



MOUNTAINS

THE MOUNTAIN OF OLIVES

MATTHEW 21:1-17

MAIN IDEA

Jesus is who He says He is, and He fulfills prophecy as written in Scripture. We all must choose how we will respond to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

If you've ever seen a show or movie about royalty, one thing you may notice is someone often announces royalty as they enter a room. When royalty is announced people pay attention. The goal is to make sure everyone in the room knows who is entering so they can respond and act appropriately.

Today we are studying the time that Jesus essentially entered Jerusalem "announcing" Himself as King of kings and the people definitely took notice.

- **Share any good or funny "mistaken identity" situations you've had (e.g., a time you stuck your foot in your mouth because you didn't realize who the person you were talking with was).**
- **Why would it potentially be bad to be around royalty and not realize who they were?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **Have someone in your group read
Matthew 21:1-11.**

Although there was no official pronouncement, Jesus did some specific things to signify publicly His deity and title of King of kings. Other times throughout the Gospels, He refrained from being direct about His identity as the Messiah, but the time had arrived and His entry into Jerusalem was the beginning of Passion Week.

- **Why do you think Jesus was so specific about the animal He chose to ride into Jerusalem? (See Zechariah 9:9.)**

Every detail about the triumphal entry was important because Jesus was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy with every move He made. The choice of animal also signified that He was arriving in peace, not as an aggressive military leader looking for battle. That is one of the ways this arrival is considered triumphant. We are again reminded that the humility Jesus displayed in His life was a triumph over any form of pride or worldliness.

The people were all gathering in the city and in a religious frenzy. We will consider the responses of the crowd in a later section. But one thing to note was the boldness Jesus displayed in arriving as He did. He knew the religious leaders who were plotting to kill Him would see and hear what was taking place.

- **Why was it important that people see Jesus arriving in peace instead of as a military leader? How might this have compared to their expectations?**

- **Why did Jesus enter Jerusalem publicly amid the religious crowd, despite the danger He faced?**

> Have someone in your group read Matthew 21:12-17.

- **What did Jesus do at the temple after coming into town?**

- **What was the purpose of His actions in the temple?**

The temple was a place to worship God and yet men had turned it into something different and unacceptable. The money changers were selling animals for required sacrifice at a high cost and taking advantage of the worshipers coming from out of town who would need to purchase animals for the sacrifice.

Jesus took charge in the temple, making another bold statement about His identity as well as His authority. He challenged the current practices and called for the temple to be returned to what God intended it to be. Think about the fact that we as New Testament believers are described as the temple of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus were to show up in our lives today, are there any areas He might want to clean out and purify?

By turning the temple into a type of self-serving marketplace, the people also prevented those in need from receiving the help and healing they longed for. The tables were set up in the outer court—the only area Gentiles were allowed which was designed for prayer and healing for all people.

- **What are some examples today of people taking advantage of others due to desperate times?**

- **How do you respond when you see price gouging? How do you think Jesus would feel about such practices in our world?**
- **What does it mean to you that Jesus claimed the temple back for God and purified it so that all people, not just Jews, could receive help and healing?**

Look back at verses 8-9 and 14-17. When Jesus entered Jerusalem and purified the temple, it brought out different reactions in people. As the crowd realized who Jesus really was, they grew more and more excited. Many were praising and worshiping Him. Those who were in need came for healing to the temple that had been blocked to them previously.

- **What do you think the crowds may have been thinking or feeling during this account?**
- **Who would not have been excited about Jesus claiming His lordship and authority? Why?**

As the crowds grew more excited, the religious leaders were the opposite. They saw Jesus as a threat to their power. Instead of humbling themselves to trust and follow Jesus, they started planning how to eliminate the threat.

Any time people are faced with the truth about who Jesus is, they have the choice of how they will respond. We can respond like the crowd, like those who came for healing, or like the religious leaders.

- **Why do you think the leaders felt threatened by Jesus?**
- **Why might people today feel threatened or upset when faced with the truth of who Jesus is?**

APPLICATION

- **Take time in prayer to evaluate your life as a temple of the Holy Spirit. What areas of your “temple” need to be cleaned out or purified? How will you submit this to Jesus?**
- **This week, try to schedule the meal you plan to share with the person you are pursuing. Get it on both of your calendars.**
- **What would need to happen to make your house a place of prayer?**

PRAY

Pray and ask God for wisdom and discernment to see areas of your life that need to change in order to be more in line with the truth about Jesus.

MATTHEW 21:1-17

21:1. The Mount of Olives was a large hill on the eastern side of Jerusalem. It was mentioned in Zch 14:4 and ancient rabbis interpreted the text as referring to Messiah (Mt 24:3). Bethphage was a small village on the slopes of the hill.

Notes:

21:2–3. Jesus may have made previous arrangements to use the animals mentioned here, but since Matthew often refers to Jesus's supernatural knowledge (17:27; 20:17–19), it is also possible that Jesus used supernatural knowledge here, in which case He has commandeered the animals in a show of messianic authority.

21:4–5. The formula that Matthew used to introduce the OT quotation affirms that God spoke through the OT prophets. The quotation is a combination of one line from Is 62:11 and excerpts from Zch 9:9. The first text refers to the coming of the Lord, while the second refers to the approach of the divine King. Both texts imply Jesus's deity and messiahship.

21:6–7. The mother donkey was led alongside her untamed foal in order to calm it. The clothes of bystanders were draped across the backs of both animals, serving as makeshift decorative saddles. The words He sat on them refer to Jesus sitting atop the robes, not to His riding both animals simultaneously.

21:8. The scattering of clothes and branches in Jesus's path recalls the way in which kings entered their royal cities (2Kg 9:13).

21:9. These words of celebration echo Ps 118:25–26. The people pleaded for salvation from God and blessed God for sending a deliverer who came in the name of the Lord.

21:10–11. All Jerusalem was also stirred when Jesus was born. See Mt 2:3. They asked the right question, but they got an incomplete answer.

Notes:

21:12. Since Roman currency had idolatrous images stamped on it, the temple accepted only idol-free Tyrian currency. Money changers exchanged pagan coins for acceptable currency for a fee. Merchants sold sacrificial animals to those who had traveled long distances. Doves were sacrificed by poor pilgrims who could not afford lambs (Lv 5:7). Although the merchants and money changers normally performed their services outside the temple precincts, they occasionally set up shop in the court of the Gentiles.

21:13. Jesus's quote is from Is 56:7 and Jr 7:11. The commotion in the court made the temple unsuitable as a house of prayer. Zechariah 6:12–13 foretold that Messiah would purify the temple. See also Zch 14:21.

21:14. Evidence suggests that first-century Jews extended the demands of Lv 21:16–20 to exclude handicapped persons from entering the temple (2Sm 5:8, LXX). By healing the blind and lame, Jesus identified himself as Messiah (Is 35:5–6). By doing so in the temple, He demonstrated that the handicapped were welcomed by a gracious God.

21:15–16. Both the wonders performed by Jesus and the words spoken by the children identified Jesus as the Son of David and Messiah (see notes at v. 14 and 1:1). Jesus argued from Ps 8:2 that the children's celebration was appropriate and divinely inspired. After all, God had prepared praise from the mouths of infants.

21:17–19. On His way from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus passed again through Bethphage (v.1), meaning, "the house of unripe figs." In light of Mc 5:7, the fruitless fig tree symbolized Israel's moral barrenness. The cursing of the tree forewarned of God's coming judgment against Jerusalem and its temple.