

Bible Study 2023-2024

Class #18

2/20/24

Synoptics 23 – 24

- Matthew 21

Matthew 21

- **Matthew 21:1-3** *“And when they drew near Jerusalem and came to Beth-phage,...and he sent them immediately”*
 - *Beth-phage* is a small village on the Mount of Olives (opposite the village of *Bethany*)
 - Upon their arrival, Jesus sent his disciples over a small ridge line to *Bethany* to obtain an ass (donkey) and her colt for Him to use in His entrance into Jerusalem

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:4-5** *“Tell the daughter of Zion, and on a colt, the foal of an ass”*
 - Father asked that we turn back to the **Book of Zachariah 9:9**
 - He was a post-exilic prophet, prophesying during the reign of *Zerubbabel*, who was encouraging the people of Israel to rebuild the temple after the exile
 - At the end of his book, he seemed to suggest that Jerusalem was going to be destroyed again

Zachariah

- **Zachariah 9:9-10** “ *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!...and from the river to the ends of the earth*”
 - The term “daughter of Zion” is a reference to the new Jerusalem found in **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah**
 - It was the restored “remnant”
 - The idea of riding on an ass, the colt of a foal of an ass is synonymous parallelism * in the Hebrew
 - We are talking about the same animal, but speaking of it in two different ways

Zachariah (Cont)

- *Ephraim* is in the North (the Northern Kingdom) and *Jerusalem* is in the South (the Southern Kingdom)
- He was talking about the divided kingdom after the death of Solomon
- This imagery is the same as seen in all the other prophets
- It is the image of the king coming to Jerusalem riding on a donkey

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- Father pointed to two issues impacting a king from scriptures: three prohibitions and the question of a successor
- **Deuteronomy 17** mandated that a king was not supposed to have:
 - War horses and chariots
 - Multiple wives (via marriage alliances)
 - Collection of gold and silver via taxes
 - Thus, Jesus would be seen as a “righteous king” in accordance with the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 17)
- The question was, whether He was a king chosen by God or one who put himself on the throne?

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- Father reminded us of the succession battle after David with *Adonijah* who decided he would be king after *Absolom* versus God's choice of Solomon, the son of Bathsheba, who rode into Jerusalem triumphantly riding on David's mule as the anointed king
- Father then pointed out that a mule was $\frac{1}{2}$ donkey and $\frac{1}{2}$ horse
- He said that he was not sure why David had a mule since the Law did not allow the mixing of things

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- It was forbidden for wheat and barley to grow in the same field
- You could not have clothing made from two types of material
- You were not allowed to let animals of different species interbreed
- Yet, for some reason, David had a mule, or at least that is what the *Hebrew* word implied
- No matter, whatever the case, you have this scene with Solomon riding into the city of Jerusalem on his mule (donkey) in triumph while another king (*Adonijah*) was sitting on the throne who had not been chosen by God
- This kind of information must have been on the minds of the people watching Jesus enter Jerusalem based on what Matthew was relating

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:6-7** *“The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them,...and he sat thereupon”*
 - They put their garments on them (plural)
 - There must be something linguistic about Matthew’s language here as it is impossible for Jesus to ride on both animals
 - Mark and Luke only talk about one animal
 - *Zechariah* only discusses one animal
 - Father suggested that there was something concerning the use of the *Hebrew* or *Aramaic* plural that might be behind these issues

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:8-11** *“Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road,...this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee”*
 - The spreading of their garments should remind us of **2 Kings 9:13***
 - This is the story of *King Jehu* of Israel (Northern Kingdom)
 - His story is a very dramatic Old Testament story
 - He was a general in the army and as soon as he was anointed by the prophet *Elisha*, (who followed the first prophet *Elijah*) his men laid their garments in the street before him and chanted, “Long live *Jehu* the king”

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- This was to demonstrate that he was their master and that they served underneath him
- Immediately after, *King Jehu* killed the two kings who were ruling in other parts of that region
 - First, he killed *King Joram*, King of *Israel*
 - Then, he killed *Ahaziah*, King of *Judah* (who was in the line of David, but was unrighteous)
- Then, he cleaned up Jerusalem, got rid of *Jezebel*, (Evil wife of *King Ahab*) and killed the worshippers of *Baal* in *Samaria*
 - He called for a feast to *Baal*, gathered all the worshippers in the temple, locked the doors, and killed all inside
 - He cleansed the land of paganism and killed the unrighteous rulers round about
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Matthew 21 (Cont)

- Most likely, Matthew was thinking of these events when Jesus was coming to Jerusalem
- Many of those in the group began spreading their garments on the road before Jesus, to cut down branches from the trees (palm trees), and were shouting, "*Hosanna*" (meaning "save us," son of David)
- Father pointed out that it was the job of the king to save his people from all the enemies round about
- This means that the people in this group were (ready for battle) were identifying Jesus as the Davidic king as they witnessed Him entering the city of Jerusalem (as seen earlier) riding on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9**

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:12-14** *“And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple,...and he healed them”*
 - Jesus went straight into the temple (just as David had done in **Psalm 118**)
 - But, Jesus found the temple precinct not to be properly prepared as it was filled with money-changers
 - This was the area where the Gentiles were supposed to come and pray to the God of Israel (an area similar to the Narthex in our churches)

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- So, Jesus chased the money-changes out of the area and said, *“My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you make it a den of robbers”*
- In this passage, Jesus combined **Isaiah 56:7** and **Jeremiah 7:11**
- What Jesus was doing here was splicing two texts together which was a common practice by exegesis at the time
 - Jeremiah contains a prophecy that the temple is going to be destroyed
 - As soon as the people heard Jesus say this, they understood that there was going to be a problem
- Jesus was saying that the court of the Gentiles was supposed to be a house of prayer for their conversion, but they had made it a place for money-changers (most of whom were thieves)

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- This meant that Jesus was saying that the House of God was again forsaken
- From the court of the Gentiles, Jesus would have gone into the court of men where only Jewish men could go
- There, He interacted with the Levites just as David had done (once again) according to **Psalms 118*** in his day as he said:

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:14-17** *“And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple,...he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there”*
 - The people were calling Jesus the Messiah
 - This middle part from **Psalm 8:2; Wisdom 10:21***
 - After completing these sayings, Jesus retired to Bethany

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- **Matthew 21:18-22** *“In the morning as he was returning to the city,...if you have faith”*
 - Father pointed out that this Passover was happening in the very early springtime
 - A good fig tree produces fruit in the Spring and Fall
 - There might have been some fruit on this tree at that time of the year, but it had to have been a very warm Spring
 - It is unlikely that there would have been edible fruit on the tree
 - When Jesus saw the tree had no fruit, he cursed it

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- The disciples knowing this asked Jesus, “How could the tree have had fruit?”
- He responded that if they had faith, they could ask a mountain to be cast into the sea and it would have been so
- Father pointed out that the phrase, “this mountain,” could have been the mountain that was before them
- Since they were traveling between *Bethany* and *Jerusalem*, they were most likely in the *Kidron Valley* and the mountain before them was *Mount Zion*

Matthew 21 (Cont)

- Father also suggested that this could be about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)
- In any event, the two fig tree stories are framing devices within the text between his prophesy of the destruction of Jerusalem