

# Lesson 21: The King Arrives

## **Key Takeaway**

Jesus is the promised King who came to save us by giving his life for us.

## **Scriptural Basis**

Matthew 21:1-11, John 19:2, Mark 10:45

## **Bible Verse**

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NLT).

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Children will understand that Jesus is the King God promised, not the kind of king people expected.
- Children will recognize that Jesus rules through love and humility, not force or wealth.
- Children will remember that Jesus invites us to follow him and be part of his forever Kingdom.

## **Materials Needed for Small Group:**

- ☐ A Bible
- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ A snack per child

### **Activity Ideas: This or That – The Unexpected King**

- ☐ Printout 1, one per small group
- ☐ Tokens or pennies, at least one for each student

### **Activity: Craft Activity: Invitation to God's Kingdom**

- ☐ Blank invitation cards (folded cardstock or colorful paper)
- ☐ Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- ☐ Stickers (hearts, crosses, crowns, palm branches)
- ☐ (Optional) Glue and cut-out decorations (optional: gold paper for crowns, palm leaves, etc.)

## **Materials Needed for Large Group:**

- ☐ A Bible

## **Materials Needed for Games:**

### **Game: King or King? Sorting Game**

- ☐ Pre-made picture or word cards (worldly king symbols: crown, throne, army, riches; Jesus' King symbols: donkey, cross, heart, serving hands)
- ☐ Two buckets or boxes labeled "Expected King" and "Promised King"

### **Game: Donkey Dash Obstacle Course**

- ☐ Cones, chairs, or tape to create an obstacle course
- ☐ Donkey headbands or simple cutout ears (optional)

### **Game: Hosanna Freeze Dance**

- ☐ Upbeat worship music
- ☐ Green paper "palm branches" (optional).

### **Game: Crown or Cross? Movement Game**

- ☐ Signs or cones marking two sides of the room: CROWN and CROSS
- ☐ Optional: Print images of a crown and a cross

# Small Group Session 1

15 Minutes

Distribute name tags and snacks. Choose one of the following activities to do together while children eat their snack.

## Share and Listen

### Option 1

Ask the children to share their highs and lows (the best and worst things that happened to them either today or from the past week).

### Option 2

Ask the children to take turns sharing how they are feeling today using the [“How Are You Feeling?” chart](#).

## Pray Together

Collect prayer requests from the students. The leader or a student can pray for the entire group, or a leader can pair up students and invite them to pray for one another.

## Opening Questions

- **“What is your idea of a king?”**
- **“If you were welcoming a king into your town, what would you do?”**

## Activity: Hosanna Cheer

***“In our lesson today we will hear about the time Jesus entered Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel.***

***The people in Jerusalem were excited. They thought Jesus would be a king who would free them from their enemies. But Jesus was a different kind of king. Let’s read what happened as Jesus came into town.”***

**Read Matthew 21:1-11.**

**Have the kids practice cheering like the people in Jerusalem did when Jesus entered.**

***“When I say, “Who is coming?” you say, “Jesus, the King!””***

Practice several times. Then have them wave their hands like palm branches and say, “Hosanna! Hosanna!”

- ***“Hosanna means “Please save us!”—the people were asking Jesus to rescue them.”***
- ***“What is a cheer we could make if Jesus was coming to club today?”***  
(Take a few minutes working on a cheer as a small group)

If it helps, have students imagine the excitement they would feel meeting their favorite player or team.

## Activity Ideas: This or That: The Unexpected King

*Objective: Help students understand the contrast between the world’s expectations of a king and how Jesus fulfilled prophecies in an unexpected way.*

**Materials Needed:**

- ☐ Printout 1 (a sheet listing each pair of kingly expectations vs. Jesus' reality)
- ☐ Pennies or small tokens (one per student)

***"Today, we're going to think about what kind of king people expected and what kind of king Jesus really was.***

***For each question, I'll read two different descriptions of a king. You'll vote for which one seems like the more powerful or expected king by dropping your tokens onto the picture you think is true.***

***After we vote, we'll see what Jesus actually did."***

Place Printout 1 on the ground or table so that all the students can see. Read the first comparison aloud (e.g., "Would a king ride a war horse or a donkey?"). Have students silently decide and drop their tokens onto the picture that matches their choice.

Read the Bible passage (or summarize it for younger kids) to show how Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in an unexpected way. If you run out of time in the first small group, go through the passages in the second small group.

Would a king:

- ***"Ride a war horse vs a donkey?"***  
(Jesus rode a donkey – Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:1-7)
- ***"Defeat enemies with a sword vs by dying on a cross?"***  
(Jesus died on a cross – Isaiah 53:5, John 18:36)
- ***"Sit on a throne vs serve others?"***  
(Jesus served – John 13:12-17)
- ***"Wear royal robes vs simple clothes?"***  
(Jesus wore simple clothes – John 19:1-3)
- ***"Sleep in a palace vs wherever he could?"***  
(Jesus had no place to lay his head – Luke 9:58)
- ***"Rule over a castle vs rule hearts?"***  
(Jesus rules hearts – Luke 17:20-21)
- ***"Have servants vs be a servant?"***  
(Jesus came to serve – Mark 10:45)
- ***"Gain riches vs give everything away?"***  
(Jesus gave everything – 2 Corinthians 8:9)
- ***"Punish sinners vs forgive them?"***  
(Jesus forgave – Luke 23:34, Isaiah 53:6)

Ask:

- ***"Why do you think Jesus chose this way instead of what people expected?"***
- ***"What surprised you most about how Jesus fulfilled these prophecies?"***
- ***"Why do you think people expected a different kind of king?"***

- *“How does knowing that Jesus is a different kind of king affect how we follow him today?”*
- *“Which choice would have been the hardest for you if you were Jesus?”*

*“How we think about a king is much like how people in Jesus’ day thought about a king. Jesus came as a humble servant, riding on a donkey.*

*God told the people through prophecy how the king would come but they still had different ideas of who the king would be and how he would come.”*

# Large Group

10-15 Minutes

Welcome the students to Crossroads and tell them you are glad they came this week.

## Optional Starters

**“Who is Jesus” call and response**

**Prayer Prompt: “God, I want to praise you for...”**

(Tell God something amazing about him and praise him for who he is.)

**Opening Song: “I Believe” by Go Fish**

## Opening Prayer

Tell kids that closing their eyes and folding their hands together can help keep them focused and not distract those around them.

## Opening Questions

- **“What is your idea of a king?”**
- **“What do kings usually look like?”**

**“Today, we’ll hear about a King who was different from all the others!”**

## Activity: What Kind of King? (Move to a Side)

*Objective: Help kids understand the difference between the world’s idea of a king and Jesus as King through movement and discussion.*

Designate two sides of the room. One side represents the first idea of a king, and the other represents the contrasting idea.

**“We’re going to think about different kinds of kings. When I say two different ideas of a king, you will move to the side of the room that matches the kind of king you would rather follow or think is the best.”**

Explain to the kids that you will say two different kinds of kings, and they will choose which one they think is better or which one they would rather follow by moving to that side of the room.

Encourage them to make quick decisions and move right away!

1. (Left side) A king who wears a golden crown 👑 or (Right side) A king who wears a crown of thorns?
2. (Right side) A king who lives in a giant castle 🏰 or (Left side) A king who travels from place to place? 🍷
3. (Left side) A king who has an army to fight for him ⚔️ or (Right side) A king who fights for his people? 🧑
4. (Right side) A king who commands everyone to serve him 📜 or (Left side) A king who serves others? 🍷
5. (Left side) A king who is rich and owns everything 💰 or (Right side) A king who gives away what he has? 🎁

6. (Left side) A king who rules with strict laws ⚖️ or (Right side) A king who shows mercy? ❤️
7. (Left side) A king who rides a big war horse 🐎 or (Right side) A king who rides a small donkey? 🐴
8. (Left side) A king who eats fancy meals 🍽️ or (Right side) A king who eats with regular people? 🍔
9. (Left side) A king who never talks to his people 🗣️ or (Right side) A king who listens to everyone? 👂
10. (Left side) A king who wears royal robes 👑 or (Right side) A king who wears normal clothes? 👕
11. (Left side) A king who wins battles with power 💪 or (Right side) A king who wins hearts with love? ❤️
12. (Left side) A king who demands respect 🙌 or (Right side) A king who earns respect? 🙏

Gather everyone back together in the middle.

Ask:

- ***“Did any of the choices surprise you?”***
- ***“Which side do you think describes the kind of king most people expect?”***
- ***“Which side do you think describes Jesus?”***

***“Today we are talking about how Jesus is the Savior King. He came to save people from their sins.”***

- ***“What are some examples of sin?”***
- ***“If you were going to save the world from sin, how would you do it?”***
- ***“Would you save people using superpowers?”***
- ***“Would you save people by using money?”***
- ***“Would you try to save people by using medicine?”***
- ***“Would you make people pay you to be saved?”***

***“When Jesus came, he didn’t seek to establish a kingdom through power, but rather, he came to save people, giving everything he had to rescue them from their sins.”***

Explain how Jesus is a different kind of king:

- ***“He came to serve, not to be served” (Mark 10:45).***
- ***“He didn’t have a palace or an army but ruled with love and truth” (John 15:9-10).***
- ***“Instead of a golden crown, he wore a crown of thorns” (John 19:2).***
- ***“Instead of demanding respect, he washed his disciples’ feet” (John 13:5).***

Finish by connecting this to how we can follow Jesus as King in our lives.

## **The Story: Jesus Arrives**

Read Matthew 21:1-11.

***“As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. “Go into the village over there,” he said. “As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone***

***asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them."***

***This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,  
"Tell the people of Jerusalem,  
'Look, your King is coming to you.  
He is humble, riding on a donkey—  
riding on a donkey's colt.'"***

***The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David!"***

***Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Praise God in highest heaven!"  
The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked.***

***And the crowds replied, "It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."  
"Now I am going to reread the story. I want you to tell me if there is anything wrong with the story as I read and and tell me what it should be."***

***As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see an elephant tied there, with its calf beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately give you a steak dinner."***

***This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,  
"Tell the people of Jerusalem,  
'Look, your King is coming to you.  
He is humble, riding on giraffe—  
riding on a giraffe's calf.'"***

***The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. They brought the zebra and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their shoes on the road ahead of him, and others took tires from the cars and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David!"***

***Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Praise God in highest heaven!"***



The entire city of Chicago was in an uproar as he entered. “Who is this?” they asked.

And the crowds replied, “It’s Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”  
*“When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he was showing everyone that he was the promised King, just as God had said long ago. The people were excited, waving palm branches and shouting ‘Hosanna!’ (which means ‘Please save us!’). They expected Jesus to be a powerful ruler who would defeat their enemies.*

*But Jesus had a different mission—he came to save people from sin, not just to be a king on earth. At first, the crowd cheered for him, but by the end of the week, many turned against him because he wasn’t the king they expected. Still, Jesus never changed his plan. He knew he would die on the cross and rise again to rescue us.*

*That’s why Jesus is the best King—he rules with love and forgiveness, not power and force. Today, we can trust him, follow him, and believe that his plan is always better than ours!*

*This week, think about how you can honor Jesus as King— by trusting him to save us from our sins. Let’s make Jesus the King of our hearts!”*

#### **Close in Prayer**

Thank Jesus for being the King who saves us. Ask God to help us follow Jesus and trust in his plan.

Pray that we would recognize Jesus as our Savior, just like the crowd called out “Hosanna!”

# Small Group Session 2

20-25 Minutes

Share the Key Takeaway: Jesus is the promised King who came to save us by giving his life for us.

***“Jesus came as a King, but he was not the kind of king people expected. Most kings rule with power and control, but Jesus rules with love and gave his life to save us. Let’s compare again what people expected of a king to what the Bible says about Jesus.”***

## Activity: King Comparisons & Bible Verses

***“Would a king...”***

1. ***“Rule with a sword or sacrifice himself on the cross? Let’s read Isaiah 53:5 and John 18:36 to find out.”***
2. ***“Live in a castle or rule in people’s hearts? What does Luke 17:20-21 say about that?”***
3. ***“Demand to be served or serve others? Let’s look at Mark 10:45 to learn Jesus’ way.”***
4. ***“Punish his enemies or forgive them? We can see Jesus’ way in Luke 23:34 and Isaiah 53:6.”***

## Discussion Questions

- ***“What do you think about the way Jesus is as King?”***
- ***“How do people respond to him?”*** (Some follow him, others reject him or ignore him.)
- ***“What does it mean to accept Jesus as our King?”*** (We trust him, follow him, and become part of his kingdom.)

## Activity -Craft: Invitation to God’s Kingdom

Objective: Kids will create a party-style invitation to represent Jesus’ invitation to be part of God’s kingdom.

### Materials Needed:

- ☐ Blank invitation cards (folded cardstock or colorful paper)
- ☐ Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- ☐ Stickers (hearts, crosses, crowns, palm branches)
- ☐ Glue and cut-out decorations (optional: gold paper for crowns, palm leaves, etc.)

Helpful Hint: You might want to create a sample card to bring to the club so kids can see an example.

***“Jesus invites everyone to be part of God’s kingdom—not through riches or power, but through his love and sacrifice. We’re going to make invitations as if***

***we were inviting someone to a big celebration—because following Jesus is the best decision ever!”***

Design the Front:

- Write “You’re Invited to God’s Kingdom!” in big, colorful letters.
- Decorate with crowns, hearts, crosses, and palm branches (symbols from the triumphal entry).

Write the Invitation Details Inside:

- Instead of a party location: “Jesus invites you to follow him!”
- Instead of a date and time: “This invitation is always open!”
- Instead of RSVP details: “Say YES to Jesus and be part of his forever kingdom!”

Personal Touch:

- Draw a picture or write something they love about Jesus inside.
- Older kids can include a Bible verse (e.g., Matthew 21:9 or John 3:16).

Share or Keep:

- Option 1: Take the invitation home as a reminder.
- Option 2: Give it to a friend or family member to share Jesus’ love.

Discussion Questions

- ***“Who does Jesus invite into his kingdom?” (Everyone!)***
- ***“How can we accept his invitation?” (By believing in him and following him.)***
- ***“Have you ever made that decision? Or are you ignoring him or rejecting him?”***
- ***“What does it mean to be part of God’s kingdom?” (Loving and obeying Jesus, sharing his love with others.)***

### **Going Deeper**

- ***“What does it mean that Jesus is God’s Son?”***
- ***“Why do you think God said, “This is my Son... Listen to Him?”***
- ***“How do you think the disciples felt when they saw Jesus glowing on the mountain?”***
- ***“What are some things that show us Jesus is human? What are some things that show he is God?”***
- ***“How does it help you to know that Jesus got tired, hungry, and sad like we do?”***
- ***“Can you think of a time when you felt alone, scared, or tempted? How might it help to know that Jesus understands those feelings?”***
- ***“What are some things Jesus did on earth that show he really lived a human life?”***
- ***“Why is it important that Jesus understands what we go through and has the power to help?”***
- ***“How can you listen to Jesus this week—just like God said to do?”***

***“Being part of God’s Kingdom means we get to live with Jesus as our King—now and forever!”***

# Ending Together

*5-10 Minutes*

- ***“What did you learn about Jesus today?”***
- ***“How can we celebrate Jesus as our King every day, not just on Palm Sunday?”***

## Response and Reflection

Younger Kids:

- Share the story of Jesus, the unexpected King who came to save people from their sins.
- Show someone at home the invitation you made and explain what it means.

Older Kids:

- Think of ways to show that Jesus is your King this week (prayer, obedience, kindness).
- Share with a friend how Jesus' kingdom is different—He came to serve and save through love and forgiveness.

## Memory Verse: John 3:16

Print the verse and practice it using simple hand motions.

Check out the [Memory Verse Game Ideas](#) for fun ways to reinforce it.

Pray with the students and dismiss them.

## Close in Prayer

Thank Jesus for being the true King who brings peace and salvation.

Ask God to help us listen to Jesus and follow him with our whole hearts.

# Games

25 Minutes

## Game: King or King? Sorting Game

### Materials Needed:

- ☐ Pre-made picture or word cards (worldly king symbols: crown, throne, army, riches; Jesus' King symbols: donkey, cross, heart, serving hands)
- ☐ Two buckets or boxes labeled "Expected King" and "Promised King"

### How to Play:

- Show or read a card.
  - Kids race to place the card in the correct bucket (Expected King or Promised King).
- After sorting all cards, review them together and discuss the differences.

**Connection to Lesson:** Reinforces the contrast between the king the people expected and the King God sent—Jesus, who saves through love and sacrifice.

## Game: Donkey Dash Obstacle Course

### Materials Needed:

- ☐ Cones, chairs, or tape to create an obstacle course
- ☐ Donkey headbands or simple cutout ears (optional)

### How to Play:

- Players pretend to be donkeys carrying the King.
- They must crawl, walk, or gallop through the course carefully (adding fun obstacles like low tunnels to duck under, balancing steps, etc.).
- Time each team to see who can complete the course carefully and quickly.

**Connection to Lesson:** Illustrates the humility of Jesus choosing to ride a donkey rather than a war horse.

- What kind of king would ride a donkey?
- What does this show about Jesus?

## Game: Hosanna Freeze Dance

### Materials Needed:

- ☐ Upbeat worship music
- ☐ Green paper "palm branches" (optional)

### How to Play:

- Play music while kids dance and wave their palm branches.
- When the leader calls "Hosanna!" kids freeze in a big praise pose.

- Last to freeze is out for that round.

**Connection to Lesson:** Fun, energetic game that reinforces the excitement of the crowd as they welcomed Jesus as King.

### Game: Crown or Cross? Movement Game

#### Materials Needed:

- ☐ Signs or cones marking two sides of the room: CROWN and CROSS
- ☐ Optional: Print images of a crown and a cross

#### How to Play:

- The leader reads statements describing either the king people expected (CROWN) or Jesus the promised King (CROSS).
- Kids run to the side that matches the type of king.

#### For example:

1. Commands soldiers to fight for him. → CROWN
2. Lets people place a crown of thorns on his head. → CROSS
3. Rides into the city on a war horse. → CROWN
4. Rides into the city on a donkey. → CROSS
5. Collects lots of gold and treasure for himself. → CROWN
6. Gives away everything to show love. → CROSS
7. Makes people bow and serve him. → CROWN
8. Washes his friends' feet. → CROSS
9. Wears a fancy royal robe. → CROWN
10. Wears simple clothes like regular people. → CROSS
11. Uses power to defeat enemies. → CROWN
12. Uses love to change hearts. → CROSS
13. Lives in a giant castle with guards. → CROWN
14. Has no place to lay his head. → CROSS
15. Sits on a golden throne. → CROWN
16. Dies on a cross to save people. → CROSS
17. Demands people pay taxes to him. → CROWN
18. Pays the price for sin himself. → CROSS
19. Punishes people who make mistakes. → CROWN
20. Forgives those who hurt him. → CROSS

- After each statement, pause and briefly explain why.

**Connection to Lesson:** Helps kids identify the difference between earthly kings and Jesus, our Savior King who came to serve.

## Printout 21.1

### THIS OR THAT: THE UNEXPECTED KING

Ride a war horse

**OR**

Ride a donkey

Defeat enemies  
with a sword

**OR**

Defeat enemies  
by dying on a cross

Sit on a throne

**OR**

Always be working

Wear a golden crown  
and royal clothing

**OR**

Wear normal clothes

Sleep in a palace  
or castle

**OR**

Sleep wherever he  
could lie down

Rule over a castle  
and kingdom

**OR**

Rule over  
people's hearts

Have servants

**OR**

Be a servant

Make himself rich

**OR**

Give everything  
he has away

Punish wrongdoers

**OR**

Offer forgiveness  
to wrongdoers