



Community Group Discussion Guide

April 13, 2025

Matthew 21:1-17 | Hosanna!

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ **Starter Question: What is one of your favorite Easter traditions? How does this relate to the story of Jesus' Resurrection?**

DISCUSS

On Sunday of what is called "Passion Week," Jesus was nearing Jerusalem and the last days of His earthly life. Through His dramatic entry into the city, He made Himself known as the Messiah—but He would not be the kind of Messiah people expected.

The significance of this event for the Gospel writers is obvious since all four record it. Jesus' "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday" has a staged arrival that not only deviates from Jesus' previous attempts to avoid calling attention to Himself but is also the beginning of open confrontation between Him and Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. The narrative today will focus on Matthew's account in Matthew 21:1-17 which also includes Jesus' cleansing of the temple (see also Mark 11:1-19; Luke 19:28-48; John 12:12-19). Matthew as well as John wanted to connect this event to Old Testament fulfillment of several prophecies about the Messiah.

- ⇒ ***For example: How do Jesus' visits to the temple fulfill Malachi 3:1?***

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem in the spring, during Passover season, when Jews came from all over the world to remember the Exodus from Egypt. During Passover, messianic excitement ran high and the population in Jerusalem greatly increased. This made for an immense social dynamic as the crowds brought tension to the leadership who knew any disruption could explode violently and bring the force of the Romans into the city.

- ⇒ ***Why is it significant that the events of Palm Sunday and Jesus' Passion Week took place during Passover when the population of Jerusalem swelled and messianic hopes ran high?***
- ⇒ ***Why should we remember that the Jews believed their Messiah was coming to oust their Roman oppressors? Who is the greater enemy that Jesus came to destroy?***

Matthew 21:1-5 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, **2** saying to them, *"Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3** If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."* **4** This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, **5** "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

It appears Jesus made advanced plans for a donkey and its colt to be ready for His entry into Jerusalem, a name that means "city of peace." "Daughter of Zion," used in verse 5, is another name

for Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. Mark 11:2 mentions that the colt had never been ridden. An animal that had never been ridden would not easily submit which demonstrated Jesus' authority

Jesus sent two disciples into the nearby village of Bethpage, foretelling their discovery of a donkey and her colt. He instructed the two to untie the animals and bring them to Him and to be prepared for any objections from observers. The animals' owner had already been prepared by the Lord, so that, at the mention of "the Lord needs them," the owner would send the disciples on their way with the animals. It was customary that a dignitary could procure use of property for personal use, so this was not an unusual request. However, unlike a plundering king, Jesus would return the animal immediately. Of note:

- This image of a king on a donkey approaching Jerusalem was consistently understood to signify the arrival of the Messianic King. Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah and proclaiming that the age of restoration was dawning through Him.
- Rulers rode horses in times of war and donkeys in times of peace. In Jesus' case, the donkey denoted a Messiah of humility and service.

⇒ ***Compare these events to Zechariah 9:9. How was this fulfillment of another messianic prophecy? What does this reveal about God and His Word?***

⇒ ***What should have been the reaction to Jesus' entry?***

Matthew 21:6-11 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. **8** Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" **10** And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" **11** And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

The animals were brought to Jesus just as He described. The disciples laid their outer garments on the animals, providing a makeshift saddle for Jesus. Not only Jesus' disciples welcomed Him. The crowd also laid their outer garments and branches cut from nearby trees across Jesus' path in the road. John 12:13 indicates these were palm branches.

⇒ ***Thrown garments symbolized the people's submission to Jesus. While the crowd wanted to honor Him as King, how did they show they misunderstood what kind of king He would be?***

Palm branches were a symbol of Jewish nationalism and embodied Israel's national hopes for victory. A longstanding sign of victory in the Greek world, palm branches were associated with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles at which they waved branches to rejoice before the Lord (Leviticus 23:40). Used in celebration after the Maccabean rebellion when the Temple was rededicated during the Maccabean era of the Intertestamental Period, Jewish rebels minted coins that were inscribed with a palm branch and an inscription: "For the redemption of Zion."

⇒ ***In light of what Jesus came to do, what makes the palm branches significant?***

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people went wild, greeting what they believed to be a national liberator

who would usher in a new golden age for Israel and bring freedom from Roman oppression. In a picture of a royal procession, the crowd praised Jesus using words from Psalm 118:25-26. This is a Thanksgiving Psalm that celebrates deliverance from captivity and expresses the messianic hopes of Israel. It was also used to greet pilgrims who came to Jerusalem at least times.

Matthew records them shouting:

a. *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"* Acknowledges that Jesus was heir to David's throne and that He would save His people and establish His throne immediately. Any Jewish teacher would have been horrified to be proclaimed "Son of David." For anyone other than the Messiah to accept such acclaim was blasphemy.

b. *"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"* Pictures an image of a king representing Yahweh Himself coming to lead the people to worship at the temple.

c. *"Hosanna in the highest!"* Proclaims Jesus as a royal figure entering the royal city down a royal road, coming, as God's representative to bring peace.

- ⇒ **How do the praises of the crowd indicate they were expecting a typical monarch who would establish an earthly kingdom rather than a humble servant?**
- ⇒ **How would Jesus go on to force a "messianic reinterpretation?"**

The whole city was stirred as Jesus and His procession passed through the city gate. When people inquired about His identity, His followers made Him known as Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee—Jesus' hometown.

- ⇒ **Discuss this quote: The triumphal entry is of vital significance in understanding the messianic mission of Jesus. Prior to this moment, Jesus had refused to allow public acknowledgement of His being the Messiah. By conducting His ministry outside Jerusalem, He had avoided further intensification of conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. Now, the time was at hand. The opponents of Jesus understood the strong messianic implications of His manner of entry into Jerusalem—all of which pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. —Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary**
- ⇒ **Discuss this insight: We must remember that the adoration of the crowd will be short-lived and instead of shouting "Hosanna!" they will soon shriek "Crucify Him!"**

Matthew 21:12-13 *And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."*

When Jesus entered the temple—the place where God's Messiah would be expected to appear--He found it busy with the activity of money changers and sellers of sacrificial birds and animals. This originated as a helpful practice. Jews coming to worship from all over Israel and parts of the known world needed animals to sacrifice. Most of them traveled long distances and it was easier to carry money to buy a sacrifice upon their arrival than to herd an animal along and carry supplies for its upkeep on the journey.

Based on Jesus' strong reaction, the selling and money changing had become a means of cheating and exploiting people. This was a misuse of the house of prayer for worldly profit. Jesus drove out the merchants and overturned their tables. Instead of attacking the political base of Roman rule, as most Jews would have hoped, Jesus' attack threatened the center of Judaism itself. What was at issue?

- a. The buying and selling took place in the Court of the Gentiles.
 - The Gentiles had been pushed out of the outer court of the temple area by the proliferation of merchandise. They were deprived of the only place in the temple where they could worship.
 - God established His temple as a place where the people could experience His presence and they could pray to Him. By allowing the court of the Gentiles to become a marketplace, the Jewish religious leaders were interfering with God's provision of a house of prayer for all nations (see Mark 11:17).
- b. The money exchanged was for temple tax and to purchase sacrificial animals.
 - Moneychangers were present at the temple to exchange Roman or other moneys for Jewish money acceptable in temple worship. Worshipers could also purchase birds and animals used for sacrifice. Since sacrificial birds and animals had to be officially certified and unblemished, it was helpful to purchase them at the temple. Some exchangers profited greatly and loaned their money. Their interest rates ranged from 20 to 300 percent per year.
 - Temple tax was collected at Passover. It was about two days wages and it had to be paid in temple shekels. The priests charged a fee for exchanging coins into shekels. And if you needed change back, you were charged extra.

While Jesus' actions did not put an end to this practice, His confrontation had prophetic significance. Jesus' cleansing of the temple fulfilled Old Testament prophecy that a day would come when no merchant would remain in the house of God (Zechariah 14:21). This was a symbolic act of judgment against the rebellious leadership of Israel. The temple's glory days were coming to an end. If no money or animals could be brought in, then the temple ceased to function in its purpose.

⇒ **To expel Jews from the temple was looked upon as expelling them from God's presence and favor. If Jesus' epic entry was not shocking enough to the Jewish religious leaders, how did His attack on the temple system seal His fate in their minds?**

Jesus made two strong statements, quoting from:

- a. Isaiah 56:7: *My house shall be called a house of prayer.* Mark 7:17 ends this statement with "for all nations." These words include even the Gentiles who were being prevented from using this one place set aside for them to pray.
- b. Jeremiah 7:11: *You have made it a den of robbers.* For thieves, their "den" is the place where they retreat after having committed their crimes—a refuge for accumulating illicit wealth and for plotting future illegal activities. Jesus blatantly attacked them for allowing the temple to degenerate into a safe hiding place where they thought they could find forgiveness and fellowship with God no matter how they acted on the outside.

Matthew 21:14-17 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. **15** But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, **16** and they said to him, "Do you hear what these 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?" **17** And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

The blind and the lame were restricted from full access to temple activities to symbolize the purity that was expected to be displayed in those approaching God (Leviticus 21:18-19). Jesus showed His authority to create purity in all those desiring to worship God. He also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5-6 by performing healing miracles.

Seeing the wonderful things Jesus did, the children cried out as the crowds had done: Hosanna to the Son of David! The Jewish leaders were indignant at Jesus' challenge to their authority. Any Jewish teacher would stop people who were proclaiming Him as Son of David. But Jesus drew attention to the appropriateness, supporting it with a quote from Psalm 8:2. Jesus pointed out the leadership's lack of understanding of Old Testament Scriptures, on which they were supposed to be experts.

The Jewish leaders did not miss the implications of what was happening. They saw the triumphal entry, the messianic praise of the crowd, Jesus' authoritative cleansing of the temple, His pronouncement of judgment, and His healing miracles.

- ⇒ **How was Jesus a threat to the religious prominence of the Jewish leadership?**
- ⇒ **On what basis did Jesus show how obvious it should have been to them that He was the Son of David?**

Having accomplished His entrance, Jesus left Jerusalem. Matthew used a strong verb form describing Jesus' leaving. It implies a purposeful departure, possibly in disgust or righteous anger. There was calculated determination in Jesus' actions.

- ⇒ **How do Jesus' actions and words show that He was in complete control?**
- ⇒ **What does the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies indicate about Jesus? What does this reveal about God?**

TRANSFORM

- 1. Make personal application:** Putting the four Gospel 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 still celebrate Palm Sunday to remember this momentous occasion and the truth that Jesus will triumph over the enemy of sin, bringing salvation to His people through His sacrifice on the cross.

- ⇒ **How can you celebrate Palm Sunday in a way that points you to Jesus?**
- ⇒ **With whom could you share this story?**
- ⇒ **What does Jesus' Messiahship mean to you personally?**

- 2. Pray:** Praise Jesus as the crowds and the children did. Thank Him for His determination to fulfill the cost of our salvation. Ask Him to make Easter especially meaningful to you this year.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Christ Chronological*, Holman, pages 98-102.
- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Matthew*, pages 337-341, 363.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, Matthew*, pages 684-712.
- *Shepherd's Notes, Matthew*, pages 76-77.