

3.25.18 ~ Matthew 21:1-17, "Passion Week Begins!"

Matthew 21:1-3... Jesus and the 12 approach Jerusalem, coming near Bethphage ["house of unripe figs"], on the SE side of Olivet [Mt. of Olives], which is just east of Jerusalem, a short distance from Bethany (home to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus).

Jesus sends two of His disciples into Bethphage to acquire a young donkey that is there with its mother.

Matthew 21:4-7... The disciples find the donkey, untie it and bring it to Jesus. The disciples, when asked why they were untying the colt, responded as Jesus had told them to and received permission (**v. 3**) from the owner of the donkey to go ahead and take it. The people in that area knew Jesus' and His disciples and also that He was referred to as Lord.

Matthew 21:5, "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Matthew 21:8-11... This display on the part of the people was reserved for royalty, an ancient practice of showing homage to a new king (cf 2Kings 9:12-13); it would seem the people are recognizing Christ to be the Messiah, King of the Jews (cf **Matthew 2:1-2; 27:11**).

The people are excited, throwing down their outer garments and fresh cut palm branches (cf **John 12:13**), all this is symbolic of the people's hope and desire for the Messiah-King to come and liberate them.

The people are shouting (**v. 9**) "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Hosanna is a contraction of the Hebrew words for "save" and "please," the intent here is to express exalted adoration, praise, and joy, for the Messiah has come!

Hosanna is a transliteration from **Psalms 118:25-26**, which says, "O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you."

Jesus' name means "God's salvation." The people call for God's Son, the Messiah, to save them.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to come and liberate them from Gentile oppression, to prosper them, and to sit on the throne of David; they didn't understand that He was coming to free them from the penalty of sin!

No wonder (**Matthew 21:10**) the people ask, "Who is this?" And yet, they seem to be aware (**Matthew 21:11**) that, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

The OT gives many prophecies to be fulfilled during Passion Week, concerning the suffering, death and resurrection of God's Son, providing forgiveness for sins.

Zechariah 9:9 (500 BC)... Israel's King will enter Jerusalem on a donkey's colt.

Zechariah 11:12... He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Exodus 21:32, the price of a slave).

Psalms 22:16 (1000 BC)... His hands and feet will be pierced. **18**... Lots will be cast for His garments.

Psalms 69:21... He will be given vinegar to drink.

Exodus 12:46 (Passover lamb, 1400 BC)... None of His bones will be broken.

Isaiah 53:1-12 (700 BC)... He will be despised, forsaken, led like a lamb to the slaughter; He will be pierced, put to death for our sins, yet He will live.

Zechariah 13:7... His friends will desert Him.

Psalms 16:8-11... He will rise from the dead.

Next Friday at 3 pm, we'll study what the Bible says about the day of Christ's death; and on Sunday, what the Bible says about His resurrection from the grave.

But today, let us turn our attention to the Lamb of God, as He enters Jerusalem for His last time before ascending back into heaven.

Matthew 21:12-13... Jesus enters the Temple and begins to clear out those desecrating the House of God.

The outer court had become a market place and stockyard; worshippers who came to offer sacrifices and pay their temple tax were forced to pay high exchange rates, as Greek and Roman coins had to be exchanged for Jewish currency; and also high prices were being charged for sacrificial animals and birds (and no doubt, the Priests were getting kickbacks from the vendors).

The Outer Court, where all this was taking place, was for the Gentiles; they were not allowed to enter any other part of the Temple, and so, this area was set apart for Gentile converts to Judaism to pray and worship.

It is here that these vendors, under the supervision of the Jewish religious leaders, had turned a place of prayer and worship into a robber's den, where criminals were being protected by the Chief Priest and Teachers of the Law, who should instead be arresting them and bringing them to judgment (Jeremiah 7:11), "Has this house, which bears My Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD."

These Religious leaders belonged to the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court of Israel); presided over by the High-Priest, it met in the Temple daily to pronounce judgments in all matters of civil, religious, cultural and ancestral Law.

Jesus offended the religious leaders (**Mark 11:18**), "The chief priests and the teachers of the law... began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared Him, because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching,"

(**Mark 1:22**), "The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." True authority is from God, Jesus came from the Father with full authority.

Matthew 21:14-16... The blind and lame came to the Temple to beg for money and seek healing; most of the Jews considered their infirmities to be payment for sins either they or their parents committed.

The religious leaders showed little, if any, mercy toward the poor and the afflicted; and yet Jesus healed all who came to Him, even receiving praise from children. This infuriated the religious elite and so, Jesus condemns these self-righteous hypocrites as enemies of God, using the OT against them in **verse 16** (from **Psalms 8:2**), "From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise," but the Psalmist goes on to say this is "because of the Messiah's enemies," in order to silence them.

God knew full-well that a majority of unbelieving Jews (along with the majority of mankind) would reject His Son, and that the Jews would show contempt toward Him, displaying the evil in their hearts by seeking to kill Him; but according to God's sovereign plan, Jesus would give His own life as payment for our sins, after which He would rise from the grave to prove He is both Lord and Savior (cf **Isaiah 53:3-6; John 10:17-18; Acts 2:22-24**).

The majority of the Nation of Israel did not receive Jesus as their Messiah, you see, they expected Him to come riding on a white horse, as a Warrior-King who would run the Romans out of Israel and free the Jews of all Gentile rule; but instead, Jesus came humbly riding on a donkey, as God's Servant, He who gave up Himself to be captured, condemned and crucified, like a criminal.

The nation of Israel is still waiting for the Messiah to come - riding on a white stallion, a conquering Warrior-King, and He will (cf. **Revelation 19:11-16**).

Matthew 21:17... Jesus came to offer freedom from the penalty of sin and eternal life in heaven with God; but the Jews adamantly rejected Him.

At the end of the day, Jesus left the crowds and went out of the city, to Bethany, where He would spend the night with some of His dearest friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, for they genuinely loved and believed in Him.

Over the next few days of Passion Week, the Biblical record tells us that Jesus poured His heart out to the nation of Israel, expressing deep compassion for them; and yet, just five days from the day He entered into Jerusalem, with the people shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David!" these same people would cry out for Him to be crucified, and Jesus would voluntarily give up His own life, as the full and final payment for all our sins.

God loves us so much that He gave His Son to take the punishment we deserve; in order that we might be saved (cf. **Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 8:1**).

Passion week is all about the love of God expressed toward us through Jesus Christ the Lord. The real question today is, have you received the love of God through Jesus Christ the Lord, and are you earnestly seeking to bring honor and glory and praise to Him, with your life? If so, you can genuinely and joyously proclaim, "Hosanna to the Son of David, to Him who comes in the Name of the LORD!" Amen!