

Signs of Rejection

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-17

Intro:

As you and I come to chapter 21 in Matthew we are going to see the last events of Jesus' ministry.

This will be His last trip to Jerusalem.

His death, burial and resurrection are less than a week away.

The "**Lamb of God**" is about to be slain for our sins.

It's amazing to me this morning that Israel rejected her Messiah in that day and even still today rejects her Messiah.

There were three things that portrayed her rejection.

- 1) If you would take your Bibles and go to verses 28-32 you would find the parable of the Two Sons and in verse 31 Jesus told Israel these words,

"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

What an indictment against Israel!

- 2) The second parable deals with the Tenants in verses 33-46 and Jesus tells the religious leaders in verse 43 and verse 44 ***"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."***

Let me share with you their response in verse 45:

"When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew He was talking about them. And they began to look for a way to arrest Him ..."

This morning I want to give you an outline of our study:

1. **The Presentation of the Messiah. Vv. 1-11**
2. **The Purifying of the Temple. Vv. 12-17**
3. **The Prophecy of the Fig Tree. Vv. 18-22**

I. **The Presentation of the Messiah. Vv. 1-11**

Now I want us to get a mental picture of what is happening here.

3

1. Remember Jesus had just left Jericho where He had healed two blind men.

As a matter of fact, it says in verse 34, “**Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him.**”

I mean – who wouldn’t immediately follow Jesus.

Imagine being blind – Joe – you know what that would be like – No! Joe – that would be beyond your imagination.

But it would just like Jesus to have compassion on you and touch your eyes and you would be able to see.

Do any of us know what it would be like to be blind? NO! We don’t have any idea!

I tried one day closing my eyes and keeping them closed and feeling the darkness and not being able to navigate or move around.

So What happened?

The crowds began to follow Him every where He went.

4

They wanted to see the miracles. Maybe there was something about them they needed His touch.

This passage is traditionally known as **THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OR THE CORONATION OF CHRIST.**

It teaches us that for a brief time, these people who followed Jesus welcomed His as their Messiah.

But folks, don’t get fooled by this – because that same crowd that for a brief time accepted Jesus as their Messiah

That same bunch of people who cut the branches and threw them on the ground in front of Jesus

That same bunch of people who shouted, “**Hosanna to the Son of David.**”

IT WAS THAT SAME CROWD OF WOULD BE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS THAT CRIED OUT JUST A FEW HOURS LATER, “CRUCIFY HIM!”

Let me give you a contrast:

When England was coronating Queen Victoria in 1838, she wore a crown on her head that had giant rubies encrusted into it.

She had in her crown sapphires surrounding a 309 carat diamond.

Her royal scepter was capped with a diamond cut from the Star of Africa weighing 516 ½ carats.

You could only imagine her dress, shoes and robe she wore on that occasion.

I want you to see in contrast Jesus as He enters into Jerusalem.

Jesus' coronation was much simpler, must less regal but much, much more important.

A. The Preparation for the Triumphal Entry. vv. 1-3

1 “As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

Get this mental picture with me – Great crowds are following Jesus on their way to celebrate the Feast of the Passover.

Do you remember in the Old Testament when the people of Israel were being held in bondage to Egypt and one of the plagues was the Passover? They were to take the blood and put it on the top and the sides of the door frame.

And when the Angel of Death came to slay the first born – they passed over those Israelites who had the blood of the lamb painted on their door frames.

Since that time – the Israelites came together through the centuries celebrating what they referred to as the Feast of the Passover.

All the religious leaders are there. The Sadduces – The Pharisees – It would remind you if you've ever been to a General Assembly with 50,000 Nazarenes gathered in one place.

After healing the two blind men in Jericho, Jesus made His way “UP” the steep road and **Drew near Jerusalem”**

All this great crowd of people with Jesus – and they are going to celebrate the Passover.

And the thing I want you to understand is – they don't know that they are in the presence of God's Passover Lamb.

2. Secondly, Matthew records that He stopped in **Bethphage on the way to the Mount of Olives.**

It's interesting to understand that the name **Bethphage** actually meant, "The house of figs." A little later we'll talk about what happens to the fig tree.

3. From Bethphage, Jesus is preparing to enter the Holy City of Jerusalem through the East Gate, but first he sends two of His disciples on a specific errand.

Remember Jesus knew what He was headed for. He had a purpose and He was determined He was going to fulfill the Plan for our Salvation.

His face was set to do the preordained will of His Heavenly Father.

Jesus told the two disciples, ***"Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her."***

Naturally the donkey colt would come with its mother.

If anyone was to ask, they were to say, ***"The Lord has need of them."***

Mark records that some did ask and Luke identifies them as the owners.

Evidently they were believers in Jesus and right away agreed to whatever Jesus needed.

B. Now – look with me to the Prophecy of the Triumphal Entry. Vv. 4-5

4 *"This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

**5 *Say to the Daughter of Zion,
'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*"**

Jesus said the donkey was needed, ***"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet"***... who was Zechariah – who prophesized this – now listen – he prophesized this 500 years before it happened in Zechariah chapter 9 and verse 9.

Mt. Zion is the highest peak in Jerusalem.

"The daughter of Zion" refers to the inhabitants of the city.

It is a known fact that whenever a Roman General would come into Jerusalem or for that fact any city, they road on a white horse.

But Zechariah foretold that Jesus would come in a **“Gentle and lowly (KJV) manner riding on a beast of burden (NASV)**

Now – it’s important for us to understand – Jesus did not come as a mighty conqueror but it says, **“See your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”**
V.5

What significance does this have? Why be so specific about the details here?

Well – let me try to explain to you what it means to us:

- 1) Jesus did not ride into Jerusalem as a Mighty Militant General – but instead as a sacrificial Lamb.
- 2) He didn’t come in wealth nor did He come in grandeur. Jesus came in poverty and meekness.
- 3) He did not come to destroy Israel’s enemies, but He came to save humanity.

This coronation was a time of humiliation, not glorification.

The time of glorification was yet to come.

We’ve been studying the book of Revelation on Wednesday nights and found in chapter 19 it

shows Jesus in the future prophetic picture of Him riding on a White Horse.

It reads like this, **“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written:**

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Now – believer friends, listen to me – this is coming!

This is going to happen! And when He comes in that day the Word of God tells us that all those who have had their sins forgiven and His name written on their hearts will with Him!

C. Next – See with me – The Process of the Triumphal Entry vv. 6-8

6 “The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”

This is majestic! Maybe not the way we would look at it – but this is impressive!

The disciples didn't have any saddle or blankets so they took garments they were wearing and put them on the colts back and Jesus got on the colt.

It says, the **“very great multitude”** encircled Jesus and began to **“Spread their clothes on the road.”**

This was an old custom that symbolized respect and submission for a monarch. It actually said, “You may walk on us.”

Others cut down branches from palm trees and spread them on the road.

In the past we've waved our palm leaves here on Palm Sunday. Palm leaves were a symbol of joy.

Let me show you what is going to happen in the future for it says in Revelation 7:9 **“a great multitude which no one could number, of all**

nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

D. Next see with me – THE PRAISE OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY IN VERSE 9

Get a picture of this in your mind as we see people going out before Jesus and a great number of people following Him.

There could have been several hundred thousand people in that great crowd.

And they shouted **“Hosanna,”** a Hebrew word which means **“Save us Now!”**

They didn't want Jesus to save their souls from sin and hell, they were interested in Jesus saving their nation from Rome.

They called Him, **“The Son of David.”** What they were actually referring to was the history of what King David had been able to accomplish over Israel's enemies and they thought Jesus was the One who would do the same thing.

They were literally saying, **“Save us now, Oh great Messiah!”**

And though they were speaking truth and fulfilling Scripture.

They were frenzied mob of people who for the most part had no idea what they were doing.

Oh, I could give you several examples of what that is like, so let me just give one little illustration.

Most of us know the Big Deal between Ohio State and Michigan.

The crowd gets together and they overturn cars.
They burn couches.
They drink and get out of hand.
Campus police have a difficult time controlling them
They just become frenzied.

And folks, that's just one example of what the crowd can do if some one gets hyped up.

E. But let's look at the Perplexity of this Event.

All the city was moved or stirred up. Though they praised Him as the Messiah the **"Son of David,"** now they asked the question in verse 10: **"Who is this?"**

Now – wait a minute just a few moments ago – they were hailing Him as the **"Son of David"** and now – **"Who is He?"**

And all of a sudden they stopped referring to Him as their Messiah when some one told them this is **"Jesus, The prophet from Nazareth."**

A few hours from then these same people – these fickle people would say to Pilate, **"We will not have this man to reign over us."**

You see – if Jesus wasn't going to do what they expected Him to do then ...

You see – now understand this – they wanted a Messiah on their terms, not God's terms.

What do you think about that?

How do we relate to that?

Application:

Are people in the religious world today still as fickle as those people were then?

Don't we want a Jesus who will meet us on our terms and conditions?

If Jesus is going to be a part of our church – then He is going to have to toe the line.

If He doesn't watch out! We'll get rid of Him!

We're not really interested in what God has to say – We're only interested in what we think the church ought to be.

Many people who claim to be Christians today in the church of Jesus Christ are filled up with self.

They are just like that crowd back then – they turn away and they reject Him when He doesn't deliver – when He doesn't do what they expect Him to do.

And if they're going to treat Jesus like that don't you think they will treat the Man of God like that?

YOU SEE THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM WAS THE FIRST SIGN THAT ISRAEL REJECTED HER OWN SAVIOR.

AND THE TRAGEDY IS – THEY STILL REJECT HIM!

II. My Second Point is – The Purifying of The Temple. Vv. 12-16

A. Look at verse 12 and see Jesus Cleansing the Temple.

This is going to be one of the most dramatic things Jesus had done up to this point.

Jerusalem is swelled with a great host of people from all over and it was like packed with people every where.

There were many things God got upset with Israel, but according to this passage Jesus really got upset when He walked into the Temple and it was all about Worship.

Worship, you see – is the focal point with God. If we get our worship wrong, nothing else is going to be right.

Let me stop right here and try to challenge you to get into Worshipping God like you should.

Would you agree with me that God has done a great thing in your life by forgiving you of your sins and getting you started for heaven?

You know – I've often wondered how I could stand and not show some kind of expression of Worship when I'm worshipping God.

Why do I raise my hands when I worship God? The Bible says this about that, ***“I raise my hands to God without wrath and without doubt.”***

Isaiah talks about clapping our hands in praise for what God has done for us.

I mean why shouldn't I show some kind of outward emotion about what He has done for me!!

So Worship is always a focal point with God and if our worship is wrong, nothing else will be right.

17

I want you to see with me that Jesus began His ministry at the Passover celebration in the same way He ended it: Cleansing the Temple.

Now I want to drop down to verses 23 thru 27.

I mean how would you react if you were some kind of spiritual leader in the Temple and some person comes in and does what Jesus did?

And after all this Jesus began to teach and it says in verse 23, "**Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"**

Let me paraphrase this, they asked, "**Just who do you think you are to do the things you do?"**

And Jesus answered them with a question of His own, which by the way, He often did this. He said, "**If you tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things.**"

24 "Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. 25 John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?"

18

Jesus wasn't being evasive. Everywhere He went He spoke openly that His authority came from His Heavenly Father.

Let me give you an example: Do you recall when Jesus said in John 6:38, "**For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.**"

25b "They discussed it among themselves - I can see them sort of like in a football huddle and they said to each other, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'then why didn't you believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From men'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

You see John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus.

John declared Jesus as "**The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**"

And to accept John with heaven's authority was to accept Jesus as their Messiah and This they would never do!

SO like our politicians today, they were ever conscious of public opinion –

If they said, "**John was from Heaven He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'"**

27 So (embarrassed) they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

I want you to catch this – Jesus responded by refusing to answer their question as well.

Jesus would not give them any more ammunition to use against Him.

In fact, He would ignore them from then on.

B. Because of Faithlessness Israel was Rejected. Vv. 19-22

That was what the withering of the Fig Tree was all about.

Jesus made a visual illustration of Israel.

They looked impressive in their religious efforts.

There were plenty of beautiful leaves.

Yet, there was no genuine spiritual fruit and this was because of their rejection of the Messiah and like the fig tree Israel would wither away.

Summary:

Have you ever seen this principle displayed in the local church?

Sad to say, most all of us have!

I've seen believers in churches who had a pretense of spiritual life, they looked good on the outside, but had not real commitment to Christ.

On the outside they could talk the talk, but they couldn't walk the walk.

They started out good and they seemed to be faithful.

They came to Sunday morning church. They even came to some Bible studies and Small groups for a while.

Some of them have even served on Church boards and become Sunday School teachers.

But you and I have watched wither too.

Believer friends, I am here to warn you and challenge you in your spiritual walk with Jesus.

You see – if we are not careful

If we don't guard our relationship with Jesus

If we don't keep on keeping on the right track

If we don't keep growing in this
Spiritual walk
If we don't pursue holiness of heart

Then what will happen is we will stray away from
Jesus.

We'll eventually reject Him.

No! I don't mean you will outwardly say, "I don't
accept Jesus as the Messiah!" You won't say that!

What you will do and folks, I've watched this for
years in the churches I have pastored.

Little by little you'll start drifting away from the
truth.

Little by little you'll start questioning and you'll be
critical and you'll be critical about any one in
leadership in His church.

Little by little you'll not feel the need to be at
church or feel the need to be in a Small Group or
Sunday School class.

It just progresses until you've rejected Jesus and
His church.

Jesus said in verse 21-22 **21 Jesus replied, "I
tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not
doubt, not only can you do what was done to
the fig tree, but also you can say to this**

**mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,'
and it will be done. 22 If you believe, you will
receive whatever you ask for in prayer."**

**Whatever – Whatever you ask for in prayer,
believing you will receive.**

Church – hear me now – Prayer is the Key to your
spiritual growth and the growth of this Church.

Jesus said, **"My house will be called a house of
prayer."**

And when we pray according to His will we see our
prayers heard and answered.

Unlike Israel of old, let us not merely attempt to
look and sound religious, but let us exercise our
faith to prayer and produce genuine fruit.