

Our Redeemer Revealed

Matthew 21:1-17

Sometimes when I read my bible I forget that I have been given information that most people who were experiencing the events first hand did not have.

Think, for example, of how many times Jesus' is revealed as the long awaited Saviour in the gospels.

God sends the angel Gabriel to speak to John the Baptist's dad Zechariah while he was in the temple by himself performing his priestly duties.

He tells him that he will have a son in his old age and that son will prepare the way of the LORD.

While some people knew something had happened, most people were completely unaware that anything was going on.

Gabriel spoke to Mary about bearing Jesus and God sent an angel to Joseph to tell him the truth about this baby, but that was hardly public knowledge.

When Jesus is born, an angel announces it to a hand full of shepherds, but most people in Bethlehem go to bed that night with no idea the King of heaven was lying in a manger in their town.

While there was a bit of a stir in Jerusalem when some guys from out east came looking to worship the one 'born king of the Jews', they remained ignorant of His identity for the next thirty or so years.

Just think of how many times friends and neighbors of Jesus' family met Him growing up in Nazareth thinking of Him only as "the carpenter's son."

I have no doubt they noticed something different about Him, but they really didn't understand who He was.

Even after Jesus' public ministry begins there are all kinds of questions about who He is.

In Matthew 16:13 Jesus asks His closest disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

They answer, "Some say John the Baptist, other say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Jesus then asks, "Who do you say that I am?"

Peter pipes up and says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter is exactly right, but there are only a few people there to hear that confession and even those guys turn out to be a bit shaky in their understanding of what it all means.

For the most part, even though Jesus' ministry had become significant, Who He really is remains hidden from the public eye.

The crowds did not have the inside view that we get as we read the bible.

No doubt people were wondering if He might be the one they had been waiting for, but most had not seen or heard Him lay claim to that title for Himself.

That changed at the beginning of Jesus' final Passover week in what is known as His 'Triumphal Entry' into the city of Jerusalem.

[This is widely considered to be Jesus most public announcement of His messiahship. As we having been trying to get a sense of the big picture of the cross and empty tomb of Jesus we have looked at God's promise of a Redeemer, we have looked at the goodness of our Redeemer, and in our passage this morning **Matthew 21:1-17** we are looking at our Redeemer being revealed. What is critically important to see here is that Jesus leaves no room for middle ground or mistaken identity. The only choice He leaves is accepting Him for Who He claims to be or rejecting Him. Matthew here presents us with a compelling reason to accept Him and he also gives us some important implications of Jesus' announcing Himself to be the long awaited redeemer. First let's look at the compelling reason Matthew gives us to accept Jesus' announcement. It comes in the first five verses where we see that...]

Point #1 – Jesus fulfills Scripture. (Verses 1-5)

From Genesis to Malachi, God tells His people what to expect in the promised redeemer and our Saviour accomplishes everything written about Him.

Verses 1-3 set the scene for us.

As He looks over the city of Jerusalem with His mission clearly in view He gives a command to His disciples.

He commands two of them to go into the next town and retrieve a donkey and her colt.

It is very interesting that He makes no mention of asking permission to borrow these animals.

He just says go and get them.

It almost sounds like Jesus is asking them to steal the donkeys.

How many of you know stealing is bad?

Of course it's bad to steal and we know that Jesus would never do anything wrong and neither would He command His disciples to do anything wrong.

That leaves us with only two possibilities here.

Either Jesus arranged this ahead of time, or He is exercising His Divine authority over the donkeys and their owners.

I agree with commentators like Matthew Henry and John MacArthur who see this as Jesus exercising His Divine knowledge and power.

That, I believe, is indicated by what Jesus tells them to say if anyone questions them.

“Say, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them.”

As the Lord of all Jesus has the right to ask anything of anyone and I believe the owners of these donkeys agree under the influence of the Holy Spirit being compelled to obey the command of Christ.

Why does He give the command? **Verse 5.**

Hundreds of years before this happens God spoke to His people through the prophet Zechariah and told them that the Messiah, the long promised redeemer, would come riding into Jerusalem on “the foal of a beast of burden”.

The typical ride for a king is a powerful horse.

Earthly kings are all about showing strength and projecting the image of a conqueror.

God’s promised redeemer projects a very different image.

He shows His people His humility and gentleness.

He comes offering peace as He comes into the city.

He does that because that’s what God said

He would do.

Some might be tempted to say, “Well, this is no big deal Jesus knew His bible and He just met the owners of the donkey a few days ahead of time and set all this up.”

If this were the only Scripture Jesus fulfilled, that might have some weight but any fair reading of the gospels shows that to be a short sighted argument.

Can Jesus birthplace be explained away by a natural explanation?

What about Herod’s attack and His escape to Egypt?

Why does Simeon recognize Jesus in the temple courts when he was just days old?

What about being a descendant of David?

How about the visit of the magi from the east?

[Have you ever heard of a famous geyser called ‘Old Faithful’? A geyser is a place where water and steam get shot out of the ground because of heat from lava underground. The reason why they call the Old Faithful geyser old faithful is because it erupts so consistently that we can know when it is going to erupt next.]

Things that happen again and again over the course of time come to be trusted as reliable.

That is one of the things that show the trustworthiness of God and His Word.

Time and again we see Him say, “This will happen” and in the course of time it happens.

Jesus commanding His disciples to retrieve these donkeys is one example of many where He fulfills what the Bible says about God’s promised redeemer.

[The LORD leaves no doubt concerning who He is. If you take the time to get to know what Jesus accomplished in history the only reason you will reject His claim to be God's Son and our redeemer is the hardness of your own heart. We'll meet some people like that in this passage but before we meet them we meet a whole bunch of people who seem to get exactly what Jesus is announcing about Himself by fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. From this group of people we learn this important lesson, that...]

Point #2 – Jesus revealed is cause for celebration. (Verses 6-11)

Every aspect of the life of Christ is a testimony to the fact that God does what He says. His offer of peace and hope is real and we should be overjoyed at that.

By this time in Jesus' ministry word about Him had spread throughout all of Israel.

Thousands upon thousands of people had witnessed His miracles and had listened to His teaching.

Several times in the gospels we read about the people being 'amazed' by what Jesus said and did.

According to John's gospel this triumphal entry takes place shortly after Jesus had raised His friend Lazarus from the dead.

With thousands being fed, incurable diseases and disabilities being healed, and people being raised from the dead it is easy to see why people would start thinking that Jesus could be the messiah.

As Jesus fulfills Zechariah 9:9 the people seem to understand exactly what He is doing which is why we read this in **verses 6-11.**

The cloaks that are referred to here were the outer garments worn by everyone.

Most people only owned one and with the temperature changes throughout the day and night a person's cloak would have been very important to their everyday living and often among their most important possessions.

When the disciples place the cloaks on the donkey it is a sign of humility, respect, and love for their Master.

When the people place their cloaks in the road it is like they are rolling out the red carpet for Jesus as He makes His way into the city.

It is a sign of submission, it is a sign of accepting the rule of the King. That is clear in what they say along the way. (**Verse 9**)

'Hosanna' most literally means 'save' and had come to be used as a word of praise.

The crowds praise Jesus as 'the Son of David' which meant they understood exactly what Jesus was doing.

They all knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, Israel's most famous king.

That was God's clear promise in the Old Testament and here they are praising Jesus as one who comes in 'the name of the LORD'.

They understood that the king of God's people was to act as the LORD's representative acting in the power of God for the good of His people.

They shout hosanna in the highest, praising God to the greatest degree because the identity of the King has been revealed.

This is a celebration and rightly so.

[In our culture sports are a pretty big deal. When a child scores the winning goal on a hockey or soccer team what do parents do? They cheer. When a team wins the Stanley cup or the Super Bowl thousands upon thousands of people cheer, cities will even have parades to celebrate. We celebrate things we think are important.]

What could be more important than the King and Saviour of God's people being revealed?

What exactly the people in this crowd understood about Jesus is unclear.

It is fairly safe to say that they had their mind more on earthly things than spiritual things, but even so the praise and celebration here was the only right response to Jesus.

[How much more should we celebrate? Jesus does far more than conquer earthly kingdoms. That was and is an easy thing for Him to do. He conquers the power of sin and death by humbling Himself and dying in our place. What kind of King does that? The greatest King of all and He is most worthy of our praise. We can see that here as the whole city is stirred up by Jesus revealing Himself as King, but when he comes into the city He does not go to a 'court or palace' as Matthew Henry points out, but instead He makes His way to the temple and what He does there shows us this next lesson, that...]

Point #3 – Jesus our redeemer brings holiness and healing. (Verses 12-14)

Christ came to give His people more than forgiveness, He came to turn our hearts from sin and ultimately free us from the effects of sin.

We see the LORD's concern for holiness in verses 12-14.

The week of the Passover was one of the busiest of the year in Jerusalem and people came from all over the country.

For those coming from a great distance it was impractical to bring all that was required in order to make sacrifices.

In Deuteronomy 14 we read of God allowing the people to buy what was needed for their offerings when they arrived at the place of God's choosing.

So on the surface it would seem like the market that was set up in the outer courts of the temple was a good thing.

Why is Jesus so upset? Why does He drive them out?

One major problem is the commercialization of worship as Randolph Tasker points out in his commentary.

The religious leaders had made it so only one kind of currency was acceptable in the temple, hence the need for money changers and those money changers could easily take advantage of people.

Once your money was exchanged you could then go and buy what was needed.
Just imagine a bunch of tables set up to sell living animals.

[How many kids here have ever been in a barn full of animals or a petting zoo? Are those quiet places? There usually pretty loud aren't they. Imagine a bunch of goats and sheep in this room, would that make it easier or harder to concentrate on worshipping and praying to God?]

Setting this market up in the temple courts would have made it very challenging for people to seek the LORD in that place.

They had turned worship into a business opportunity that was particularly abusive to those with the least amount of money and Jesus because of His zeal for the LORD and His holiness drives them out of the temple.

If we think that we can treat God with contempt and be on good terms with Jesus, we had better think again.

Did you know that on this side of the cross the Bible says the church is "God's temple" (1cor 3:16).

Instead of a building of wood and stone, it is a building made up of people.

Christ's aim for us as we gather in His name is to be holy and the Holy Spirit is constantly at work making that happen.

If you feel like Jesus has been flipping over tables in your life please know that is for your good and the good of His Church.

He does more here though than just flip over tables.

We are told that 'the blind and the lame come to him in the temple, and he heals them.'

In doing this He is pointing us to what His work on the cross and His overcoming of the grave will do.

One day Jesus will drive out every trace of evil from the entirety of creation and when that day comes every trace of sickness will be removed.

The curse brought upon the world in Genesis three will be completely reversed.

In order for us to enjoy that we first need to be healed of spiritual blindness.

We need our eyes opened to the reality of the wretched condition of our souls and our need of forgiveness and restoration that is only possible in Jesus' name.

[Having Jesus as our King and Redeemer means having the condemnation that our sins deserve taken away, it means having our hearts changed and made alive to the delights of God's laws, and it means looking forward to a day when evil shall have no place in our hearts. That is who Jesus is and what He does, He brings holiness and healing. There is only one right response to that and while there are those who will fight against it, we see here is the next few verses that...]

Point #4 – God ensures the praise of our redeemer. (Verses 15-17)

No matter how hard people try to stop it, the Name of Jesus will be exalted both in this life and throughout all eternity.

What we read here should serve as a powerful warning to us concerning the ability of the human heart to remain hard towards the LORD.

Let's look together at the reaction of some to Jesus' announcing His claim to the throne of David. **(Verse 15)**

The contrast here is quite powerful.

On the one hand we have the 'chief priests and scribes'.

These are men who had studied the scriptures most of their lives.

Of all the people in the crowd these men should have been the most prepared to praise Jesus.

But what do we see here instead?

It says when they 'saw the wonderful things He did and the children crying out...they were indignant.'

I am always struck by the fact that many of these religious leaders are eye witnesses to miracles and their response is anger instead of joy.

On this particular occasion they are likely really upset because Jesus clears the temple.

They were probably upset because they were profiting from the market and Jesus had hurt their bottom line for the day.

In addition to that they were likely offended at the fact that Jesus came from humble beginnings instead of being approved by their system and standards.

Their love for worldly things had made them so blind to heavenly things that they could have miracles take place right before their eyes and despise them.

Opposite to them there are the children who also witness ‘the wonderful things he did.’

Children who had little education by comparison and who had no influence or social standing.

They see what happens and they join in on the praises of the crowds that walked along with Jesus as He entered the city.

Hearing this, the priests and scribes ask Jesus in verse 15, “Do you hear what these are saying?”

Of course He hears them. What they are really asking Him is, “Why aren’t you telling these children to be quiet?”

They have contempt for the praise of Jesus.

Look with me at how the LORD replies. (**Verse 16b-17**)

Jesus question is more of a statement than a question.

Of course they had read Psalm 8, they had probably memorized it because these guys were supposed to be the experts.

You know it is possible to be really smart and at the same time a complete fool.

God uses children here to absolutely shame the experts.

If people harden their hearts towards Jesus, God will still see to the praise of His name.

The language Jesus quotes here from psalms 8 refers to very young children, likely younger than four years old.

Children who are still learning how to speak, who are completely dependent on their parents, and who have a God given capacity to see things for what they are.

What they see, by God’s grace, is the promised redeemer.

Because God is just He will see to the praise of Jesus no matter what.

Jesus leaves us no middle ground brother and sisters.

He clearly claims to be the promised redeemer.

Getting a donkey and riding it into to Jerusalem is one example of many where His reveals Himself to be God’s promised King.

That is cause for celebration, the only question is will you join in with the shouts of hosanna?

If you will then you will embrace Christ’s desire for holiness and look forward to His healing.

If you will then you will be a part of what must be so. The praise of His great name forever.