

Matthew 21 Commentary

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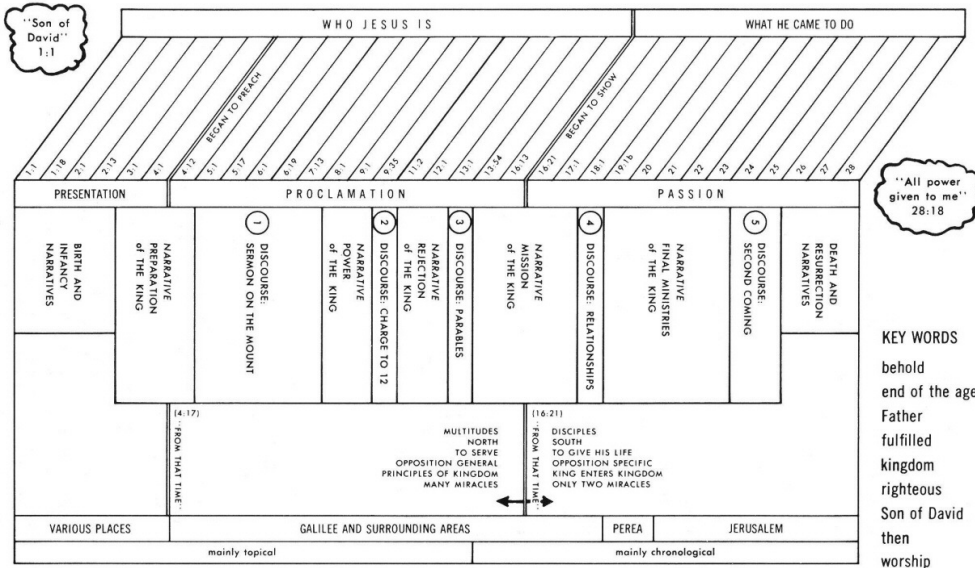
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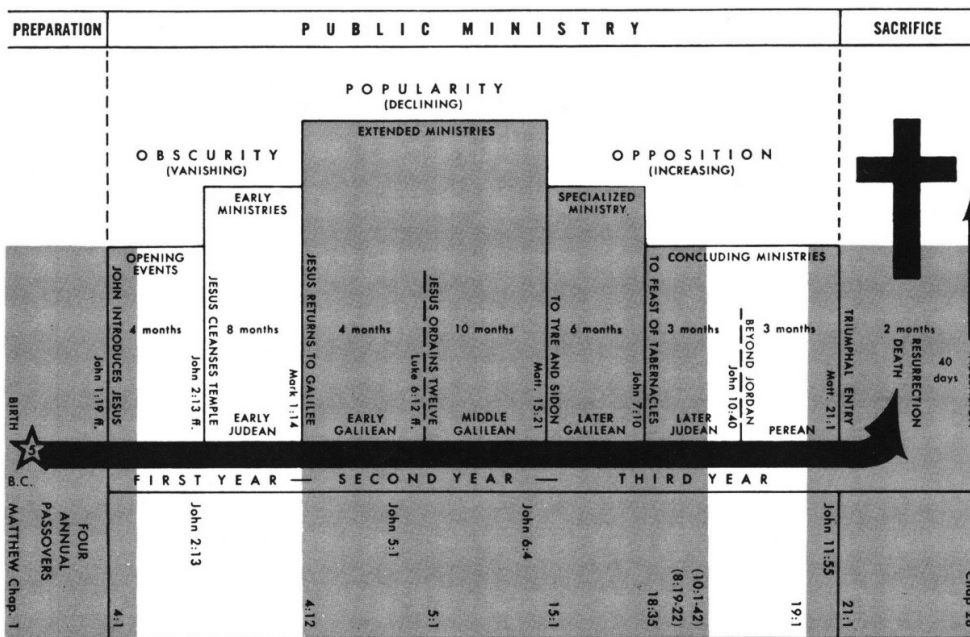
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MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

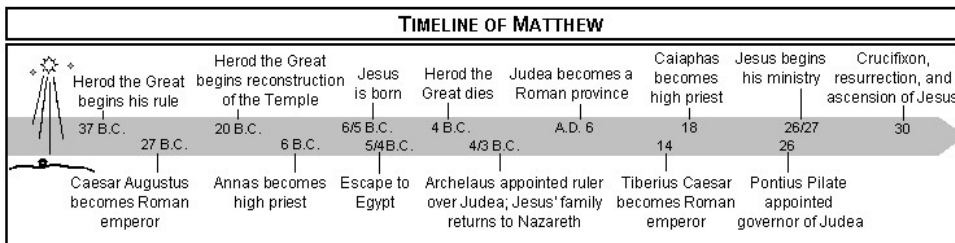


Click chart to enlarge
Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
Another Chart from Swindoll

THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow Ryrie Study Bible

PLEASE NOTE - THIS PAGE IS INCOMPLETE AND IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION - JULY, 2024 EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2024

Matthew 21:1 When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

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- when (KJV): Mk 11:1 Lu 19:28
 - Bethphage (KJV): Bethphage was a village on the declivity of Mount Olivet, and somewhat nearer to Jerusalem than Bethany.
 - the mount (KJV): Mt 24:3 26:30 Zec 14:4 Lu 19:37 21:37 Joh 8:1 Ac 1:12

When they had approached ([eggizo](#) - drew near) Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent ([apostello](#)) two disciples

NET NOTE - The exact location of the village of Bethphage is not known. Most put it on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives and northwest of Bethany, about 1.5 miles (3 km) east of Jerusalem. "Mountain" in English generally denotes a higher elevation than it often does in reference to places in Palestine. The Mount of Olives is really a ridge running north to south about 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) long, east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley. Its central elevation is about 30 meters (100 ft) higher than Jerusalem. It was named for the large number of olive trees which grew on it. **Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:1-11.** This coming of Christ was described by the prophet Zechariah, Zechariah 9:9. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty, in mercy to work salvation. As meekness and outward poverty were fully seen in Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how wrong covetousness, ambition, and the pride of life must be in Zion's citizens! They brought the ass, but Jesus did not use it without the owner's consent. The trappings were such as came to hand. We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ. The chief priests and the elders afterwards joined with the multitude that abused him upon the cross; but none of them joined the multitude that did him honour. Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet. Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! But of how little value is the applause of the people! The changing multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Multitudes often seem to approve the gospel, but few become consistent disciples. When Jesus was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the Pharisees, were moved with envy. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom.

QUESTION - [What is Palm Sunday?](#) [WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Palm Sunday is the day we celebrate the [triumphal entry](#) of Jesus into Jerusalem, one week before His resurrection (Matthew 21:1–11). As Jesus entered the holy city, He neared the culmination of a long journey toward Golgotha. He had come to save the lost (Luke 19:10), and now was the time—this was the place—to secure that salvation. Palm Sunday marked the start of what is often called "[Passion Week](#)," the final seven days of Jesus' earthly ministry. Palm Sunday was the "beginning of the end" of Jesus' work on earth.

Palm Sunday began with Jesus and His disciples traveling over the [Mount of Olives](#). The Lord sent two disciples ahead into the village of Bethphage to find an animal to ride. They found the unbroken colt of a donkey, just as Jesus had said they would (Luke 19:29–30). When they untied the colt, the owners began to question them. The disciples responded with the answer Jesus had provided: "The Lord needs it" (Luke 19:31–34). Amazingly, the owners were satisfied with that answer and let the disciples go. "They brought [the donkey] to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it" (Luke 19:35).

As Jesus ascended toward Jerusalem, a large multitude gathered around Him. This crowd understood that Jesus was the Messiah; what they did not understand was that it wasn't time to set up the kingdom yet—although Jesus had tried to tell them so (Luke 19:11–12). The crowd's actions along the road give rise to the name "Palm Sunday": "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road" (Matthew 21:8). In strewing their cloaks on the road, the people were giving Jesus the royal treatment—King Jehu was given similar honor at his coronation (2 Kings 9:13). John records the detail that the branches they cut were from palm trees (John 12:13).

On that first Palm Sunday, the people also honored Jesus verbally: "The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' / 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' / 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'" (Matthew 21:9). In their praise of Jesus, the Jewish crowds were quoting Psalm 118:25–26, an acknowledged prophecy of the Christ. The allusion to a Messianic psalm drew resentment from the religious leaders present: "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'" (Luke 19:39). However, Jesus saw no need to rebuke those who told the truth. He replied, "I tell you . . . if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40).

Some 450 to 500 years prior to Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah had prophesied the event we now call Palm Sunday: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! / Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! / See, your king comes to you, / righteous and victorious, / lowly and riding on a donkey, / on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). The prophecy was fulfilled in every particular, and it was indeed a time of rejoicing, as Jerusalem welcomed their King. Unfortunately, the celebration was not to last. The crowds looked for a Messiah who would rescue them *politically* and free them *nationally*, but Jesus had come to save them *spiritually*. First things first, and mankind's primary need is spiritual, not political, cultural, or national salvation.

Even as the coatless multitudes waved the palm branches and shouted for joy, they missed the true reason for Jesus' presence. They could neither see nor understand the cross. That's why, "as [Jesus] approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies . . . will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you'" (Luke 19:41–47). It is a tragic thing to see the Savior but not recognize Him for who He is. The crowds who were crying out "[Hosanna!](#)" on Palm Sunday were crying out "Crucify Him!" later that week (Matthew 27:22–23).

There is coming a day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). The worship will be real then. Also, John records a scene in heaven that features the eternal celebration of the risen Lord: "There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were *holding palm branches in their hands*" (Revelation 7:9, emphasis added). These palm-bearing saints will shout, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (verse 10), and who can measure sum of their joy?

Palm Sunday Calendar:

2024 — March 24

2025 — April 13

Matthew 21:2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.

- Mt 26:18 Mk 11:2,3 14:13-16 Lu 19:30-32 Joh 2:5-8

saying to them, "**Go** ([present imperative](#)) into the village opposite you, and immediately ([euthus](#)) you will find a donkey tied there and a colt ([polos](#)) with her; untie ([luo](#)) them and **bring** ([aorist imperative](#)) them to Me

Henry Morris - colt with her. The parallel accounts in Mark 11:2 and Luke 19:30 mention only one donkey, but that does not mean they deny that two were involved. Also, Matthew is the only one who mentions that this incident was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, although the others must have known this reference.

Matthew 21:3 "If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

- The Lord (KJV): 1Ch 29:14-16 Ps 24:1 50:10,11 Hag 2:8,9 Joh 3:35 17:2 Ac 17:25 2Co 8:9
- straightway (KJV): 1Sa 10:26 1Ki 17:9 Ezr 1:1,5 7:27 2Co 8:1,2,16 Jas 1:17

If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately ([euthus](#)) he (the owner) will send ([apostello](#)) them

NET NOTE - The custom called angaria allowed the impressment of animals for service to a significant figure.

Send (649) [apostello](#) from **apo** = from, away from + **stello** = to withdraw from, avoid) means to send off, to send forth, to send out. To send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, an envoy. The idea is to send forth from one place to another. But the meaning of [apostello](#) is more than just to send because it means "to send off on a commission to do something as one's personal representative, with credentials furnished" (Wuest) To send upon some business (Mt. 2:16; 10:5; 20:2). To send away in the sense of to dismiss (Mk 12:3, 4). To send or thrust forth as a sickle among corn (Mk 4:29). **Apostello** summarized - 1. send someone out, implying for a particular purpose (Mk 1:11; 1Co 1:17); 2. send a message, send word (Ac 28:28, Mt 14:35, Mt 27:19); 3. ([apostellō](#) to [drepanon](#)), begin to harvest, place the sickle (Mk 4:29) (**Ed**: literally "send the sickle" = begin to harvest)

Apostello in Matthew - Matt. 2:16; Matt. 8:31; Matt. 10:5; Matt. 10:16; Matt. 10:40; Matt. 11:10; Matt. 13:41; Matt. 14:35; Matt. 15:24; Matt. 20:2; Matt. 21:1; Matt. 21:3; Matt. 21:34; Matt. 21:36; Matt. 21:37; Matt. 22:3; Matt. 22:4; Matt. 22:16; Matt. 23:34; Matt. 23:37; Matt. 24:31; Matt. 27:19

Matthew 21:4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

- this (KJV): Mt 1:22 26:56 Joh 19:36,37
- saying (KJV): Zec 9:9 Joh 12:15

This took place to fulfill ([pleroo](#)) what was spoken through the prophet

Henry Morris - the prophet. Here, for the first time publicly, Christ presented Himself to the Jews as their promised Messiah and King (Zechariah 9:9).

Matthew 21:5 "SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.'"

- **the daughter** (KJV): Ps 9:14 Isa 12:6 40:9 62:11 Zep 3:14,15 Mk 11:4-11
- **King** (KJV): Mt 2:2,6 Ge 49:10 Nu 24:19 Ps 2:6-12 45:1-17 72:1-20 Ps 110:1-4 Isa 9:6,7 Jer 23:5,6 Eze 34:24 37:24 Da 2:44,45 Da 7:13,14 Mic 5:2 Zec 6:12-13 Joh 1:49 19:15-22
- **gentle** (KJV): Mt 11:29 12:19,20 2Co 10:1 Php 2:3-5
- **mounted** (KJV): De 17:16 Jud 5:10 12:14 2Sa 16:2 1Ki 1:33 10:26 Ho 1:7 Mic 5:10,11 Zec 9:9-10

Related Passages:

Zechariah 9:9-10 (See also [discussion below](#).) Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, GENTLE ([praus](#)), AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY, EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN - See also [discussion below](#).

NET NOTE - Grk "Tell the daughter of Zion" (the phrase "daughter of Zion" is an idiom for the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "people of Zion"). The idiom "daughter of Zion" has been translated as "people of Zion" because the original idiom, while firmly embedded in the Christian tradition, is not understandable to most modern English readers. Grk "**the foal of an animal under the yoke**," i.e., a hard-working animal. This is a quotation from Zech 9:9.

Gentle ([4239](#)) **praus** - some sources state it originates from **paos** = easy, mild or soft) ([Click](#) for in depth study of the related noun "gentleness" = **prautes** which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit - Gal 5:23-[note](#)) describes those who are of a quiet, gentle spirit, in opposition to the proud and supercilious Scribes and Pharisees and their disciples. We have a compound word **gentleman**, which once fully expressed the meaning of the word meek, but in our modern society has almost wholly lost its original meaning. **Paus** describes a person who is not overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance, but instead one who is gentle, humble, lowly, defers, and is considerate or mild. Ultimately person who manifests **praus** is the one who imitates Jesus (cf His gentleness in Mt 11:29-[note](#)) enabled of course by the power of His indwelling Spirit.

Praus - 4v - Matt. 5:5; Matt. 11:29; Matt. 21:5; 1 Pet. 3:4

Matthew 21:6 The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them,

- and did (KJV): Ge 6:22 12:4 Ex 39:43 40:16 1Sa 15:11 Joh 15:14

The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them

Matthew 21:7 and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.

- brought (KJV): Mk 11:4-8 Lu 19:32-35
- put (KJV): 2Ki 9:13

and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats

NET NOTE - Grk “garments”; but this refers in context to their outer cloaks. The action is like 2 Kgs 9:13.

Matthew 21:8 Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.

- others (KJV): Lev 23:40 Joh 12:13

Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.

QUESTION - [What is the significance of the triumphal entry?](#) [WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - The triumphal entry is that of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on what we know as [Palm Sunday](#), the Sunday before the crucifixion (John 12:1, 12). The story of the triumphal entry is one of the few incidents in the life of Jesus which appears in all four Gospel accounts (Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19). Putting the four accounts together, it becomes clear that the triumphal entry was a significant event, not only to the people of Jesus’ day, but to Christians throughout history. We celebrate Palm Sunday to remember that momentous occasion.

On that day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey’s colt, one that had never been ridden before. The disciples spread their cloaks on the donkey for Jesus to sit on, and the multitudes came out to welcome Him, laying before Him their cloaks and the branches of palm trees. The people hailed and praised Him as the “King who comes in the name of the Lord” as He rode to the temple, where He taught the people, healed them, and drove out the money-changers and merchants who had made His Father’s house a “den of robbers” (Mark 11:17).

Jesus’ purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to make public His claim to be their Messiah and King of Israel in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew says that the King coming on the foal of a donkey was an exact fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus rides into His capital city as a conquering King and is hailed by the people as such, in the manner of the day. The streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him, and like a king He ascends to His palace, not a temporal palace but the spiritual palace that is the temple, because His is a spiritual kingdom. He receives the worship and praise of the people because only He deserves it. No longer does He tell His disciples to be quiet about Him (Matthew 12:16, 16:20) but to shout His praises and worship Him openly. The spreading of cloaks was an act of homage for royalty (see 2 Kings 9:13). Jesus was openly declaring to the people that He was their King and the Messiah they had been waiting for.

Unfortunately, the praise the people lavished on Jesus was not because they recognized Him as their Savior from sin. They welcomed Him out of their desire for a messianic deliverer, someone who would lead them in a revolt against Rome. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ as Savior, nevertheless hoped that perhaps He would be to them a great temporal deliverer. These are the ones who hailed Him as King with their many hosannas, recognizing Him as the Son of David who came in the name of the Lord. But when He failed in their expectations, when He refused to lead them in a massive revolt against the Roman occupiers, the crowds quickly turned on Him. Within just a few days, their hosannas would change to cries of “Crucify Him!” (Luke 23:20-21). Those who hailed Him as a hero would soon reject and abandon Him.

The story of the triumphal entry is one of contrasts, and those contrasts contain applications to believers. It is the story of the King who came as a lowly servant on a donkey, not a prancing steed, not in royal robes, but on the clothes of the poor and humble. Jesus Christ comes not to conquer by force as earthly kings but by love, grace, mercy, and His own sacrifice for His people. His is not a kingdom of armies and splendor but of lowliness and servanthood. He conquers not nations but hearts and minds. His message is one of peace with God, not of temporal peace. If Jesus has made a triumphal entry into our hearts, He reigns there in peace and love. As His followers, we exhibit those same qualities, and the world sees the true King living and reigning in triumph in us.

QUESTION - [Why would a king ride a donkey instead of a warhorse \(Zechariah 9:9-10\)?](#)

ANSWER - Many have wondered why the king mentioned in Zechariah 9:9-10 would ride a donkey into Jerusalem rather than a warhorse. It seems an odd choice for royalty. Kings ride chargers, don't they?

In the ancient Middle Eastern world, leaders rode horses if they rode to war, but donkeys if they came in peace. 1 Kings 1:33 mentions Solomon riding a donkey on the day he was recognized as the new king of Israel. Other instances of leaders riding donkeys are Judges 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; and 2 Samuel 16:2.

The mention of a donkey in Zechariah 9:9-10 fits the description of a king who would be "righteous and having salvation, gentle." Rather than riding to conquer, this king would enter in peace.

Zechariah 9:10 highlights this peace: "I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth."

Note the many details symbolic of peace:

- "Take away the chariots": an end to the main vehicle of war.
- "Take away . . . the war-horses": no need for horses used in war.
- "The battle bow will be broken": no need for bows or arrows for fighting.
- "He will proclaim peace to the nations": His message will be one of reconciliation.
- "His rule shall be from sea to sea": the King will control extended territory with no enemies of concern.

Jesus fulfills this prophecy of Zechariah. The worldwide peace proclaimed by this humble King will be a fulfillment of the angels' song in Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (NKJV). Significantly, Jacob's blessing on his son Judah includes a reference to a donkey and a donkey's foal (Genesis 49:11). Jesus is from the [tribe of Judah](#).

Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled by the [triumphal entry](#) as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19). Verses 10 and following refer to a future time when the Messiah will reign after defeating His enemies at the [second coming](#).

Matthew 21:9 The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!"

- Hosanna (KJV): Mt 21:15 Ps 118:24-26 Mk 11:9,10
- Blessed (KJV): Mt 23:39 Lu 19:37,38 Joh 12:13-15
- in the highest (KJV): Lu 2:14

The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna ([Hosanna](#)) to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest

Henry Morris - These multitudes were unwittingly fulfilling Psalm 118:25,26 ("Hosanna" means "save now"). However, they only perceived Jesus as "the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matthew 21:11) and were evidently expecting Him somehow to defeat the Romans and restore the kingdom to Israel. People had frequently called Him "son of David," evidently knowing about the genealogy of His (foster) father, and realizing He was the legal heir to David's throne (see note on Matthew 1:16). However, just five days later, these same multitudes--apparently disappointed by His meek submission to arrest and torture by the Jewish and Roman rulers--were calling for His crucifixion, preferring to release Barabbas who had led a rebellion against the Romans (Matthew 27:21,22).

NET NOTE - The expression $\sigma\nu\nu\acute{\alpha}$ (hōsanna, literally in Hebrew, "O Lord, save") in the quotation from Ps 118:25–26 was probably by this time a familiar liturgical expression of praise, on the order of "Hail to the king," although both the underlying Aramaic and Hebrew expressions meant "O Lord, save us." In words familiar to every Jew, the author is indicating that at this point every messianic expectation is now at the point of realization. It is clear from the words of the psalm shouted by the crowd that Jesus is being proclaimed as messianic king. See E. Lohse, TDNT 9:682–84. **Hosanna** is an Aramaic expression that literally means, "help, I pray," or "save, I pray." By Jesus' time it had become a strictly liturgical formula of praise, however, and was used as an exclamation of praise to God. A quotation from Ps 118:25–26.

Hosanna ([5164](#)) [Hosanna](#) is a word that we hear frequently in worship services, for it is found in many great old hymns and modern spiritual songs. Indeed, it is a word we should hear often, singing loud "Hosanna's", even "Hosanna's in the highest" to our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, and yet do we all understand what we are singing? The word **hosanna** in English is a transliteration (not a translation) of a Hebrew phrase composed of two Hebrew words (**hoshiya** + **na'** - spelling varies depending on resource consulted) used only once in [Ps 118:25 See below](#)>). The meaning of the original Hebrew phrase is something like "Please save!," "Help, I pray," "Save now," or "Save now, I pray!" (the exact wording depends on source consulted). As **John Piper** explains more fully [below](#), in Jesus' day the word **Hosanna** while originally signifying a cry for help, over time was not only a prayer for help (salvation), but also an invocation of blessing, an exclamation of praise, and/or a shout of celebration. As discussed below, in the context of Jesus' "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem, the shouts of **Hosanna** from the crowd seem to have had all three nuances.>**Hosanna** would have been a term familiar to everyone in Israel which accounts for the crowds shouting "Hosanna" at the time of the Triumphal Entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem.

[What is the meaning of hosanna?](#)

[What is the meaning of hosanna in the highest?](#)

The modern Webster's Dictionary defines **Hosanna** as "a cry of acclamation and adoration." The 1828 Webster's Dictionary adds that **Hosanna** is "an exclamation of praise to God or an invocation of blessings. In the Hebrew ceremonies, it was a prayer rehearsed on the several days of the Feast of Tabernacles, in which this word was often repeated."

Hosanna is similar to [Hallelujah](#), [Sabbath](#), [Sabaoth](#), [Amen](#) in that all these words represent transliteration of Hebrew words or phrases. **Hosanna** is composed of two transliterated Hebrew words (aN" = **na** - [see below](#) + h[ʻyviAh = **yasha** - [see below](#)). **TWOT** adds that "The Greek **hosanna** is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase "O save us," even including the phonetic doubling of the **n** of the particle **nā** ([below](#))."

J A Motyer explains that **hosanna** represents a

transliteration from Aramaic **hōša' nā'** (Heb., **hoshiya** + **na'**), meaning "O, save". The precise OT equivalent to the NT cultic shout "Hosanna" is to be found in the **hoshiya** + **na'** of Ps. 118:25. Here [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) does not view it as a cultic cry of the "hallelujah" type, and produces the translation *sōson*. There is general agreement that we should find in [Ps. 118](#) a liturgy for the Feast of Tabernacles, but beyond that interpretations vary as to who the "coming one" of v. 26 is. The view that it is the Jerusalem pilgrim who is so "blessed" by the welcoming priests (see, e.g. IDB II, S.V. Hosanna) is singularly unimpressive. The whole movement of the Psalm, and certainly its exalted tone of spiritual elation, is better suited if we imagine the Davidic king, in his role as the → Melchizedek priest, leading his people in procession to Yahweh's house (cf. NBCR). In this context the cry "O, Save" would indicate an imploring cry to Yahweh to bring to reality that which the liturgy has depicted. Judaism later followed out this thought by making the great cry focus on the expectation of the messianic king.

NT By NT times Hosanna had become a full "cultic cry", exactly as is reflected in [Lxx](#) use of → [allelouia](#). The Greek of Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9; Jn. 12:13 **transliterates but does not translate**. The sight of Jesus fulfilling the kingly prophecy of Zech. 9:9, coupled with the strewing and waving of branches reminiscent of the ceremonial fronds which had come to characterize the [Feast of Tabernacles](#), prompted the shout appropriate to that occasion and, all unwittingly, they greeted the true → David with the Davidic welcome. All the NT "hosanna" verses above centre their thought on the "**son of David**", the "**kingdom of David**" and the "**King of Israel**". ([New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology](#) - online)

Matthew 21:10 When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?"

- all (KJV): Mt 2:3 Ru 1:19 1Sa 16:4 Joh 12:16-19
- Who (KJV): Song 3:6 Isa 63:1 Lu 5:21 7:49 9:9 20:2 Joh 2:18 Ac 9:5

When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this

Matthew 21:11 And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."

- This (KJV): Mt 16:13,14 De 18:15-19 Lu 7:16 Joh 7:40 9:17 Ac 3:22,23 7:37
- of Nazareth (KJV): Mt 2:23 Joh 1:45,46 6:14

And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee

Matthew 21:12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

- went (KJV): Mal 3:1,2 Mk 11:11
- and cast (KJV): Mk 11:15 Lu 19:45,46 Joh 2:14-17
- moneychangers (KJV): De 14:24-26
- doves (KJV): Lev 1:14 5:7,11 12:6,8 14:22,30 15:14,29 Lu 2:24

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves

NET NOTE - The merchants (those who were selling) would have been located in the Court of the Gentiles. Matthew (here, Mt 21:12–27), Mark (Mk 11:15–19) and Luke (Lk 19:45–46) record this incident of the temple cleansing at the end of Jesus’ ministry. John (Jn 2:13–16) records a cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. See the note on the word temple courts in John 2:14 for a discussion of the relationship of these accounts to one another.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:12-17. Christ found some of the courts of the temple turned into a market for cattle and things used in the sacrifices, and partly occupied by the money-changers. Our Lord drove them from the place, as he had done at his entering upon his ministry, John 2:13-17. His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former. If Christ came now into many parts of his visible church, how many secret evils he would discover and cleanse! And how many things daily practised under the cloak of religion, would he show to be more suitable to a den of thieves than to a house of prayer!

QUESTION - [What does it mean that the house of prayer had been turned into a den of thieves?](#)

ANSWER - About a week before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus went into the [temple and cleared it](#) out of “all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves” (Matthew 21:12). Jesus then spoke to the startled crowds: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (verse 22, KJV). The same incident is recorded in Mark 11 and Luke 19. John 2 records similar actions of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry.

In speaking of a “house of prayer” and a “den of thieves” (the NIV has “den of robbers”), Jesus cited two passages from the [Tanakh](#). In Isaiah 56:7 God says, “These [faithful foreigners] I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Twice in this verse, God’s temple is called “a house of prayer.” God’s design was for His house in Jerusalem to be a gathering place for worshipers from all nations, a place where prayers would rise like incense from the hearts of the faithful to the presence of the living God.

The phrase *den of thieves* comes from Jeremiah 7:11, where God says, “Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.” The prophet Jeremiah was rebuking the temple leaders for their abuses. Even as they continued going through the motions of their religion, they were oppressing the needy and violently taking what was not theirs. God saw through their pretense, however, and promised to deal with the thieves in His sanctified house.

Jesus takes these two verses from the Old Testament and applies them to His day. One verse was full of purity and promise: God’s temple would be an inviting house of prayer. The other verse was full of conviction and warning: people had perverted God’s right purposes for their own gain. In the courts of the temple, people were being taken financial advantage of, being cheated through exorbitant exchange rates and being compelled to buy “temple-approved” animals for sacrifice, on the pretext that their own animals were unworthy. Jesus denounced such greedy goings-on and physically put a stop to the corruption. In His righteous indignation, He quoted Isaiah and Jeremiah to show that He had biblical warrant for His actions. What should have been a sanctuary for the righteous had become a refuge for the wicked, and the Son of God was not going to put up with it. God’s design for the temple was that it be a house of prayer, a place to meet with God and worship Him. But when Jesus stepped into its courts, He found not prayer but avarice, extortion, and oppression.

It’s always good to remember the Lord’s purpose for what He makes. Whether it’s the temple, the church, marriage, the family, or life itself, we should follow God’s design and seek to honor Him. Any twisting or perverting of God’s design for selfish purposes will draw

the Lord's righteous anger.

[How many times did Jesus cleanse the temple?](#)

Related Resources:

- [Why does God call His house a house of prayer \(Isaiah 56:7\)?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus overturns tables \(John 2:15\)?](#)
- [How many times did Jesus cleanse the temple? Why did He cleanse the temple?](#)
- [Was Jesus ever angry?](#)
- [Who were the money changers in the Bible?](#)
- [What does it mean that "zeal for your house will consume me" in John 2:17?](#)

Matthew 21:13 And He *said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."

- It is (KJV): Mt 2:5 Joh 15:25
- My (KJV): Ps 93:5 Isa 56:7
- ye (KJV): Jer 7:11 Mk 11:17 Lu 19:46

And He *said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER' (from Isa 56:7); but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN

NET NOTE - A quotation from Jer 7:11. The meaning of Jesus' statement about making the temple courts a den of robbers probably operates here at two levels. Not only were the religious leaders robbing the people financially, but because of this they had also robbed them spiritually by stealing from them the opportunity to come to know God genuinely. It is possible that these merchants had recently been moved to this location for convenience.

Matthew 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

- Mt 9:35 11:4,5 Isa 35:5 Ac 3:1-9 10:38

And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them

Matthew 21:15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant

- when (KJV): Mt 21:23 26:3,59 27:1,20 Isa 26:11 Mk 11:18 Lu 19:39,40 20:1 22:2,66 Joh 11:47-49,57 12:19
- Hosanna (KJV): Mt 21:9 22:42 Joh 7:42
- they were (KJV): Joh 4:1

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant

Matthew 21:16 and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus *said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF'?"

- Hearst (KJV): Lu 19:39,40 Joh 11:47,48 Ac 4:16-18
- have (KJV): Mt 12:3 19:4 22:31 Mk 2:25
- Out (KJV): Mt 11:25 Ps 8:2

and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus *said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT

QUESTION - [What does it mean that “out of the mouth of babes You have perfected praise” \(Matthew 21:16\)?](#)

ANSWER - In Matthew 21, Jesus has just arrived in Jerusalem for the final days leading up to His death on the cross. While He was in the temple, [healing the blind and the lame](#), the leading priests and scribes saw Jesus performing miracles and even heard children shouting, “Hosanna! Praise God for the Son of David.” The religious teachers grew irate, questioning Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?” “Yes,” Jesus responded to His critics, asking, “Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise’?” (Matthew 21:16, NKJV).

Jesus was quoting Psalm 8:2:
“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.”

Following the Greek Septuagint, Matthew 21:16 uses “praise” instead of “strength.” The idea is that God silences His enemies and puts them to shame by the words coming out of the mouths of babies and infants who tell of the Lord’s strength.

Earlier this day, six days before the Passover, Jesus had [ridden on a donkey into the city](#). The crowds celebrated Him as the Messiah and guided Him into town like a conquering warrior or exalted king: “A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’” (Matthew 21:8–9).

The Jewish leaders could not miss the implications as they observed everything taking place. They witnessed Christ’s victorious entry into Jerusalem, the ecstatic crowd of worshippers, His commanding cleansing of the temple, His miracles of healing, and even children proclaiming His praises. The people hailed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and it was more than these religious hypocrites could handle. They became outraged.

By pointing out what they saw as a dreadful error—children worshipping Him as Messiah—they thought Jesus would be horrified that He had misled these innocent ones, even causing them to commit blasphemy. Surely Jesus would put a quick stop to it. But instead, Jesus saw nothing wrong with receiving their praise. He accepted it enthusiastically, supporting their actions by referring to an Old Testament Scripture that the religious leaders would recognize. The children had understood what the leaders had not—that Jesus was their promised Savior. The Jewish leaders were the same as God’s Old Testament enemies who would be silenced and put to shame by children’s praise.

The word *babes* refers to “infants” and “young children.” Earlier, in Matthew 11:25–27, Jesus had affirmed the ability of children to perceive the secrets of God’s kingdom when others could not: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!” (NLT).

The children crying out praises to God in the temple proved to be wiser than the wise (see 1 Corinthians 1:18–25). Even though the priests and scribes failed to praise God, these little children would not. Luke’s gospel records the Pharisees trying to silence the crowds during Jesus’ triumphal entry. But Jesus declares, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!” (Luke 19:40, NLT).

About Matthew 21:16 and Psalm 8:2, one Bible commentator writes, “The ‘scarcely articulate’ cry of an infant proves, like the heaven and the stars, the power and providence of God. On all these God builds a stronghold against His adversaries, i. e. convinces them of His might. So also the children in the temple attest the truth of God” ([Carr, A. *The Gospel According to St Matthew, with Maps, Notes, and Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 1893, p. 162](#)).

Out of the mouth of babes You have perfected praise means the praise of little children is perfect praise. It is perfect because children can comprehend the realities of God’s kingdom that even the most learned fail to grasp (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:13–15; Luke 18:16–17). Children are not blinded by pride and hypocrisy and are better able to perceive spiritual truth (Matthew 18:3–4.) Jesus accepts their worship because it is untainted and reserved for God alone.

Matthew 21:17 And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

- he left (KJV): Mt 16:4 Jer 6:8 Ho 9:12 Mk 3:7 Lu 8:37,38
- Bethany (KJV): Bethany was a village to the east of the mount of Olives, on the road to Jericho; fifteen stadia, (Joh. 11:18) or nearly two miles, as Jerome states, from Jerusalem. This village is now small and poor, and the cultivation of the soil around it is much neglected; but it is a pleasant, romantic spot, shaded by the mount of Olives, and abounding in vines and long grass. It consists of from thirty to forty dwellings inhabited by about 600 Mohammedans, for whose use there is a neat little mosque standing on an eminence. Here they shew the ruins of a sort of castle as the house of Lazarus, and a grotto as his tomb; and the house of Simon the leper, of Mary Magdalene and of Martha, and the identical tree which our Lord cursed, are among the monkish curiosities of the place. Mk 11:11,19 Lu 10:38 Joh 11:1,18 12:1-3

And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Matthew 21:18 Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry.

- in (KJV): Mk 11:12,13
- he hungered (KJV): Mt 4:2 12:1 Lu 4:2 Heb 4:15

Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:18-22 This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general, and so teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion in those who profess it, and the savour of it from those that have the show of it. His just expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. A false profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse. The fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. This represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus found among them nothing but leaves. And after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us greatly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree.

QUESTION - [Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?](#)

ANSWER - The account of Jesus cursing the barren fig tree is found in two different gospel accounts. First, it is seen in Matthew 21:18-22, and then also in Mark 11:12-14. While there are slight differences between the two accounts, they are easily reconciled by studying the passages. Like all Scripture, the key to understanding this passage comes from understanding the context in which it happened. In order to properly understand this passage, we must first look at the chronological and geographical setting. For example, when did this occur, what was the setting, and where did it happen? Also, in order to fully understand this passage, we need to have an understanding of the importance of the fig tree as it relates to the nation of Israel and understand how the fig tree is often used in the Scriptures to symbolically represent Israel. Finally, we must have a basic understanding of the fig tree itself, its growing seasons, etc.

First, in looking at the general chronological setting of the passage, we see that it happened during the week before His crucifixion. Jesus had entered Jerusalem a day earlier amid the praise and worship of the Jewish people who were looking to Him as the King/Messiah who was going to deliver them from Roman occupation (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11). Now, the next day, Jesus is again on His way to Jerusalem from where He was staying in Bethany. On His way, both Matthew and Mark record that He was hungry and saw a fig tree in the distance that had leaves on it (Mark 11:13). Upon coming to the tree expecting to find something to eat, Jesus instead discovered that the fig tree had no fruit on it and cursed the tree saying, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" (Matthew 21:19; Mark 11:14). Matthew records the cursing and the withering of the fig tree all in one account and includes it after the account of Jesus cleansing the Temple of the moneychangers. Mark explains that it actually took place over two days, with Jesus cursing the fig tree the first day on the way to cleanse the Temple, and the disciples seeing the tree withered on the second day when they were again going to Jerusalem from Bethany (Mark 11:12-14 and Mark 11:19-20). Of course, upon seeing the tree "withered from the roots up," the disciples were amazed, as that would have normally taken several weeks.

Having reviewed the general chronological setting of the story, we can begin to answer some of many questions that are often asked of it. First of all is the question, Why did Jesus curse the fig tree if it was not the right season for figs? The answer to this question can be determined by studying the characteristics of fig trees. The fruit of the fig tree generally appears before the leaves, and, because the fruit is green it blends in with the leaves right up until it is almost ripe. Therefore, when Jesus and His disciples saw from a distance that the tree had leaves, they would have expected it to also have fruit on it even though it was earlier in the season than what would be normal for a fig tree to be bearing fruit. Also, each tree would often produce two to three crops of figs each season. There would be an early crop in the spring followed by one or two later crops. In some parts of Israel, depending on climate

and conditions, it was also possible that a tree might produce fruit ten out of twelve months. This also explains why Jesus and His disciples would be looking for fruit on the fig tree even if it was not in the main growing season. The fact that the tree already had leaves on it even though it was at a higher elevation around Jerusalem, and therefore would have been outside the normal season for figs, would have seemed to be a good indication that there would also be fruit on it.

As to the significance of this passage and what it means, the answer to that is again found in the chronological setting and in understanding how a fig tree is often used symbolically to represent Israel in the Scriptures. First of all, chronologically, Jesus had just arrived at Jerusalem amid great fanfare and great expectations, but then proceeds to cleanse the Temple and curse the barren fig tree. Both had significance as to the spiritual condition of Israel. With His cleansing of the Temple and His criticism of the worship that was going on there (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17), Jesus was effectively denouncing Israel's worship of God. With the cursing of the fig tree, He was symbolically denouncing Israel as a nation and, in a sense, even denouncing unfruitful "Christians" (that is, people who profess to be Christian but have no evidence of a relationship with Christ).

The presence of a fruitful fig tree was considered to be a symbol of blessing and prosperity for the nation of Israel. Likewise, the absence or death of a fig tree would symbolize judgment and rejection. Symbolically, the fig tree represented the spiritual deadness of Israel, who while very religious outwardly with all the sacrifices and ceremonies, were spiritually barren because of their sins. By cleansing the Temple and cursing the fig tree, causing it to wither and die, Jesus was pronouncing His coming judgment of Israel and demonstrating His power to carry it out. It also teaches the principle that religious profession and observance are not enough to guarantee salvation, unless there is the fruit of genuine salvation evidenced in the life of the person. James would later echo this truth when he wrote that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). The lesson of the fig tree is that we should bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23), not just give an appearance of religiosity. God judges fruitlessness, and expects that those who have a relationship with Him will "bear much fruit" (John 15:5-8).

Related Resources:

- [What is the fig tree prophecy?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Fig Tree?](#)

Matthew 21:19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He *said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.

- fig tree (KJV): Gr. one fig-tree
- and found (KJV): Isa 5:4,5 Lu 3:9 13:6-9 Joh 15:2,6 2Ti 3:5 Tit 1:16
- Let (KJV): Mk 11:14 Lu 19:42-44 Heb 6:7,8 2Pe 2:20-22 Rev 22:11
- the fig tree (KJV): Jude 1:12

Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He *said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered

NET NOTE - The fig tree is a variation on the picture of a vine as representing the nation; see Isa 5:1-7.

Matthew 21:20 Seeing this, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither all at once?"

- How (KJV): Isa 40:6-8 Mk 11:20,21 Jas 1:10,11

Seeing this, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither all at once

Matthew 21:21 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen.

- If ye have (KJV): Mt 17:20 Mk 11:22,23 Lu 17:6,7 Ro 4:19,20 1Co 13:2 Jas 1:6
- Be thou removed (KJV): Mt 8:12

And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen

Matthew 21:22 “And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

- Mt 7:7,11 18:19 Mk 11:24 Lu 11:8-10 Joh 14:13 15:7 16:24 Jas 5:16 1Jn 3:22 5:14,15

And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive

NET NOTE - Grk “believing”; the participle here is conditional.

Matthew 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?”

- when (KJV): Mk 11:27,28 Lu 19:47,48 20:1,2
- the chief priests (KJV): 1Ch 24:1-19
- By what (KJV): Ex 2:14 Ac 4:7 7:27

When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:23-27 As our Lord now openly appeared as the Messiah, the chief priests and scribes were much offended, especially because he exposed and removed the abuses they encouraged. Our Lord asked what they thought of John's ministry and baptism. Many are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak what they know to be false, as to their own thoughts, affections, and intentions, or their remembering and forgetting. Our Lord refused to answer their inquiry. It is best to shun needless disputes with wicked opposers.

Matthew 21:24 Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

- I also (KJV): Mt 10:16 Pr 26:4,5 Lu 6:9 Col 4:6

Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

Matthew 21:25 “The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’

- baptism (KJV): Mt 3:1-12 11:7-15 17:12,13 Mk 1:1-11 11:27-33 Lu 1:11-17,67-80 Lu 3:2-20 7:28-35 Joh 1:6,15,25-34 3:26-36
- Why (KJV): Lu 20:5 Joh 3:18 5:33-36,44-47 10:25,26 12:37-43 1Jn 3:20

The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him

NET NOTE - The question is whether John's ministry was of divine or human origin.

Matthew 21:26 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet.”

- we fear (KJV): Mt 21:46 14:5 Isa 57:11 Mk 11:32 12:12 Lu 20:6,19 22:2 Joh 9:22 Ac 5:26
- for (KJV): Mk 6:20 Joh 5:35 10:41,42

But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet

Matthew 21:27 And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

- We cannot tell (KJV): Mt 15:14 16:3 23:16-28 Isa 6:10 28:9 29:10-12 42:19,20 56:10,11 Jer 8:7-9 Mal 2:6-9 Lu 20:7,8 Joh 9:30,40,41 Ro 1:18-22,28 2Co 4:3 2Th 2:9,10

And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things

NET NOTE - Very few questions could have so completely revealed the wicked intentions of the religious leaders. Jesus’ question revealed the motivation of the religious leaders and exposed them for what they really were—hypocrites. They indicted themselves when they cited only two options and chose neither of them (“We do not know”). The point of Matt 21:23–27 is that no matter what Jesus said in response to their question, they were not going to believe it and would in the end use it against him. **Neither will I tell you.** Though Jesus gave no answer, the analogy he used to their own question makes his view clear. His authority came from heaven.

Matthew 21:28 “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’

- what (KJV): Mt 17:25 22:17 Lu 13:4 1Co 10:15
- A certain (KJV): Lu 15:11-32
- sons (KJV): Mt 20:5-7 Mk 13:34 1Co 15:58

But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:28-32 Parables which give reproof, speak plainly to the offenders, and judge them out of their own mouths. The parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, is to show that those who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were shamed by those who knew it, and owned it. The whole human race are like children whom the Lord has brought up, but they have rebelled against him, only some are more plausible in their disobedience than others. And it often happens, that the daring rebel is brought to repentance and becomes the Lord's servant, while the formalist grows hardened in pride and enmity.

QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Two Sons?](#)

ANSWER - The Parable of the Two Sons can be found in Matthew 21:28-32. The basic story is of a man with two sons who told them to go work in the vineyard. The first son refused, but later obeyed and went. The second son initially expressed obedience, but actually disobeyed and refused to work in the vineyard. The son who ultimately did the will of his father was the first son because he eventually obeyed. Jesus then likens the first son to tax collectors and prostitutes—the outcasts of Jewish society—because they believed John the Baptist and accepted “the way of righteousness” (v. 32), in spite of their initial disobedience to the Law.

The key interpretive point in understanding the Parable of the Two Sons comes in defining to whom Jesus is speaking. For that we need to look at the overall context of this passage. Matthew chapter 21 begins with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The whole point of Matthew’s gospel is to show Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. The crowd responds by shouting Hosannas and praises to the King. The King’s first act upon entering Jerusalem is to cleanse the temple (21:12-17). Afterwards, we see Jesus cursing a fig tree (21:18-22). This account may seem an isolated story, but Jesus was making a strong symbolic point. The fig tree is often symbolic of Israel (cf. Hosea 9:10; Joel 1:7). The fact that the fig tree had leaves but no fruit is symbolic of Israel’s religious activity—i.e., all the trappings of spirituality, but no substance. Israel may have had the leaves of activity, but not the fruit of repentance and obedience to God, which is why Jesus tells them the prostitutes and tax collectors will enter the kingdom ahead of them (v. 31).

In Matthew 21:23-27, the religious authorities—the chief priests and elders—question Jesus’ authority. Who is this Jesus who comes into Jerusalem receiving the praises of the masses and drives the moneychangers out of the temple? The stage is set for the

showdown. It is in this context that Jesus tells three parables—the Two Sons, the Tenants, and the Wedding Feast. Each of these parables is told to the Jewish religious leaders, each illustrates their rejection of Jesus, and each pronounces judgment on Israel for their rejection of their Messiah. In the Parable of the Two Sons, the leaders of Israel are the second son who claimed obedience, but did not do the will of the father.

Matthew 21:29 “And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went.

- I will not (KJV): Mt 21:31 Jer 44:16 Eph 4:17-19
- he repented (KJV): Mt 3:2-8 2Ch 33:10-19 Isa 1:16-19 55:6,7 Eze 18:28-32 Da 4:34-37 Jon 3:2,8-10 Lu 15:17,18 Ac 26:20 1Co 6:11 Eph 2:1-13

And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went

NET NOTE - The Greek text reads here μεταμέλομαι (metamelomai): “to change one’s mind about something, with the probable implication of regret” (L&N 31.59); cf. also BDAG 639 s.v. The idea in this context involves more than just a change of mind, for the son regrets his initial response. The same verb is used in v. 32.

Matthew 21:30 “The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go.

- I go (KJV): Mt 23:3 Eze 33:31 Ro 2:17-25 Tit 1:16

The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go

Matthew 21:31 “Which of the two did the will of his father?” They *said, “The first.” Jesus *said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

- did (KJV): Mt 7:21 12:50 Eze 33:11 Lu 15:10 Ac 17:30 2Pe 3:9
- The first (KJV): 2Sa 12:5-7 Job 15:6 Lu 7:40-42 19:22 Ro 3:19
- Verily (KJV): Mt 5:18 6:5 18:3
- the publicans (KJV): Mt 9:9 20:16 Lu 7:29,37-50 15:1,2 19:9,10 Ro 5:20 9:30-33 1Ti 1:13-16

Which of the two did the will of his father?” They *said, “The first.” Jesus *said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you

NET NOTE - The tax collectors would bid to collect taxes for the Roman government and then add a surcharge, which they kept. Since tax collectors worked for Rome, they were viewed as traitors to their own people and were not well liked.

NET NOTE - TECHNICAL NOTE - Verses 29–31 involve a rather complex and difficult textual problem. The variants cluster into three different groups: (1) The first son says “no” and later has a change of heart, and the second son says “yes” but does not go. The second son is called the one who does his father’s will. This reading is found in the Western MSS (D it). But the reading is so hard as to be nearly impossible. One can only suspect some tampering with the text, extreme carelessness on the part of the scribe, or possibly a recognition of the importance of not shaming one’s parent in public. (Any of these reasons is not improbable with this texttype, and with codex D in particular.) The other two major variants are more difficult to assess. Essentially, the responses make sense (the son who does his father’s will is the one who changes his mind after saying “no”): (2) The first son says “no” and later has a change of heart, and the second son says “yes” but does not go. But here, the first son is called the one who does his father’s will (unlike the Western reading). This is the reading found in (x) C L W (Z) 0102 0281 f1 33 and several versional witnesses. (3) The first son says “yes” but does not go, and the second son says “no” but later has a change of heart. This is the reading found in B Θ f13 700 and several versional witnesses. Both of these latter two readings make good sense and have significantly better textual support than the first reading. The real question, then, is this: Is the first son or the second the obedient one? If one were to argue simply from the parabolic logic, the second son would be seen as the obedient one (hence, the third reading). The first son would represent the Pharisees (or Jews) who claim to obey God, but do not (cf. Matt 23:3). This accords well with the parable of the prodigal son (in which the oldest son represents the unbelieving Jews). Further, the chronological sequence of the second son being obedient fits well with the real scene: Gentiles and tax collectors and prostitutes were not, collectively, God’s chosen people, but they

did repent and come to God, while the Jewish leaders claimed to be obedient to God but did nothing. At the same time, the external evidence is weaker for this reading (though stronger than the first reading), not as widespread, and certainly suspect because of how neatly it fits. One suspects scribal manipulation at this point. Thus the second reading looks to be superior to the other two on both external and transcriptional grounds. But what about intrinsic evidence? One can surmise that Jesus didn't always give predictable responses. In this instance, he may well have painted a picture in which the Pharisees saw themselves as the first son, only to stun them with his application (v. 32).

QUESTION - [Why does the Bible speak so negatively about tax collectors?](#)

ANSWER - Probably in every culture, in every part of history, from the tax collectors of ancient Israel to the IRS agents of today, the tax man has received more than his share of scorn and contumely. The New Testament indicates that the occupation of "tax collector" (or "[publican](#)") was looked down upon by the general populace.

The [Pharisees](#) communicated their disdain for tax collectors in one of their early confrontations with Jesus. The Lord was eating a meal with "many tax collectors and sinners . . . , for there were many who followed him." When the Pharisees noticed this, "they asked his disciples: 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Mark 2:15–16). A "sinner," to a Pharisee, was a Jew who did not follow the Law (plus the Pharisees' own rules). And a "tax collector" was—well, a *tax collector*.

Jesus used the commonly held opinion of tax collectors as an illustration of the final stage of church discipline: when a person is excommunicated, Jesus said to "treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matthew 18:17). In other words, the excommunicant is to be considered an outsider and a candidate for evangelism.

There are a few reasons for the low view of tax collectors in the New Testament era. First, no one likes to pay money to the government, especially when the government is an oppressive regime like the Roman Empire of the 1st century. Those who collected the taxes for such a government bore the brunt of much public displeasure.

Second, the tax collectors in the Bible were *Jews* who were working for the hated Romans. These individuals were seen as turncoats, traitors to their own countrymen. Rather than fighting the Roman oppressors, the publicans were helping them—and enriching themselves at the expense of their fellow Jews.

Third, it was common knowledge that the tax collectors cheated the people they collected from. By hook or by crook, they would collect more than required and keep the extra for themselves. Everyone just understood that was how it worked. The tax collector [Zacchaeus](#), in his confession to the Lord, mentioned his past dishonesty (Luke 19:8).

Fourth, because of their skimming off the top, the tax collectors were well-to-do. This further separated them from the lower classes, who resented the injustice of their having to support the publicans' lavish lifestyle. The tax collectors, ostracized as they were from society, formed their own [clique](#), further separating themselves from the rest of society.

Jesus taught that we should love our enemies. To emphasize the point, He said, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" (Matthew 5:46). The word *even* is significant. Jesus was telling the crowd they needed to rise above the level of publican behavior. If our love is only reciprocal, then we're no better than a tax collector! Such a comparison must have left its mark on Jesus' hearers.

Given the low esteem people had for tax collectors, it is noteworthy that Jesus spent so much time with them. The reason He was [eating that meal](#) in Mark 2 with "many tax collectors" is that He had just called Matthew, a tax collector, to be one of His twelve disciples. Matthew was throwing a feast because he wanted his circle of friends to meet the Lord. Many believed in Jesus (verse 15). Jesus responded to the Pharisees' indignation by stating His ministry purpose: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

The Pharisees saw tax collectors as enemies to be shunned. Jesus saw them as the spiritually sick to be healed. The Pharisees could offer nothing to the tax collectors except a list of rules. Jesus offered forgiveness of sins and the hope of a new life. No wonder the publicans liked to spend time with Jesus (Luke 15:1). And tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus were transformed by the gospel and followed the Lord.

[John the Baptist's](#) message was that *all* need to repent, not just tax collectors and other obvious sinners. The Pharisees couldn't see their need and refused to be categorized with publicans. To the self-righteous, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him" (Matthew 21:31–32).

Matthew 21:32 “For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

- came (KJV): Mt 3:1-8 Isa 35:8 Jer 6:16 Lu 3:8-13 2Pe 2:21
- and ye believed (KJV): Mt 21:25 11:18 Lu 7:29,30 Joh 5:33-36 Ac 13:25-29
- the publicans (KJV): Lu 7:37-50
- repented (KJV): Ps 81:11,12 Zec 7:11,12 Joh 5:37-40 2Ti 2:25 Heb 3:12 6:6-8 Rev 2:21

For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him

Matthew 21:33 “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

- Hear (KJV): In this parable, in its primary sense, the householder denotes the Supreme Being; the family, the Jewish nation; the vineyard, Jerusalem; the fence, the Divine protection; the wine-press, the law and sacrificial rites; the tower, the temple; and the husbandmen, the priests and doctors of the law. Mt 13:18 1Ki 22:19 Isa 1:10 Jer 19:3 Ho 4:1
- There (KJV): Ps 80:8-16 Song 8:11,12 Isa 5:1-4 Jer 2:21 Mk 12:1 Lu 20:9-18 Joh 15:1
- husbandmen (KJV): Mt 23:2 De 1:15-17 16:18 17:9-12 33:8-10 Mal 2:4-9
- went (KJV): Mt 25:14,15 Mk 13:34 Lu 19:12

Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey

NET NOTE - The vineyard is a figure for Israel in the OT (Isa 5:1–7). The nation and its leaders are the tenants, so the vineyard here may well refer to the promise that resides within the nation. The imagery is like that in Rom 11:11–24. The leasing of land to tenant farmers was common in this period.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 21:33-46. This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken to convict them, is spoken to caution all that enjoy the privileges of the outward church. As men treat God's people, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them. How can we, if faithful to his cause, expect a favourable reception from a wicked world, or from ungodly professors of Christianity! And let us ask ourselves, whether we who have the vineyard and all its advantages, render fruits in due season, as a people, as a family, or as separate persons. Our Saviour, in his question, declares that the Lord of the vineyard will come, and when he comes he will surely destroy the wicked. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, and they would not admit his doctrine or laws; they threw him aside as a despised stone. But he who was rejected by the Jews, was embraced by the Gentiles. Christ knows who will bring forth gospel fruits in the use of gospel means. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin. But God has many ways of restraining the remainders of wrath, as he has of making that which breaks out redound to his praise. May Christ become more and more precious to our souls, as the firm Foundation and Cornerstone of his church. May we be willing to follow him, though despised and hated for his sake.

QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Vineyard?](#)

ANSWER - The Parable of the Vineyard appears in three of the gospels ([Matthew 21:33-46](#); [Mark 12:1-12](#); [Luke 20:9-19](#)), with Matthew's account being the most complete. However, there are additions in the others; hence, it is wise to study all three accounts so as to achieve the greatest understanding. To get the context of what is happening, we need to look at [Matthew 21:18](#). Early in the morning, Jesus goes to the temple courts to teach (Mt 21:23). While He is teaching, the chief priest and elders confront Him, wanting to know by what authority He is teaching. Not allowing them to control the conversation, Jesus answers the question by first asking a question (Mt 21:24-26). They do not like His question nor His response to their answer; essentially, He has told them that they can't save face from their obvious attempt to cajole Him and, therefore, He is not obligated to answer their question (Mt 21:27). What Jesus told them is that John the Baptist and He received their authority from the same source. This exchange causes the leaders to become angry and puts them in opposition to Jesus. Jesus then further frustrates the priests by telling two parables: the first one is the Parable of the Two Sons, and the second is the Parable of the Vineyard, sometimes called the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

The first parable Jesus teaches tells the priests that they have claimed to accept the message from God but they have failed to live up to it by being obedient. Outwardly, they are pious and appear to be people of God, but God knows the heart, and there they have failed miserably. The next parable (the Parable of the Vineyard) is like pouring salt on a wound. Just in case they didn't fully

understand (which they did), Jesus gives a much clearer picture of what He means. Obviously, this further infuriates the priests, but it also gives the others who were present an opportunity to hear Jesus fully explain the implications of the disobedience of the Jewish people throughout the ages.

Background: There are 6 main characters in this parable:

- 1) the landowner—God,
- 2) the vineyard—Israel,
- 3) the tenants/farmers—the Jewish religious leadership,
- 4) the landowner's servants—the prophets who remained obedient and preached God's word to the people of Israel,
- 5) the son—Jesus, and
- 6) the other tenants—the Gentiles.

The imagery used is similar to Isaiah's parable of the vineyard (it would be prudent to study this also) found in Isaiah chapter 5. The watchtower and the wall mentioned in verse 33 are means of protecting the vineyard and the ripened grapes. The winepress is obviously for stamping out the juice of the grapes to make the wine. The farmer was apparently away at the time of harvest and had rented the vineyard to the tenants. This was customary of the times, and he could expect as much as half of the grapes as payment by the tenants for use of his land.

Explanation: Verses 34-36 tell us the landowner sent his servants to collect his portion of the harvest and how they were cruelly rejected by the tenants; some were beaten, stoned, and even killed. Then he sent even more the second time and they received the same treatment. The servants sent represent the prophets that God had sent to His people/Israel and then were rejected and killed by the very people who were claiming to be of God and obedient to Him. Jeremiah was beaten (Jeremiah 26:7-11; 38:1-28), John the Baptist was killed (Matthew 14:1-12), and others were stoned (2 Chronicles 24:21). In this parable Jesus is not only reminding the religious establishment what they were like, but He was putting in their minds a question: how could they claim obedience as God's people and still reject His messengers? We don't know how many servants the owner sent, but that is not what is important; the theme is God's repeated appeal through His prophets to an unrepentant people. In the next verses (37-39), the situation becomes even more critical. The landowner sends his own son, believing that they will surely respect him. But the tenants see an opportunity here; they believe that if they kill the son they will then receive his inheritance. The law at the time provided that if there were no heirs then the property would pass to those in possession (possession is nine tenths of the law). This amounts to conspiracy to commit murder by the Jewish leadership, and it is prophetic in the sense that Jesus is now telling them what they are going to do to Him (see Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16). After Jesus' death, Peter would make the same charges against the religious establishment (Acts 4:8-12). The tenants probably thought that the fight for the property was over, but it wasn't; the owner would now appear on the scene.

Jesus now (Mt 21:40-41) asks the question, what will the owner do to the evil tenants? What He is doing is forcing the religious leaders/priests to declare their own miserable fate: condemnation for their blatant disobedience. This is similar to the question that Nathan put to David (2 Samuel 12:1-7). Up to this point, Jesus has been dealing with the immediate situation of Israel and its past disobedience; now Jesus leaves open the question of what Israel's leadership is going to do with the Messiah, the Son of God, whom He refers to as the "chief cornerstone" (Mt 21:42). Cornerstones and capstones are used symbolically in Scripture and picture Christ as the main piece of the foundation of the church and the head of the church, respectively. Jesus is the beginning of and is foundational to the church, and He now stands over the church in His rightful position of honor, guiding the church to fulfill its divine destiny. This verse makes clear prophetically how Jesus will be rejected by the religious establishment and ultimately be crucified (see Psalm 118:22-23).

The key to understanding this parable and what it says about the religious leaders is found in verse 43, where Jesus makes their lack of obedience personal. Jesus tells the leaders that because of their disobedience they will be left out of the kingdom of heaven (individually and as a people); that they have let their opportunity for the time being slip away to be given to the Gentiles (see verse 41, "other tenants"). This will be more than they can tolerate, as we will see in verses 45 and 46. He is saying that there will be a new people of God made up of all peoples who will temporarily replace the Jews so that Jesus can establish His church. This will change the way God deals with man, from the old dispensation of the law to a new dispensation of God's grace. It will usher in a period of time where man will no longer understand forgiveness of sins as man's work through what he does or doesn't do or by the sacrifices of animals on the altar, but by the work of Christ on the cross. It will be a time where each individual can have a personal and saving relationship with the One and only God of the universe. The exciting part of the verse is the phrase "who will produce fruit"; this gives authority to the church to share the gospel of Christ to the lost of the world. Up to this time, the Jews felt that they had automatic membership in God's kingdom because of their relationship to Abraham; this is why they put so much emphasis on genealogies. But

the new people of God would truly have what God wanted for Israel all along: a personal and holy relationship that would be honored through the spreading of God's word to all peoples (see Exodus 19:5-6).

Jesus continues the stone metaphor in verse 44 to show how a stone can be used to build something beautiful, such as His church, or it can be used to crush and destroy, depending on the situation. This could be likened to God's word: to some it is salvation, peace and comfort. To others it is foolish and disconcerting because of its ability to convict man of his sins (2 Timothy 3:16).

Verses 45 and 46 give us three insights into the psyche of the chief priest of the religious establishment. 1) They are jealous and envious of Jesus' popularity with the common people. This encroaches on their authority and power to govern. 2) They have come to the realization that Jesus is talking about them. This hurts their pride and embarrasses them in front of the people. 3) They understood the analogy of the son and that Jesus was referring to Himself. This would be blasphemous to them, and they would now seek to kill Jesus. From here the leaders would meet in secrecy to plot how they would get rid of Jesus. Why all the secrecy? The people thought of Jesus as a prophet from God; arresting Him could cause an uprising. An uprising would jeopardize the leaders' relationship with the Roman authorities, something that the Jews did not want at any cost.

Application: We apply this parable to our lives by asking two questions:

First, have you come to know Christ as your Lord and Savior, or have you rejected Him like the Jewish leadership did? The process is simple, as long as you are sincere in seeking a relationship with Christ. You need to recognize your sins, and then accept Christ as the only One who can save you from the penalty of your sins.

Second, if you are a believer, what have you done with Jesus? Are you like the bad tenants, rejecting His Word and living a life of disobedience? If you are, you need to study God's Word and pray for guidance (ED: AND [ESPECIALLY LEARNING TO DEPEND ON THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT](#) TO ENABLE YOUR OBEDIENT CHOICES!), seeking His will for your life and living out that will as best as you can, moment by moment, day by day.

Matthew 21:34 "When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.

- he sent (KJV): 2Ki 17:13,14-23 2Ch 36:15,16 Ne 9:29,30 Jer 25:3-7 35:15 Zec 1:3-6 7:9-13 Mk 12:2-5 Lu 20:10-19
- that (KJV): Song 8:11,12 Isa 5:4

When the harvest time approached, he sent ([apostello](#)) his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce (Lit "to collect his fruits")

NET NOTE - These slaves represent the prophets God sent to the nation, who were mistreated and rejected.

Matthew 21:35 "The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.

- Mt 5:12 23:31-37 1Ki 18:4,13 19:2,10 22:24 2Ch 16:10 24:21,22 2Ch 36:15,16 Ne 9:26 Jer 2:30 25:3-7 26:21-24 Lu 13:33,34 Ac 7:52 1Th 2:15,16 Heb 11:36,37 Rev 6:9

The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third

NET NOTE - The image of the tenants mistreating the owner's slaves pictures the nation's rejection of the prophets and their message.

Matthew 21:36 "Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.

Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them

Matthew 21:37 "But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

- last (KJV): Mt 3:17 Mk 12:6 Lu 20:13 Joh 1:18,34 3:16,35,36 Heb 1:1,2
- They (KJV): Isa 5:4 Jer 36:3 Zep 3:7

But afterward he sent ([apostello](#)) his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son

NET NOTE - The owner’s decision to send his son represents God sending Jesus.

Matthew 21:38 “But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’

- This (KJV): Mt 2:13-16 26:3,4 27:1,2 Ge 37:18-20 Ps 2:2-8 Mk 12:7,8 Lu 20:14 Joh 11:47-53 Ac 4:27,28 5:24-28

But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance

Matthew 21:39 “They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

- caught (KJV): Mt 26:50,57 Mk 14:46-53 Lu 22:52-54 Joh 18:12,24 Ac 2:23 4:25-27
- cast (KJV): Heb 13:11-13
- slew (KJV): Ac 2:23 3:14,15 4:10 5:30 7:52 Jas 5:6

They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him

NET NOTE - Throwing the heir out of the vineyard pictures Jesus’ death outside of Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:40 “Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?”

- what (KJV): Mk 12:9 Lu 20:15,16 Heb 10:29

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers

Matthew 21:41 They *said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.”

- they say (KJV): Our Lord here causes them to pass that sentence of destruction upon themselves which was literally executed about forty years afterwards by the Roman armies.
- He will (KJV): Mt 3:12 22:6,7 23:35-38 24:21,22 Lev 26:14-46 De 28:59-68 Ps 2:4,5,9 Isa 5:5-7 Da 9:26 Zec 11:8-10 12:12 13:8 14:2,3 Mal 4:1-6 Lu 17:32-37 19:41-44 21:22-24 1Th 2:16 Heb 2:3 12:25
- and will let out (KJV): Mt 21:43 8:11 Isa 49:5-7 65:15 66:19-21 Lu 13:28,29 14:23,24 21:24 Ac 13:46-48 15:7 18:6 28:8 Ro 9:1-11:36 15:9-18

They *said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons

Matthew 21:42 Jesus *said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?

- Did (KJV): Mt 21:16
- The stone (KJV): Ps 118:22,23 Isa 28:16 Zec 3:8,9 Mk 12:10,11 Lu 20:17,18 Ac 4:11 Ro 9:33 Eph 2:20 1Pe 2:4-8
- and it is (KJV): Hab 1:5 Ac 13:40,41 Eph 3:3-9

Jesus *said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone; THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES (Ps 118:22–23)

NET NOTE - Or “capstone,” “keystone.” Although these meanings are lexically possible, the imagery in Eph 2:20–22 and 1 Cor 3:11 indicates that the term κεφαλῆ γωνίας (kephalē gōnias) refers to a cornerstone, not a capstone. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The use of Ps 118:22–23 and the “stone imagery” as a reference to Christ and his suffering and exaltation is common in the NT (see also Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:6–8; cf. also Eph 2:20). The irony in the use of Ps 118:22–23 here is that in the OT, Israel was the one rejected (or perhaps her king) by the Gentiles, but in the NT it is Jesus who is rejected by Israel.

Matthew 21:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.

- The kingdom (KJV): Mt 21:41 8:11,12 12:28 Isa 28:2 Lu 17:20,21 Joh 3:3,5
- a nation (KJV): Ex 19:6 Isa 26:2 1Co 13:2 1Pe 2:9

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it

Matthew 21:44 “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

- whosoever (KJV): Ps 2:12 Isa 8:14,15 60:12 Zec 12:3 Lu 20:18 Ro 9:33 2Co 4:3,4 1Pe 2:8
- but (KJV): Mt 26:24 27:25 Ps 2:9 21:8,9 110:5,6 Da 2:34,35,44,45 Joh 19:11 1Th 2:16 Heb 2:2,3

And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust

NET NOTE - This proverb basically means that the stone crushes, without regard to whether it falls on someone or someone falls on it. On the stone as a messianic image, see Isa 28:16 and Dan 2:44–45.

QUESTION - [Why is Jesus called the stumbling stone in Matthew 21:43-44?](#)

ANSWER - In Matthew 21:44, Jesus says, "He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." The key to understanding this statement lies in the context of the verse and the larger conversation Jesus was having.

Jesus was teaching in the temple courts when the chief priests and elders approached Him and demanded to know the source of His authority. In response, Jesus asked them about John the Baptist—was he a prophet of God or not? The religious leaders, fearing the people’s response, refused to reveal their true opinion on the matter. In turn, Jesus refused to reveal the source of His authority (Matthew 21:23-27). In doing so, Jesus made it clear that the Jewish leaders themselves had no authority to judge Him.

Jesus then related two parables concerning vineyards. In the first, Jesus told of [two sons](#) who were told by their father to go work in the vineyard. The first son initially refused but later changed his mind and went to work. The second son promised to work, but he never went to the vineyard. Jesus applied this to the religious leaders of Israel, who were like the second son—they expressed agreement with the Father but, in the final analysis, were disobedient. The sinners who responded to John the Baptist’s message were like the first son—they seemed unlikely candidates for heaven, but they repented and thus will enter the kingdom (verses 28-32).

In the [second parable](#), Jesus tells of a landowner who, at harvest time, sent some servants to his vineyard to collect the fruit. However, the farmers who were tending the vineyard were a wicked lot, and when the servants arrived, the farmers beat some of them and killed others. Finally, the landowner sent his own son to collect the fruit, expecting that the farmers would show him respect. But the farmers treated the son worst of all, throwing him out of the vineyard and killing him (Matthew 21:33-39).

Jesus then asks a question: "When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" (Matthew 21:40). The chief priests and elders respond, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end" (Matthew 21:41). Jesus then presses His point home with a quotation from Psalm 118: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Matthew 21:42). After a warning that the religious leaders will not inherit the kingdom (Matthew 21:43), we come to the statement in question, which is the culmination of a series of dire pronouncements aimed at the chief priests and elders.

Jesus begins with a question about John the Baptist in Matthew 21:25, but by the end of the conversation, Jesus is plainly speaking of Himself, referring to a "father" sending his "son" who was killed (Matthew 21:37). He then immediately quotes a Messianic prophecy (Matthew 21:42), in effect claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah. The progression is logical: a rejection of John leads one naturally to a rejection of Christ, to whom John pointed (John 1:29, 3:30).

The stone which "the builders rejected" in Mt 21:42 is Jesus. Although rejected, He nevertheless becomes the "chief cornerstone" (NKJV). See also Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; and 1 Peter 2:6-8. The builders' rejection of the stone is a reference to Christ's crucifixion. The Lord's choice of the stone to be the cornerstone is a reference to Christ's resurrection. God chose His Son, despised and rejected by the world, to be the foundation of His church (1 Corinthians 3:11). "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16).

Now, there are consequences for coming into contact with a stone. If you trip over the edge of a rock and fall on it, you may break some bones. If a large enough rock falls on top of you, you may be killed. Jesus uses these truths to deliver a warning to the Jewish leaders.

The stone in Mt 21:44 is also Jesus. In saying that those who fall on this stone "will be broken to pieces," Jesus is warning against opposing Him. Defying Jesus is like beating one's head against a solid rock—a foolish action. In saying that those upon whom the stone falls "will be crushed," Jesus is warning against ignoring Him or trivializing Him. Apathy towards Jesus is like standing in the way of a falling rock—another foolish action. "I am here to do God's work," Jesus essentially says. "The foundation for the church will be laid. It is unwise to oppose Me because God's work is not inconsequential."

Rejection of the Savior is fatal. Unfortunately, many do reject Him. "He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall" (Isaiah 8:14). To persistently reject the Savior is to court judgment so severe that the only thing left will be dust. The prophet Daniel gives a similar picture of the Messiah, likening Him to a rock "cut out, but not by human hands," which smashes into the nations of the world and completely obliterates them (Daniel 2:31-45).

Matthew 21:44 is a call to faith, an appeal to open one's eyes and see that Jesus is indeed the Son of God sent into the world. The verse is also a strict warning against rejecting Jesus Christ. He is the sure Rock of salvation for those who believe, but an immovable stumbling stone for those who do not.

Related Resources:

- [What is the significance of a capstone in the Bible?](#)

QUESTION - [What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone?](#)

ANSWER - Since ancient times, builders have used cornerstones in their construction projects. A cornerstone was the principal stone, usually placed at the corner of an edifice, to guide the workers in their course. The cornerstone was usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the edifice. The Bible describes Jesus as the cornerstone that His church would be built upon. He is foundational. Once the cornerstone was set, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything was aligned to it. As the cornerstone of the building of the church, Jesus is our standard of measure and alignment.

The book of Isaiah has many references to the Messiah to come. In several places the Messiah is referred to as "the cornerstone," such as in this prophecy: "So this is what the sovereign Lord says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line'" (Isaiah 28:16-17). In context, God speaks to the scoffers and boasters of Judah, and He promises to send the cornerstone—His precious Son—who will provide the firm foundation for their lives, if they would but trust in Him.

In the New Testament, the cornerstone metaphor is continued. The apostle Paul desires for the Ephesian Christians to know Christ better: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-21). Furthermore, in 1 Peter 2:6, what Isaiah said centuries before is affirmed in exactly the same words.

Peter says that Jesus, as our cornerstone, is "chosen by God and precious to him" (1 Peter 2:4). The Cornerstone is also reliable, and "the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (verse 6).

Unfortunately, not everyone aligns with the cornerstone. Some accept Christ; some reject Him. Jesus is the "stone the builders rejected" (Mark 12:10; cf. Psalm 118:22). When news of the Messiah's arrival came to the [magi in the East](#), they determined to bring

Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when that same news came to [King Herod](#) in Jerusalem, his response was to attempt to kill Him. From the very beginning, Jesus was “a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (1 Peter 2:8).

How can people reject God’s chosen, precious cornerstone? Simply put, they want to build something different from what God is building. Just as the people building the [tower of Babel](#) rebelled against God and pursued their own project, those who reject Christ disregard God’s plan in favor of their own. Judgment is promised to all those who reject Christ: “Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matthew 21:44).

Related Resource:

- [Leon Patillo's vocal - Cornerstone](#)

Matthew 21:45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

- they (KJV): Mt 12:12 Lu 11:45 20:19

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them

Matthew 21:46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

- they sought (KJV): 2Sa 12:7-13 Pr 9:7-9 15:12 Isa 29:1 Joh 7:7
- because (KJV): Mt 21:11 Lu 7:16,39 Joh 7:40,41 Ac 2:22

When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet