are speaking prophetically once again they're speaking far more truth than they actually realize so as we consider these three perspectives on Jesus I want to ask the question tonight where are you today where are you today perhaps you can identify with the disciples there was once a time in your life when you just didn't get Jesus you didn't get what he was all about the gospel never really made sense to you and then one day possibly over a period of time or maybe it happened very suddenly the cross and all the glory and all the majesty and all the beauty of the crucified saviour burst through into your experience you could say with Isaac Watts this is indeed a wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died here is love so

amazing so divine that it demands my life my soul my all you could say with John Newton I once was blind but now I see I was recently reading Douglas Macmillan's testimony there is a website right now where you can get a lot of old free church sermons and I have been listening to a lot of Douglas Macmillan and David Patterson over the last few weeks and I went back to reading Douglas

[23 : 40] Macmillan's testimony after listening to him and this is what he says he speaks about a preacher who was praying with him and who quoted the words of John 3 16 God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life and Douglas asked the question does that mean that if I really believe that Jesus is the son of God and that he died on the cross at Calvary to save us from our sins and trust him because of that I will be saved and the preacher replied yes that's just what it means and Douglas responded well it can't be as simple as that he goes on though although I was arguing like that I felt I was understanding the way of salvation for the first time in my life what I had known in one way for so long now seems so new and as I believed it for the first time a great peace began to flood into my heart and a stillness came over me perhaps that's been your experience you once didn't understand but now you do you once were blind but now you see or perhaps you've known what it is to identify with the crowds in this passage you once saw something so attractive in Jesus so attractive in his gospel offer and you opened up your life to him you saw one who could help when it came to your health one who could help when it came to your work one who could help when it came to your relationships and then Jesus didn't seem to show up he didn't seem to come through for you he didn't seem able to meet your deepest needs he didn't do what you wanted him to do and you began to drift away from him there was once a time when you could rejoice in him there was once a time when you rejoiced in gathering with his people to rejoice in him but now you're far from him you're cold toward him maybe there's a little voice in the back of your head even saying

I wonder if I'll keep coming back to church throughout this year I don't know where you're at friend but you know Stephen Cole writes the longer that I am a Christian the more I am saddened to see people who made a profession of faith in Christ and began to follow him but later fell away and are now far from God while there are different reasons that they fell away from the Lord at the root of every case is that the person either never knew or else lost sight of who Jesus really is maybe that's your experience or perhaps you're identifying with the Pharisees you've heard about Jesus and you've seen how others have responded to him you've seen how others have been touched by him and it's amazing you think that person's completely new in fact they amaze you more than even if risen Lazarus was to burst into this room there's such a change in them but you won't have Jesus you see him as too demanding you see him as too threatening you see him as one who could turn your world upside down and shake you out of your comfort zone and you're not ready for that you know one of the most frightening things I find in this island is that there are people who believe in Jesus and they believe in what he has done and they believe in what he has promised and yet they will not have him because they're afraid it will turn their lives upside down they know it all but they won't have him where are you today friend are you identifying with the disciples once you didn't understand you were blind but now you see or are you identifying with the crowds once you followed him but now you've begun to fall back from him or are you identifying with the Pharisees you seem as too much of a threat and you won't have anything to do with him not really well on this first Sunday of a new year and a new decade I really want to underline and underscore the importance of having this right perspective when it comes to Jesus do you know I've seen it to our own folk earlier today one of the most frightening things looking out on a congregation on a Sunday at the beginning of a new year is wondering who's going to be there at the end of the year who's going to be there I buried two elders in the past year who's going to be there at the end of the year that's why I underline and underscore the importance of having the right perspective when it comes to Jesus because here in John 12 we find him coming in humility with the offer of peace the offer of salvation but he is coming again he is coming as the warrior king depicted in revelation 19 who comes with a great horse in his garments dripping in blood on that day his kingdom will be fully established on that day his creation will be fully renewed and restored and he will declare over it this is very good on that day his bride will be brought home to the place that he has prepared for her and on that day those who refused him those who resisted him those who rejected him those who said we will not have this man to rule over us will be cast into the lake of fire the king friends is coming he is on his way and if we were just still for a moment we might even hear his advance as

he calls out

I am coming soon I am coming soon though no one knows the day or the hour and so the key question the crucial question the most pressing question that you and I need to deal with at the beginning of a new year is are we ready for the return of the king are you ready for the return of the king if he was to burst through the doors of this place tonight would we run toward him saying this is my beloved this is my friend and he is altogether lovely or would you hold back from him would you fall away from him for fear and terror because you know the words that he is going to say to you will be so solemn depart from me

[30 : 47] I never knew you oh friend are you ready tonight for the return of the king amen well let's close by singing these words that we focused on in psalm 118 psalm 118 to sing psalms version on page 156 saying verses 19 to 29 through wide the gates of righteousness I'll enter and give thanks to God this is the gate of God through which the righteous come before the Lord you answered me I will give thanks salvation comes from you alone the stone the builders had refused has now become the cornerstone psalm 118 the sing psalms version on page 156 singing verses 19 to 29 through wide the gates of righteousness

I'll enter and give thanks to God this is the gate of God through which the righteous come before the Lord you answered me I will give thanks a wish that comes from you alone the stone the builder has refused has now become the cornerstone the Lord himself has done all this it is a marvel in our sight this is the day the Lord has made in it let us take great in light save us

O Lord we humbly pray O Lord we pray grant us success He's blessed who comes in God's great name You from the Lord's house we will bless rest the Lord is God and He has made His glorious right upon us all let us approach the older storms I celebrate the blessed world

You are my God I'll give you thanks You are my God I'll give you praise O thank the Lord for He is good His steadfast love ensures always praise O Lord our God our prayer this evening is that we would be those who truly know your salvation that we would be those who see in Christ the one who was the stone that the builders rejected yet he is the one who has become that great corner stone that great cap stone of the new temple that he is building we thank you that he is the one in whom salvation is found that he is the blessed one of the

Lord and the blessing is found with him that through him we receive goodness through him we receive that steadfast love and our prayer is that each and every one of us tonight would hear his voice coming to us in the gospel that we would be those who hear those terms of peace that offer of salvation and that we would be those who know the joy of closing in with him surrendering all to him and able to say with the disciples that once we didn't understand but now we do once we were blind but now we see encourage our hearts we pray and enable us to keep on going with Christ knowing that he is the one who carries his people and we simply lean upon him and it's in his beautiful and precious name we ask these things Amen