



Chapter 21

Triumphal Entry

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Theme: Jesus enters Jerusalem officially, cleanses the temple, curses the fig tree, and when He is challenged by the chief priests and elders, He condemns them by parables of the two sons and the householder whose servants slew his son

McGee Introduction: The movement in Matthew comes back into sharp focus in this chapter. Jesus comes to Jerusalem in a new role. Heretofore He had entered the city unobtrusively. Now He presses His claims as King upon the city of the King. Nothing could be more forward or daring. He cleanses the temple for the second time. This is presumption of the first order if He is not the One whom He claims to be. He curses the fig tree, which is a symbolic action He meets the challenge of the religious rulers and by parable accuses them of plotting His death.

You will note the decisive and deliberate tone in the method of Jesus. He is forcing the issue now. He will force them to act when and how He chooses. He is in full control of the entire situation. He is never more kingly than when He approaches the cross.¹

ESV Introduction: The Messiah Asserts His Authority over Jerusalem. Jesus' authority over Jerusalem is revealed in his triumphal entry (21:1–11), actions in the temple (21:12–17), cursing the fig tree (21:18–22), debates with religious leaders (21:23–22:46), and woes pronounced on the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (23:1–39).

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,

[drew nigh unto Jerusalem] First of two entries into Jerusalem. This was two days before the one in Mark 11:1-3; Luke 19:28-31; John 12:12-15. See Luke 19:45.

[Bethphage] "House of figs," one mile from Bethany toward Jerusalem.

Bethphage—A place on the west declivity of Mount Olivet, from which it is thought the whole declivity and part of the valley took their name. It is supposed to have derived its name from the fig-trees which grew there; *beeth*, signifying a region as well as a house, and *phag*, a green fig.²

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem. They were going up now from Jericho, Matthew 20:29. The distance was about nineteen miles. The most of the way was a desert, or filled with caves, and rocks, and woods—a fit place for robbers. See Luke 10:30. The Mount of Olives, or *Olivet*, is on the east of Jerusalem. Between this and Jerusalem there runs a small stream called the brook Kidron, or Cedron. It is dry in the hot seasons of the year, but swells to a considerable size in time of heavy rains. John 8:1. The Mount

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:110). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Adam Clarke's Commentary

of Olives was so called from its producing in abundance the olive. It was from Jerusalem about a Sabbath day's journey, Acts 1:12. On the west side of the mountain was the garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:39, Mark 4:32. On the eastern declivity of the mountain, were the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. Mark and Luke say that he came near to both those places. He came nearest to Bethphage, and sent his disciples to the village over against them, *to Bethany, [Bethpage?]*. Bethany was the place where Lazarus dwelt whom he raised from the dead, (John 11:1) where Martha and Mary dwelt; and where Mary anointed him with ointment against the day of his burying, John 12:1-7. These circumstances are omitted by the three first evangelists, but supplied by John, who wrote after them. The Mount of Olives is about a mile in length, and about seven hundred feet in height, and overlooks Jerusalem; so that from its summit almost every part of the city can be seen. The mountain is composed of three peaks or summits. Our Saviour is supposed to have ascended from the middle one. The *olive* is a fruit well known among us as an article of commerce. The tree blooms in June, and bears white flowers. The fruit is small. It is first green, then pale, and, when fully ripe, black. It incloses a hard stone, in which are the seeds. The *wild olive* was common, and differed from the other only in being of a smaller size. There are two roads from Jerusalem to Bethany; one around the southern end of the Mount of Olives, and the other across the summit. The latter is considerably shorter, but more difficult; and it was probably along this road that the Saviour went.³

Mount of Olives. Hill one-half mile east of Jerusalem, separated from the Temple site by the Kidron Valley. **Beit-Pagey** (Aramaic, “house of unripe figs,” Bethphage) and Beit-Anyah (“house of the poor,” Bethany; v. 17) were villages on its south flank, along the road leading up from Jericho. The Mount of Olives is where Yeshua rose to heaven and where he will return at his second coming (Ac 1:9–12&N).⁴

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.

Ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt—Asses and mules were in common use in Palestine: horses were seldom to be met with. Our blessed Lord takes every opportunity to convince his disciples that nothing was hidden from him: he informs them of the most minute occurrence; and manifested his power over the heart in disposing the owner to permit the ass to be taken away.⁵

Ye shall find an ass tied, In Judea there were few horses, and those were chiefly used in war. Men seldom employed them in common life, and 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

³ Barnes' Notes

⁴ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

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, 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.⁶

Lord: *kurios*, G2962, *koo'-ree-os*; from **kuros** (*supremacy*); *supreme* in authority, i.e. (as noun) *controller*; by implication *Mr.* (as a respectful title) :- God, Lord, master, Sir.

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.

A prearranged password is implied.

Jesus plainly refers to himself as **the Lord**, the sovereign orchestrator of these events.

The Lord hath need of them. This means no more than the *master* has need of them. The word *lord* often means no more than *master* as opposed to *servant*, Matthew 10:24, Ephesians 6:6, 1 Peter 3:5,6. The word is sometimes used in the Bible as applied to God, or as a translation of the name JEHOVAH. Its common use is a mere title of respect given by an inferior to a superior, by a servant to a master, by a disciple to a teacher. As a title of *high respect* it was given to Christ, or the Messiah. The persons to whom these disciples were sent were probably acquainted with the miracles of Jesus, and favourably disposed towards him. He had attracted great notice in that region particularly by raising Lazarus from the dead, and most of the people regarded him as the Messiah.⁷

Matthew 21:4

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Which was spoken—The Spirit of God, which predicted those things that concerned the Messiah, took care to have them literally fulfilled:

1. To show the truth of prophecy in general; and,
2. To designate Christ as the person intended by that prophecy.

Spurgeon: Matthew is always reminding us of the Old Testament; as well, indeed, he may, for our Lord is always fulfilling it. Every point of detail is according to prophetic model: All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. The Old and New Testaments dovetail into each other. Men have written "Harmonies of the

⁶ Barnes' Notes

⁷ Barnes' Notes

Gospels"; but God has given us a Harmony of the Old and New Testament. The passage referred to is in (Zec 9:9.) It represents Zion's King as meek and lowly even in the hour of his triumphant entrance into his metropolis, riding, not upon a war-horse, but upon a young ass, whereon no man had sat. He had before said of himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and now he gives one more proof of the truth of his own words; and, at the same time, of the fulfillment of prophecy: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass." He did not, like Solomon, fetch horses out of Egypt to minister to his pride; but he who was greater than Solomon was content with a colt the foal of an ass, and even that humble creature was borrowed, for he had none of his own. The tenderness of Jesus comes out in the fact of his having the ass brought with her foal that they might not be parted. He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy: his grandeur involved no pain, even for the meanest living thing. How blessed is it for us to be ruled by such a King!

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.

Quoting Zech 9:9. There were several times that Jesus became popular and the crowd wanted Him to be King. Each time Jesus slips away and notes that "Mine hour has not yet come." Here Jesus stages the event! He does this deliberately to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy.

This was four days before Passover. Every able-bodied male was required by the Law to go to Jerusalem for Passover. So Jerusalem at this time was a tourist center. (This was not "Palm Sunday" either: the 10th of Nisan was a *Saturday*.)

(Zechariah 9:9) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Tell ye the daughter of Sion—The quotation is taken from Zechariah 9:9, but not in the precise words of the prophet.

This entry into Jerusalem has been termed the triumph of Christ. It was indeed the triumph of humility over pride and worldly grandeur; of poverty over affluence; and of meekness and gentleness over rage and malice.

He is coming now meek, full of kindness and compassion to those who were plotting his destruction! He comes to deliver up himself into their hands; their king comes to be murdered by his subjects, and to make his death a ransom price for their souls!⁸

Daughter of Zion. That is, *Jerusalem*. *Zion* was one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. On this stood the city of David and some strong fortresses. The names *daughter* and *virgin* were given to it often, in accordance with the oriental

⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentary

figurative manner of expression. Isaiah 1:8; Amos 5:2; Psalms 137:8; Isaiah 47:1. It was given to them as an expression of their beauty or comeliness.

Meek. Matthew 5:5. The expression here rather denotes *peaceful*, not *warlike*; not with pomp, and state, and the ensigns of ambition. He came in the manner in which kings were accustomed to ride, but with none of their pride and ambitious feeling.

Matthew mentions a donkey and a colt, while the other Gospels mention only the colt. This was the same event, but Matthew focuses on the prophecy in Zech. 9:9, where a donkey and a colt are mentioned. He shows how Jesus' actions fulfilled the prophet's words, thus giving another indication that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt, he affirmed his Messianic royalty as well as his humility.

McGee: This is a quotation from Zechariah 9:9—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

There are certain important omissions in the quotation in Matthew which a careful comparison will reveal. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" is omitted. Why? Because our Lord is not coming into Jerusalem for that time of rejoicing. That will take place at His second coming. Also omitted is "he is just, and having salvation"—the word *salvation* has the thought of victory, which will be fulfilled at His second coming. The conclusion to be drawn from these portions is that at His second coming there will be a true triumphal entry.

It is assumed that our Lord was displaying His meekness by riding upon this little donkey. That is not true. This little animal was ridden by kings. In our day it would be like riding into town in a Rolls Royce. The donkey was the animal of peace while the horse was the animal of war. When Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on this little animal of peace, He was offering Himself as King. In spite of the fact that He was doing that, the prophet says that He was humble. That is very important to see.⁹

ESV: This took place to fulfill. Matthew specifies that Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem upon a colt fulfills the prophecy of Zech. 9:9. Jesus' action is an open declaration that he is the righteous Davidic Messiah, for the prophecy says, "**your king is coming to you.**" Matthew could also be alluding to Gen. 49:8–12, where Jacob prophesies about a kingly descendant of Judah whose rule will extend to the nations. The first line of the OT quotation, however, is from Isa. 62:11 and uses the phrase **daughter of Zion** to refer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. **And on a colt** can also mean "even on a colt" (see esv footnote, using an alternative meaning for Gk. *kai*), which is the sense here. It is an example of Hebrew poetic parallelism, where an idea is stated twice, in successive lines, using slightly different wording.

⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:110). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yashanet.com: thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass ...

One of the problems posed by the Tenakh's prophecies, regarding the Messiah, is that He would arrive both on the back of a donkey as well as in the clouds of glory. As it did not seem possible for one person to fulfill both prophecies, there developed a theory that if the people were righteous, Messiah would come on the clouds, if they were not, He would arrive on a donkey:

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a - *R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. it is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it! — if they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . .] lowly, and riding upon an ass! — if they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.*

However, even the Talmudists recognized that Scripture did not truly offer an "if-or" option, hence the idea of two Messiahs came into being. The first, Messiah ben Joseph would be more of the humble suffering servant. He would in fact be killed. The second, Messiah ben David, would come, avenge the death of Messiah ben Joseph and usher in the Millennial Kingdom.

8 others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.

The cutting of branches alludes to the feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), most closely associated with the coming of the Messianic era (See comments on Matthew 17:4).

Leviticus 23:39-42- *Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths.*

It is clear from the behavior of these people that they thought Yeshua was at least a great prophet, if not the Messiah.

Matthew 21:6

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

Matthew 21:7

And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon.

Riding this unbroken colt was a miracle in itself!

And put on them their clothes—Thus acknowledging him to be their king, for this was a custom observed by the people when they found that God had appointed a man to the kingdom. When Jehu sat with the captains of the army, and Elisha the prophet came, by the order of God, to anoint him king over Israel, as soon as he came out of the inner chamber into which the prophet had taken him to anoint him, and they knew what was done, every man took his garment, and spread it under him on the top of the steps, and blew the trumpets, saying, “Jehu is king.” 2 Kings 9:13.

And they set him thereon—,upon him, i.e. the colt. This is most likely to be the true reading; for we can scarcely suppose that he rode upon both by turns,—this would appear childish; or that he rode upon both at once, for this would be absurd. Some say he sat on both; for “the ass that was tied up was an emblem of the Jews bound under the yoke of the law; and the colt that had not been tied represented the Gentiles who were not under the law; and that Jesus Christ’s sitting on both represented his subjecting the Jews and the Gentiles to the sway of his evangelical scepter.” He who can receive this saying, let him receive it.¹⁰

JNTC: 2–7 The key to this passage is the citation from the *Tanakh* in v. 5. It conflates two verses in the *Tanakh*, Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. The former includes the lines,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘See your salvation comes!
See, His reward is with Him,
but His work lies ahead of Him.’ ”

The word for “salvation” here is “*yeshua*,” identical with the name of the Messiah, Yeshua, except for the optional letter *vav*. Moreover, Isaiah describes this “*yeshua*” as a person, and not just any person, but God—since a person who is salvation must be God. English translations, including Jewish ones, which capitalize pronouns referring to God recognize this fact by capitalizing “His” and “Him” in this passage, as is done above. One may even say that in this verse Isaiah, writing 700 years before Yeshua was born, refers to him in his divine aspect by name.

Zechariah 9:9 has these lines in it:

“Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! ...
See, your king comes to you.
He is triumphant and victorious,
humbly riding on a donkey,
yes, on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden.”

¹⁰ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

By combining the two verses Mattityahu gives a hint (*remez*; see 2:15N) that God, the Salvation of Israel, the Messianic King and Yeshua of Natzeret are one. Also he hints at the two comings of the Messiah and the difference between them: at his first coming Yeshua is our final atoning sacrifice, bringing salvation by his death; therefore he rides into Jerusalem humbly on a beast of burden, ready to perform the work which lies ahead of him. But he will return, triumphant and victorious, as ruling king, rewarding the faithful—although for those who are faithful now, he has already begun to share the reward which he brings with him.

On a donkey, humbly, reflecting Yeshua’s first coming to die for our sins. At his second coming he will be on horseback (Rv 19:11), as befits a king.

On a donkey and on a colt (v. 5)... **Yeshua sat on them** (v. 7). The relationship between these two phrases has given rise to a criticism of Mattityahu which, if justified, impugns his credibility as a divinely inspired writer. In v. 5, Greek *kai*, here rendered “and” (but see below), seems to imply that Zechariah is writing about two donkeys. Then, in v. 7, the phrase, “**and he sat on them,**” is ambiguous—did he sit on the **robes**, using them as a cushion, or on both the donkey and the colt?

The argument is that Mattityahu the tax-collector was an ignorant *am-ha-arets* (country bumpkin; see Ac 4:13&N) unfamiliar with parallelism in Hebrew poetry, wherein the second line of a couplet sometimes adds no new information but only states differently what the first line has already said. Not knowing this, he supposed that fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy required both a donkey and a colt and therefore created the ludicrous picture of Yeshua straddling two animals at once.

One can explain it, of course, by saying he did not sit on them simultaneously but in succession, kindly giving the colt rest, since it had never been ridden. One can even find meaning in Yeshua’s action: his sitting on not only the donkey but its colt symbolizes his utter humiliation at his First Coming (Pp 2:6–8), since the colt is described as the mere offspring of a beast of burden, even lower in status than the mother animal.

But in fact there is no need to suppose Mattityahu thought Yeshua rode on both animals. Mattityahu was thoroughly familiar with the *Tanakh*, as his many quotations from it attest. Moreover, we know from the parallel passages that Yeshua rode on only one animal (Mk 11:7, Lk 19:35). Perhaps Mattityahu mentions two donkeys for a different reason, namely, to emphasize the immaturity of the colt (see Mk 11:2), too young to be separated from its mother.

Furthermore, the Greek grammar allows a different approach. In v. 5 Greek *kai*, corresponding to Hebrew letter *vav*, makes it possible to replace “and on a colt” with any of these alternative renderings: “yes, on a colt,” “indeed, on a colt,” “even on a colt,” or “that is, on a colt.” These eliminate explicitly the *need* for two animals in order to fulfill the prophecy, without excluding the possibility that there were nevertheless two animals there.

The Talmud contains an interesting homily based on Zechariah 9:9, but it obscures the difference between his first and second comings.

“Rabbi Alexandri said, ‘Rabbi Y’hoshua set two verses against each other: It is written, “And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven” (Daniel 7:13), while elsewhere it is written, “See, your king comes unto you, ... humbly riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). [He resolved the paradox by saying that] if they deserve it [he

will come] with the clouds of heaven, but if not, lowly and riding on an ass.’ ” (Sanhedrin 98a)

The New Testament explanation, of course, is that at his first coming the Messiah was “humbly riding on a donkey,” but his second coming will be “with the clouds of heaven” (24:30). For similar paradoxes cited from the same page of the Talmud see MJ 3:7N and 2 Ke 3:12N.

It has been suggested that Yeshua was an impostor who arranged this and other scenes in order to convince the people he was the Messiah: “Here’s an easy prophecy to fulfill: I’ll do what it says, and then they’ll believe.” If riding on a donkey colt were the only qualification for Messiahship, one might take the objection seriously—or we could all be Messiahs. Clearly Yeshua did arrange his entry into Jerusalem to fulfill Zechariah’s prophecy. But he also fulfilled many other prophecies which he could not have manipulated, such as the time and place of his birth (Daniel 9:24–26, Micah 5:1(2); see above, 2:1–6&NN), and his resurrection (Psalm 16:10; see Ac 2:24–32&NN). For a fuller listing of these prophecies see 26:24N and Section VII of the Introduction to the *JNT*.¹¹

ESV: the donkey and the colt. Matthew alone mentions two animals. The unbroken young colt's mother moving alongside would be the best way to calm it during the noisy entrance into Jerusalem. **and he sat on them.** “Them” refers to the cloaks (which is the closest antecedent in Gk.), not to the two animals.

Matthew 21:8

And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

All this may have been customary in parades of conquerors and great princes honored by the people. Compare 2 Kings 9:13.

The palm-tree is common in warm climates, and was abundant in Palestine. The finest grew about Jericho and Engeddi. Hence Jericho was called the city of *palm-trees*. The palm has a long and straight body, a spreading-top, and an appearance of very great beauty. It produces an agreeable fruit, a pleasant shade, a kind of *honey* little inferior to the honey of bees, and from it was drawn a pleasant wine, much used in the east. On ancient coins the palm-tree is often a symbol of Judea. On coins, made after Jerusalem was taken, Judea is represented by a female sitting and weeping under a palm-tree. A reference to the palm-tree occurs often in the Bible, and its general form and uses are familiar to most readers. We give an engraving of the tree, and add a description of it for the use of those to whom it is not familiar.

This verse is one of the few places where the Gospels record that Jesus’ glory is recognized on earth. Jesus boldly declared himself King, and the crowd gladly joined him. But these same people would bow to political pressure and desert him in just a few

¹¹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:2). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

days. Today we celebrate this event on Palm Sunday. That day should remind us to guard against superficial acclaim for Christ.

ESV: Cloaks on the road symbolized the crowd's submission to Jesus as king (cf. 2 Kings 9:13). **Branches** (palms) symbolized Jewish nationalism and victory (see John 12:13). They were connected with prominent Jewish victories (e.g., *1 Macc.* 13:51) and with the Festival of Tabernacles; palm motifs were common on both Jewish coinage and synagogue decoration.

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.

The account in Luke notes that they are singing Psalm 118, heralding Jesus as the *Meschiach Nagid*, the Messiah the King. The Pharisees are upset because they felt that they were blaspheming. Did Jesus ever sit on the throne of David? No, it didn't exist then. He will later (Cf. 1 Kgs 1:38-40: Solomon was brought to his coronation riding *David's mule*.

(Psalm 118:19-29) Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Later in the week, Jesus Himself would refer to this psalm and apply it to Himself (Ps 118:22–23; Mt 21:42).

Hosanna

- This Greek transliteration of a Hebrew word “Save we pray,” occurs six times in the Gospels as the cry of the people when our Lord entered Jerusalem as the Messiah (Mt 21:9,15; Mk 11:9; Jn 12:13).
- Taken from Ps 118, recited at the Feast of Tabernacles in “the great Hallel,” Ps 113-118 they waved willow and palm branches with rejoicings.
- The 7th or last day of the feast was called “the Great Hosanna,” especially associated with consummated salvation.

Hosanna to the Son of David The word *hosanna* means, "Save now," or, "Save, I beseech thee." It is a Syriac word, and was the form of acclamation used among the Jews. It was probably used in the celebration of their great festivals. During those festivals they sang the 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th psalms. In the chanting or singing of those psalms, the Jewish writers inform us, that the people responded frequently *hallelujah* or *hosanna*. Their use of it on this occasion was a joyful acclamation, and an invocation of a Divine blessing by the *Messiah*.

Son of David—A well-known epithet of the Messiah. He who cometh in the name, etc. He who comes in the name and authority of the Most High.

Blessed is he, That is, blessed be the *Messiah*. This passage is taken from Psalms 118:25,26. To come *in the name of the Lord*, is to come *by the authority* of the Lord; to come commissioned by him to reveal his will. The Jews had commonly applied this to the Messiah.

Hosanna in the highest. This may mean either "Hosanna in the highest, loftiest strains;" or it may mean a prayer to God, "Save now, O thou that dwellest in the highest heaven, or among the highest angels." Perhaps the whole song of hosanna may be a prayer to the Supreme God, as well as a note of triumphant acclamation: "Save now, O thou supremely great and glorious God; save by the Messiah that comes in thy name."

Mark adds, that they shouted "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord." That is, the kingdom, promised to David, 1 Kings 2:4, 8:25. *Coming in the name of the Lord*, means coming according to the *promise* of the Lord. Its meaning may be thus expressed: "Prosperity to the reign of our father David, advancing now according to the promise made to him, and about to be established by the long-promised Messiah, his descendant." Luke adds, "*Luke 19:38* that they said, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." The word *peace* is used here as significant of joy, triumph, exultation in heaven at this event. There will be increased peace and rejoicing from the succession of the redeemed: and let glory and praise be given to God *among the highest angels*.

There is no contradiction here among the evangelists. Among such a multitude the shouts of exultation and triumph would by no means be confined to the same words. Some would say one thing, and some another; and one evangelist recorded what was said by a part of the multitude, and another what was said by another part.¹²

It is possible that He had never come into Jerusalem by this route before—we'll see that in the Gospel of John. I think that generally He came in by the sheep gate in a very unobtrusive manner, the gate through which the animals for sacrifice were brought. But not this time! Here He rides in as a King, and those who are with Him recognize Him as a King. It is their opportunity to accept Him or reject Him.

¹² Barnes' Notes

JNTC: Shouting, “Please! Deliver us!” to the Son of David. Greek *ôsan*na transliterates Hebrew *hoshia· na* (literally, “Save, please!”). The word, and sometimes the whole phrase, is usually rendered as if it were an acclamation of praise: “shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ” Actually “*Hoshia· na*” is a prayer addressed to the Messiah, quoted from Psalm 118:25–26; Psalm 118 is Messianic throughout (Mattityahu cites another important passage from it at v. 42 below). The implication is that the crowds recognized and honored Yeshua as the Messiah by shouting, “Please, deliver us, Son of David!”—“Son of David” is a Messianic title (see 1:1N), and the crowds wanted their Messiah to deliver them from the Roman overlords.

Likewise, again quoting Psalm 118:25–26, they were recognizing Yeshua’s Messiahship when they shouted, **Blessed is he who comes in the name**—that is, with the power and authority (see Ac 3:16N)—**of Adonai!** In other words: blessed is the Messiah, who exercises God’s power and authority on earth and at the same time is present **in the highest heaven**, with intimate access to God himself (compare Yn 17:1–26, Pp 2:6–11). That this is the sense is clear from Yeshua’s own use of the same passage at 23:39.¹³

Yashanet.com: Hosanna to the son of David

The term "Hosanna" is *Hosheanu*, meaning, "save us." The cry of the people (*Hosheana, ben David*), is also tied to Sukkot. The 7th day of Sukkot is called, *Hosheana Rabba*, meaning "the great save us." As mentioned earlier, "son of David" is a Messianic title. Interestingly, the time of this occasion is the spring and not the fall, (when Sukkot takes place). Also, even though Yeshua is the final Yom Kippur sacrifice (another fall feast), He was killed in the spring on Pesakh (Passover). The resolution to this lies in deeper levels of study (at the Sod level). Suffice it to say that although the feasts of God seem separate and unique from our point of view in this physical world, in the spiritual realm there is less distinction and far greater unity (enabled by the Messiah).

The Zohar¹ says of the Lord’s feasts, that they are all unified in the great Sabbath to come, the thousand year Millennial Sabbath, (referred to as "her" in the text below):

Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 133b - *‘From all of these we take "the heave offering of the Lord" on each of these special seasons, in order that it may rest upon us: on Passover by means of the paschal lamb, on Tabernacles by means of the tabernacle, and so forth. The six Days [Feasts] are but a preparation for her. As they are united above in "One."*

Matthew 21:10

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

[**moved**] Greek: *seio* (GSN-4579), be agitated. Translated "quake" (Matthew 27:51) and shake (Matthew 28:4; Hebrews 12:26; Rev. 6:13).

[**Who is this?**] If they had really known the answer to this question they would have realized that the crisis of the ages was soon to take place on a cross.

¹³Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:9). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

All the city was moved—Or, the whole city was in motion. Εσεισθη, was in a tumult—they saw and heard plainly that the multitude had proclaimed Christ king, and Messiah. Who is this? Who is accounted worthy of this honor?

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved. There was great excitement. The sight of such a multitude, the shouts of the people, and the triumphant procession through the city, excited much attention and inquiry.

ESV: whole city. Just as “all Jerusalem” was “troubled” in 2:3 when the King of the Jews was born, so here the religious establishment is once again **stirred up**, fearing that Jesus may usurp their power.

Matthew 21:11

And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The Final Week

Matthew 21	Luke 19	Triumphal Entry
Matthew 22	Luke 20	
Matthew 23		
Matthew 24	Luke 21	Olivet Discourse
Matthew 25		
Matthew 26	Luke 22	Last Seder
Matthew 27	Luke 23	Crucifixion
Matthew 28	Luke 24	Resurrection

This is Jesus THE PROPHET—Ο προφητης 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 (if the creatures of the high priest be not only intended) should, 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.¹⁴

Since it was Passover, there were probably about 2 million people in and around Jerusalem. This was the only time in His ministry that Jesus actually planned and promoted a public demonstration. Up to this time, He had cautioned people not to tell who He was, and He had deliberately avoided public scenes.

Why did Jesus plan this demonstration? For one thing, He was obeying the Word and fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9. This prophecy could apply only to Jesus Christ, for He is the only One with credentials that prove He is Israel’s King. We usually do not associate the lowly donkey with kingship, but this was the royal animal of

¹⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Jewish monarchs (1 Kings 2:32ff). There were actually two animals involved, the mother and the colt (foal). Jesus sat on the colt with the mother walking beside.

By comparing Matthew's quotation with the original prophecy in Zechariah, we discover some interesting facts. Zechariah's prophecy opens with, "Rejoice greatly" but Matthew omitted this phrase. When Jesus approached the city, He wept! How could He (or the people) rejoice when judgment was coming?

Matthew also omitted "He is just, and having salvation." Our Lord's coming to Jerusalem was an act of mercy and grace, not an act of justice or judgment. He did have salvation for them, but they refused to accept it (John 1:11). The next time Israel sees the King, He will ride in great power and glory (Rev. 19:11ff).

This colt had never been ridden (Mark 11:2), yet he meekly bore his burden. The presence of the mother helped, of course. But keep in mind that his rider was the King who has "dominion over... all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field" (Ps. 8:6-7). The fact that Jesus rode this beast and kept him in control is another evidence of His kingship.

There was a second reason for this public presentation: It forced the Jewish leaders to act. When they saw the spontaneous demonstration of the people, they concluded that Jesus had to be destroyed (see John 12:19). The prophetic Scriptures required that the Lamb of God be crucified on Passover. This demonstration of Christ's popularity incited the rulers to act.

The people acclaimed Jesus as their King both by their words and their deeds. They shouted *Hosanna* which means, "Save now!" They were quoting from Psalm 118:25-26, and this psalm is definitely messianic in character. Later that week, Jesus Himself would refer to this psalm and apply it to Himself (Ps. 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42).

Keep in mind that this Passover crowd was composed of at least three groups: the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, the crowd from Galilee, and the people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-18). Sharing the news of this miracle undoubtedly helped to draw such a large crowd. The people wanted to see this miracle-worker for themselves.

But the Jews still did not recognize Jesus as their King. What caused Israel's spiritual blindness? For one thing, their religious leaders had robbed them of the truth of their own Word and had substituted man-made traditions (Luke 11:52). The leaders were not interested in truth; they were concerned only with protecting their own interests (John 11:47-53). "We have no king but Caesar!" was their confession of willful blindness. Even our Lord's miracles did not convince them. And the longer they resisted the truth, the blinder they became (John 12:35ff).¹⁵

ESV: the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee. Although Moses had predicted the coming of a "prophet like me," to whom "you shall listen" (Deut. 18:15-18; see note on John 6:14), there is no indication that the crowds here in Jerusalem recognized Jesus as that prophet.

¹⁵Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Mt 21:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

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,

Jesus had opened His ministry with a similar act (Jn 2:13-25). Now, three years later, the temple was defiled again by the “religious business” of the leaders. Annas, the former high priest, was the manager of this enterprise, assisted by his sons. In order to comply with the requirements of the Temple, you had to have the Temple currency. This created the need for moneychangers. The whole practice was corrupt and also in the wrong place.

[moneychangers] A half shekel (about \$1.25) had to be paid by every Jew on the 15th of Adar or March. It was called a “tribute” in Matthew 17:24-27. In every city there were collectors to receive it. Moneychangers exchanged Jewish coins for foreign ones for those who came to the feast. Foreign coins with idols on them could not be used in the worship. Many took advantage of this to practice fraud and get rich.¹⁶

[doves] Required for offerings (Leviticus 14:22).

Jesus went into the temple of God, etc.—“Avarice,” says one, “covered with the veil of religion, is one of those things on which Christ looks with the greatest indignation in his Church. Merchandize of holy things, simoniacal presentations, fraudulent exchanges, a mercenary spirit in sacred functions; ecclesiastical employments obtained by flattery, service, or attendance, or by any thing which is instead of money; collations, nominations, and elections made through any other motive than the glory of God; these are all fatal and damnable profanations, of which those in the temple were only a shadow.” QUESNEL.¹⁷

And Jesus went into the temple of God, From Mark 11:11-15, it is probable that this cleansing of the temple did not take place on the day that he entered Jerusalem in triumph, but on the day following. He came and looked round upon all things, Mark says, and went out to Bethany with the twelve. On the day following, returning from Bethany, he saw the fig-tree. Entering into the temple, he purified it *on that day*; or, perhaps, he finished the work of purifying it on that day, which he commenced the day before. Matthew has mentioned the purifying of the temple, which was performed probably on two successive days; or has stated the *fact*, without being particular as to the order of events. Mark has stated them more particularly, and has *divided* what Matthew mentions together.¹⁸

This is the second time Jesus cleared the temple (see John 2:13-17). Merchants and money changers set up their booths in the court of the Gentiles in the temple, crowding out the Gentiles who had come from all over the civilized world to worship God. The merchants sold sacrificial animals at high prices, taking advantage of those who had

¹⁶ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

¹⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

¹⁸ Barnes’ Notes

come long distances. The money changers exchanged all international currency for the special temple coins—the only money the merchants would accept. They often deceived foreigners who didn't know the exchange rates. Their commercialism in God's house frustrated people's attempts at worship. This, of course, greatly angered Jesus. Any practice that interferes with worshipping God should be stopped.¹⁹

JNTC: Pilgrims in Jerusalem turned to merchants for the animals and pigeons they needed for sacrifices; and they had recourse to foreign-exchange dealers because the Temple tax (see 17:24&N) was payable in Tyrian rather than Roman coin, since the latter had heathen markings; see Mishna Sh'kalim 5:3, 6:5, 7:2. Yeshua is fully aware of this but objects to the use of the Temple grounds for these purposes; the Talmud includes curses on the Sadducean priests for their greed. The restrictions placed on business in the Temple area created monopolistic profits for the merchants and revenue for the authorities.

According to the *Tanakh*, “on that day,” that is, in Messianic times, “there shall no longer be a merchant in the house of *Adonai* of Hosts” (Zechariah 14:21; the word for “merchant,” “trafficker” or “trader” is, literally, “Canaanite,” as at Job 40:30(41:6) and Proverbs 31:24).²⁰

Like Jeremiah's smashing the pot in the temple centuries before (Jer 19), Jesus' demonstration there was a prophetic act inviting repentance and warning of the temple's imminent destruction (see comment on Mt 24:1–2).²¹

Two cleansings of the temple are recorded in the Gospels—one in John 2:14–17 at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and one in the synoptic Gospels at the end of His ministry (see Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45, 46). bought and sold: Financial corruption ran rampant in the outer courts of the temple. Some of the gains that were realized from this profiteering probably went to the family of the high priest. The money changers exchanged coins with pagan symbols on them for acceptable coins to be used in the temple. They charged a premium for this “service.” Those who sold doves sold them at top prices.

ESV: 12–17 The Temple Actions: Jesus' Pronouncement on the Temple Establishment. John's Gospel records a similar cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 2:13–17). Interpreters have proposed two explanations: (1) there was only one cleansing, but John narrated the action at the beginning for thematic/theological purposes,

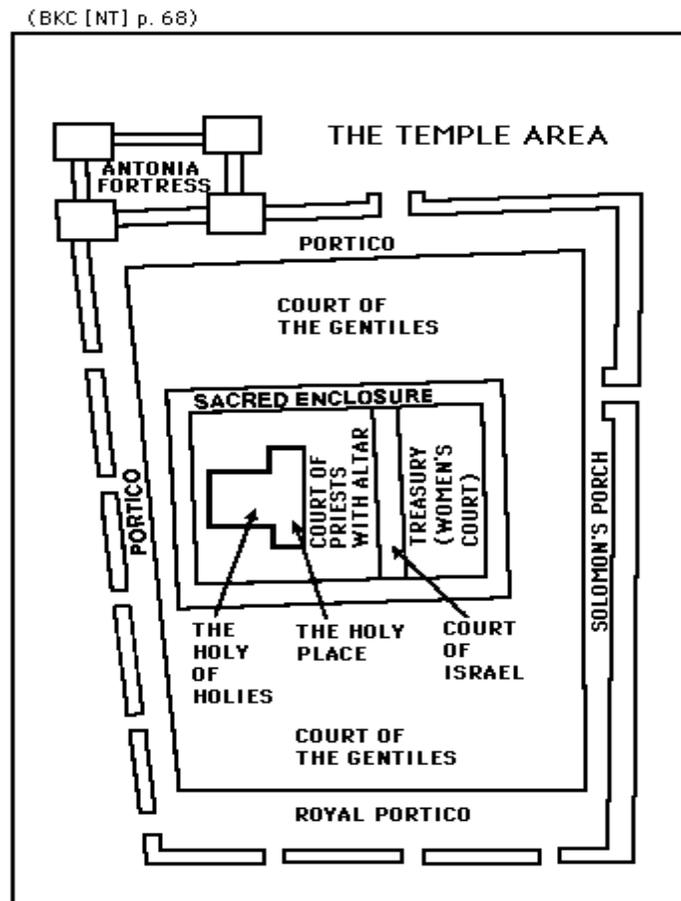
¹⁹ Life Application Notes

²⁰ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:12). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications. repentance **Repentance**. In the New Testament, this term does not merely mean “change of mind” (as some have gathered from the Greek term); it reflects the Old Testament and Jewish concept of “turning around” or “turning away” from sin. Jewish people were to repent whenever they sinned; the New Testament uses the term especially for the once-for-all turning a Gentile would undergo when converting to Judaism or any sinner would undergo when becoming a follower of Jesus.

²¹ Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 21:12). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

while the Synoptic Gospels narrate the actual historical chronology; (2) there were indeed two similar but distinctly different temple cleansings. The differences of detail seem to indicate the latter, for while the initial action is similar, Jesus' statement (Matt. 21:13) and the challenge from the Jewish leaders (vv. 15–16) are entirely different from what John records. In addition, John places the event so early in his Gospel that it would be difficult to think he wanted readers to take it as anything but an event that happened early in Jesus' ministry. Thus Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning as a warning, and at the end of his ministry as a statement of judgment on the leadership of Israel.

ESV: And Jesus entered the temple might seem to suggest that this cleansing of the temple took place immediately after Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Sunday (vv. 1–11), but Mark clearly places the incident on Monday morning (Mark 11:12–19). At times Matthew condenses some of the narrative of Jesus' activities during Holy Week and arranges it topically, which is the case here. Once Matthew tells readers that Jesus entered Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1–11), he recounts what else Jesus did in Jerusalem (vv. 12–17) without specifying that it was the next day. **all who sold and bought.** Within the temple was a sort of market where commercial activity enabled pilgrims from throughout the Diaspora (see note on John 7:35) to participate in temple activities, exchange their own currency for temple currency (Matt. 17:24–27; cf. Ex. 30:11–16), and purchase animals and other items for sacrifices.



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.

“My house,” He was affirming that He is God. Quoting from Isa 56:7. The entire 56th chapter of Isaiah denounces the unfaithful leaders of Israel. The phrase “den of robbers” comes from Jeremiah 7:11 and is part of a long sermon that Jeremiah delivered in the gate of the temple, rebuking the people for the same sins that Jesus saw and judged in His day.

(Isaiah 56:7) Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

(Jeremiah 7:11) Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

But ye have made it a den of thieves—This is taken from Jeremiah 7:11.

Our Lord alludes here to those dens and caves in Judea, in which the public robbers either hid or kept themselves fortified.

They who are placed in the Church of Christ to serve souls, and do it not, and they who enjoy the revenues of the Church, and neglect the service of it, are thieves and robbers in more senses than one.²²

McGee: That is very strong language, is it not? Now let me call your attention to certain facts regarding the so-called triumphal entry. First of all, I do not think that “triumphal” entry is the proper name for it because, as we have seen, only certain portions of Zechariah’s prophecy were fulfilled. Our Lord came into the city of Jerusalem in order that He might be the *Savior*. He was making the final public presentation of Himself to the people. When you consider the four Gospel records together, they present a composite picture. The obvious conclusion is that He did not enter the city on only one day but on three separate days.

The first time was on Saturday, the Sabbath day. There were no money changers on that day, and He looked around and left, “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve” (Mark 11:11). He entered as *Priest*.

The second day He entered Jerusalem was on Sunday, the first day of the week. The money changers were there, and He cleansed the temple (vv. 12–13). On this day He entered as *King*.

The third day He entered Jerusalem was on Monday, the second day of the week. At that time He wept over Jerusalem, then entered the temple and taught and healed (see Luke 19:41–44; 47–48). He entered as a *Prophet* that day.

²² Adam Clarke’s Commentary

As we compare these three records in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it becomes apparent that they record three different entries, and I believe that our Lord entered Jerusalem on three consecutive days and in three consecutive roles—as Priest, as King, as Prophet. And He retired each day to Bethany. Apparently, He did not spend the night in the city until He was arrested.

Remember that the so-called triumphal entry ended at the cross. But He will come the second time in *triumph*. The writer to the Hebrews puts this together in a wonderful way: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). We are told in Zechariah 14:4 that when He comes the next time to this earth, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives—that’s where He will touch down. Then when He enters the city of Jerusalem, that will be the triumphal entry! I cannot call these three entries into Jerusalem triumphal entries because He is on His way to the cross to die for your sin and my sin.

After the Lord cleansed the temple, many came to Him for help.²³

Yashanet.com: ye have made it a den of thieves.

The people were required to make offerings at the Temple. As it was too difficult for those living far away to bring animals with them, they would instead purchase the animal when they arrived at the Temple. Also, it was not permitted to use pagan money to make offerings (or pay the Temple tax), so coins would be evaluated and exchanged for shekels. The men providing this service had found it too easy to cheat people however, and it is for this dishonesty that Yeshua drives them out.

The verse Yeshua quotes is from both Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7. As the prophets state, the Temple of the Lord was to be a house of prayer for all nations, thereby including gentiles into the faith of Israel. The actions of the money changers were a perversion of justice, taking advantage of people, which is a perversion of the essence of God's Torah. By such evil works, the name of the God of Israel would be blasphemed among the gentiles. This acted against God's Temple being a house of prayer for them, in fact keeping salvation from the gentiles.

As Paul similarly wrote of some of his fellow Jews:

Romans 2:23-24 - *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

Matthew 21:14

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

[he healed them] Jesus demonstrated power up to the last to convince the nation and all foreigners present that He was the true Messiah. Having condemned the wrong use of the temple, He now showed them the right use of it.

Notice how Matthew emphasizes the fact that multitudes of folk were healed.

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:111). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Even hereditary priests who were blind or lame were not permitted in the sanctuary (Lev 21:18); this rule was extended in time to exclude all the blind and lame (2 Sam 5:8). Second-century rabbis permitted but did not require blind and lame men to attend the feasts like other men. Although those who controlled the temple would not have opposed their presence in the outer court. Jesus' emphasis on ministry to them here makes a countercultural statement.

The powerful Sadducean priests who ran the temple were generally not looking for a Messiah; but had they expected him, they would have expected him either to challenge their power militarily or to seek an alliance with them. From the aristocratic standpoint, seeking followers among the weak was a foolish way to try to establish a kingdom.

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,

[saw the wonderful things that he did] His enemies saw the wonderful things that He did. It was God's last effort to impress Israel in the time of their visitation before their great sin of rejecting their Messiah (Luke 19:41-44).

When the Chief Priests. The chief men of the nation were envious of his popularity. They could not prevent it; but being determined to find fault, they took occasion to do so from the shouts of the children. Men often are offended that *children* have anything to do with religion, and deem it very improper that *they* should rejoice that the Saviour has come. Our Lord Jesus viewed this subject differently. He saw that it was proper that they should rejoice. *They* are interested in the concerns of religion; and then, before evil principles get fast hold of their minds, is a proper time to love and obey him. He confounded them by appealing to a text of their own Scriptures. This text is found in Psalms 8:2. This quotation is not made directly from the Hebrew, but from the Greek translation. This, however, should create no difficulty. The *point* of the quotation was to prove that *children* might offer praise to God. This is expressed in both the Hebrew and the Greek.

Matthew 21:16

And said unto him, Hearst 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?**

Out of the mouth of babes—The eighth Psalm, out of which these words are quoted, is applied to Jesus Christ in three other places in the new covenant, 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:6. Which proves it to be merely a prophetic psalm, relating to the Messiah.

It was a common thing among the Jews for the children to be employed in public acclamations; and thus they were accustomed to hail their celebrated rabbins. This shouting of the children was therefore no strange thing in the land: only they were exasperated, because a person was celebrated against whom they had a rooted hatred. As to the prophecy that foretold this, they regarded it not. Some imagine that babes and sucklings in the prophecy have a much more extensive meaning, and refer also to the first preachers of the Gospel of Christ.²⁴

Yashanet.com: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? Yeshua quotes Psalm 8, which is highly Messianic in its nature, thus offering the people a "hint" as to who He was:

Psalm 8 - O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Matthew 21:17

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

[city into Bethany] Not one night did He stay in the city where God chose to put His name forever (1 Kings 9:3; 2 Kings 21:7). Was it because of their rebellion? Bethany was within a Sabbath days walk from Jerusalem. There were some very special times in Bethany, where Lazarus is raised.

[lodged there] Perhaps with Lazarus, where He spent the Sabbath between the two entries.

McGee: “And he left them” indicates His rejection of the religious leaders. “And went out of the city into Bethany.” As we have indicated, our Lord did not spend the night in Jerusalem until the night of His arrest. But we find Him coming back into the city the next day. This, I think, is the entry that Luke emphasizes for us, His third and last entry on Monday morning—²⁵

²⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

²⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:112). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 21:18

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

[**morning**] After the sabbath at Bethany (Matthew 21:17; John 12:1-11)

[**hungered**] This helps to show the humanity of Jesus, “He hungered” (Matthew 4:2; Matthew 21:18; Mark 2:25; Mark 11:12; Luke 4:2).

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.²⁶

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

ESV: 18–22 Cursing the Fig Tree: Jesus' Judgment of the Nation. Matthew discusses the cursing of the fig tree and the disciples' reaction together, treating the events topically just as he did the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple (see note on v. 12). Mark gives the probable chronological order, while Matthew gives a literary compression of the account. Thus the tree was cursed most likely on Monday morning on the way into the city, and on Tuesday morning the disciples react to the withering on their way back to Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11:12–14, 20–26).

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.**

The Fig Tree

In most varieties of fig trees in this part of the country, the figs show up before the leaves. So by the time there are leaves, there should be fruit on it. When we consider the time and place of this event, we understand it better. Jesus was near Jerusalem in the last week of His public ministry to His people. Jesus was not angry at the tree. Rather, He used this tree to teach several lessons to His disciples.

God wants to produce fruit in the lives of His people. In the Parable of the Fig Tree (Lk 13:6-9), the gardener was given more time to care for the tree, but now the time was up. While we can make a personal application of this event, the main interpretation has to do with Israel (Jer 8:13; Hos 9:10, 16; Lk 13:6-9) or, specifically, Judah (Isa 24, Hos 9, Joel 1).

Just as this tree had leaves but no fruit, so Israel had a show of religion but no practical experience of faith resulting in godly living.. The lesson here for the disciples is if they don't bear fruit they are in jeopardy. One cannot judge the human heart—that is God's job—however, one can inspect the fruits!

²⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary

[nothing thereon, but leaves only] Figs remain on trees between seasons if not picked (Mark 11:13).

[Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever] An example of what faith can do (cp. Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:23).

[presently the fig tree withered away] It was discovered the next day (Mark 11:20). Christ had power to do whatever He said and promised the same power to all believers (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:1-15; John 15:7,16).

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, This tree was standing in the public road. It was therefore common property, and any one might lawfully use its fruit. Mark says, Mark 11:13, "Seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came," etc. That is, not far off *from the road*; but seeing it at a considerable distance, having leaves appearing healthy and luxuriant, they presumed that there would be fruit on it. Mark says, (Mark 11:13,) "He came, if haply he might find anything thereon." That is, judging from the *appearance* of the tree, it was *probable* that there would be fruit on it. We are not to suppose that our Lord was ignorant of the true condition of the tree, but he acted according to the appearance of things; being a man as well as Divine, he acted of course as men *do act* in such circumstances.²⁷

And found nothing thereon, but leaves only. Mark Mark 11:13 gives as a reason for this, that "the time of figs was not yet." That is, the time of gathering the figs was not yet, or had not passed. It was a time when figs were ripe, or fit to eat, or he would not have gone to it, expecting to find them. But the time of *gathering* them had not passed, and it was to be presumed that they were still on the tree. This took place on the week of the passover, or in the beginning of April. Figs in Palestine are commonly ripe at the passover. The summer in Palestine begins in March, and it is no uncommon thing that figs should be eatable in April. It is said that they sometimes produce fruit the year round.²⁸

And said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee, Mark calls this "cursing" the tree, Mark 11:21. The word *curse* does not imply here anger, or disappointment, or malice. It means only *devoting to this destruction*, or this withering away. All the *curse* that was pronounced, was in the words that no fruit should grow on it. The Jews used the word *curse*, not as always implying wrath, and anger, but to devote to *death*, or to any kind of destruction, Hebrews 6:8. It has been commonly thought that he did this to denote the sudden *withering away*, or destruction of the Jewish people. They, like the fig-tree, promised fair, That was full of leaves, and they full of professions. Yet both were equally barren. And as that was destroyed, so were they soon to be. It is certain that this would be a good *illustration* of the destruction of the Jewish people; but there is not the least evidence that our Saviour *intended* it as such; and without such evidence, we have no right to say that that was its meaning.

²⁷ Barnes' Notes

²⁸ Barnes' Notes

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? This was not a thoughtless, angry act, but an acted-out parable. Jesus was showing his anger at religion without substance. Just as the fig tree looked good from a distance but was fruitless on close examination, so the temple looked impressive at first glance, but its sacrifices and other activities were hollow because they were not done to worship God sincerely (see Matthew 21:43). If you only appear to have faith without putting it to work in your life, you are like the fig tree that withered and died because it bore no fruit. Genuine faith means bearing fruit for God's kingdom. For more information about the fig tree, see Mark 11:13-26.

McGee: There has been a great deal of difficulty in attempting to interpret the fig tree incident. I have heard all sorts of ideas about what the fig tree represents. The fig tree, I believe, is symbolic of Israel as in Matthew 24, as we shall see. At least we can say with confidence that when our Lord came into the world, there was no fruit evidenced by the nation of Israel. There were only the outward leaves of a ritualistic, lifeless religion. This the Lord condemned. The nation of Israel went through a religious form, but they had no power. They had turned what God had given them into a dead, lifeless ritual without vitality and virility which no longer was accomplishing God's purpose. And I am of the opinion that God will deal the same way with the organized church which has turned its back upon the Person of Jesus Christ.

Again let me say that I feel His cursing of the fig tree is symbolic. Certainly He condemned the nation of Israel, and the nation suffered devastating judgment in A.D. 70.²⁹

He was hungry: Jesus desired to eat of the fruit of the fig tree one more time before He died, but could not. Fig trees do not bear their fruit in the spring, during Passover, but in the fall of the year. However, fig trees do have a small, edible fruit that appears in the spring before the sprouting of the leaves. This tree was full of leaves, but had no fruit. It looked full of promise, but was empty—just like the city of Jerusalem and its beautiful temple. Immediately does not necessarily mean instantly; it may have the idea of “very soon” as in Luke 19:11 (see Mark 11:12–14, 20–24). This miracle—the only recorded miracle of Jesus that involved judgment—illustrates God's judgment on the Israelites, who professed adherence to God but produced no fruit or spiritual reality.

ESV: found nothing on it but only leaves. Since the fruit of the fig tree begins to appear about the same time as the leaves (or a little thereafter), the appearance of leaves in full bloom should have indicated that fruit (in the form of green figs) was already growing. Jesus' actions here have symbolic importance, signifying the hypocrisy of all who have the appearance that they are bearing fruit but in fact are not (cf. Hos. 9:10–17).

Yashanet.com: There is a deep, "hidden" significance to this brief encounter with the fig tree, having to do with Israel's lack of faith. An interesting comparison can be made to an ancient Hebraic mystical text, which speaks of the "attribute" of God that abides with Israel (also referred to as the Shekinah):

²⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:112). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

When Israel diverges from God's way, then this attribute is found to be lacking, meager and low. She is like foliage whose leaves have shrivelled in a garden without water. Then she is like a tree whose fruit has fallen
*Of*³⁰

Matthew 21:20

And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

How soon is the fig tree withered away!—We often say to our neighbors, “How suddenly this man died! Who could have expected it so soon?” But who takes warning by these examples? What we say to-day of OTHERS, may be said to-morrow of OURSELVES. Be ye also ready! Lord, increase our faith!³¹

And when the disciples saw it. That is, on the morning following that on which it was cursed, Mark 11:20.

They marvelled, saying, Peter said this, Mark 11:21. Matthew means only to say that this was said to him; Mark tells us which one of them said it.

Spurgeon: The Lord's word was so very quickly fulfilled, that the disciples wondered. We marvel that they marveled. By this time they should have grown accustomed to deeds of power, and to the rapidity with which they were performed. Even to this day some doubt a work if it is speedy, and thus imitate the cry, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!" Whatever the Lord does, he does perfectly, completely. The fig tree was presently" destroyed.

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] Three times this is repeated (Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:21; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6). Naturally, we do not see any need of moving mountains and cursing trees, but such is literally possible "If ye have faith, and doubt not" (1 Cor. 13:2; Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:23).

³⁰ *Sha'are Orah* ("Gates of Light"), Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla, translated by Avi Weinstein, Altamira Press, 1994, p. 37.

³¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

[this mountain] Perhaps the Mount of Olives, for He passed over it daily these last few days. It is mentioned 12 times in connection with His first coming (Matthew 21:1; Matthew 24:3; Matthew 26:30; Mark 11:1; Mark 13:3; Mark 14:26; Luke 19:29,37; Luke 21:37; Luke 22:39; John 8:1). It was the place of the ascension (Acts 1:12) and will be literally removed by halves at His second coming (Zech. 14:4). It is located just east of Jerusalem over which the main highway from the east passed (2 Samuel 15:30). It is called "Mount of Corruption" (2 Kings 23:13).

[Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done] When one has power with God, a word of command is all that is necessary.

Jesus answered and said, . Jesus took occasion from this to establish their faith in God, Mark 11:22. He told them that any difficulty could be removed by faith. To remove a mountain, denotes the power of overcoming any difficulty. The phrase was so used by the Jews. There is no doubt that this was *literally* true, that if they had the faith of miracles, they could remove the mountain before them the mount of Olives-for this was as easy for God to do by them as to heal the sick, or raise the dead. But he rather referred, probably, to the difficulties and trials which they would be called to endure in preaching the gospel.

Many have wondered about Jesus' statement that if we have faith and don't doubt, we can move mountains. Jesus, of course, was not suggesting that his followers use prayer as "magic" and perform capricious "mountain-moving" acts. Instead, he was making a strong point about the disciples' (and our) lack of faith. What kinds of mountains do you face? Have you talked to God about them? How strong is your faith?

Spurgeon: To the first disciples the power of absolutely working miracles was given by our Lord, and given in connection with a simple, unwavering confidence: "If ye have faith, and doubt not." God may not work miracles for us, but he will do all that we need in accordance with our faith; doing it in a way of providence, according to the spirit of the present dispensation. But here also the faith that we exercise in him must be free from doubt. Before a living faith, barren systems of religion will wither away; and by the power of undoubting confidence in God, mountains of difficulty shall be removed, and cast into the sea. Have we ever spoken in Christ's name to barren fig trees and obstructing mountains, bidding them depart out of our way? If not, where is our faith? If we have faith and doubt not, we shall know the truth of this promise: it shall be done. Apart from the actual possession of unwavering faith, the words of our Lord will seem fabulous.

Matthew 21:22

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

[ask] Used 109 times in Scripture; 44 times of prayer to God for needful things.

Twelve Things to Ask For:

1. Help from God (2 Chron. 20:4)
2. Things to come (Isaiah 45:11)

3. The old paths (Jeremiah 6:16)
4. Spiritual rain (Zech. 10:1)
5. Needs and wants (Matthew 6:8; Psalm 23:1; Psalm 34:9-10; Psalm 84:11)
6. Good things (Matthew 7:7-11)
7. Any thing (Matthew 18:19; John 14:14; 1 John 5:14)
8. Whatsoever (Matthew 21:22; John 14:13; John 15:16; John 16:23; 1 John 3:22)
9. The Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9-13)
10. What you will (John 15:7; Mark 11:24)
11. Wisdom (James 1:5-8)
12. Life (1 John 5:16)

This verse is not a guarantee that we can get *anything* we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that would violate his own nature or will. Jesus' statement is not a blank check. To be fulfilled, our requests must be in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God's will, and then God will be happy to grant them.

McGee: Our Lord is giving them a lesson in prayer, that there should be *faith* in prayer. They marvel that the fig tree was cursed, and He tells them that their problem is that they do not have faith to believe that God can move in such a miraculous way.

Frankly, I do not believe that our business is cursing fig trees or removing literal mountains. For many years I have lived in Southern California right along the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains. To me they are lovely. I have never grown tired of them. I always enjoy looking at them, and there are never two days when they are alike. In Psalm 121 the psalmist says, "I will (lit., "Shall I ...?") lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help?" I don't think that he was implying that his help came from the hills, because he added, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2). Certainly, I do not look to those mountains for help, only for enjoyment, and I have never wanted to move them. I feel that there is something bigger and more important to do than mountain moving and fig tree cursing. To preach the gospel of Christ, to give out the Word of God so that the Spirit of God can use it—that, my friend, is a miracle! When these lips of clay can say something that the Spirit of God can use to transform a life, that involves the kind of faith that I want. What we need is faith to believe that God can and will use His Word.³²

Yashanet.com: As God would not want all of us hurling huge mountains about, it is easy to see that there are deeper meanings to these verses.

First, if we take these verses at a more literal (p'shat) level (even considering the allegorical terms of "mountains" and "seas"), it would seem that great miracles should be "commonplace" among those who are righteous in God's sight. As this is not the case today, one has to ask what the problem is.

³²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:112). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The answer may be found in another statement made by Yeshua:

Luke 18:8 - *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

As "faith" is defined by God in terms of a relationship with Him based on His instruction, His Torah, (i.e., Deuteronomy chapter 6, Luke 18:18-22) and the majority of those claiming to follow His Messiah today preach that they are "not under the Law," (i.e., not submissive to His Torah), then Messiah's words are a indeed frightening prophecy. (See notes to Matthew chapters 5 through 7 on Torah as part of faith.)

There is a deeper meaning to these verses however, that is actually applicable to their immediate context. The question must first be asked, What is the purpose of Messiah's teachings in these surrounding chapters (21-23)? As we are seeing, Yeshua is both, a) rooting out the false teachings (leaven) of the religious leadership, and b) presenting the offer of the Kingdom to His people. (See Isaiah 61 as well.)

The metaphorical terms "mountains" and "seas" have to do with leaders and the spiritual abyss. As Yeshua points out in these chapters, the Pharisees were actually keeping people away from the Kingdom of God through their teachings (though the people were at fault as well for allowing them to do this). Yeshua is thus instructing His disciples that with faith, not only can the falsehood of the Pharisees be overcome (the mountain being tossed into the sea), but the Kingdom itself can be ushered in, (where "miracles" will be commonplace, i.e., "whatever you ask you will receive.")

Matthew 21:23

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

[came unto him] In the wrong attitude, not as men should come (Matthew 11:28-30).

By what authority doest thou these things?—The things which the chief priests allude to, were his receiving the acclamations of the people as the promised Messiah, his casting the traders out of the temple, and his teaching the people publicly in it.

Who gave thee this authority?—Not them: for, like many of their successors, they were neither teachers nor cleansers; though they had the name and the profits of the place.

The religious rulers are becoming ugly and very hateful in their manner. They do not question what the Lord Jesus is doing. Do you notice that? They have no basis on which they can deny the miraculous things He does; they can only question His authority.

JNTC: Hebrew *s. mikhah*, rendering Greek *exousia* ("authority"), means "leaning" or "laying" on of hands in the ordination ceremony for a judge, elder or rabbi. Laying on of hands is, in the *Tanakh*, a symbolic act that confers or transfers an office, along with its duties and privileges, by dramatizing God's bestowal of the blessings and giftings needed for the work. In Judaism the practice is traced back to Moses' ordination of Joshua and of

the seventy elders (Numbers 11:16–17, 24–25; 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 34:9; see also Ac 8:17, 9:17, 13:3, 19:6, 28:8; 1 Ti 4:4, 5:22; 2 Ti 1:6).

A rabbinic ordinand was granted the right to judge and to decide points of *halakhah* (see 16:19N, 18:18–20N) by a board of three elders, at least one of whom had also received *s. mikah*. The *cohanim* (2:4N) **and elders**, who are also *P. rushim* (v. 45, 3:7N), are asking: “What kind of ordination did you receive that entitles you to teach as authoritatively as you do (7:28–29&N), to decide points of *halakhah* as you do (12:1–15&NN), and to disturb the peace in the Temple courts (vv. 12–17 above)? And who dared give you such an ordination (so that we can interrogate him too)?” Yeshua does not answer their question (although see Yn 5:27, Mk 1:22–27N) but instead puts them on the defensive (21:29–22:46).³³

Matthew 21:24

And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

This series of three parables grew out of the demand of the chief priests and elders for Jesus to explain what authority He had for cleansing the temple. By what authority? This is late in the game, they have had their chance. He will give them His answer when He is under oath at the trial.

Matthew 21:25

The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

“Catch-22”: No matter how they answer they lose. In taking them back to the ministry of John, Jesus was not trying to avoid the issue. John had prepared the way for Jesus. Had the rulers received John’s ministry, they would have received Jesus. Instead, the leaders permitted Herod to arrest John and then to kill him. If they would not accept the authority of John, they would not accept the authority of Jesus; for both John and Jesus were sent by God. In Chapter 23 Jesus pronounces **eight woes** upon the Pharisees.

And Jesus answered ³⁴ Jesus was under no obligation to give them an answer. They well knew by what authority he did this. He had not concealed his power in working miracles, and had not kept back the knowledge that he was the Messiah. He therefore referred them to a similar case—that of John the Baptist He knew the estimation in which John was held by the people. He took the wise in their own craftiness. Whatever answer they gave, he knew they would convict themselves. And so they saw, when they looked at the question. They reasoned correctly. If they said, *From heaven*, he would directly ask

³³ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:23). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

³⁴ Barnes’ Notes

why they did not believe him. They professed to hear all the prophets. If they said, *Of men*, their reputation was gone, for all the people believed that John was a prophet.

The baptism of John. For an account of this, see Matthew chapter 3. The word *baptism* here probably includes all his work. This was his principal employment; and hence he was called the Baptist, or the *Baptizer*. But our Saviour's question refers *to his whole ministry*.- "The *ministry of John*, his baptism, preaching, prophecies-was it from God, or not?" If it *was*, then the inference was clear that Jesus was the Messiah; and then they might easily know by what authority he did those things.

ESV: 25–27 From heaven or from man? The leaders' refusal to answer this question shows their dishonesty, but Jesus also traps them, for as religious leaders they must now profess their ignorance. And if they do not know whether John was from God, how can they judge whether Jesus is?

Matthew 21:26

But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

McGee: You see, these religious rulers were attempting to trap Him by putting Him on the horns of a dilemma, but He immediately put them on the horns of a dilemma. He said, "I'll tell you by what authority I work if you will tell Me by what authority John the Baptist did his work. Was it from heaven or was it of men?" Of course, if they had said it was of heaven, our Lord would have said, "I move by the same authority." So they would not answer Him. They would not accept John's authority as being from heaven; so, of course, they would not accept Jesus' authority either.³⁵

Matthew 21:27

And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

[**We cannot tell**] This plain lying only proved that they were not worthy of a reply, so they did not get it. They reasoned that if they accepted John as the forerunner of the Messiah, they must of necessity receive Jesus as the Christ.

We cannot tell—Simplicity gives a wonderful confidence and peace of mind; but double dealing causes a thousand inquietudes and troubles. Let a man do his utmost to conceal in his own heart the evidence he has of truth and innocence, to countenance his not yielding to it; God, who sees the heart, will, in the light of the last day, produce it as a witness against him, and make it his judge.

³⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:113). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We cannot tell, said they; which, in the words of truth, should have been, We will not tell, for we will not have this man for the Messiah: because, if we acknowledge John as his forerunner, we must, of necessity, receive Jesus as the Christ.

They who are engaged against the truth are abandoned to the spirit of falsity, and scruple not at a lie. Pharisaical pride, according to its different interests, either pretends to know every thing, or affects to know nothing. Among such, we may meet with numerous instances of arrogance and affected humility. God often hides from the wise and prudent what he reveals unto babes; for, when they use their wisdom only to invent the most plausible excuses for rejecting the truth when it comes to them, it is but just that they should be punished with that ignorance to which, in their own defense, they are obliged to have recourse.³⁶

We cannot tell. This was a direct falsehood. They could have told; and it should have been, we *will* not tell. There was no reason but that why they did not tell. The reason probably why they would not acknowledge that John was a prophet was that, if they did, they saw he could easily show them by *what authority* he did those things; i.e., as Messiah. John predicted *him*, pointed him out, baptized him, came as his forerunner, to fulfil the prophecies. If they acknowledged one, they must the other. In this way our Saviour was about to lead these crafty men to answer their own question, to their own confusion, about his authority. They saw this; and having given them a sufficient answer, there was no need of stating anything further.³⁷

The Pharisees demanded to know where Jesus got his authority. If Jesus said his authority came from God, they would accuse him of blasphemy. If he said that he was acting on his own authority, the crowds would be convinced that the Pharisees had the greater authority. But Jesus answered them with a seemingly unrelated question that exposed their real motives. They didn't really want an answer to their question; they only wanted to trap him. Jesus showed that the Pharisees wanted the truth only if it supported their own views and causes.

Matthew 21:28

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

The 41st parable in Mt. (Matthew 18:23). This illustrates that the despised classes—the sinners—will be saved before the religious and self-righteous chief priests and elders (Matthew 21:23,31).

ESV: 28–32 The parable of the **two sons** demonstrates the religious leaders' failure to respond rightly to John the Baptist's prophetic ministry. They hypocritically did not live up to their talk. The fruit of one's life ultimately proves whether or not one is obedient to God's message. A person's actions ultimately prove whether or not he is obedient to God.

³⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³⁷ Barnes' Notes

Matthew 21:29

He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

[I will not: but afterward he repented, and went] This illustrates sinners who first reject truth and then repent and do the will of God (Matthew 21:31).

Matthew 21:30

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

One says that he is not going to do it, but he does; and the other says he will, but he doesn't. He is talking to the Scribes and Pharisees. All that the Lord said, we will do (Ex 24:7 vs. Rom 2:24 vs. John 3:3,5).

[I go, sir: and went not] This illustrates the hypocrites, the self-righteous Pharisees who promised God all and did nothing for Him (Matthew 21:31).

I go, sir—This is all respect, complaisance, and professed, obedience; but he went not: he promised well, but did not perform. What a multitude of such are in the world, professing to know God, but denying him in their works! Alas! what will such professions avail, when God comes to take away the soul?³⁸

The son who said he would obey and then didn't represented the nation of Israel in Jesus' day. They said they wanted to do God's will, but they constantly disobeyed. They were phony, just going through the motions. It is dangerous to pretend to obey God when our hearts are far from him because God knows our true intentions. Our actions must match our words.³⁹

Matthew 21:31

Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

Why tax collectors and harlots? Their lifestyle is rebellious, but they might repent. In contrast to the Scribes and Pharisees whose words are supportive and yet their hearts are far from Him.

[publicans] Tax-gatherers. Used 17 times. They were despised by the Jews, so any reference to being less than this class was the lowest thing that could be said of anyone religious. They were classed with sinners (Matthew 9:10-11; Matthew 11:19; Matthew

³⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³⁹ Life Application Notes

21:31-32). Many repented and were baptized (Luke 3:12; Luke 7:29). One of them—Matthew—became an apostle (Luke 5:27-29; Luke 19:1-10).

McGee: This parable was a terrible insult to the religious rulers. Jesus likens them to the second son who said he would work for his father but did not. The Lord places publicans and harlots on a higher plane than these religious leaders.

This parable applies today. Many people have joined the church and are religious and think they are Christians, but they are not. They can perform their church rituals and give mental assent to the doctrines, but they are not genuine believers unless there has been a transformation in their lives. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). The publicans and harlots recognized their sinfulness and came to Christ for salvation. They came late—at first they had said no to God, but they repented and came to Him, and He received them.⁴⁰

into the kingdom of God before you—The publicans and the harlots were the first son, who, when told to work in the Lord’s vineyard, said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went. Their early life was a flat and flagrant refusal to do what they were commanded; it was one continued rebellion against the authority of God. The chief priests and the elders of the people, with whom our Lord was now speaking, were the second son, who said, I go, sir, but went not. They were early called, and all their life long professed obedience to God, but never rendered it; their life was one of continued disobedience.⁴¹

The theological impasse and the consternation of the priests spawn another parable in the mind of Jesus. The conclusion of the parable is the startling and infuriating news that the hated tax collectors and immoral harlots would enter the kingdom before the priests would. These began their lives in disobedience to God; but, if they were penitent and had faith in Jesus, they would enter the kingdom. On the other hand, the priests had a marvelous profession of mouth but an inward rebellion of heart against God.⁴²

Matthew 21:32

For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

[John came unto you] Last of 24 references of John in Matthew (Matthew 3:1-14; Matthew 4:12; Matthew 9:14; Matthew 11:2-18; Matthew 14:1-10; Matthew 16:14; Matthew 17:13; Matthew 21:25-32).

⁴⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:113). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴¹ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 21:31). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁴² Believer’s Study Bible

[righteousness] Declaring righteousness as the forerunner of the Sun of Righteousness (Matthew 3:3-15; Matthew 14:4; Luke 1:15-17; Luke 3:1-18).

The religious rulers had a religion of exterior decorations with nothing real inside. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior, the interior is not only redecorated, it is made new.

Tax collectors and harlots is a proverbial phrase for moral reprobates. Jesus' phrase enter ... before you not only established that these repentant sinners would enter the future kingdom, it also left the door open for the religious leaders to repent. But even though the self-righteous leaders saw the example of repentant tax collectors and prostitutes, they refused to believe. This parable condemned the leaders' conduct. Clearly God delights in the brokenness of sinners but also in the humble faith of the morally upright.

Matthew 21:33

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

[parable: There was a certain householder ...] The 42nd parable in Matthew (Matthew 18:23). This illustrates that the responsibility of propagating the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (Matthew 21:43-46).

[tower] A booth for watchmen (Isaiah 1:8; Isaiah 5:2).

[let it out] Three kinds of leases were given:

1. Laborers received part of the crop.
2. Full rent was paid in money.
3. A portion was paid to the owner.

Leases were for a year, for life, or were hereditary. This last was the kind here. It is not possible to make all the details fit into the common Jewish or Christian interpretations, such as giving meanings to the fence, tower, etc. The main teaching is clear and that is plainly stated in the point illustrated in Matthew 21:42-46.

Vineyards of Palestine:

1. In some vineyards the vines were planted in rows 8 or 10 feet apart and trained on stakes. In others, they were planted in 2 rows and made to slant toward each other, forming an arch. The stock was allowed to grow 6 to 8 feet high, being fastened in position by strong stakes. The shoots were allowed to grow from one plant to another. Some vineyards were planted on the side of a terraced hill, the old branches being permitted to trail along the ground, while the fruitbearing shoots were propped up with forked sticks. Still others were planted so that the vines could be trained to grow over heaps of stones (called grape-mounds) to keep the clusters off the ground.

2. Vineyards were sometimes fenced with a wall of stone (Numbers 22:24; Proverbs 24:31) or thorny plants (Psalm 80:12). Sometimes both were used (Isaiah 5:5). Large mud-bricks about 1 yard wide, 1 yard thick, and 2 yards long were also used.
3. The winepress generally consisted of 2 parts—the receptacle for the grapes and the vat for the juice. Either part was sometimes called the press. The juice ran out the receptacle into the lower vat to purify the juice of sediment. Some vats were 8 to 10 feet square and 15 to 20 inches deep, the bottom being slightly sloped toward one end. Another vat lower than this was used at times for further purification purposes. The grapes were trodden in the receptacle, the juice running out of closely grated hole into the vat (Judges 9:27; Neh. 13:15; Isaiah 63:1-8; Amos 9:13; Rev. 14:17-20; Rev. 19:15). From 2 to 8 people would tread on the grapes, supported by ropes hung from crossbeams over their heads. The pressure of feet would naturally spatter juice over the garments (Genesis 49:11; Isaiah 63:1-8).
4. The tower was a temporary dwelling for the guard who watched over the vineyard to keep thieves and wild beasts out while the fruit was ripening. Some towers were mere booths which lasted only a season, while others were more permanent—built of stone (see pt. 2, Three Comparisons of Zion). Towers were circular or square in shape and 15 to 50 feet high.

Hedged it round about. This means, he *inclosed it*, either with a fence of wood or stone, or more probably with *thorns*, thick set and growing—a common way of inclosing fields in Judea, as it is in England.

And digged a winepress in it. Mark says, "digged a place for the wine-vat." This should have been so rendered in Matthew. The original word does not mean the press in which the grapes were trodden, but the *vat*, or *large cistern* into which the wine ran. This was commonly made by digging into the side of a hill. The *wine-press* was made of two receptacles. The upper one, in Persia at present, is about eight feet square, and four feet high. In this the grapes are thrown, and *trodden* by men, and the juice runs into the large receptacle, or cistern below. Isaiah 63:2,3.

And built a tower. See also Isaiah 5:2. In eastern countries at present these towers are often eighty feet high, and thirty feet square. They were for the keepers who defended the vineyard from thieves and animals, especially foxes. Song 1:6, 2:16.

The main elements in this parable are (1) the landowner—God, (2) the vineyard—Israel, (3) the tenants—the Jewish religious leaders, (4) the landowner's servants—the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God and preached to Israel, (5) the son—Jesus (Matthew 21:38), and (6) the other tenants—the Gentiles. Jesus was exposing the religious leaders' murderous plot (Matthew 21:45).

Matthew 21:34

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

Matthew 21:35

And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

The Vineyard: Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ps 80:8.

Matthew 21:36

Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Matthew 21:37

But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

“...his son”: in Mark 12:6 notes his *beloved* son (Cf. John 1:11; 6:38; 7:28,29; “killed,” Acts 2:23).

Jewish guilt: 1 Thess 2:2,14,15. Gentiles guilt: Acts 4:26,27 (vs. us and our sins).

Last of all, Mark adds, that this was an only son, greatly beloved. This beautifully and most tenderly exhibits the love of God, in sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for men. Long had he sent the prophets, and they had been persecuted and slain. There was no use in sending any more prophets to the people. They had done all they could do. God had one only-begotten and well-beloved Son, whom he might send into the world, and whom the world ought to reverence, even as they should the Father, John 5:23. To *reverence*, denotes honour, esteem, deference—that feeling which we have in the presence of one greatly our superior;—to give such a person, in our feelings and by our deportment, the honour which is due to his rank and character. God is often represented in the Bible as giving his Son, his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, for a lost world, John 3:16,17, 1 John 4:9,14, Romans 8:3,32, Galatians 4:4.

In trying to reach us with his love, God finally sent his own Son. Jesus’ perfect life, his words of truth, and his sacrifice of love are meant to cause us to listen to him and to follow him as Lord. If we ignore God’s gracious gift of his Son, we reject God himself.

In Mark (Mk 12:6) this is most touchingly expressed: “Having yet therefore one son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son.” Luke’s version of it too (Lu 20:13) is striking: “Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him.” Who does not see that our Lord here severs Himself, by the sharpest line of demarcation, from all merely *human* messengers, and claims for Himself *Sonship* in its loftiest sense? (Compare Heb 3:3–6). The expression, “*It may be* they will reverence My

Son,” is designed to teach the almost unimaginable guilt of *not* reverentially welcoming God’s Son.⁴³

Matthew 21:38

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

This is the most pointed parable that our Lord has given so far. It is His final warning to the religious rulers. When in the parable He said, “But last of all he sent unto them his son,” the Son was standing before them, giving them the parable. What are they going to do with God’s Son? He is telling them right now what is in their hearts.

Matthew 21:39

And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*.

Matthew 21:40

When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Jesus was killed outside the gate...

Matthew 21:41

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Their answer showed that they understood the parable. The story is similar to the one where Jews killed servants God sent them. Last of all God sent His Son. Now the prediction was that they would kill Him as the husbandmen did the son of the owner of the vineyard they had leased. The husbandmen were destroyed and the vineyard leased to others. This meaning is clear from the application in Matthew 21:42-46.

and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons—If this answer was given by the Pharisees, to whom our Lord addressed the parable, they thus unwittingly pronounced their own condemnation: as did David to Nathan the prophet (2Sa 12:5–7), and Simon the Pharisee to our Lord (Lu 7:43, &c.). But if it was given, as the two other Evangelists agree in representing it, by our Lord Himself, and the explicitness of the answer would seem to favor that supposition, then we can better explain the exclamation of the Pharisees which followed it, in Luke’s

⁴³Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 21:37). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

report (Lu 20:16)—“And when they heard it, they said, God forbid”—His whole meaning now bursting upon them.⁴⁴

Matthew 21:42

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Jesus Himself would refer to Psalm 118 that was sung on His entry and apply it to Himself (Ps 118:22–23; Mt 21:42). Idea of Jesus being the stone (Isa 28; Ex 17; 33; 1 Cor 10; Mt 21; Isa 8; Zech 3) Cf. Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:7.

This applies to Jesus and His rejection by the Jews, who, after a period of rejecting, will accept Him as their Messiah (Matthew 23:37-39; Romans 11:25-29).

[Lord's doing] The Lord had predicted all this and was in the background fulfilling every detail (John 3:16; Romans 8:32).

[marvellous in our eyes] The Lord's plan of redemption is marvelous (Romans 11:33; Ephes. 3:16-19; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

Jesus refers to himself as “the stone the builders rejected.” Although Jesus was rejected by many of his people, he will become the capstone, or cornerstone, of his new building, the church (see Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7).

Only a few months later Kefa told the *Sanhedrin*, “This Yeshua is the stone rejected by you builders which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom we must be saved!” (Ac 4:11–12&NN).⁴⁵

Matthew 21:43

Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

[nation] Greek: *ethnos* (GSN-1484), race or nation, meaning the Gentiles who took the place of Jews in the gospel program (Acts 13:46-49; Acts 15:13-18; Romans 10:19-11:26).

⁴⁴Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 21:41). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁴⁵Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:42). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

McGee: It is interesting to note that the Lord changed the expression “kingdom of heaven” to “kingdom of God.” I feel that He is using the larger term because He is getting ready to include the Gentiles and everybody that will come to Him.

“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”—that is, taken from the Jews and given to the church. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). The church is that “holy nation.”⁴⁶

The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you. Yeshua is not saying that the Christians will replace the Jews as God’s people, as many Christians teach. Rather, he is warning that Jewish leaders who do not look out for God’s interests (vv. 33–42) will be deprived of sharing in his rulership; and this task, with its rewards, will fall to a different group of Jewish leaders, the Messianic Jewish *talmidim* caring for Yeshua’s Messianic Community (see 18:18–20&N). Before long, of course, this community comes to include Gentile Christians, some of whom become leaders too.

In Sifre, a collection of *midrashim* compiled in the 4th century but including much older material, the rabbis, making a similar point in their discussion of Deuteronomy 32:9, told a similar parable about a king who leased a field to tenants.⁴⁷

ESV: kingdom of God will be taken away. The leaders have failed to carry out their obligations to God both in their personal lives and in leading the nation of Israel. Their privileged role in caring for God's vineyard/kingdom is now being taken away and **given to a people producing its fruits**. The church will be a new “people” (Gk. *ethnos*, “nation, people”) consisting of disciples, both Jews and Gentiles, gathered out of many “nations” (28:19; plural of Gk. *ethnos*) and brought together as one new “nation” (1 Pet. 2:9; singular of Gk. *ethnos*) in the unfolding of God's kingdom in the present age.

Yashanet.com: This verse, in conjunction with verse 19 (the fig tree) is often used to teach that God changed His mind and did away with the faith of Israel (as given in Torah), and began something new (i.e., “the Christian Church”), about the time of Acts chapter 2.

The reality is that God did not do away with His Torah (i.e., Matthew 5:17-21, Romans 3:31), but the offer of the Kingdom, along with the task of spreading the news of Messiah, did indeed “pass from” Israel proper, to the nations (via the faithful Jewish remnant in the diaspora), after Yeshua's death -- though not for long. (Much of chapters 9-11 of Paul's Romans letter addresses this.)

The offer of the Kingdom through Messiah was indeed intended for Israel and not the gentiles:

Matthew 10:5-7 - *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the*

⁴⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:114). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁷Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 21:43). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 15: 22-24 - *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

The seeds for what was to come indeed began in Acts 2, but not as the Christian church depicts. Here we find Jews (not "Christians") gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Shavuot. The *Ruach haKodesh* (Holy Spirit) descends on these Jewish followers of Messiah as an indication that God's will and intent were being served through those who trusted in Yeshua. (This experience was similar to that of Mount Sinai. These Jews then returned to their homes throughout the Roman empire, continuing in their Torah-based faith, with a knowledge of Messiah in Yeshua and empowerment of the His Ruach. We know that the Kingdom offer had not completely been taken away from Israel at the time of the events in Acts 2, for we see Peter extending this to His Jewish brethren, following the events of that Shavuot in the very next chapter:

Acts 3:12-26 - *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the*

earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

We also see Paul continue to teach that this offer of salvation/Kingdom was for the Jew first:

Romans 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Israel did not heed the warnings however. This was followed by the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and subsequent Roman war of 132 AD. During this approximately 100-year time period, a process began whereby the baton of Torah-based Messianic faith was passed along to the remaining faithful remnant of Israel in the diaspora, and those gentiles who congregated with them (i.e Romans, chapters 9-11). It was in this manner that nations other than Israel were "given" the Kingdom offer to take to the world. It was not long however before Babylonian paganism crept in and took the place of the faith of Yeshua and His disciples, resulting in the formation of gentile Christianity. By the time of Constantine (early 4th century) anyone continuing to follow the original (authentic) Torah-based Hebraic faith in Yeshua was considered a heretic. Conversely, some would argue that the phrase "*a nation*," here still refers to Israel, but a different generation. This argument is made no doubt, with the intention to combat the aforementioned false teaching that God deserted the Torah-based faith of Israel in favor of Christianity.³

It would seem however that the context (from the cursing of the fig tree on Yeshua's way into Jerusalem, to His words as He left the Temple in 33:37-39), indicate a rebuke of Israel, (other than the faithful remnant). This has nothing to do with God's faithfulness to Israel (i.e., as seen in Jeremiah 31 and Romans chapters 9 through 11), only to their role of bringing the truth of God's Kingdom, as it will be established through Yeshua, to the nations.

In short, although the main body of Israel did not carry out its mission of the Kingdom (and has never accepted Yeshua or taught others about Him since that time), neither did the gentiles when given the chance.

Matthew 21:44

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Stumble: Isa 8:14. Ground to Powder: Dan 2:34, 35. Mountains are idioms for government. This stone becomes a government.

Stones & Mountains

- God is referred to as a rock or a stone (Deut 32:4, 18, 30-31; Ps 18:2, 31, 46).
- The stone is also a Messianic title.
- To Israel, Jesus was a stumbling stone (Isa 8:14-15; Rom 9:32-33; 1 Cor 1:23).
- Israel rejected the Messiah, but in His death and resurrection He created the church.
- To the church, Jesus is the foundation stone, the head of the corner (Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pet 2:4-5).
- At the end of the age, Jesus will come as the smiting stone, destroy Gentile kingdoms,

and establish His own glorious kingdom (Dan 2:34).

They were the *builders* who rejected the stone (Acts 4:11). What were the consequences? For one thing, the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to another nation, the church (1 Pet 2:9, and note the context, 1 Peter 2:6-10). Those who would attack this stone would be “pulverized”; those whom Christ judges will be crushed to bits.

[whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder] Whoever throws himself on the mercy of Christ shall be broken and made contrite (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 51:17; Psalm 147:3), but whoever rejects His mercy shall be completely crushed (Greek: *likmao* (GSN-3039), be scattered like chaff, Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:18). This scattering like chaff refers to the dispersion of the nation (Luke 21:24). The term “broken in pieces” refers to complete defeat and destruction in Isaiah 8:9; Jeremiah 50:2; cp. Daniel 2:35,44-45.

Whosoever shall fall, There is an allusion here, doubtless, to Isaiah 8:14,15. Having made an allusion to himself *as a Stone*, or a Rock, Matthew 21:42, he proceeds to state the consequences of coming in contact with it. He that falls upon it, shall be broken; he that *runs against it*-a corner-stone, standing out from the other parts of the foundation-shall be injured, or broken in his limbs or body. He that is offended with *my* being the foundation, or that opposes me, shall, by the act, injure himself; make himself miserable by so doing, even were there nothing farther, But there *is* something farther.

On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. That is, in the original, will reduce him to dust, so that it may be scattered by the winds. There is an allusion here, doubtless, to the custom of *stoning* as a punishment among the Jews. A scaffold was erected, twice the height of the man to be stoned. Standing on its edge, he was violently struck off by one of the witnesses; if he died by the blow and the fall, nothing farther was done; if not, a heavy stone was thrown down on him, which at once killed him. So the Saviour speaks of the falling of the stone on his enemies. They who oppose him, reject him, and continue impenitent, shall be crushed by him in the day of judgment, and perish for ever.⁴⁸

Jesus used this metaphor to show that one stone can affect people different ways, depending on how they relate to it (see Isaiah 8:14-15; Isaiah 28:16; Daniel 2:34, 44-45). Ideally they will build on it; many, however, will trip over it. And at the last judgment God’s enemies will be crushed by it. In the end, Christ, the “building block,” will become the “crushing stone.” He offers mercy and forgiveness *now* and promises judgment later. We should choose him now!

“Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken” relates to Christ’s first coming. He is the Rock on which the church is built. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). To fall on that Stone is to come to Christ for salvation in this day of grace. To reject Christ is to have the Stone fall later in the

⁴⁸ Batnes’ Notes

judgment about which Daniel prophesied (see Dan. 2:34, 44–45), which relates to Christ’s second coming.

Matthew 21:45

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

They knew what He was talking about. In our day, unfortunately, a great many folk don’t see that there is also an application for themselves, especially for those in the church.

Matthew 21:46

But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Although the religious rulers had determined that Jesus should die, when they attempted to seize Him, they became fearful of the multitudes who considered Him a prophet of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:115). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.