

LESSON 24: MATTHEW 21
MARCH 18, 2009

OVERVIEW

- . Jesus' entry into Jerusalem – Matthew 21:1-11
- . The cleansing of the temple – Matthew 21:12-17
- . The symbolism of the cursed fig tree – Matthew 21:18-22
- . Jesus' answer to the Pharisaic opposition with a question – Matthew 21:23-27
- . The parable of the two sons – Matthew 21:28-32
- . The parable of the wicked tenants – Matthew 21:33-46

JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM – MATTHEW 21:1-11

- . Preparing for entry – Matthew 21:1-7
 - . The Lord's entry takes place on the eve of the Passover celebration
 - . History of the Passover – Exodus 12
 - . Busiest time of the year in Jerusalem
 - . The law required every male within twenty miles of city to be Present
 - . Extra interest this year over the anticipation of Jesus' arrival John 11:55-57
 - . What were the disciples thinking
 - . Most were still confused over how this would all play out – John 12:16 Mark 9:32
 - . Thomas was expecting the worst – John 11:16
 - . Judas still hoping for power grab – Mark 14:10
 - . Fulfillment of prophecy – Zechariah 9:9
 - . Zechariah 9-14 are considered to be the last words spoken by God in the Old Testament
 - . Zechariah 9-14 deals with the new order, the day of judgment which is Coming
 - . Zechariah 9-14 promises the coming of the Messiah
 - . In the East the horse was a symbol of war and the donkey a symbol of Peace
 - . Zechariah's prophecy was that Jesus would come as the King of Peace
 - . The donkey was also a lowly beast and no Jewish king since Solomon had ridden on one
- . The triumphant entry – Matthew 21:8-11
 - . The multitude heard of His arrival and poured in to the city to greet Him
 - . Many recognized Jesus as Messiah – Psalm 118:25-26
 - . Hosanna originally meant "save now"

- . The people were hoping for liberation from their enemies now
- . Jesus, who had previously prohibited such public display, now allowed it for His hour had come
- . As Jesus approached Jerusalem He saw the city and wept
 - . Jesus gives us every opportunity to be reunited with God, yet He also knows the fate of those who reject Him
 - . Jesus speaks of the impending destruction of Jerusalem that many in the crowd will witness

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE – MATTHEW 21:12-17

- . Two kinds of trading taking place within the temple
 - . Money changing taking place to pay for the temple tax
 - . Every Jew paid a temple tax of one-half shekel which had to be paid before Passover
 - . After a certain date, it could only be paid at the temple
 - . It had to be paid in the correct currency, a sanctuary shekel
 - . Many pilgrims didn't have the current currency so they needed to exchange their money
 - . The money changers exploited the pilgrims by charging a tax on top of the tax, for personal gain
 - . The typical excise tax was an additional 25%, or two days Wages
 - . Selling doves
 - . God ordained that a person too poor to bring the usual sacrifice of a lamb, could bring two doves – Leviticus 5:7
 - . In addition, all sacrifices were required to be without defect – Exodus 12:5
 - . Officials habitually turned down the sacrifices not purchased on the temple precincts
 - . A pair of doves purchased at the temple were twenty times more Expensive
 - . The area where these animals were sold was the personal property of the high priests family
 - . Jesus drives out the merchants quoting from scripture – Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11
 - . He converts the space to an area where He does God's work of healing
 - . The Pharisee's response is another example of their blindness
 - . This is the second time Jesus cleanses the temple – John 2:13-17

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE CURSED FIG TREE – MATTHEW 21:18-22

- . During Passover week, the out of town crowds needed to leave the city at night
- . A fig tree produces its fruit before it leafs out
 - . Leaves on a fig tree usually means the fruit is ripe
- . A fig tree with leaves would have been very unusual for this time of year

- . This “hypocrite” tree, with no fruit, symbolizes the moral and religious character of the Jewish leaders
 - . Christ’s reaction to the tree foreshadows His judgment on these people
 - . His absolute power over the tree also shows the disciples the power they will soon have against such obstacles
- . This tree would serve as a symbol of strength to the disciples in the years to come, as they would pass it often

JESUS’ ANSWER TO THE PHARISAIC OPPOSITION WITH A QUESTION **MATTHEW 21:23-27**

- . When the Pharisee’s attempt to trap Jesus with their question, Jesus responds with His own question that reveals their true identity and traps them
 - . If the Pharisee’s truly believed John’s baptism was from God, they would not have killed Him
 - . If they would have believed it to be from God and killed him, then they would have put their selfish ambition before God which would have violated the very commands they taught
 - . If they believed John was not a prophet and said so, they would have alienated themselves from the people
 - . Because they valued their status in the community above all else, they were forced to abstain from answering
 - . The result was that they lost all credibility with the people

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS – MATTHEW 21:28-32

- . The first son initially choose not to obey, but later choose to obey
 - . This son represents those who had originally chosen to reject the rule of God over their lives, but then repented and surrendered their lives to God
- . The second son agreed to obey but never followed through on his commitment
 - . This son represents those, like the Pharisees, who claim to serve God, but never see the need to repent and surrender themselves to God
- . The Pharisees can answer this question correctly but fail to connect the dots
 - . Their pride, arrogance and self righteousness has blinded them to the truth

PARABLE OF THE WICKED TENANTS – MATTHEW 21:33-46

- . The symbolism and meaning of the parable
 - . The vineyard represents the nation of Israel as well as her spiritual heritage Isaiah 5:1-7
 - . Among all nations of the world, God chose Israel to be the recipient of His most complete revelation of Himself
 - . The tenants represent the people of Israel
 - . They were responsible to give God spiritual fruit by serving Him and making Him central in their lives
 - . The servants represent all the Old Testament prophets

- . The son is Jesus Christ and the owner of the vineyard is God
- . The Pharisees condemn themselves by their answer
 - . God will destroy these wicked men
 - . God will give His vineyard (His kingdom) to others
 - . The kingdom of God will be taken from Israel, as a nation, and given to the church, the body of Christ, comprised of believers from all nations

NEXT LESSON: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009 – MATTHEW 22