

Matthew 21:1-11 The Procession into Jerusalem

Today we begin Matthew chapter 21 in our Gospel of Matthew series. Our first section is the first 11 verses. You'll notice that the title of these eleven verses is The Procession into Jerusalem.

It should be noted before we really get into the text itself that this isn't just a riding of a donkey that we celebrate on Palm Sunday; but this is actually the beginning of Passover week. It is what we call Palm Sunday, but it is the beginning of several days in which a few million people came to Jerusalem and crowded Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover. One of three feasts that the Jews were mandated that they are to keep. They are thronging into Jerusalem and this is the Passover week. So, the procession is part of a week of events, not just a one-time event.

This is known as our Palm Sunday, when we celebrate Palm Sunday. And most of your Bibles - if you have your Bibles out or have them at home - the publishers of the Bibles usually put at the top of the chapter that this is "The Triumphant Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem." They have put this label on it, but this not the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. His triumphant entry will be at His second coming. According to Revelation chapter 19, at Christ's second coming He will descend in the clouds and be riding on a white horse and will enter into Jerusalem and we will enter in with Him on white horses. He will then come into Jerusalem and He will then set up His Kingdom upon the earth for a thousand years. Satan will be bound for that thousand years and sin will not be known during that time.

This is a donkey ride, not a white horse ride. A *beast of burden*. Donkeys are used to carry the loads and the burdens of the people. He came riding on a donkey in order to be the Passover Lamb to die for the sins of the world. The people thought that He was coming in order to set up His Kingdom. They thought, "This is it! This is the second coming," which they thought was the first coming. They did not know there was a first coming and a second coming. They thought this was the coming of Messiah. As we will see in a moment, they will recognize Him and acknowledge Him as the Messiah. But in coming into Jerusalem He is riding on a donkey. They thought He was coming in to set up His Kingdom in Jerusalem and to set them free from the Roman government; so they hailed Him as the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. But in reality, this is not the triumphant entry, this is the entry of Jesus to lay down His life for the sins of the world on the cross.

Verse 1:

And when they drew near into Jerusalem and came into Bethphage, toward the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples.

Now the Mount of Olives is a small hill or mountain range to the east of Jerusalem. There are small villages on this mountain range. There is Bethphage that we just read about here in the text. There is Bethany, there is Bethsaida; all associated with the Mount of Olives. And people passing through this small hill or mountain range then descend down into Jerusalem. The mountain range is about 250 feet above the city of Jerusalem.

The word *Bethphage* means *house of unripe figs*. By the way *Bethany* means *the house of unripe dates*. So the figs and the dates and the olives were all up on the Mount of Olives and the villages up there were full of the workers for these products.

So as He came to the Mount of Olives, He is now stopped as the city of Jerusalem is now in view and He sent two disciples. We do not know who these two disciples were, but He stops and sends two disciples.

Verse 2:

Saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you (that's Bethphage) and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt that is with her. After having loosed them, lead them to Me."

Verse 3:

"And if anyone should say anything to you, you will say that, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them" as the result.

Now, either the people in Bethphage who owned the donkeys had this planned with Jesus ahead of time - where Jesus would send them up ahead and get the donkeys ready so that when He sent the disciples they would be ready to be delivered as the Lord directed, or the Lord is just in charge, His Word is making things happen. The owners don't know what the donkeys are going to be used for except that the two disciples said, "The Lord has need of them," and so the owners let them go, let the two donkeys go. Notice that there are two of them; one is the mother donkey and the other is the colt, the foal, the beast of burden. Jesus would ride on the colt. Luke 19:30 says, "Upon which no one had ever ridden before."

Jesus said at the end of verse 3, "And immediately he will send them." I've cautioned before, that if you think it is the Word of the Lord making people release things because He needs of them, be very careful. You don't want to go down to the mall and tell somebody, "Give me your car, the Lord has need of it," because you might find out that really is not the Lord's will for your life.

Verses 4 and 5 is The Commentary by Matthew about this whole incident.

Verse 4:

Now this whole thing had happened in order that it might be fulfilled that which has been spoken through the prophet.

That would be Zechariah and Isaiah.

Verse 5:

"Speak to the daughter of Zion saying,

That is the first quote, that is from Isaiah 62:11.

'Behold, your King is coming to you lowly and mounted upon a donkey, and a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

This is now the quote about the donkey, Zechariah 9:9.

Jesus was fulfilling scripture. It was prophesied ahead of time that their King would come riding on the foal of a donkey and He would ride into Jerusalem as their King. So the people, some of the people have this in mind. We will see by the time that we are through with this section not all of the people understood this about Jesus.

Verses 6 through 9, The Coming of the Messiah. Jesus is now riding into Jerusalem.

Verse 6:

And the disciples, having gone and having done according as Jesus commanded them,

Verse 7:

they led the donkey and the colt. And they put their clothes upon the donkey, and set Him upon them. That is upon the clothes that are draped upon the donkey.

So they delivered the donkey there at the Mount of Olives. They spread their clothes upon the back of the colt, and they put Jesus upon the colt so that He could ride into Jerusalem.

Now there is a parallel account in the gospel of Luke that shares with us some very important insights into this act of putting the clothes on the donkey so that Jesus could sit on the donkey - in Luke chapter 19 he covers this same episode.

In Luke 19:35 he covers this incident where they put their clothes upon the donkey and then set Jesus upon the clothes except Luke uses a more specific word than Matthew does. Matthew just says, "They put their clothes on the donkey." Luke uses a different Greek word **ἐπιρίψαντες** (epiripsantes). Matthew uses **ἐπιτίθημι** (epitithēmi) but Luke uses **ἐπιρίψαντες** (epiripsantes), which means *to cast or throw* the clothes upon the back of the donkey and by doing so, let him go as you are putting the clothes on the donkey.

This is very, very important because Peter used the same word that Luke used, **ἐπιρίψαντες** (epiripsantes), back in I Peter 5:7-8. The only two places where that word is found in the New Testament, *to cast or throw* the clothes on the back of the donkey.

This is very important because in I Peter chapter 5 Peter says:

Be humbled under the mighty hand of God, by casting (there is your word) all your care upon Him; for He is concerned for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

Now in verse 7, when he says, "Casting all your care upon Him," the word *care* is the word **μέριμνα** (merimna). We have studied that many times. In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus said, "Do not be anxious," or, "do not care about your life, what you shall put on, what you shall eat." Anxiety - **μέριμνα** (merimna) - has to do with *occupation of the attention of the mind*. Not occupying the mind but occupying the attention of the mind. Jesus said, "Don't let your mind be occupied with the horizontal necessities of this life."

We have a series that has been out for several years entitled Satan's Only Weapon. Do you realize that once you are saved, Satan's only weapon against a believer is to occupy the attention of the mind? To cause things to happen - either personally, physically, or in circumstances around us, or with friends, but things happening - that occupy our mind. That is Satan's only weapon. He can't take my soul, Christ has my soul, Christ has come to live within. Christ has my soul but Satan can try to occupy my mind and get me all worried and anxious about things to take my focus off of the Lord.

Last time when we met a couple of weeks ago, we shared with you about the birth of Christ. The announcement was that peace would come. Peace being a oneness with Christ. Satan wants to take the attention and the oneness that one has with Christ away. We can be saved but have the attention of our mind occupied with things.

So here Peter, in I Peter 5:7, says, "Casting all of your cares - all of your anxieties, all of your worries, all of your **μέριμνα** (merimna) - upon Him because He is concerned for you because your adversary the devil is walking around looking for whom he may devour." By *devour* it is to *devour mentally* - occupying the attention of the mind.

I should also make note - gives me time to slip in an advertisement, which we usually don't do - starting tomorrow, Lord willing, the website will now carry, every week, a Greek word study called Greek Concepts and the first series is on **μέριμνα** (merimna). There are already 150 of them prepared and so each week there will be a new word study up there on the home page of BTE. You can print it out, make a notebook of it, or read it, and just study about it. But these are important concepts to understand just like we are talking about this morning.

The concept of **μέριμνα** (merimna) is the occupation of the attention of the mind. Satan is trying to get us occupied but Peter says, "Casting all your care upon Him." **ἐπιρίψαντες** (epiripsantes). Now here is the importance of Luke's account in using this word to describe putting the clothes on Jesus. When Peter uses it, and I actually have a prop this morning, I actually have a sheet here. If this keyboard represented the colt upon which the clothes were put, and the sheet were to represent the clothes put upon it, what the text is saying is put your cares - everything that has got your mind all worked up, everything that has your mind occupied and has your attention taken away from Christ - cast it upon Christ. Now the importance to understand about this word is that by casting it on Christ it doesn't mean you hold on to it while you drape it over the Lord. Do you know how many times I have said, or someone else has said to me, "Oh, I'm just so worried and I'm just so caught up in things and I've prayed about it." Well, praying about it doesn't help. You actually have to - through prayer you actually have to give it to Him. You have to cast all of your care upon Him. Let go.

And you say, "How many times do I have to pray?" How many times before you let go? Sometimes you only have to pray once: "Well, I gave it to the Lord, so I am not even going to get involved. I'm not going to worry about it anymore." Then there's other times when people worry about things and get occupied with things multiple times per hour. It is time not to pray about it. Prayer is not the answer. It is praying by giving - *casting* - all of our care, our anxiety, our worry upon Him and leaving it there. Not praying about it and then holding on to it. "I've

prayed about it, but I've still got it. I haven't let go." It is literally letting go. It is literally understanding that Satan causes things to happen that would cause us to be occupied with them to take our attention away from Christ and not experience His peace.

So, in the parallel account in Luke to our account here - that is Luke 19:35 - he uses a different Greek word to talk about casting the clothes upon the donkey. And he used it specifically because it has a more detailed specific meaning than Matthew's does: **ἐπιτίθημι** (epitithēmi) *to place* the clothes on the donkey. Peter picks up on Luke's word and shares it with the people and says, "Now when Luke was talking about putting the clothes on the donkey, this is what is meant by how you are supposed to put your care on the Lord. Give it to Him."

Verse 8:

And the very great crowd...

And remember that there are throngs of people, thousands of people at a time are thronging into Jerusalem. And there are a few million people in Jerusalem that have already gathered there.

And the very great crowd spread their own garments in the road.

This is a traditional thing that people would do for dignitaries as they would come in. They would take their clothes, their outer garments, and spread them in the road so that Jesus or any dignitary would ride in. Here it is Jesus the King.

They spread their own garments in the road. And others were cutting branches from the trees (that is where we get our Palm Sunday from) **and were spreading them in the road.**

Again, something that they did for dignitaries as they came into the city.

Verse 9:

And the crowds, the ones going before and the ones following after, were calling out and saying...

I have to stop here before we study what it is they called out and said. The pilgrims, the Jewish pilgrims, would sing what are called the Hallel Psalms on the way to Jerusalem on the Passover. They would sing them as they are traveling. Some would chant them. But they would sing the Hallel Psalms and so that is what is happening here. The ones behind Jesus and the crowds ahead of Jesus were singing the Hallel Psalms. Psalms 113 through 118 are the Hallel Psalms.

What is interesting is as they were singing - and this is how they did it, as they were coming into the city, the people would line the city streets as the pilgrims would be coming through and as the pilgrims would sing and chant one verse out of one of the Psalms, the people on the sides would chant and sing the next verse in the Psalm. And so there was a back and forth, give and take in the singing of the Hallel Psalms once they got into the gate of the city. But verse 9 says they were at Psalm 118:26 - that is the Psalm that they were singing at the gate:

**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the One coming in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!**

That is what the crowds were chanting and singing about Jesus.

Hosanna is made up of two Hebrew words - *hoshea* which means *save*, and the word *na* which means *now*. So *Hosanna* is made up of *hoshea* and *na*, which means *save now*.

And then Son of David is the Messianic title. You call someone who is the messiah the Son of David. Hosanna to the Son of David. What they are saying is, "Save now, Messiah."

Blessed is the One coming in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

It's quite a tribute to make, quite a verse to be at and a song to sing when Jesus is riding through the gate. And the people in front and the people behind are all singing and chanting this very same thing and they are attributing it to Jesus as He is coming in.

Verses 10 and 11 says this all created confusion.

Verse 10:

And when He entered into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying...

The word *moved* is the Greek word **σεισμός** (seismos) where we get our term *seismology*, the study of earthquakes. **σεισμός** (seismos) means *the study of the moving of the earth*. Well, the city was moved. You are talking about a few million people and here is this uproar at the city gate singing, "Hosanna!" and singing the Messiah Psalm to this man coming in on a donkey. The whole city was moved. Everybody stopped what they were doing and were congregating at the gate. Again, we are talking a few million people, and the majority of the people were saying:

..."Who is this?"

Verse 11:

And the crowds were saying, "This is Jesus, the Prophet, the One from Nazareth of Galilee."

They didn't know who He was. The ones at the gate did. The pilgrims traveling with Him knew but the few million who were already inside the city, they didn't know who He was. They said, "What's all the commotion? Who is this guy?" and somebody had to explain it to them.

Now you should know, because there is a tradition that is passed around that says that the same crowd that shouted, "Hosanna!" to Him as the Messiah when He came into the gates is the same crowd that yelled, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" at the end of the week. They are not the same people. The majority in the city had no idea who He was when He came in; only those people who were directly involved with Jesus at the main gate. But by the end of the week, they are yelling, "Crucify Him," and crucify Him.

It is true that some of the people were disappointed. They thought He was riding into Jerusalem to free them from the Roman government, but only to find out that He was crucified on a cross. They were confused, did not understand, angry, upset. Of course later, to find out

through the preaching of the gospel what exactly the cross means and the fact that there will be a time when Jesus comes a second time on a white horse, not a donkey; and He will ride into Jerusalem and He will set up His Kingdom and He will free them from the Roman yoke and free the world from Satan for a thousand years, while He sets up His kingdom here on the earth.

But I want you to remember that one thing about this entrance into Jerusalem if anything. Not just the information about Him riding into Jerusalem, but the fact of the putting of the clothes over the donkey picked up by Luke, who passed it on to Peter. Where Peter says, "Be humbled by casting all of your care - all the things that you are occupied with, all of the things that have you burdened down. Cast all of your burdens upon Jesus and let it go." *Casting upon Him* means *letting go*; not holding on while you are riding next to Him but letting go. That is what frees us. That is what brings us to be at peace with Christ.

Let's close with prayer.