

International Sunday School Lesson Study Notes

Lesson Text: Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-11

Lesson Title: The Entrance of the King

Introduction

People often ask, "Why is the world in such a mess? Will things get better? Why is there so much suffering, pain and agony?" The answer is really very simple. The "King" is absent and until He returns to rule and reign, confusion and turmoil is the order of the day. Jesus Christ, the "King" came to earth the first time when He was born in Bethlehem. At His first coming, He came to suffer and die on the cross to atone for man's sin. During His days on earth, Jesus offered His kingdom to people but many rejected it. Jesus' message was that a man had to be "*born again*" in order to "*see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

Long before Jesus came into the world and began His earthly ministry, the prophet Zechariah wrote about a coming king for the nation of Israel. Israel had asked God to give them a king in order to be like other nations (1 Samuel 8:6). Israel's request for a king proved to be a thorn in the nation's side. There were some good kings that ruled but for the most part the kings only led the people further and further away from God. God promised David that a king would come through his lineage. The people of God looked for the promised king in each passing generation. Perhaps even some in Zechariah's day expected the promised king to appear after the temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. That would not be the case. It would be some five and a half centuries later before the promised king would make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

In Zechariah 9, we are presented with prophecy concerning the first coming of the "King," the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Matthew we have the record of the events when that prophecy was fulfilled.

The King Announced- Zechariah 9

The prophet Zechariah lived and prophesied around 520 B.C., about the same time as that of his contemporary, Haggai. In 538 B.C., Cyrus the Persian freed the captives from Israel's captivity to resettle to their homeland and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). Zechariah's primary purpose for writing was to join with Haggai in stirring up the people to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4:24; 6:15). His secondary purpose was to announce God's prophetic program and outline the events leading

up to the millennial age for Israel. Part of that included prophesy concerning the arrival of Messiah as King and His entrance into Jerusalem.

Commenting on Zechariah 9, Doctor Fred Hartman writes, "To prepare his readers for the First Coming of the Lord, the writer referred to the exploits of a great king, Alexander the Great. In so doing, he provided a road map for the coming Messiah. Most commentators interpret this portion of Zechariah as showing the judgment of nations. Although I believe they are correct, I also believe that the signs along the way show the tactics of this might Greek warrior to point people to the Messiah who was to come." (*from ZECHARIAH: Israel's Messenger of the Messiah's Triumph: Copyright 1994 by Fred Hartman. All rights reserved.*)

Verse 9

"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."

In Zechariah 9:8, the prophet looked far ahead in time to a day when Jerusalem will never again be oppressed by foreign invaders. "*And I will encamp about mine house*" (Zechariah 9:8) is a reference to Jerusalem. "*...And no oppressor shall pass through them any more*" (Zechariah 9:8) is Zechariah's prophesy of God's protection of Jerusalem. As history records, Alexander the Great intended to destroy Jerusalem to its foundations but was actually used by God to prevent her destruction. And what God is saying in Zechariah 9:1-8 is, if God can use a wicked heathen king and conqueror such as Alexander the Great to save the city of Jerusalem, imagine what God with His King, the Messiah, when He comes.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem" is a call from the prophet for the people to celebrate the promise of a coming king. As the people consider what a pagan king and conqueror will do in the future (vv.1-8), they must vocalize and declare with joy the promise of a coming king.

"Rejoice" literally means "go round and round" with joyful praise. "Greatly" means "intensely." "Shout" means "give a blast." It is a word used to reinforce the prophet's challenge to joyful praise. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are called the "daughters of Zion" or "daughters of Jerusalem" and represent the whole of the nation of Israel.

"The King cometh unto thee" are significant words. Literally, Zechariah is saying, "Your king is coming for your benefit and good." This statement alone should

result in energetic and joyful emotion from the people. They had waited long for One to come and it is only natural that they should welcome Him with great rejoicing and loud praise.

Zechariah mentions three features of the coming King in this verse. First, He is "just." Messiah is "just" or "righteous." Of Messiah as a future reigning Davidic King the prophecy is: *"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God"* (2 Samuel 23:3). The prophet Jeremiah wrote, *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"* (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Second, Israel's King will have "salvation." It means Israel's King will "show Himself a Savior." In contrast, Alexander the Great slaughtered and butchered people while on his conquering march. The coming "King" will "show Himself a Savior." Luke wrote, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56). Third, Israel's King is "lowly." While the thought is humility, the word "lowly" goes beyond just being humble. It refers to the full attitude of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul summed up our Lord in Philippians 2:5-7, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."* An illustration of Messiah's lowliness is seen in that He would appear "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." The "ass" or donkey, was regarded in biblical times as a very lowly animal and was usually ridden only by persons who possessed no rank or worldly position. Israel's "King" riding on this humble beast indicates Him to be without prestige or notable position.

The King Arrives- Matthew 21

Matthew presents Jesus Christ as King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah (anointed one) of Israel. Writing to a Jewish audience, Matthew, a former Jewish tax collector, now disciple of Christ, draws heavily on Old Testament prophecies to convince his readers that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The events of Matthew 21 take place the last week of our Lord's earthly ministry. Until the final week of His ministry, Jesus refused the title "King," and walked away from any attempts by the people to prematurely make him king (John 6:15;

18:36). The word "king" actually means "one who is able." Jesus Christ was always "King" in the truest sense, for He and He alone is able.

Verse 1-3

"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them."

Jesus had previously been ministering in Galilee and Judea and just finished spending the Sabbath in Bethany. "Bethpage" is a village near Bethany about a mile east of Jerusalem. It is Passover time in "Jerusalem" and the city would be filled with thousands of people. Sensing that His hour is now come He moves toward "Jerusalem." It is time for Jesus to proclaim Himself as the Promised Messiah, the long expected "King." As Matthew gives us details of this event we know as "The Triumphal Entry," it is obvious that Jesus is in control of every detail. He is preparing for Calvary with royal and sovereign authority.

Notice our Lord's commands to His "two disciples." He told them to "go, find, loose and bring." With these words Jesus is setting in motion the events that will end in the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. Shouldn't a king introduce himself in a more glorious and royal manner? Jesus is going to introduce Himself as "King" by sending His disciples to "find an ass tied, and a colt with her" and have them both brought unto him. It seems inappropriate that any king should make his triumphal entry riding a donkey. But this is the way it would be. Every move the Lord made as He went through this world, was in perfect obedience to the prophetic Word and in accordance to the Father's will.

"And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them" indicates that there were men and women in Jerusalem who recognized Jesus as "Lord." If anyone questioned the disciples they were to reply that "The Lord hath need of them" and the owner of the donkey would willingly let them take the animals.

It is amazing that the "Lord" of glory had "need" of a donkey! It should humble us to know that the Sovereign, God in the flesh, used humans such as the "two disciples" and animals in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He can still use whatever we are and whatever we have if we are willing to accept that He is "Lord."

Note: What is happening in these verses is a direct fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. The lowly beast of burden was symbolic. While other kings burdened their subjects, our "King" bears the burdens of His subjects!

Verse 4-5

"All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

Christ's actions in sending His disciples for the donkey was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. "All this was done" in order to fulfill the prophecy of "the prophet" Zechariah as recorded in Zechariah 9:9. Zechariah had prophesied that the King would come into His royal city "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9). "All this" was fulfilled literally as Jesus came down the slope of Olivet and into Jerusalem riding upon the unbroken colt.

The "daughter of Sion" speaks of the city of Jerusalem. "Sion" is the Greek name for Mount Zion, one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built.

"Meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" is a two-fold description of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. These two descriptive words and phrases should have easily associated Jesus' entry as a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. "Meek" describes the gentle, patient, and submissive nature of Jesus' personality. "Riding upon an ass" further defined Jesus' character. Jesus did not come into Jerusalem to conquer with a sword while riding upon a war horse. He came to Jerusalem to conquer with His cross.

Verse 6-8

"And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way."

"The disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them" are encouraging and refreshing words. They offered no arguments nor did they ask for any explanation in spite of the fact that they weren't sure which one Jesus would ride. That is why they "put on them their clothes," or put their clothes on both of the animals. The disciples spread some of their own garments upon it as a saddle, and "they sat

him," the Lord Jesus Christ "thereon." It is significant that this humble creature was more subject to Him-its Creator-than men whom He had come to save.

"A very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way." Since this was Passover time, there would be large numbers of people in Jerusalem. Matthew says, "A very great multitude." Some of them carpeted the road with "their garments." "Others," covered the road with palm tree "branches." These symbolic actions recognized Jesus as their rightful King.

Verse 9

"And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

"Hosanna to the son of David" and "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" were quotations from the Psalm of Triumph, Psalm 118:25-26. In Psalm 118, the Lord's royal subjects acclaim their King, "David's greater Son." The complete fulfillment of the psalm awaits Christ's second coming, as He Himself predicted later (Matthew 23:39).

No doubt the "multitudes," those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, thought the hour of His triumph had come. They use all the right language and words. They cry "Hosanna" and "blessed." "The Passover pilgrims of Jerusalem are embracing Him as that Messiah—or at least as the Messiah they think He should be. Jesus is the king entering the city as Zechariah foretold over 500 years earlier. Since that prophet's time, Israel has had a city, a temple, and a priesthood. Now the people see their king." (*Standard Lesson Commentary 2013-2014*).

The "multitudes" believed that Christ was about to assert His royal authority and begin His reign over Israel and make Jerusalem the capital of a regenerated world. All this will happen in God's appointed time, but He had other work to accomplish first. So the entrance into the city among the cries of "Hosanna" from the people was premature. Christ must first die upon a Roman cross, where He was to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17). For Jesus, there could be no kingdom without the Cross.

Verse 10-11

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus entered Jerusalem and made a public claim through His actions to be the messianic King. This prompted the question, "Who is this?" The answer to this question dictated the action that follows in the story. While the crowd sang hosannas and welcomed Him, they didn't grasp His identity. They decided "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." While the answer the people gave was true, it was only partly true. Jesus is prophet, but also Messiah, and king and ultimately God the Son.

"Who is this" is still a profitable and needful question today. Many people today only know in part who Jesus is. They recognize Him as a great teacher and miracle worker but stop short of believing that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, the Messiah, and coming King (Romans 10:9-10). As the childhood song of long ago said, "Everybody ought to know, everybody ought to know, everybody ought to know, Who Jesus is!"

Conclusion

The Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem set in motion the events that ultimately led to His crucifixion and death. The entry was a brief moment of glory for our Lord, but it didn't take long for the crowds to change their "Hosanna's" to "Crucify Him." Jesus was not fooled by the hearts of those who lined the streets with their clothes. He did not come to overthrow Rome or occupy an earthly seat of power for the sake of man. He came to die on a cross so He can rightfully rule in the future over all the earth.

There is coming a time when the Lord will deliver Israel from all their enemies and oppression. But that promise rests upon the One who was first nailed to the cross of Calvary. While the welcome that Jesus received in Jerusalem was in harmony with God's divine plan, those who would have crowned Him as king at that time had to learn that He must first suffer many things, be crucified, and rise from the dead. In God's due time, the remainder of the prophecy will have a glorious fulfillment one day soon.

Jesus Christ is Lord today. The Scripture settles that. The question however is "Who is Jesus to you?"

Amen.

