

March 27, 2024

Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–17
(Triumphal Entry)



Jesus Is King of Kings

Remember Verse

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. John 17:3

LESSON OVERVIEW

EXPLORE// 10 minutes




Option 1: Pin the Tail on the Donkey (for younger kids)

SUPPLIES

- Donkey Poster*
- Yarn (4" per child)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Blindfolds

Option 2: Covering the Road (for younger and older kids)

SUPPLIES

- Palm Branches template*
- Coats or jackets (1 for every 2 children)
- Masking tape
- Timer or stopwatch
- Optional: real palm branches 

DISCOVER// 30 minutes



Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image*
- Remember Verse animation*

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)


Connect Activity:
Through the Tunnel

SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image*
- Connect Activity image*
- Upbeat music


The Big God Story

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image*
- Timeline animation*
- Images: Arena, Map of Ancient World, Donkey, Prophecy, Royal Procession, Horses, Palm Branch*
- Bibles
- Palm branches (1 per child; real, paper, or other material; see Resources for optional Palm Branch cutout) 

Worship as Response

SUPPLIES

- Worship music: "Jesus Saves," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*
- Palm branches from The Big God Story (1 per child) 
- Optional: markers or pens

RESPOND// 15 minutes



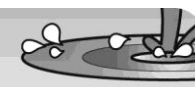
Reflect

Palm Sunday Still Life

SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (various colors, 10–20 sheets of each color)
- Scissors (several pairs)
- Tape (a few rolls)
- Optional: camera

BLESS// 5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 4*
- Large blankets or towels (2)
- Bible

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:
Customizable copy of Lesson 3
2018–19 Scope and Sequence
TruStory How It Works
Small Group Enhancements

At Home Weekly: Lesson 3

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

A sense of freedom fills the 9:00 p.m. service Sunday nights at my church. Energetic college kids attend “The Nine,” and it's not unusual for people to raise their hands, shout, or even dance as they worship.

Because those of us at The Nine are so willing to uniquely worship God, our worship leaders sometimes suggest new or different postures of response. One Sunday, after the sermon, the worship leader stopped halfway through the first song. “I think it would be great,” he said, “if we got to our knees to worship Jesus, our King.” The space between the rows of seats at my church is pretty tight! But slowly, one by one, everyone maneuvered to his knees. Even the worship band followed suit.

I'll be honest: It felt uncomfortable. But, to me, it was a physical expression of what our hearts and lives should look like. We're called to glorify Christ regardless of our situations. We're called to be the sort of people who submit to God even when it's inconvenient. We're to lift up Jesus, always, because He is our King.

Erika Abdelatif

ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

From the beginning to the end, the Old Testament records the history of God's people, the Israelites, awaiting the arrival of their promised Savior. They envisioned a king who would come with a sword and make Israel the leader of all the nations. Their hope for this sort of Messiah is evident in the way they welcomed Jesus on what we refer to as “Palm Sunday” or the “Triumphal Entry.” As Jesus approached Jerusalem, crowds scurried to cut palm branches and wave them over Him as He entered the city.

The palm branch was a symbol of Jewish patriotism. It represented victory for the Jewish people. Palms were used in decorating Jewish coins, buildings, and even synagogues. They were prominently displayed during many of the major feasts and festivals. Throughout the Old Testament and various Jewish texts, palm branches were used to symbolize Jewish pride, and Israelites would only cover the ground with them for honorable and worthy individuals. For the people to lace Jesus' path with palm fronds while waving branches over Him as He passed implied that they perceived Him to be a king coming to rescue them. In fact, the people cried out, “Hosanna,” which means “Save us” or “Rescue us.” The people shouted it in celebration, as if to say, “Hooray—He is here to save us!”

In His first coming, Jesus didn't intend to be an earthly warrior king. He came to restore the broken relationship between mankind and God. Instead of bringing a sword, He brought a message of peace and humility for true salvation. Those who followed Jesus had to be willing to embrace a new concept of kingship, one of love and inclusion rather than domination and exclusion. And one day He'll return to earth as our conquering King.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

How do you honor a king? In the movies, everyone bows in the presence of a king. Sometimes a servant or messenger will kneel or walk backward so as not to turn his back to the king. This gives the king the honor and respect he deserves. Subjects bow down in submission, recognizing the power and majesty of the king.

The Bible proclaims that Jesus is the King of Kings! We probably don't bow down before Jesus—simply for the sake of giving Him honor—often enough. Sometimes we forget His position of authority and rule over us because He is such a loving and generous King. This week, each morning, spend a few minutes bowing down before God. Instead of

running into His throne room with requests, spend a few moments worshipping and praising Him for who He is—the King of the universe and your life.

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

EXPLORE//10 minutes



Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Option 1: Pin the Tail on the Donkey (for younger kids)

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He rode a donkey. For Israel, a donkey represented a king coming in peace (Zechariah 9:9). Play this classic children's game to get the kids curious about the part of The Big God Story they'll hear today.

SUPPLIES

- Donkey Poster (see Resources)
- Yarn (4" per child)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Blindfolds

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Donkey Poster. Cut the yarn into four-inch pieces; make one piece for each child.

SET UP

Tape the Donkey Poster to the wall.


RELATE

One at a time, blindfold each child and hand him a piece of yarn with a piece of tape stuck to one end. Then invite him to try to "pin" the "tail"—tape the piece of yarn—on the donkey. Add a challenging twist to the game by spinning around the children before releasing them to pin the tail on the donkey.

Option 2: Covering the Road (for younger and older kids)

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people placed palm branches and coats down on the road. This was something people did when they welcomed a king to their town (2 Kings 9:13). As Jesus rode in, the people were recognizing that Jesus is the King of Kings! In this activity, kids will walk down the "Road to Jerusalem."

SUPPLIES

- Palm Branches template (see Resources)
- Coats or jackets (1 for every 2 children)
- Masking tape
- Timer or stopwatch
- Optional: real palm branches 

SET UP

Print one Palm Branches template for every two children. Cut out each branch. Use the masking tape to make a start line on the floor and a finish line about 10 to 20 feet away. Place the palm branches and coats nearby.

RELATE

Select one child at a time to walk down the "Road to Jerusalem." Then, have the rest of the children each choose either a coat or jacket or a palm branch. Start a timer and have the children lay their coats or branches on the ground next to each other in front of the player to create "stepping stones" for him to use to get to the other line. See how fast he can get there without stepping on the floor. This may require kids to put down their coat or branch for him to step on and

then pick it up and hurry to the other end to put it down again. Repeat with as many players as possible.

LARGE GROUP

SECTION

DISCOVER//30 minutes



Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3

Connect

QUESTION

Have you ever seen a royal procession? If so, what did it look like? If not, what do you imagine a royal procession would look like?

Activity: Through the Tunnel

SUPPLIES

- Connect Question image (see Resources)
- Connect Activity image (see Resources)
- Upbeat music

RELATE

Have children line up in two lines facing each other. Once everyone is lined up, have them discuss the Connect question with the person across from them. Then, have children reach their arms up toward their partners' arms to form a tunnel. *Tech: Cue upbeat music.* One by one, have the partners on the end drop their arms and walk through the tunnel to the other end. Then have them put their arms back up for the rest of the kids to go through. Play until everyone has gone through the tunnel.

The Big God Story


Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–17

Storytelling Technique: Props and Sounds

Jesus Is King of Kings

SUPPLIES

- Timeline image (see Resources)
- Timeline animation (see Resources)

- Images: Arena, Map of Ancient World, Donkey, Prophecy, Royal Procession, Horses, Palm Branch (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Palm branches (1 per child; real, paper, or other material; see Resources for optional Palm Branch cutout) 

SET UP

Hand out the palm branches beforehand or set them up front to hand out during the storytelling time. Note: If you don't have actual palm branches, print out multiple copies of the Palm Branch image.

RELATE

By a show of hands, who loves holidays? What's your favorite thing about holidays? Invite kids to respond. If you want, share your answer. **I think we can safely say everyone loves holidays. This week, we'll hear about a celebration that took place after Jesus traveled. First, let's pray.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

It was Passover, one of the Jews' most important holidays. Passover was one of the three feasts Jewish people traveled to Jerusalem to attend, and Jesus and His disciples were making their way to the city. About 100,000 people lived in Jerusalem. So, when people traveled from all over to go there, the city's population got three times bigger. Wow! Have everyone stand up and move closer together so that it feels crowded. Then, have leaders work their way through the crowd to the front, saying, "Excuse me ... pardon me." Hand each leader some palm branches to distribute to the kids. Then, have everyone sit down as leaders pass out palm branches.

This Passover was different from all the other Passovers before because this time Jesus—the King of Kings—was coming into Jerusalem. Encourage children to wave their palm branches and say, "Jesus is King of Kings." Teach them to wave their branches and repeat with you every time you say, "Jesus is King of Kings."

Many of the people who had come to the festival in Jerusalem had heard of Jesus and were hoping He would be there. Have kids pretend to whisper to one another as if they are talking about the rumor that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. **They had heard about Jesus healing sick people, blind people, and paralyzed people—and even raising a man from the dead!**

They hoped Jesus was the Messiah—the One prophesied about for hundreds of years. What they didn't know was that Jesus was the Messiah *and* the King of Kings! Encourage children to wave their palm branches and say, "Jesus is King of Kings."

So just imagine a crowd of people—as many as in a sports arena (have children cheer as if they are a large crowd; *Tech: Cue Arena image*)—all hoping to see one person: Jesus. Jewish people had been waiting since the beginning of The Big God Story for the promised Messiah.

They knew the Messiah would save His people. Because the people were living under Roman rule (*Tech: Cue Map of Ancient World image*), they thought the Messiah would save them from the Romans. They were expecting a warrior king (have children make trumpet sounds as if welcoming a warrior king) to ride in on his magnificent horse and beat the bad guys so they could be free again to live as God's people.

Of course, Jesus is the King of Kings. Have children wave their palm branches and say, "Jesus is King of Kings." **He is King over everything because He is God! But He is not the kind of king the Jewish people thought He would be.** Have children make trumpet sounds as if announcing a king. **He had come to save them, but not from their enemies or Roman rule. Jesus had come to save His people and the rest of the world from their sins.** Have children all make a "hush" sound as if quieting down the regal celebration. **This would be a hard fact for many Jewish people to accept. They had expected for so long that the Messiah would be a warrior king (have children make trumpet sounds as if announcing a king), but Jesus wanted them to see that He would not be that kind of king yet.**

As Jesus and His disciples approached Jerusalem, He sent two disciples on a special errand. Read Matthew 21:2-3 aloud and encourage children to open their Bibles and follow along. *Tech: Cue Donkey image.* **Jesus knew He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey because of what the prophet Zechariah had said approximately 500 years earlier. Want to know what the prophecy said?** Encourage children to look in their Bibles at Matthew 21:5 and follow along as you read aloud. *Tech: Cue Prophecy image.* **"See, your king comes ... gentle and riding on a donkey" (v. 5). Jesus knew His choice to ride in on a donkey was the fulfillment of prophecy. He also knew He was telling the crowd that Jesus is King of Kings!** Invite children to wave their palm branches and say, "Jesus is King of Kings."

Once the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus, they threw their cloaks over it like a saddle, and Jesus prepared to ride into Jerusalem. If you were in a crowd waiting for a king to enter, what do you imagine would happen when he showed up? *Tech: Cue Royal Procession image.* You might imagine that chariots would lead the way, that trumpets would sound, or that soldiers would walk with him. Or you might imagine him riding on a

big, beautiful, decorated horse, like kings did when they headed to war. *Tech: Cue Horses image.*

Well, Jesus—the King of Kings (have children wave their palm branches and say, “Jesus is King of Kings”)—**chose to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Why do you think this was how He entered Jerusalem? Back in Bible times, donkeys symbolized humility and peace.** Have children slap their hands on their thighs as if they are making donkey stepping sounds. **Jesus rode on a donkey to show His people that He was indeed the King they sought, but not in the way they had imagined.**

Read Matthew 21:8 aloud as children follow along. *Tech: Cue Palm Branch image.* Have kids stand up and act out the scene by waving their palm branches as you read Matthew 21:9 aloud. **Back then, people spread their garments on the pathway to cushion the ride of a king. They also waved palm branches because palms symbolized triumph. The word *triumph* means “victory.” So, the Jewish people waved palms because they thought Jesus would bring military victory over the Roman government.**

They also shouted, “Hosanna!” This word means, “save us!” Have children shout “Hosanna! Hosanna!” **Clearly, these people wanted Jesus to save them. They thought Jesus would save them from living under Roman rulers. But they had no idea that Jesus is King of Kings.** Have kids wave palm branches and say, “Jesus is King of Kings.” **They had no idea how much Jesus actually would save them! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus saves everyone who believes in Him from the chains of sin and death. Wow!**


When Jesus rode into Jerusalem that day, He knew the crowd had an incorrect view of Him. They thought He would only save them from their earthly problems. Jesus wanted them to know that His kingdom and His reign are much bigger and much greater than simply a kingdom on earth. But Jesus did not come as an earthly king on a warrior horse to take down the Roman government. He is God of the universe, the King of Kings, who sacrificed Himself in love to save people from sin and death! Have children wave their palm branches and say, “Jesus is King of Kings!”

God wants us to know Him. That’s why He sent His Son. And when we cry out to Him, “Hosanna! Save us!” we are not only inviting Him to be our Savior, but we are inviting Him to take His rightful place as the King of our lives. Share the story of a time when you let Jesus be the King of everything in your life.

Worship as Response

This time allows kids to respond to God through worship. Make plans for your worship time, but prepare yourself and your team to hold them loosely if the Holy Spirit leads the group in a different direction.

SUPPLIES

- Worship music: “Jesus Saves,” TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*
- Palm branches from The Big God Story (1 per child) 
- Optional: Markers or pens

RELATE

Jesus may not have been the earthly king the Israelites had been hoping for. However, because Jesus died and rose again for our sake, we know He is our King of Kings for eternity—who will also rule over a new earth, forever. Because we know Him for who He truly is—a God who loves us and cares for us—we can worship Him all the time, regardless of what happens. We know He has a bigger plan, both for our lives and for His kingdom! As you consider Jesus being your King of Kings, feel free to dance, shout, and celebrate Him!

During this time, we are going to play some music, and you can respond as you choose. You can wave your palm branch as if you are saying, “Hosanna! Save us!” You can dance around with your palm branch as you celebrate that Jesus is King of Kings. Or, you can think of one area of your life you want to Jesus to be King over. When you’re ready, bring your branch forward and place it on the ground as if you are making a path for King Jesus.

Lead the kids in a time of worship through singing. Play “Jesus Saves” for the kids and let them respond as they choose. Encourage them to dance around with their palm branches. Or, if you used the cutouts from The Big God Story, have children write or draw on their palm branches one area of life they want invite Jesus to be King over. When they finish, they can bring their branches to the front of the room.

SMALL GROUP

RESPOND//15 minutes

Children respond to what the Holy Spirit is teaching them as they reflect on the day's portion of The Big God Story, engage in relationship, and create meaningful pieces of art individually or together.

Reflect: Jesus Is King of Kings

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

- **Why did Jesus ride on a donkey?** Matthew 21:1–5; John 12:14–15
- **What were the people shouting as Jesus rode into Jerusalem?** Matthew 21:9; John 12:12–13
- **What does *hosanna* mean?**
- **What kind of king is Jesus?**
- **How can you worship Jesus as King of Kings this week?**

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER KIDS

- **Why did Jesus ride on a donkey?** Matthew 21:1–5; John 12:14–15
- **Why were the people waving palm branches?**
- **Why wasn't Jesus the kind of king they were hoping for?**
- **What kind of king is Jesus?**
- **What does *hosanna* mean? Is there a place in your life where you feel like shouting, "Hosanna!" to Jesus?**
- **How can you worship Jesus as King of Kings this week?**
- **What does it mean to you to have Jesus as King of your life?**

Palm Sunday Still Life

Kids will create a "snapshot" of the scene of Jesus riding into Jerusalem.

SUPPLIES

- Construction paper (various colors, 10–20 sheets of each color)
- Scissors (several pairs)
- Tape (a few rolls)
- Optional: Camera

RELATE

When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the Israelites recognized Him as King. The problem was that they didn't know what kind of king He really was! We, however, have the privilege of knowing Jesus for who He really is: the King of Kings! Today we will worship Jesus and let Him know He is our King. Using construction paper and tape, help the kids create a snapshot of the scene of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. Kids can make palm fronds out of green paper, crowns and Bible-times head coverings out of yellow or brown paper, etc. They can even make their own donkey out of brown paper. Once the kids build their scene, have them act it out. Optional: If you have a camera, take a picture of the scene.

BLESS//5 minutes

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 4 (see Resources)
- Large blankets or towels (2)
- Bible

RELATE

Have children work together to spread out the blankets or towels to make a path. Then, have kids kneel on either side of the towels as if they're the crowd watching Jesus pass. As you kneel, open a Bible and read Matthew 21:9:

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

May you know that Jesus is the King of Kings. May you be full of joy and praise because He alone is the King over all the earth.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.