

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**11-8-23**

**Matthew 21**

**Jesus Comes To Jerusalem As King – Verses 1-5**

**<sup>1</sup> As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: <sup>5</sup>“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”**

**21:1** When they drew near Jerusalem: Jesus knew that the religious leaders were going to arrest Him and condemn Him and mock Him and scourge Him and deliver Him to the Romans for crucifixion (Matthew 20:19). Yet He had the courage to not only enter Jerusalem, but to enter in as public a way as possible. This contrasts to His previous pattern of suppressing publicity.

**21:2-5** Matthew mentions a donkey and a colt, while the other Gospels mention only the colt. This was the same event, but Matthew focuses on the prophecy in Zechariah 9: 9, where a donkey and a colt are mentioned. He shows how Jesus’ actions fulfilled the prophet’s words, thus giving another indication that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt, he affirmed his messianic royalty as well as his humility. On the practical side, what better way to lead an unbroken colt for its first ride down a crowded road than to have its mother with it?

**Jesus Comes To Jerusalem As King – Verses 6-11**

**<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> 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!” <sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”**

**21:8** This verse is one of the few places where the Gospels record that Jesus’ glory is recognized on earth. Jesus boldly rode as the King of peace, and the crowd gladly joined him. But these same people would bow to political pressure and desert him in just a few days. Today we celebrate this event on Palm Sunday. That day should remind us to guard against superficial acclaim for Christ.

**21:10-11** When He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved: Jesus also showed that He wasn’t afraid of chief priests and Pharisees. He knew they were plotting to kill Him, yet He came openly to the city as Messiah. “How strange is it that these same people...should, about five days after, change their hosannas for, Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him! How fickle is the multitude! It was here, before He entered the city, that He looked over the city and wept, knowing the judgment that would come upon Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44).

## **Jesus at the Temple – Verses 12-13**

**<sup>12</sup> Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. <sup>13</sup> “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”**

**21:12** This is the second time Jesus cleared the temple (see John 2: 13-17). Merchants and money changers set up their booths in the Court of the Gentiles in the temple, crowding out the Gentiles who had come from all over the civilized world to worship God. The merchants sold sacrificial animals at high prices, taking advantage of those who had come long distances. The money changers exchanged all international currency for the special temple coins— the only money the merchants would accept. They often deceived foreigners who didn't know the exchange rates. Their commercialism in God's house frustrated people's attempts at worship. This, of course, greatly angered Jesus. Any practice that interferes with worshiping God should be stopped.

## **Jesus Carries On God's Compassionate Work In The Temple Courts – Verses 14-17**

**<sup>14</sup> The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. <sup>16</sup> “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?” <sup>17</sup> And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.**

**21:14** Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. The blind and the lame were restricted to the court of the Gentiles; they could not go closer to the temple and could not go to the altar to sacrifice. After purging the court of the Gentiles of merchants and robbers, Jesus then ministered to the outcasts who congregated there. He got back to doing the business of the Messiah, a significant part of which was showing the power of God in the context of compassion and mercy.

**21:15-17** They were indignant: This was their response to the wonderful things that He did, and to the praise of children for Jesus in the temple courts. The hypocrisy of the religious leaders is evident. Greed and theft in the temple didn't bother them, but praise to Jesus did. This reminds us that children can have a real relationship with God and spiritual life, yet they will still be children.

## **Jesus Curses A Fig Tree – Verses 18-19**

**<sup>18</sup> Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. <sup>19</sup> Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.**

**21:18-19** Why did Jesus curse the fig tree? This was not a thoughtless, angry act but an acted-out parable. Jesus was showing his anger at religion without substance. Just as the fig tree looked good from a distance but was fruitless on close examination, so the temple looked impressive at first glance, but its sacrifices and other activities were hollow because they were not done to worship God sincerely (see 21: 43). If you only appear to have faith without putting it to work in your life, you are like the fig tree that withered and died because it bore no fruit. Genuine faith means bearing fruit for God's kingdom.

## How Did Jesus Do This? – Verses 20-22

<sup>20</sup> When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked. <sup>21</sup> Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, 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. <sup>22</sup> If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

**21:21** Many have wondered about Jesus’ statement that if we have faith and don’t doubt, we can move mountains. Jesus, of course, was not suggesting that his followers use prayer as “magic” and perform capricious “mountain-moving” acts. Instead, he was making a strong point about the disciples’ (and our) lack of faith. What kinds of mountains do you face? Have you talked to God about them? How strong is your faith?

**21:22** This verse is not a guarantee that we can get anything we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that would violate his own nature or will. Jesus’ statement is not a blank check. To be fulfilled, our requests must be in harmony with the principles of God’s kingdom. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God’s will, and then God will be happy to grant them.

## The Authority of Jesus Questioned – Verses 23-27

<sup>23</sup> 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?” <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ <sup>26</sup> But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

**21: 23-27** The Pharisees demanded to know where Jesus got his authority. If Jesus said his authority came from God, they would accuse him of blasphemy. If he said that he was acting on his own authority, the crowds would be convinced that the Pharisees had the greater authority. But Jesus answered them with a seemingly unrelated question that exposed their real motives. They didn’t really want an answer to their question; they only wanted to trap him. Jesus showed that the Pharisees wanted the truth only if it supported their own views and causes.

## The Parable of the Two Sons – Verses 28-32

<sup>28</sup> “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ <sup>29</sup> “‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup> “Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. <sup>31</sup> “Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup> 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.

**21:30** The son who said he would obey and then didn’t represented many of the people of Israel in Jesus’ day, particularly the religious leaders. They said they wanted to do God’s will, but they constantly

disobeyed. They were phony, just going through the motions. It is dangerous to pretend to obey God when our hearts are far from him because God knows our true intentions. Our actions must match our words.

### **The Parable of the Tenants – Verses 33-41**

<sup>33</sup> **“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. <sup>35</sup> “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. <sup>38</sup> “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup> “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup> “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”**

**21:33-41** The main elements in this parable are (1) the landowner— God, (2) the vineyard— Israel, (3) the tenants— the Jewish religious leaders, (4) the landowner’s servants— the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God and preached to Israel, (5) the son— Jesus (21: 38), and (6) the other tenants— the Gentiles. Jesus was exposing the religious leaders’ murderous plot (21: 45).

**21:37** In trying to reach us with his love, God finally sent his own Son. Jesus’ perfect life, his words of truth, and his sacrifice of love are meant to cause us to listen to him and to follow him as Lord. If we ignore God’s gracious gift of his Son, we reject God himself.

### **Jesus Warns The Religious Leaders Of The Result Of Their Rejection – Verses 42-46**

<sup>42</sup> **Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes? <sup>43</sup> “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. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” <sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup> They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.**

**21:42** Jesus refers to himself as “the stone the builders rejected.” Although Jesus was rejected by many of his people, he will become the cornerstone of his new building, the church (see Acts 4: 11; 1 Peter 2: 7).

**21:44** Jesus used this metaphor to show that one truth can affect people in different ways, depending on how they relate to it (see Isaiah 8: 14-15; 28: 16; Daniel 2: 34, 44, 45). Ideally they will build on it; many, however, will trip over it. And at the Last Judgment God’s enemies will be crushed by it. In the end, Christ, the “building block,” will become the “crushing stone.” He offers mercy and forgiveness now and promises judgment later. We should choose him now!