

“Passion Week Begins”

Matthew 21:1-20

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March 26, 2023

Teaching Aim: To examine the circumstances surrounding “*the Triumphal Entry*” of Christ into Jerusalem during the beginning of Passion Week (the week before the Passover Festival). To realize Jesus was clearly presenting Himself as the Messiah to the Jewish people. To understand people had differing expectations of who the Messiah would be; in a little less than a week, many who were shouting “*Hosanna*” (meaning “*Save us we pray!*”) would be shouting “*Crucify Him!*”

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Jesus presents Himself as the fulfillment of Zech. 9:9 (Matt. 21:1-7)

1. Where do most scholars believe the village of Bethphage was located (**vs. 1**)? What elevation is the Mount of Olives? (Hint: Google it) In what unusual way did Jesus present Himself as He drew near to Jerusalem (**vv. 1 & 2**)? Did the disciples question Jesus about His instructions? Do you think they may have wondered about these instructions? If so, why?

2. What were the disciples to look for in Bethphage (**vs. 2**)? How many animals did Mark and Luke mention in their accounts? (See **Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30**) With his focus being on Jewish readers, why do you think Matthew specifies both the colt and mother donkey in his account? (See **Zech. 9:9**) What message do you think Jesus was conveying to the Jewish people?

3. What did Jesus prepare His disciples for in **verse 3**? What title did Jesus use for Himself in this verse? How else might this verse be interpreted? (See Commentaries)

4. According to **verse 4**, was Jesus aware of what He was doing and the implications that would follow? What major change takes place in the ministry of Jesus at this point? (See **Matt. 16:20; 17:9**)

5. In **verse 5**, Matthew quoted from **Zech. 9:9**. In examining this verse, what parts of it did Matthew intentionally leave out? Why? When will the ultimate “*Triumphal Entry*” take place in Jerusalem?

6. Even though the two disciples may not have fully understood why Jesus was sending them to take the two animals, they didn't question Him as to why (**vs. 6**). Do you obey and do what the Lord commands you to do in His Word, or do you second-guess Him when you feel uncomfortable doing what He commands? Did the owner challenge the two disciples when they untied the animals? (See **Mark 11:4-7; Luke 19:32-35**) What was their response? Have people ever challenged you when you went God's way instead of the world's? If so, how?

7. Where did the disciples lay their clothes (**vs. 7**)? What did this symbolize? According to Mark and Luke, which of the two animals did Jesus sit on? (See **Mark 11:7; Luke 19:32-35**) What was the significance of riding into Jerusalem on this animal? Had this ever happened before? (See **1 Kings 1:33-34**) How do we see both King Solomon and King Jesus in the Davidic Covenant? (See **2 Sam. 7:12-17**) How are parallel railroad tracks a good symbol for Bible prophecy?

Part II: The people cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. 21:8-11)

1. According to **verse 8**, how many people were following Jesus as He approached Jerusalem? Were these individuals people who lived in Jerusalem, or were most those who had joined Jesus along the way on His trip from Galilee? Was this multitude simply following Jesus, or were many going to Jerusalem for another reason? For what major event were the Jewish people preparing to celebrate?

2. What did the multitude do as Jesus approached the city (**vs. 8**)? What did cutting down palm branches and spreading them along the road in front of Jesus symbolize? How did palm branches and Jesus riding on top of them on the colt of a donkey into Jerusalem send two different messages? (See **1 Macc. 13:51-52a in the Apocrypha**) What contrasting messages were being sent?

3. According to **verse 9**, how big had the crowd grown? Did this massive crowd simply follow Him or were they walking before Him and behind Him? What were the members of the crowd crying out? What is the meaning of the word "Hosanna?" (See Commentaries) What were the people actually requesting? How did their cry contrast with the actual mission Jesus had come to earth for? (See **Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8-9**)

4. The Greek word for “moved” in **verse 10** is the word “*seio*.” What English word is similar to the Greek “*seio*” and relates to earthquakes? In what way did Jesus “shake” Jerusalem? According to **verse 10**, did the masses in Jerusalem recognize Jesus for who He was, or did they have to inquire?

5. Who ends up introducing Jesus to the masses (**vs. 11**)? From the introduction, did the crowd truly understand that Jesus was more than a prophet? Did they understand that He was in actuality, “*the Son of God?*” How do people in some other religions view Jesus today?

Part III: Jesus cleanses the temple for a second time (Matt. 21:12-17)

1. According to **Mark 11:12-18**, did the clearing of the temple take place immediately as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Sunday, or did it occur on Monday (**vs. 12**)? It is important to realize that this was the second time Jesus had cleared out the temple in Jerusalem; what were circumstances surrounding the first? (See **John 2:13-17**)

2. During the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, all male Jews who were old enough, healthy enough, and close enough were to travel to Jerusalem to attend these feasts. Bringing sacrificial animals with you was difficult; so many people purchased animals to sacrifice at the temple. The religious leaders refused to receive currencies from the countries they came from and required their money be exchanged into the Jewish currency. Annas and the religious leaders were charging the pilgrims exorbitant exchange rates if they wanted to worship at the temple (**vs. 12**). If the former High Priest Annas and his sons were the ones running this money-making racket (as history indicates), how would the actions of Jesus have affected His relationship with Annas and the others? When do He see Annas again?

3. What two scriptures did Jesus refer to as He rebuked the religious leaders in **verse 13**? (See **Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:9-10**) How had “*the Court of the Gentiles*” at the temple in Jerusalem become a “*den of robbers?*” Do we see the same happening in some Christian circles today? If so, how?

4. After the chaos of clearing out *“the Court of the Gentiles,”* what did Jesus do next while the religious leaders were still watching (**vs. 14**)? Does Jesus still heal the spiritually blind and lame today? If so, how? (See **John 3:3,5,16-17; Eph. 2:8-9**) How should the religious leaders have responded to these healings?

5. According to **verse 15**, how did they respond? How do some religious leaders respond today when they are called into account for their own sinful behaviors? How should a Christian react once he or she realizes they have sinned? (See **1 John 1:9**)

6. What was the real meaning of the children’s cry, *“Hosanna to the Son of David”* (**vs. 15**)? How did the religious leaders respond as the children shouted out? Who were these children? According to **verse 16**, did Jesus accept the children’s praise? What does this reveal about who Jesus is?

7. Did Jesus remain with the religious leaders overnight in Jerusalem or did He depart before nightfall (**vs. 17**)? How far was Bethany from Jerusalem? What famous people were living in this village and most likely hosted Jesus? (See **John 11:11-25**) What happened on His return trip to Jerusalem the following morning (**vv. 18 & 19**)?

8. Figs were a staple part of the Jewish diet in ancient Israel and still are today. Fig trees grow to a height of about 20 feet and give lots of shade from the hot Israeli sun. In good times, fig trees were used as a symbol of God’s blessing on the nation (See **1 Kings 4:25**). In bad times, fig trees were used as a symbol of His curse (See **Jer. 5:17**). It is noteworthy that figs are mentioned over 50x in the Bible. What was wrong with the fig tree that Jesus came to in **verse 19**? The leaves should have indicated that fruit was on the tree, but what did Jesus find when He reached the tree? What did Jesus do as a result? Does this seem out of character? Why or why not?

9. The tree was deceiving in appearance, what curse did Jesus put on this unfruitful tree (**vs. 19**)? Matthew used the literary style of "*compression*" in his account of "*Passion Week*" while Mark followed the events chronologically. What differences do you find between **verse 19** and **Mark 11:19-22**? How can this be explained in light of "*biblical compression*"?
10. How did the disciples react to the quick death of the tree (**vs. 20**)? NOTE: This is the only time Jesus did a miracle that took a life instead of giving life. Did Jesus do this miracle in a rage of anger, or did He choose to use this fruitless tree as an object lesson for His disciples and the Jews? What was Jesus teaching the hypocritical religious leaders by using this illustration? Why would the religious leaders be judged so severely? How does this imagery relate to false teaching in our own day? Will false teachers be judged more strictly? (See **Jam. 3:1**)
11. Amazingly, the religious leaders rejected their Messiah when He was right in front of them. There are few guarantees in life, but one of them is that all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will receive the gift of eternal life. Have you repented of your sins and received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ the gift of eternal life? If not, why not do so right now in prayer?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Among the synoptic gospels, only Matthew mentions both the colt and its mother.
- Riding in on a colt was both a sign of peace and the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah.
- Laying clothes on top of the animals and the road was a sign of respect toward royalty.
- Some believe the palm branches were a symbol of resistance against the Romans, not a sign of peace.
- The cry, "*Hosanna to the Son of David*" was a plea for Jesus to save the Jewish people from Roman oppression.
- Jesus cleared the temple for the second time in His ministry; this time the day after He arrived at Jerusalem!
- Jesus healed the blind and the lame that came to Him in the temple courtyards; He still heals spiritually blind and lame people today who receive Him as Savior and Lord.
- The Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus despite all the miracles He did in front of them; they were religious, but they were not true believers.