

Warroad Baptist Church
April 5, 2009

“Who Is Jesus to You?”
(Mt 21:1-11)

Call To Worship: Mt 16:13-17

Jesus has been acclaimed as the greatest religious leader who ever lived, as being the most influential person to have lived on earth, and as being unique to the degree that no one can be compared to Him.

But considering Jesus Christ merely on the basis of an exemplary life and His superior moral teaching will not remove the stumbling blocks to Christianity raised by an unbelieving world. The real test of what one thinks of Him must revolve around who *He* claimed to be and what *He* accomplished during His brief mission to this earth. Our conclusion must be that without Christ, there is no Christianity; it all centers in Him. Do you know who Jesus is?

The predominant theme of the Scriptures is the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He is God (Jn 5:18;10:30). He became a human being (Jn 1:14; Php 2:7, 8). He died on a cross. He is the fundamental theme of the Gospel (John 12:27). He was buried, and He rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven (1 Co 15:3,4). He is the only, all-sufficient Savior of the world (Acts 4:12). And, He is coming again to this earth to make all things right when He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over His new creation (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 22:3-5). Jesus Christ is the testimony of the Scriptures and is the essence and meaning of life. (The Billy Graham Christian Worker’s Handbook (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1984), pp. 152-154).

King David said in Ps 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” Do you know Jesus?

Dr. S. M. Lockridge put it this way: Jesus is enduringly strong, entirely sincere, eternally steadfast, immortally graceful, imperially powerful, and impartially merciful. He is God’s Son. He is a sinner’s Savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. He stands alone in Himself. He’s unique, unparalleled, unprecedented, supreme, preeminent. He’s the loftiest idea in literature. He’s the highest idea in philosophy. He’s the fundamental truth in theology. He’s the cardinal necessity of spiritual religion. He’s the miracle of the ages. He sympathizes and He saves. He guards and He guides. He heals, cleanses and forgives. He discharges debtors, delivers captives, defends the feeble, blesses the young, serves the unfortunate, regards the aged, rewards the diligent, and beautifies the meek. Do you know Him?

His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He is indescribable, incomprehensible, invincible, and irresistible. The Heavens cannot contain Him, man cannot explain Him. He always has been, and He always will be. He’s the King of kings and the Lord of lords and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Dr. S. M. Lockridge, Dallas, Texas, quoted by Max Anders in *Jesus, Knowing Our Savior*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1995), pp. 33-35).

Turn with me if you would please in your Bibles to Mt 21:1-11 **Read!** Pray

Jesus is who the Bible describes Him to be regardless of what we may believe or not believe about Him. The only accurate, definitive and trustworthy explanation of who Jesus is found only in the Bible. Who is Jesus to you?

Who Jesus is will never change. We have God’s word on this, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (He 13:8). Jesus is who He is. Who Jesus is to me or who Jesus is to you or anyone else for that matter, however, can be very different.

The religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes, should have been the first to recognize who Jesus was. They knew the OT Scriptures inside and out and all of the prophecies regarding His identity, and in spite of His miracles and His claims that confirmed He was the promised Messiah, they rejected and hated Him.

The secular leaders of Jesus' day although they couldn't argue that Jesus' teaching was unlike that of any other and His authority over nature and disease made Him the most unique person in history, they were more concerned about what the people thought of them than they were about coming to terms with who Jesus was.

Even the people of His hometown of Nazareth, those whom He had grown up with and who knew Him well took offense at Him and rejected Him (Mk 6:1-3).

And what about His disciples, they not only failed to recognize His true identity, they actually feared Him (Mk 4:35-41). Where do you sit? Who is Jesus to you?

What we refer to as the "Triumphal Entry" into the city of Jerusalem by the Lord Jesus Christ marked the last major public appearance of Jesus prior to His crucifixion and the end of His three years of public ministry.

Jesus' coming into the city of Jerusalem as He did was significant in the following ways:

1. Jesus was doing the Father's will (Mt 26:39,42)
2. Jesus was presenting Himself to God's chosen people – the nation of Israel as Her promised Messiah/King
3. Jesus was fulfilling OT prophecy (Mt 5:17)
4. Jesus was giving His readers the opportunity to draw some important conclusions from the events recorded here

We are fortunate to have four separate accounts of the events surrounding Jesus' ministry recorded for us in the N.T. By placing these accounts side by side and comparing their contents we can arrive at a fuller understanding and appreciation of what happened – a harmony of the Gospels does this for us.

We're going to be looking at some key truths from Matthew's account that bear witness to the true nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and distinguish Him from every other person who has ever lived on this earth.

I'd like to look at the events leading up to Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem starting with Peter's confession in Mt 16:16 where these words are recorded for us in response to the question Jesus posed to His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Beginning with v21 we read, "From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

In ch 17:22,23 the text says, "When they came together in Galilee, He (*Jesus*) said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life..."

The third recorded instance of Jesus announcing his impending death and resurrection is found in ch 20:17-19, "Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be raised to life!"

Talk about penetratingly sobering words. What follows? What's the response to these dramatic words from the lips of the Savior? James and John, the son's of Zebedee championed by their mother were concerned about places of honor in Christ's kingdom. I find Jesus' response to their request highly instructive. Talk about bringing things into perspective, v26 "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, v27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – v28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Jesus was modeling His message. In the very next scene, Two blind men appealed to Jesus for the restoration of their sight and out of compassion, He healed them.

Who was *there* for Jesus? Who cared enough about what He was going through and what He would be facing just a few days from then and who was reaching out to Him and asking, “what can I do for you, Jesus, how can I help you?” His Father in heaven was – every step of the way!

Jesus’ sovereign authority is brought out in Mt 21:1-3 by the deliberate and detailed instructions He gave His two disciples in sending them on an assignment which ultimately fulfilled what was written some 500 years earlier in the OT book of Zechariah. The Jews regarded this passage of Scripture as a Messianic prophecy. Jesus demonstrated the divine nature of His person as Israel’s Messiah/King and brought to pass precisely what was foretold would happen here.

The significance of what Jesus was doing is clear. He was formally presenting Himself to the nation of Israel as Her Messiah. The expression “the Lord needs them” in Mt 21:3 underscores Jesus’ divine power and authority as the Messiah.

Jesus was not coming in earthly *splendor* to reign in earthly *power*. He did not come to *slay* Israel’s enemies but to *save* all of mankind. It was God’s sovereign will for Jesus to bear the sin of the world and in doing so, it was more fitting that He come into Jerusalem riding on a beast of burden signifying that He is the bearer of the world’s burden of sin.

Jesus’ purpose in preparing to come into Jerusalem the way He did, we’re told in Mt 21:4 was “To fulfill” OT Prophecy. Jesus quoted from Zech 9:9 “**Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!** See your King comes to you, **righteous and having salvation**, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

If you take the time to look at the words Jesus uses in Mt 21:5 more closely, a couple of things stand out:

1. The first phrase, “**Say to the Daughter of Zion**” is actually a quotation from Isa 62:11. Why did Jesus insert this at the beginning of Zech 9:9 instead of quoting what was already there? There was nothing to rejoice or shout about at this time in Israel’s history. Israel had failed to recognize Jesus as Her Messiah and in less than five short days from the events unfolding here, She would shout in Mt 27:22,23 “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”
2. Jesus did not quote the words, “righteous and having salvation.” Why not? Isn’t it true? Of course it is! Problem was, Israel rejected Jesus as Her King so He was not bringing national salvation to Israel at this time.

Matthew could not have made his description of the Kingly nature of Jesus more explicit – “See your King comes to you”

Now wait a minute, if Jesus really wanted to draw the attention of the nation of Israel to the fact that He was presenting Himself to them as their Messiah/King then why didn’t He come into Jerusalem in a more regal way like you would expect royalty to do. Where was the entourage and the fanfare, the trumpets sounding and the like. A donkey! You’ve gotta be kidding!

Isn’t that just human nature? We have an idea of what God should be like and how He should do things and what does He do? Exactly what He’s already told us in the Bible He will do and we miss it because we’re looking for something else! What a tragedy of life. God wants to give us everything that matters for eternity and we’re caught up in whether it seems right or looks right or feels right.

In Matthew’s account of this event, there is no indication that the disciples were challenged when they did as Jesus had instructed them. They found the animals right where Jesus said they would be, took them and subsequently brought them to Him.

But, in Mark’s gospel 11:5-6 we discover some additional detail. Mark records that some bystanders asked them what they were doing, and in Luke 19:33 we learn that they were in fact the owners of the animals. Both Mk and Lk record

that the colt had never been ridden before. We wouldn't know this if we only had Matthew's description of what happened.

By considering the other Gospel accounts, we come to a fuller understanding of what took place. I'm grateful that God has done this for us in His Word. Each of the Gospel writers relate what they do from a particular perspective and purpose in describing the events they record. Matthew's perspective concerned presenting Jesus as Israel's Messiah/King, so the details cited by Mark and Luke were viewed as incidental by Matthew and he didn't mention them because they didn't serve his purpose.

John's account provides some additional commentary not found in Mt. John indicates in Jn 12:16,17 that even Jesus' own disciples did not comprehend what was happening. They did not have the perspective of the Cross and Jesus' resurrection like we have. They failed to make the connection between Zechariah's prophecy and the fact that Jesus was fulfilling it. I don't know about you, but this really makes 1 Co 2:14 ring true in my own heart, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." Jesus' disciples did not have the Spirit of God within them to give them understanding into the truths of Jesus' Words. In Jn 16:12-14 we read, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you." The disciples didn't have what we have, today: Every person who accepts Jesus Christ personally as Savior has the Spirit of God dwelling within them to help them understand what the Bible says. We have a complete Bible. The disciples had only the O.T. The N.T. clearly spells out who Jesus is, why He came, what He's done, and what He wants us to do. We have no excuses for not knowing this.

When Jehu was anointed king over Israel, we read in 2 Ki 9:13 "they hurried and took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, "Jehu is king!" a symbol of respect and submission.

This is exactly what Mt described was happening in Jesus' case in Ch. 21:8 as He entered the city. Every outward indication pointed to the entrance of a King into Jerusalem.

The Prince of Peace came on the appointed day to bring peace to the nation. He was identified as the Messiah at His Baptism. He was authenticated as the Messiah at His temptation. His glory as the Messiah was revealed at His transfiguration. But, it was at His triumphal entry that Jesus presented Himself to the nation as Her long prophesied Messiah. This was it, He was the very One they had been waiting for – their Redeemer, Deliverer and King.

What the crowds were shouting in v9 is found in Ps 118:25a,26a "Hosanna", which can also be translated "O LORD, save us;" Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD." The multitude was right in acknowledging Jesus as "the Son of David" who had come in the name of the Lord, but they were wrong about the sort of Deliverer He was.

Although the people were shouting for Jesus to save them, it had nothing to do with the sin in their souls and everything to do with being delivered from the stranglehold of Rome. They were more interested in a King who would defeat the Romans to free them from oppression than to experience freedom from their sin. They were looking for a conquering Messiah who would establish a kingdom of justice and righteousness where God's chosen people would have special favor. Jesus did not come to conquer Rome but to conquer sin and death. He did not come to make war with Rome but to make peace with God for men. They did not recognize the nature of His Kingship or His Kingdom. He *was* a King, but His *Kingdom* was not of this world (Jn 18:36). That's not what the people wanted. They wanted Jesus on *their* terms not His. Sounds just like people today, doesn't it? We want a Jesus who will give us what we want, not what we desperately need but don't realize. Jesus did not come to be crowned, but to be crucified. One day, Php 2:10,11 reminds us, "...at the name of Jesus every knee *will* bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue *will* confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This will happen when Jesus comes to establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth. Right now, they would have accepted Jesus as an earthly king,

but they would not have Him as their heavenly King. Jesus' coming into Jerusalem was an act of mercy and grace, not an act of justice or judgment.

Lk 19:39-44 provides us with some further insight into what transpired that is not recorded in Mt or in the other Gospels. The Pharisees weren't too keen on all the fuss being made by the crowds over Jesus, so they said to Jesus in v39 tell your disciples, a reference to the crowd, to tone it down. Jesus' response in v40 was pointed, "It's not going to happen!" Verses 41-44 are very telling words that, in part, predicted some devastating news regarding Israel's future.

Mt 21:10,11 confirm that Israel was blind to who Jesus truly was and in spite of all His miraculous works that they themselves had witnessed were willing to recognize Him only as a prophet from an the insignificant little town of Nazareth.

The entrance of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem occurred on the very day that the 69th wk of Daniel's prophecy in Da 9:25 had run out. Right on plan.

Because Israel refused to accept her King when He was presented in exact fulfillment of their Scripture, their unbelief was confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt. One day Israel will receive Jesus as her Messiah when he comes again to establish His millennial kingdom on earth. At that time according to Re 19:11-16 Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords will make His triumphal return to earth on a white horse with the armies of heaven following Him to bring about His righteous judgment on earth.

Twenty first-century crowds are as divided regarding who Jesus is as the first-century crowds were. Some say He was a good moral teacher; others say He is Lord. Who is Jesus to you? If you haven't settled this question in your own heart and mind you can right now. This is the most important question you will ever answer in your lifetime.

Pray: "Father, God, in Your infinite wisdom, You have chosen to do what You have done in the person of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ because of Your great love for us. Sending Jesus to die in our place on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins is an unparalleled act of incomparable mercy and grace. Your desire is that we believe in Jesus and personally accept Him as Savior and Lord. God, Holy Spirit, I pray that You will bring conviction into the hearts of each one of us concerning who Jesus is and help us come to an accurate understanding of His person as the Son of God, Messiah, Lord, Savior and King. LORD Jesus, forgive us for our unwillingness to come to You on Your terms. Thank You for dying for our sin and providing us with the forgiveness that leads to eternal life in heaven. Amen."