

## The Return of the King

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Speaker: Mr. Paul Sudhakar

Scripture: Mark 11:1-25

### Jesus is God's long-expected King

#### 1-10

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*

*They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, He sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,*

*"Hosanna!"*

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"*

*"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

These verses tell us that Jesus is God's long expected king. In the first 8 chapters, Jesus is doing many miracles and trying to convince the disciples that He is the God-sent Messiah who was to come into the world. But they don't quite get it. Even when Peter got it, Jesus said not to tell this to anybody, and that God had revealed this to him.

Jesus never called Himself the Son of God, but when people called Him that, He gladly accepted it. At that time, people did not know that Jesus was the King, the Messiah who was to come into the world. But suddenly, you see the remarkable change here in the way Jesus approached this. Jesus now goes public. He sends His disciples to fetch the donkey. How He goes public is very clear in the way He travelled. Up till now, Jesus walked from place to place – from Galilee to Jerusalem, Judea and all the places. But suddenly, as He approaches Jerusalem, He fetches a donkey and sits on it and rides into Jerusalem. And then people cry out – *"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"* as a welcome for the King.

They get it now. They get that Jesus is the coming King who was to come into the world to set up His kingdom. It was written in the Old Testament, the only Bible they had at that time. It is revealed to us, but to them, it was hidden.

Zechariah 9:9 says, *"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!*

*Shout aloud, Daughter Jerusalem!*

*See, your king comes to you,*

*Righteous and having salvation,*

*Humble, mounted on a donkey,*

*On a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

This is what they were actually quoting. The mark of the king is to come on a donkey's colt. If you read Zechariah 9, he describes that this king will bring righteousness and peace into the world. He will set up the kingdom and there will be a perfect state of affairs in the world. All the kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of the Lord, and He will bring people into that Kingdom so that they would enjoy the kingdom. But such a thing had not happened – even at the time when Jesus entered Jerusalem, not even after 2000 years. It still has not happened. You may wonder where that kingdom is. If God has prophesied that He is going to come as the King, as the Lord, enter into Jerusalem, and establish the kingdom, then where is the Kingdom? Where is the righteous rule of the king? That's not what we see around us. We see absolute anarchy in the world. But Jesus has yet to establish that Kingdom, and what He is doing, is just a foretaste of what He is going to do. He is actually fulfilling the prophecy that was written.

But the Jews, though they welcomed Him as the king of the Jews, within a week, they reject Him. First they said "Hail King of the Jews!" but soon they said, "Nail Him, nail Him! Crucify Him! Why? The Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah in humility and in truth as a babe in Bethlehem, preaching the good news of the gospel of the kingdom, establishing righteousness and restoring salvation of His people. But there is another body of scripture intermingled with it – the coming of the King in power and glory, and establishing, restoring the kingdom to Israel, and ruling the world in righteousness, taking vengeance on the enemies and where the lion will lie down with the lamb, where death itself will retard, and a wonderful state of the Kingdom will be established. When it is intermingled, they could not see that. So, when Jesus entered, they cried "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," but soon they said, "Nail Him. Nail Him."

this is where we have to understand that the Jews were so taken up with this kingdom coming into power, that God's Messiah would come in glory and in honor and in great power, restoring the kingdom, that they completely missed Him as a Savior. That's why many people did not receive Him, except for the few disciples.

But what about us? Just as the Jews missed Him completely because they were so taken up with the King coming in power and glory, we the Church, us Christians, like the Jews, can also miss His because we are so taken up with Him as a Savior but not as a king. But He is the King; He is going to come.

When the King comes, He has two offices:

- The King has to save His people. He comes in humility to bring salvation for all of us. This He has already done.
- The King has to also bring righteousness and judgment, which He still has not done.

A Jew could not distinguish Jesus coming in power and glory and in humility, because it was intermingled, because it was prophesied. So he could not see that. Even Jesus said, "*O, daughter of Jerusalem, you do not know the time of your visitation.*"

Why is the greater reproach ours? Because the prophecy is already fulfilled. Jesus came into the world, He established the church, salvation is bought, the Holy Spirit has descended. So, if we don't recognize the second part which actually pre-empts the first part which has already come. The second part is to be fulfilled. Therefore, if you don't believe the King in our heart to come in judgment, definitely the greater reproach is the church's. so, the question

to the church is: Do you expect the King? Are you waiting for the King to come in justice and in truth? Are you waiting for Him? The Jews were not ready; they were so taken up with all the glory. We are not ready because we are so taken up with our salvation alone. That is what Jesus is trying to bring into these verses and that's not all about what Jesus is trying to do.

### **Jesus is the Unexpected King come to Judge**

#### **Mark 11:11-21**

*Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.*

*The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to find out if it had any fruit. When He reached it, He found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then He said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And His disciples heard Him say it.*

*On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as He taught them, He said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."*

*The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared Him, because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching.*

*When evening came, Jesus and His disciples went out of the city. In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree You cursed has withered!"*

In these verses, we get a couple of incidents:

- The fig tree
- The temple

Jesus first goes to the temple and surveys what was happening there. Then He comes back to Bethany to rest for the night. Then when He goes back, He looks for figs and when He doesn't find any, He curses the fig tree. Then He goes to the temple and cleanses the temple in that violent act of overturning the tables. The next morning, Peter finds the fig tree withered.

Mark has written these two incidents – the fig tree cursing and the temple cleansing – as if they are related. In fact, he has bracketed the fig tree along with the temple so that what is true of the fig tree was happening to the temple. Or from the fig tree, one can learn the lesson as to what is happening in the temple.

#### The Fig Tree:

Read by itself, everyone thinks that Jesus was too harsh on the fig trees, particularly this fig tree that He cursed. Jesus is fully aware that it was not the season for figs. In fact, Mark is upfront enough to tell us that. A fig tree is supposed to put forth the fruit and then the leaves, but this one has got it all wrong. It has put forth the leaves first without the figs. This means that anyone standing far from the tree and seeing the leaves, will be attracted to it, thinking that there will be fruit. And that's what happened. When Jesus saw the tree from a distance, it

had leaves. But when He went near, there was no fruit. So Jesus said, “May you never bear fruit anymore.” In other words – your function as a fig tree is over. You are no longer meant to be a fig tree. It is cursed.

### The Temple:

When He goes to the temple, there are two points there.

1. **A House of Prayer.** In vs. 17 He says, “Is it not written My house is called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it into a den of thieves.” Actually, this one verse consists of two references to the Old Testament prophecies. So first of all, Jesus is saying that the Jews are guilty of denying others their place with God.

“My house is called a house of prayer for all nations.” It is not only for the Jews. But what did they do? They converted it into a den of thieves. Therefore, this first point tells us that Jesus was very unhappy with the way the Jews conducted and went about the temple. Why? Because they prevented others from coming to God. They presumed that God is with them only. The Old Testament tells us that the Jewish nation was uniquely privileged as the people of God. They had a special relationship and many privileges with God. God came and dwelt in the temple and they offered sacrifices, prayed to God and worshipped God. God met with them in the temple and heard their prayers.

But God’s plan, in the Old Testament as well, was that this temple, this privilege must be extended to the Gentiles also. The Gentiles were equally welcome as the Jews. However, they were not supposed to enter the temple because they didn’t know about the sacrifices. But, if a Gentile would come to The Court of the Gentiles, which is outside the temple but inside the premises, he is welcome. We see that clearly in the chapter of Acts where the Ethiopian eunuch comes all the way from Ethiopia to see God in the temple. He doesn’t find it. There is anarchy there, the worship of everything, selling of goods, and so on. So, he goes away disappointed. But God sees him and sends Philip to preach the gospel to him.

Jesus is alluding to that situation when He says, “My house is called a house of prayer for all nations.” What He is referring to is very simple. The court of the Gentiles was meant for the Gentiles to come. It was a large area – two football fields wide and three football fields length, the largest of all the courts. It was situated to the west of the Mount of Olives.

When a Jew came to the temple, he had to do two things: offer a blood sacrifice with an animal, and offer the temple tax. Jesus was also asked for the temple tax which was half a shekel. But they would not accept a denarius, because that was Roman currency. It had the emblem of the Roman king and so was considered defiling to them. That is why money changers were required and they were all in the Mount of Olives. The sacrifices which were given, in terms of the doves and the unblemished lamb, and all the things that were being sold during Passover would actually happen in the Mount of Olives. But Caiaphas, the high priest at that time, brought it into the Court of the Gentiles, which meant that he was preventing the other nations from coming to God. So that is the sin that Jesus saw in the people of His day, the Jews.

In Zechariah it says very clearly that the Gentiles who were supposed to meet with God and receive the privileges which the Jew would otherwise receive in answer to their prayers, they were prevented from doing that by the Jews. The Jews converted this area of prayer into profits, and that's a blatant sin.

Therefore, the central point is that the Jews were preventing others from coming to God. Not only were they guilty of committing the sin of excluding nations from coming to God, but they were equally guilty of the sin of presuming their own standing with God. They said that the Gentiles don't have a place with God because they are defiled. They only were the ones privileged. If one says, "I am privileged," naturally he would say next that the others are not privileged. They presumed their own place with God and they excluded others from coming to God.

2. **A Den of Thieves.** As I said, the Jews were uniquely privileged in that God said that He would come and dwell in the temple. So, they thought that the temple is where they would unite with God. If they go to the temple, God would protect them. It is a safe house for them. "My house is called a house of prayer, but you have converted it into a den of thieves." What is a den of thieves? It's a place where a thief would hide, a safe house for him. So, the Jews thought that way – they thought that if they go into the temple, God is not going to judge them because God is the one who established the temple worship, and as long as I am in the temple, I am safe.

This prophecy is mentioned very clearly in Jeremiah 7:9-11 *Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears My name, and say, "We are safe"- safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house which bears My name become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.*

What Jeremiah is saying is that God is telling His people that if they don't repent, He will come to them in judgment. But the Jews took it lightly because they presumed their place with God. Rather than being an example to other nations, welcoming them with warm hearts into the providential grace of God, they were proud in their own presumption that God would never judge them. They did all sorts of sinful things and hid themselves in the place which they called a temple.

Jesus repeats that prophecy. "You call My house a house of prayer and you are preventing others from doing it, and you yourself are converting it into a den of robbers." This is exactly what they were doing. They were selling good, sheep and doves, for an exorbitant price, which many people could not afford. Even Joseph and Mary could only afford to buy two doves because that was small and cheap. Also, many times these Jews, in order to overthrow the Roman empire, would come into the court of the Gentiles and scheme how to overthrow them. So, Jesus quotes Jeremiah, "You have converted this place into a den of robbers and also you are preventing others from coming and worshipping Me." So, they come under the judgment of God.

The fig tree illustrates this point very clearly. They Jews expected Jesus to judge the other nations, forgetting how they conducted themselves. They thought they would not be judged; but they brought judgment upon themselves and they became enemies of God. Therefore, Jesus says in subsequent verses, "Never again will I come to you until you learn to cry

‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’.” And He never enters the temple after that.

The fig tree is destroyed instantly. It is just an example/metaphor/parable which Jesus is using to make people understand that God is a God of love and a God of judgment. God is holy, God is loving; but the Jews don’t quite get it. The tree is an example of what would happen to the temple. But the point is the temple. He leaves the temple and after that, He never enters the temple. The temple is destroyed to the ground actually in 70 AD by King Titus, the Roman king. That’s what Jesus said in His prophecy. Not one stone would be left on the other, everything is thrown down. This was fulfilled when King Titus set the temple on fire – the pillars caught fire and the overlaid gold was melted and went into the crevices. After it cooled, the Roman soldiers dug into the stones and picked at the gold. Therefore, not one stone was left on another until everything was thrown down.

The King will not only come in humility and truth and save His people – that’s His office – but the King also will come in judgment. So, Jesus is God’s unexpected King who is going to bring judgment. The Jews expected Him to bring judgment on their enemies, but actually they became God’s enemies because they presumed their place with God. They excluded others from coming to God because of their own proud presumption that they are the chosen people of God.

So, what is the lesson for us, for the church? Do we expect the King to come in judgment? Or do we settle for the idea that He is only a Savior? Is our future King going to come in judgment? Many people today assume that they are right with God. They presume that God accepts them. To such people, it won’t be the temple anymore that they think they could hide. It could be anything. It’s not the temple which tells them that they are protected by things; it could be anything. It’s a matter of the church worship that we go through. It could be our own self-righteousness, the good works that we do. Or it could even be a simple disbelief that God would ever judge anybody. To such people, God’s unexpected King will come in judgment.

If you presume on the King, He will come in judgment for you. That makes us understand that we too have some of the traits the Jews had. By just always blaming the Jews and how they lived at that time, in order to bring judgment on them, we are not excluded from them. We are not people who are perfect before God. We all have the same traits as the Jews had – we judge people. Are we examples to others? Do we extend a warm welcome to everyone? When John the Baptist came, he said, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, because the axe is already at the root.” Do we produce fruit? Do other nations, other people who don’t know anything about God, see the fruit in us? Are they extended a warm welcome into the temple of God, into the premises of God? Or do we exclude them by our proud presumption that we are saved by faith in Christ? That’s what he says, and that makes us ask this question: Is not the gospel true? Is not the gospel saving? If we trust in Jesus, the Bible says that we are saved. Yes, this is absolutely true. but how He says, is very differently here. If our prayer is: Lord, I do not want this judgment, but I want to be saved, then the God’s King, Jesus will save you when He brings judgment.

### **The coming King will still save His People**

In the first part of the reading we saw that Jesus came as a Savior, as a humble servant of God, preaching the good news. But He judged the temple and He judged the fig tree. But

when comes as a judge, judging the nations, He will still save His people. That is the office of the King.

Vs. 22-25

*“Have faith in God, “Jesus answered. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore, (see, He uses the word therefore, that means the first two verses are the reason) I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that Your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

On the surface, these verses appear to be very simple – that if you stand by faith and ask anything to be removed, it will be removed. But, if we see the prophecy of Zechariah, then you understand it very well.

Zechariah 14:1-4

*A day of the Lord is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.*

*Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as He fights on a day of battle. On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*

This mount is probably the Mount of Olives where Jesus stands. What He is saying to Peter is: “If you believe in God, any insurmountable thing that is in your way can be removed like this mountain, can be removed and split into two and provide a way of salvation for you.”

The mountain is insurmountable. The imagery is a little weird if you look only at the mountain in exclusion. But when you see the prophecy along with what Jesus said, then you see our own inability to save ourselves despite the fact that we have received Him as a Savior. The King has to save you still.

We are saved by grace through faith. That is what He is saying – have faith in God. Faith is never by itself. Faith in God! You cannot have faith in faith itself. We cannot say we have a great faith. Nobody has. We have faith in a great God who can do many things – insurmountable things as this.

Actually, salvation is of two parts:

- The substitutionary work of the Cross of Jesus Christ who put our sins on the cross and justified us fully, totally, until He knew it was finished.
- But God, by giving the Holy Spirit, works the identification work of the Cross which we all are supposed to do. Every time sin is produced in us, we have to take it to the cross and nail it. That’s the work of the Holy Spirit in this age, in the church age, the age in which we are living. So, the Holy Spirit strives every time with the believer in order to do the work of identification with Jesus Christ.

But none of us seem to be doing it. So, in order for salvation to be full, the King has to save us. We see our sins as a mountain, just as the prophecy says. But when we are on the

mountain, we naturally won't see a way of salvation. Nobody prays for judgment; we pray for salvation. That's what Jesus seems to be referring to here in this verse: "Therefore, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be done. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him."

When you stand praying, ask for forgiveness. The fact that forgiveness is mentioned here is the forgiveness of God for our sins first. Only when we receive forgiveness of God, can we ever forgive others. And when we don't forgive others, how can we receive the forgiveness of God. Our sins, for God, are enormous. If God puts all our sins in one room, it cannot hold it. We commit so many sins, and we forget it. It is an insurmountable task for God Himself to forgive us, but He does it. That's what it says, even if it is like a mountain, as big as the Mount of Olives, He can still remove it for you when He comes in judgment.

Zechariah says that the judgment is going to be horrible, when people will run away unexpected. Jesus has said – unequalled, unparalleled in the entire history of the human race. People will hide behind the rocks and welcome death, because that is going to be the judgment that's going to purge the entire world when the King comes and sets His feet on the Mount of Olives.

He says that when that happens, when the true believers in God, who trust Him, when they cry out, He will provide an escape route for them. How? He'll open up the mountain – even through it is so big, there will be a valley for people to pass.

So, what do we learn from all this? Do we expect the King to come? Is it the burning and blistering desire in our hearts that the King would come? Or are we slumbering into our salvation that God has anyway established the Kingdom for us, and therefore, I am entering the Kingdom. Should we do that, then we are no better than the Jews who presumed on God when they prevented others from entering the temple. Does our attitude prevent people from coming to God? We are a walking Bible. Others have to see the Bible in us, and be attracted. As the Jew was supposed to be an example and a warm welcome to the nations, so also should the Christians. But if we presume on the King, He will come in judgment for us.

About forgiveness: God wants us to forgive others. When you forgive others, then you are naturally humbled. We find our own unworthiness before God which naturally propels us to ask forgiveness from God. But if we should be forgiven by God, we should forgive others.

Stand praying: He says that such an insurmountable thing as the Mount of Olives can be accomplished by prayer only and that can happen when you forgive others as God will forgive you and save you.

He leaves so many questions for us today, that we should be men of faith; have faith in God. Always faith in God, not faith in faith. So, there are no great men of faith of God. It's a contradiction actually. There are men who have faith in a great God – like Billy Graham. All these people who accomplished great things of God because they had weak faith. They had no faith, in fact, very little faith in a great God. So, should we, in terms of our salvation. We cannot presume on God, or on the things of God. If we do, He will come in judgment for us. And we carry on praying until Jesus returns and brings His kingdom in justice and truth that is the full salvation for us. Until then, our nature makes us sin which brings judgment of God.

Therefore, our attitude should be one of humility and submission to God, not judging others and forgiving others and praying to God until the King returns. We truly must see the complete hopelessness for anyone to be saved until or unless the King intervenes.

Is there a blazing, blistering desire in your heart to be saved? For the Kingdom to come, for the King to return? If it is not so, then we have to search ourselves and ask God: God, Your King is going to come. He is going to bring judgment into the world, not only salvation. Lord, if I have presumed anything in Christ that I am saved, I am like the Jew in the temple. Help me, Lord, that I don't presume on the things of God. Help me not to prevent others from coming to Christ because of my own behavior. Help me to forgive others constantly and keep me in humility and in truth so that I may receive Your salvation in complete. That should be our prayer.

Let's look to God in prayer.

Our Father, we come into Your Holy presence, Lord. we thank you for the illustration that You have given to the fig tree. You never cursed any man, Lord, nor did You curse any human being. It is just an illustration of the greater truth, that one day You will judge this world in righteousness and in truth. but You will prevent us, Lord, from going through judgment. The Bible tells us that we will all be raptured; those who look for the King to come, they will be taken up. Lord, when He returns, we will not be here but in heaven. As He appears, so we will be, Lord. thank You for the Word, but at the same time, help us Lord, not to presume on the King. And when we presume, Lord, we become like the Jews. Forgive us Lord, if we have already presumed and help us to understand Your Word, meditate and remain in You. In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.