

earthly ministry) are read into these parables. In the parable of the two sons, Jesus' point is that the tax collectors are more righteous/repentant than the Jewish leaders. In the parable of the tenants, Jesus' point is that those who reject him will not inherit the kingdom but it will be given to others. In the parable of the wedding banquet, Jesus explains that those invited refused to come and so their places would be filled by others.

In sum, those who reject Jesus are the Jewish leaders of his day; they will not receive the kingdom. Others will, but this does not deny OT prophecy which calls for God fulfilling his promises to national Israel. The OT anticipated rejection of the Messiah while also predicting Israel's national repentance and acceptance (Isa 53; Zech 11-12). Later Peter (in Acts 2-3) and Paul (in Romans 9-11) would make it clear that Israel's rejection of Jesus does not mean that Israel fell beyond recovery.

Is the Olivet Discourse for believers?

In response to the disciples' questions, Jesus explains the events surrounding his return and the end of the present age (before the kingdom begins). Jesus answers the question directly without deviating into the place of the church or the matter of the rapture. Instead, Jesus provides an answer which is largely an explanation from the book of Daniel about what will happen before he establishes his kingdom. Daniel does not address the issues of the church and the rapture, nor does Jesus. These truths will be developed in later Scripture, including 1 Thess 4 and 2 Thess 2.

GOING FURTHER

How do Mark 11-13, Luke 19-21, and John 12 make similar points to Matthew? How are they different?

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read Matthew 26-28. Think about how Matthew shows Jesus' death as the fulfillment of the OT. How does Matthew's presentation correspond with Isaiah 53?

JESUS' ENTRANCE TO JERUSALEM AS KING (MATT 21-25)

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read Matthew 21-25. Figure out the main point of each unit. Pay attention to Jesus' claims about himself, his response to opposition, and his predictions of the future.

THE CONTEXT

In this study, we are seeking to understand God's work in history as it unfolded progressively. We study each new development in light of previous revelation in order to understand it correctly. In looking today at Jesus' great entry into Jerusalem, we are keeping in mind both the immediate context (Jesus' ministry) and the greater context (the OT).

In the greater context, God had promised to provide a righteous king who would follow his commands and establish peace on earth. In the context of Matthew (along with the other Gospels), Jesus fulfilled prophecy that the Messiah's light would shine in Galilee. In Matthew 4-20, Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, preaching and doing miracles associated with God's coming kingdom.

JESUS' INTENTION IN THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

But Jerusalem was the capital of Israel, the home of the temple, and the place where any claimant to the throne must be accepted. We know from the Gospel of John that Jesus visited several times earlier in his ministry, but these were more low-key and before he had fully preached his message. This coming to Jerusalem that we know of as Palm Sunday was a dramatic entrance intended to force the nation to come to a decision about him (Matt 21:1-11).

Jesus' entrance was intentionally bold. He timed his arrival for Passover, Israel's festival celebrating release from slavery in Egypt. By riding on a donkey, Jesus was making an unmistakable claim to be the prophesied king of Zechariah 9 (the Romans wouldn't understand but the Jewish people would). He then took over the

temple courts, removing the unrighteous leaders and asserting his own authority (21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18). He vindicated his authority by doing miracles prophesied of the Messiah (Matt 21:14).

THE NATION'S RESPONSE TO JESUS' ENTRY

Everyone understood the claims Jesus was making. The crowd responded by waving palm branches (as they did for military victors), throwing down their cloaks (as they did for new kings), and hailing Jesus as the Son of David, the king who brings the kingdom. All of Jerusalem knew of Jesus' coming. The Jewish leaders sought to shut Jesus down by every means possible. They challenged his authority, made every effort to trap him, sought to turn the people against him, and plotted to arrest him.

JESUS FORCES THE OPPOSITION'S HAND

Jesus' actions following the donkey ride were not only intended to make bold his claim to be Messiah, but they also were meant to galvanize the opposition against him. Normally the Pharisees and Sadducees were enemies, but Jesus offended both groups so severely and publicly that they were united in their hatred of him. How did Jesus offend? By speaking the truth, plainly and directly. He bested them in the traps they set for him and demonstrated his moral superiority.

He offended them by telling parables that revealed that (1) he knew they wanted to kill him; (2) he considered prostitutes ahead of them in line for the kingdom; and (3) the kingdom would be taken away from them (21:28-22:14). He followed all of this up with a blistering attack that exposed the Jewish leaders as self-righteous hypocrites who negated the word of God and were just like their fathers who killed the prophets. He predicted that they would go to hell and their house would be left desolate (Matt 23).

Within a few days in Jerusalem, then, Jesus proclaimed his identity as God's Messiah and ensured that the nation's leaders would put him to death not because they didn't know who he was but because they did.

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

Jesus also took advantage of some private time to prepare his disciples. The Olivet Discourse is Jesus' explanation of the end of the age and his coming (Matt 24-25). He explained the signs that would precede his return:

- Birth pains would begin: wars, famines, earthquakes (24:4-8).
- Many would leave the faith and believers would be persecuted (24:9-14).
- The temple would be defiled and believers would flee (24:15-29).
- Jesus' return would be sudden and powerful (24:30-35).

Jesus told the disciples that the timing of his return is known only to the Father and therefore they should always be ready. Jesus compared his return to the instantaneous coming of the flood (24:36-41), the unexpected coming of a thief (24:42-44), the surprise coming of a master (24:45-51), and the sudden coming of a bridegroom (25:1-13). He spoke about the interim period before he would return to establish the kingdom, emphasizing the need for them to be faithful in his absence (25:14-30). Then he described the judgment that would precede the establishment of the kingdom (25:31-46).

In the context of Jesus' ministry, the main point of this lengthy teaching is that though Jesus would be rejected, the OT prophecies would be fulfilled. What's new is that the Messiah would come and go away before he established his kingdom. The kingdom that was near is revealed to be yet future because of Israel's rejection.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Did Jesus say that the kingdom would be taken from the Jews and given to the Church?

Knowing that the Jewish leaders would kill him, Jesus gives three parables pronouncing judgment on them. Some misinterpretations are made because foreign ideas (outside of the context of Jesus'