

## Matthew Chapter 21

Verses 1-9:

This event is traditionally known as the triumphal entry, when Jesus officially offers Himself to the nation of Israel as her long-awaited Messiah.

However, in many ways it was far from a triumph, for the day ended in Jesus' public prediction of His rejection by His own people (see Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-39; John 12:12-15).

“Bethphage was a village near Bethany, about a mile east of Jerusalem and apparently hidden from it by the summit of the Mount of Olives, which was the hill on the east of Jerusalem.

The quotation in (verse 5), is a combination of (Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9), taken substantially from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament.

“Hosanna” is the transliteration of a Hebrew term meaning “please save”, and occurs (in 2 Samuel 14:4 and Psalm 118:25).

From the following verse of this Psalm the acclamation “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” is taken.

Riding on the colt of an ass marked the official entry of Israel's kings.

Thus, Jesus arrives in the full declaration of His kingship.

**Matthew 21:1 "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,:**

“Bethphage”:

A small town near Bethany, on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives.

It is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture except in connection with Christ's triumphal entry (Mark 11:1; Luke 19:29).

This was the beginning of the last week of the life of our Lord before the crucifixion.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is what we Christians celebrate as Palm Sunday.

"Bethphage" means house of figs.

The Mount of Olives is just outside the wall of the old city of Jerusalem.

This time Jesus entered Jerusalem as Messiah.

"Messiah" means anointed.

They called him King of the Jews in Jerusalem this time.

The names of the two disciples were not known.

**Matthew 21:2 "Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose [them], and bring [them] unto me."**

"Go into the village over against you":

That is, to Bethphage.

"Ye shall find an ass tied":

In Judea, there were few horses and those were chiefly used in war.

People seldom employed them in common life or in ordinary journeys.

The ass, the mule, and the camel are still most used in Eastern countries.

To ride on a horse was sometimes an emblem of war; on a mule and an ass, the emblem of peace.

Kings and princes commonly rode on them in times of peace, and it is mentioned as a mark of rank and dignity to ride in that manner (Judges 10:4; Judges 12:14; 1 Samuel 25:20).

So Solomon, when he was inaugurated as king, rode on a "mule" (1 Kings 1:33).

Riding in this manner, then, denoted neither poverty nor degradation, but was the appropriate way in which a king should ride.

And in which, therefore, the King of Zion should enter into his capital, the city of Jerusalem.

**Matthew 21:3 "And if any [man] say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them."**

"And if any man say ought unto you":

Mark recorded that this was in fact exactly what happened (Mark 11:5-6).

Having just arrived in Bethphage (verse 1), Jesus would have had no opportunity to make arrangements for the use of those animals.

Yet He knew precisely the location of the animals and the disposition of the owners.

Such detailed foreknowledge reveals His divine omniscience.

Jesus was to fulfill the prophecy to the very last letter.

Not only were they to get an ass, but the colt of an ass, as well.

Many feel that the spiritual implication here, was that the older animal represented the Jews and the younger animal represented the Gentiles.

Jesus sent for both Jew and Gentile.

The Jews rejected Him as a whole.

This man, who had the animals, was either someone who was already a follower of Jesus, or someone God had divinely placed at this place at this specific time for this specific purpose.

I believe personally, that the latter was true.

It had been prophesied by Zechariah (in chapter 9), that He would be riding on the colt of an ass.

These two disciples were to walk up to the first ass with a colt and just unloose them and bring them to Jesus.

This had to be preplanned of God.

**Matthew 21:4 "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,"**

“All this was done”:

The disciples were sent to the neighboring village for the ass and colt, and they brought them, and Christ rode upon them.

It was not because of the distance of the place from Jerusalem, for he was just there at it; or because He was weary, or it would be very fatiguing to him to walk there on foot; for he had been used to travelling.

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet”:

Isaiah 62:11 "Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey."

**Matthew 21:5 "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."**

“A colt the foal of an ass”:

An exact quotation from Zech. 9:9 (see 21:4).

The precise fulfillment of this messianic prophecy would not have excepted the Jewish multitudes, who responded with titles and accolades fit only for the Messiah.

**Matthew 21:6 "And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,"**

“And the disciples went”:

The two disciples, as the Arabic version reads, to the village over against them; and, as Mark says, "found the colt tied to the door outside, in a place where two ways met".

The house was just at the entrance of the village, at the door of which, on the outside in the street, was the colt fastened, where there were two ways of going into, and coming out of the town; so that it was a public place.

The colt was easily seen, and could not be taken away without being observed, as it was by the owners of it.

And as Jesus commanded them; they loosed the colt; and while they were untying it, the owners of it asked them, what they meant by doing so?

They returned the answer what Christ had directed them to say; upon which they were satisfied, and let them go with it (see Mark 11:4).

**Matthew 21:7 "And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set [him] thereon."**

“The ass and the colt”:

Matthew is the only gospel writer who mentions the mare donkey.

But all mention the young age of the donkey (John 12:14), or state that no man had ever sat on him (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30).

The mare was brought along, possibly to induce the colt to cooperate.

The disciples never questioned, they just did whatever Jesus told them to do.

They knew that whatever He told them to do, it was right.

They took their clothing and made them into something like a saddle blanket for Jesus to sit on, on the colt.

This was humbleness to the utmost.

**Matthew 21:8 "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed [them] in the way."**

“Spread their garments in the way”:

Spreading one’s garments on the street was an ancient act of homage reserved for high royalty (2 Kings 9:13), suggesting that they recognized His claim to be King of the Jews.

**Matthew 21:9 "And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."**

“Hosanna”:

This transliterates the Hebrew expression which is translated “Save now” (in Psalm 118:25).

This word has been used in services of both Christians and Jews.

These people were still calling Jesus "son of David".

This is a physical description, not a spiritual understanding of who He is.

“Blessed is he”:

This is an exact quotation from verse 26 of the same psalm.

This, along with the messianic title “Son of David” make it clear that the crowd was acknowledging Christ’s messianic claim.

The date of the entry was Sunday (9 Nisan, A.D. 30), exactly 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes mentioned (in Dan. 9:24-26).

This multitude with Jesus was not only His disciples, but was many of them who had been healed by Jesus.

This was a very triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

Their worship of Him was so great that they removed their garments and put them on the road for the ass and colt to ride over.

**Matthew 21:10 "And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"**

“And when he was come into Jerusalem”:

The metropolis of the nation, the seat of the ancient kings of Judah, and of his father David.

Entering into it in this very public manner; as he never did before; riding in the manner as ancient judges and kings of Israel did.

Attended with a numerous retinue, and shouting as they went along, while singing their "Hosannas" to him:

**Matthew 21:11 "And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."**

“This is Jesus the Prophet”:

That prophet whom Moses spoke of (Deuteronomy 18:18).

I will raise them up a prophet, like unto thee, etc.

Every expression of the multitude plainly intimated that they fully received our blessed Lord as the promised Messiah.

How strange is it that these same people, about five days after, change their hosannas for, “Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!”.

How fickle is the multitude!

Even when they get right, there is but little hope that they will continue so long.

This was quite a procession of adoration.

The people in Jerusalem knew there was some reason for all this attention being given, so they wanted to know who He was.

The multitude did not understand themselves who He was.

They called Him a prophet.

The only thing that they knew for sure was that He had healed the sick.

They had seen it with their own eyes.

That was why they were shouting Hosanna, not because they knew who He was.

Verses 12-17 (see Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-47).

A similar cleansing is recorded at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 2:13-22), indicating His disdain for the corruption of organized religion which lacked purity of life and the power of God.

In light of the seriousness of what He had come to do, Jesus could not tolerate such gross perversion of "the temple," meaning the whole temple area on Mount Moriah including all the precincts and courts.

"Money changers:"

Temple dues could be paid only in sacred coinage and it was necessary to change one's money.

The selling of doves was for purposes of sacrifice.

This exchange became a source of extortion for the family of the high priest, who personally controlled it.

In reality, the atmosphere amounted to a public bazaar.

"It is written":

In His condemnation, the Lord quotes from the Greek Septuagint version of (Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11).

Bethany" was a village on the eastern shoulder of the Mount of Olives, a little more than a mile east of Jerusalem.

It was the home of His friend Lazarus and Lazarus's sisters.

**Matthew 21:12 "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,"**

"Cast out":

This was the second time Jesus had cleansed the temple.

John 2:14-16 describes a similar incident at the beginning of Christ's public ministry.

There are distinct differences in the two incidents.

In the first cleansing, temple officials confronted Christ immediately afterward (John 2:18); none of the accounts of this second cleansing mention any such confrontation.

Instead, the synoptic gospels all describe how Jesus addressed all present (verse 13), and even made the incident an occasion for public teaching (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46-47).

“Them that sold and bought”:

He regarded both merchants and customers guilty of desecrating the temple, items being bought and sold included “doves” and other animals for sacrifice (John 2:14).

“Money changers”:

Currency-exchange agents, present in droves, were needed because Roman coins and other forms of currency were deemed unacceptable for temple offerings.

Evidently, both merchants and money changers were charging such excessive rates that the temple marketplace took on the atmosphere of a thieves’ den (verse 13).

This kind of commerce took place in the court of the Gentiles, a large area covering several acres on the temple mount.

**Matthew 21:13 "And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."**

“It is written”:

Jesus conflates two Old Testament prophecies; Isa. 56:7 “(My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples”); and Jer. 7:11, “(Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight”).

Jesus came into the temple this time with great authority.

He, by force, chased those out who were in there for self-gain.

He reminded them that the house of God is a place of prayer.

I just wonder what He would do today, if He would come into the churches as so many are not a house of prayer.

The world and its ways have crept into the house of God.

Compromise is everywhere.

I am sure that He would be displeased and do some house cleaning, as He did there in Jerusalem.

**Matthew 21:14 "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them."**



“The blind and the lame came”:

Having condemned the profane use of the temple, he now shows the proper use of it.

It is a house of prayer, where God is to manifest his goodness and power in giving sight to the spiritually blind, and feet to the lame.

The Church or chapel in which the blind and the lame are not healed has no Christ in it, and is not worthy of attendance.

**Matthew 21:15 "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,"**

“Children”:

Literal “boys”.

The crowd in Jerusalem for the Passover would have included a large number of 12-year old boys, who were there to celebrate their first Passover, just as Jesus Himself had done.

How dare God the Word come into the place of worship and actually heal people.

How dare the people praise God and cry, because they were touched by Him.

The reason they did not like it, was because they were jealous.

**Matthew 21:16 "And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"**

“Yea, have ye never read”:

Jesus’ reply to the “indignant” chief priests and scribes amounted to an inescapable assertion of His deity.

In quoting from (Psalm 8:2), He was claiming the right to receive worship as God.

**Matthew 21:17 "And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there."**

Bethany (house of unripe figs), was about two miles out of Jerusalem, and it was a convenient place to spend the night, so that He could come back to Jerusalem the next day.

Verses 18-22; (see also Mark 11:12-14; 20-26).

“The fig tree” fruit generally appears in February, followed by leaves, which are not formed until late spring.

So there should normally have been some fruit on the tree.

The fig tree was often used as a symbol of the nation of Israel (Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7), and when Jesus literally came upon a barren fig tree, He used the incident in the almost immediate withering of the entire tree.

While trees are non-moral, they, like all of nature, are subject to the word of Christ.

The “disciples ... marveled” at how this could happen so fast.

**Matthew 21:18 "Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered."**

“Now in the morning, as he returned into the city”:

Which was his custom from the time he wholly left Jerusalem, spending only the day time teaching in the temple (see Matthew 21:17).

This was probably on Thursday, the 12th day of the month Nisan.

“He hungered”:

Probably neither he, nor his disciples, had anything but what they got from public charity; and the hand of that seems to have been cold at this time.

**Matthew 21:19 "And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away."**

“And presently”:

This is a relative term; the tree may have died at once, but (Mark 11:14, 20), suggested that the withering was not visible until the following day.

Jesus’ cursing of the tree was a purposeful divine object lesson, and was not just an impetuous act of frustration.

The fig tree is often employed in Scripture as a symbol; of Israel (Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7), and the barren fig tree often symbolizes divine judgment of Israel because of her spiritual fruitlessness despite an abundance of spiritual advantages (Jer. 8:13, Joel 1:12).

Jesus' act therefore illustrates God's judgment against earthly Israel for shameful fruitlessness, exemplified in the rejection of their Messiah.

One of Christ's parables taught a similar lesson (Luke 13:6-9).

**Matthew 21:20 "And when the disciples saw [it], they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!"**

"And when the disciples saw it":

The next day in the morning, as Mark says: they had, heard what Christ had said to it the day before, as the same evangelist observes.

But did not take notice of the immediate withering of the tree.

But the next morning, as they returned from Bethany, they saw it dried up from the roots.

"They marveled" not that Christ should curse it, but that it should wither away so soon, and upon his saying what he did.

Which was a considerable instance of his power and Godhead, all creatures, animate and inanimate, being at his command and disposal.

They said, "How soon is the fig tree withered away":

This was said by Peter, in the name of the rest, who recollecting what Jesus had said to it the day before, and observing how the event had answered his words so soon.

Addressed Christ asking, "master, behold the fig tree which thou cursed is withered away", that was expressing his wonder at it and ascribing it to the power of Christ.

The fig tree is symbolic of the Jews, physical Israel, if you will.

This is symbolism of the rejection of Jesus by the Jews.

**Matthew 21:21 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this [which is done] to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."**

"If ye have faith, and doubt not":

This presupposes that the thing requested is actually God's will, for only God-given faith is so doubt-free (Mark 9:24).

"It shall be done":

A miracle on such a cosmic scale was precisely what the scribes and Pharisees wanted Christ to do, but He always declined.

Here, He was speaking figuratively about the immeasurable power of God, unleashed in the lives of those with true faith.

**Matthew 21:22 "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."**

“And all things”:

He adds an encouragement for them to pray, assuring them that they should have all things which they asked.

This promise was evidently a special one, given to them regarding working miracles.

To them it was true, but it is manifest that we have no right to apply this promise to ourselves.

It was desired especially for the apostles; nor have we a right to turn it from its original meaning.

There are other promises in abundance on which we "may" rely in prayer, with confident assurance that our prayers will be heard.

Jesus reminded them once more, here, that their faith gets answers to prayers.

No problem (mountain), is too great for a miracle answer, if we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and believe in our hearts, and it is in the will of God, it will come to pass.

## **Matthew Chapter 21 Questions**

1. What city was near the Mount of Olives?
2. How many disciples did Jesus send to the village?
3. When is Palm Sunday?
4. What does it celebrate?
5. What does Bethphage mean?
6. What would Jesus be called in Jerusalem?
7. What two animals would the disciples find?
8. What were they to do with them?

9. What do many believe the spiritual implication of the two animals was?
10. Who does the author think the owner of the animals was?
11. Which prophet prophesied this?
12. What did the disciples put on the animal?
13. Who came into the city with Jesus?
14. What were they crying?
15. What did their calling Jesus "Son of David" signify?
16. When the people in Jerusalem asked who He was, what did they reply?
17. What did Jesus do in the temple?
18. What did Jesus say the house of God should be called?
19. Who came to Jesus, and He healed them?
20. When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things He did, how did they act?
21. Why did they feel this way?
22. Where was Bethany?
23. What tree is symbolic of the Jews?
24. What causes our prayers to be answered?