CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 21 — The King Enters Jerusalem, Authority Challenged, and Parables of Judgment

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 20 ended outside Jericho, with two blind men receiving their sight and following Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 21 begins as Jesus arrives at Jerusalem.

This is the beginning of the last week of His life on earth.

Christians often call this week **Holy Week.**

Jesus enters the city riding on a donkey.

Crowds spread their cloaks and branches on the road.

They shout:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

It is a royal welcome.

The King has come to His city.

But Jesus does not go to a palace.

He goes to the temple.

And what He finds there makes Him angry.

The house of prayer has become a marketplace.

He overturns the tables and drives out the buyers and sellers.

Then the blind and the lame come to Him, and He heals them.

Children shout His praises.

But the religious leaders are angry.

The next morning, Jesus curses a fig tree that has leaves but no fruit.

It withers immediately.

It is a picture of a religion that looks good on the outside but produces no fruit.

Then the religious leaders challenge His authority.

“Who gave You this authority?”

Jesus answers with a question about John the Baptist that they cannot answer.

Then He tells two parables.

In the first, two sons are asked to work in their father's vineyard.

One says no but later goes.

The other says yes but never goes.

In the second, tenant farmers beat and kill the owner's servants, and finally they kill his son.

The religious leaders realize Jesus is talking about them.

Matthew 21 therefore shows two great truths:

Jesus is the King who comes humbly and has all authority.

And:

Those who reject Him, no matter how religious they appear, will face judgment, while God's kingdom will be given to those who produce its fruit.

The central truth of Matthew 21 is:

Jesus enters Jerusalem as the humble King with divine authority, calling for true worship and real fruit, and warning that those who reject God's Son will lose the kingdom He offers.

I. APPROACHING JERUSALEM

Matthew 21:1 — Bethphage on the Mount of Olives

“As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,”

Jesus and His disciples were coming near **Jerusalem.**

They came to **Bethphage**, a small village **on the Mount of Olives.**

The Mount of Olives is a hill just east of Jerusalem.

From its top, a person can look across the valley and see the whole city and the temple.

The prophet Zechariah said that one day the Lord would stand on the Mount of Olives.

Jesus **sent two disciples** ahead to prepare for His entry into the city.

Cross References

Mark 11:1

> As they came near Jerusalem, to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His followers.

Luke 19:29

> As Jesus came near Bethphage and Bethany, at the hill called the Mount of Olives, He sent out two of His followers.

Zechariah 14:4

> On that day He will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus planned every detail of His final week.

II. A DONKEY AND HER COLT

Matthew 21:2 — Untie Them

“saying, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt beside her. Untie them and bring them to Me.’”

Jesus gave clear instructions.

Go to the village.

You will find a donkey tied there, with her colt.

Untie them and bring them to Me.

Jesus knew exactly what they would find.

Mark and Luke focus on the colt, which no one had ever ridden.

Matthew mentions the mother donkey too.

A young colt would be calmer with its mother beside it.

In Genesis, Jacob had prophesied that the King from Judah would tie his donkey's colt to a vine.

Cross References

Genesis 49:11

> He ties his donkey to a grapevine and his young donkey to the best branch.

Mark 11:2

> Go to the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will quickly find a colt tied, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here to Me.

Luke 19:30

> Go to the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here to Me.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus knows what is ahead before we get there.

III. THE LORD NEEDS THEM

Matthew 21:3 — He Will Send Them Right Away

“If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

Jesus prepared them for questions.

If anyone asks, tell him that the Lord needs them.

The owner would **send them right away.**

Perhaps the owner was a follower of Jesus.

Or perhaps God moved his heart.

Either way, the Lord's need was enough.

Cross References

Mark 11:3

> If anyone asks you why you are doing this, tell him its Master needs the colt, and he will send it at once.

Luke 19:31

> If anyone asks you why you are untying it, say that the Master needs it.

Luke 19:34

The followers answered, “The Master needs it.”

Spiritual Principle

When the Lord needs what we have, we should give it gladly.

Application

The Lord may need your:

- Time.
- Home.
- Money.
- Talents.
- Possessions.
- Willingness.

IV. TO FULFILL WHAT WAS SPOKEN

Matthew 21:4 — The Prophet

“This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:”

Matthew explains why Jesus did this.

To fulfill what was spoken by the prophet.

Jesus was not riding a donkey by chance.

He was deliberately fulfilling prophecy.

He was announcing that He was the promised King.

Cross References

Matthew 1:22

> All this happened to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet.

John 12:14

> Jesus found a colt and sat on it. This was as the Scripture says.

Luke 24:44

> Everything written about Me must happen — everything in the law of Moses, the books of the prophets, and the Psalms.

Spiritual Principle

Every detail of Jesus' life fulfilled God's Word.

V. YOUR KING COMES TO YOU

Matthew 21:5 — Gentle and Riding on a Donkey

“‘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.”’”

Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9.

The daughter of Zion means the people of Jerusalem.

See, your King comes to you.

This was a royal announcement.

Gentle and riding on a donkey.

Kings going to war rode horses.

Kings coming in peace rode donkeys.

King Solomon rode a donkey at his coronation.

Jesus did not come as a warrior on a war horse.

He came as a gentle King of peace.

He came to save, not to conquer by force.

Cross References

Zechariah 9:9

> Rejoice, people of Jerusalem! Shout for joy! Your King is coming to you. He does what is right, and He saves. He is gentle and riding on a donkey, on the colt of a donkey.

Isaiah 62:11

> Tell the people of Jerusalem, “Look, your Savior is coming!”

John 12:15

> Don't be afraid, people of Jerusalem! Your King is coming, sitting on the colt of a donkey.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is a King who comes in humility and peace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The King of kings chose a donkey, not a war horse, because He came to make peace, not war.

VI. THE DISCIPLES OBEYED

Matthew 21:6 — As Jesus Instructed

“The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.”

The disciples went.

They did as Jesus had instructed them.

They did not argue.

They did not ask questions.

They obeyed.

And everything happened just as Jesus said.

Cross References

Mark 11:6

> The followers answered the way Jesus told them to answer, and the people let them take the colt.

Luke 19:32

> The two followers went into town and found the colt just as Jesus had told them.

Matthew 26:19

> The followers did what Jesus told them to do, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience to Jesus' word always finds His word true.

VII. CLOAKS ON THE DONKEYS

Matthew 21:7 — Jesus Sat on Them

“They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.”

The disciples **brought the donkey and the colt.**

They **placed their cloaks on them.**

This made a saddle for Jesus.

And Jesus sat on them — that is, on the cloaks placed on the colt.

In the Old Testament, when Jehu was declared king, people spread their cloaks under him.

This was a sign of honor for a king.

Cross References

2 Kings 9:13

> Then the officers quickly took off their coats and put them on the steps in front of Jehu. They blew the trumpet and shouted, “Jehu is king!”

Mark 11:7

> They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it, and Jesus sat on it.

Luke 19:35

> They brought it to Jesus, threw their coats on the colt's back, and put Jesus on it.

Spiritual Principle

Honoring Jesus as King begins with giving Him what we have.

VIII. CLOAKS AND BRANCHES

Matthew 21:8 — On the Road

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”

A very large crowd gathered.

It was Passover season.

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were coming to Jerusalem.

They **spread their cloaks on the road.**

This was like rolling out a red carpet for a king.

Others cut branches from the trees.

John tells us these were **palm branches.**

That is why this day is called **Palm Sunday.**

Palm branches were a symbol of victory and celebration.

Cross References

John 12:13

> They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Jesus, shouting, “Praise God! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the King of Israel!”

Leviticus 23:40

> On the first day pick good fruit from the fruit trees, and take branches from palm trees... Celebrate before the LORD your God for seven days.

Mark 11:8

> Many people spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches in the fields and spread them on the road.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is worthy of our greatest honor.

IX. HOSANNA!

Matthew 21:9 — Blessed Is He Who Comes

“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!’”

The crowds shouted with joy.

“Hosanna!”

Hosanna is a Hebrew word that means **“Save us now!”**

Over time, it became a shout of praise.

“To the Son of David!”

They were calling Jesus the Messiah, the promised King from David's family.

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

This comes from Psalm 118, a psalm sung by pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for the feasts.

“Hosanna in the highest!”

Let all heaven praise Him.

Within a week, some voices in Jerusalem would be shouting, **“Crucify Him!”**

Cross References

Psalm 118:25

> Please, LORD, save us! Please, LORD, give us success!

Psalm 118:26

> God bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless all of you from the Temple of the LORD.

Mark 11:9

> The people walking ahead of Jesus and behind Him were shouting, “Praise God! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the King who saves.

Spiritual Warning

Praise that is shallow can quickly turn into rejection.

X. WHO IS THIS?

Matthew 21:10 — The Whole City Was Stirred

“When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’”

The whole city was stirred.

The word **stirred** means **shaken**, like an earthquake.

Jerusalem was in an uproar.

They asked:

“Who is this?”

More than thirty years earlier, when wise men came asking about the newborn King, **all Jerusalem** was disturbed.

Now the King had come, and the city was shaken again.

Cross References

Matthew 2:3

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, as were all the people in Jerusalem.

Luke 19:37

As Jesus was coming close to Jerusalem, on the way down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of followers began joyfully shouting praise to God for all the miracles they had seen.

John 12:19

So the Pharisees said to each other, “You can see that nothing is going right for us. Look! The whole world is following Him.”

Spiritual Principle

When Jesus comes, people must answer the question, “Who is this?”

XI. THE PROPHET FROM NAZARETH

Matthew 21:11 — The Crowd's Answer

“The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’”

The crowds answered.

“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

This answer was true.

But it was not the whole truth.

Jesus was a prophet.

But He was much more.

He was the Messiah.

He was the Son of God.

The crowds saw part of who He was.

Cross References

John 1:45

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses wrote about in the law... He is Jesus of Nazareth.”

John 6:14

When the people saw this miracle that Jesus did, they said, “He must truly be the Prophet who is coming into the world.”

Luke 7:16

> All the people were filled with fear and began praising God. They said, “A great prophet has come to us!”

Spiritual Principle

Seeing part of who Jesus is is not the same as seeing all of who He is.

XII. JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21:12 — Overturning the Tables

“Jesus entered the temple 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.”

Jesus went straight to **the temple.**

The temple had a large outer area called the **Court of the Gentiles.**

This was the only place where non-Jews could come to pray.

But it had become a noisy marketplace.

People sold animals for sacrifices.

Money changers exchanged foreign coins for temple coins, often charging high fees.

Those selling doves sold the sacrifices that poor people used.

Jesus **drove out all who were buying and selling.**

He overturned the tables.

This was holy anger.

They had turned a place of prayer into a place of profit.

And they were cheating the poor and keeping the Gentiles from worship.

Cross References

John 2:15

> Jesus made a whip out of cords and forced all of them, both the sheep and cattle, to leave the Temple. He turned over the tables and scattered the money of those who were exchanging it.

Mark 11:15

> When Jesus returned to Jerusalem, He went into the Temple and began to throw out those who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of those who were exchanging money.

Malachi 3:1

> Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His Temple.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is zealous for the purity of worship.

Key Truth

The gentle King on the donkey is also the holy King who cleans His house.

XIII. A HOUSE OF PRAYER

Matthew 21:13 — A Den of Thieves

“He said to them, ‘It is written: “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you are making it a den of thieves.’”

Jesus explained His actions from Scripture.

“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”

This comes from Isaiah 56.

Mark adds the rest of the verse: **“for all nations.”**

The temple was meant to be a place where everyone could come to pray.

“But you are making it a den of thieves.”

This comes from Jeremiah 7.

A **den** is a hideout.

Thieves go to a den to hide after they steal.

The religious leaders were using the temple to cover up their greed and sin.

Cross References

Isaiah 56:7

> I will make them happy in My house of prayer... because My Temple will be called a house of prayer for people from all nations.

Jeremiah 7:11

> This Temple where I have chosen to be worshiped has become a hiding place for robbers.

Mark 11:17

> Then He taught the people, saying, “It is written in the Scriptures, ‘My Temple will be called a house for prayer for people from all nations.’ But you are changing God's house into a hiding place for thieves.”

Spiritual Principle

God's house is for prayer, not for profit.

Application

Ways worship can become corrupted today:

- Treating church as a business.
- Seeking money or fame through ministry.
- Making it hard for outsiders to come.
- Using religion to cover up sin.
- Forgetting that prayer is central.

XIV. THE BLIND AND THE LAME

Matthew 21:14 — He Healed Them

“The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them.”

After Jesus cleared out the sellers, **the blind and the lame came to Him.**

In David's day, the blind and the lame were kept out of the palace.

Some traditions also limited them in the temple.

But Jesus welcomed them.

And He healed them.

Jesus drove out those who were using the temple for profit.

And He welcomed those who needed mercy.

This is what the temple was supposed to be.

Cross References

2 Samuel 5:8

That is why people say, “The blind and the crippled cannot enter the palace.”

Matthew 11:5

The blind can see, the crippled can walk, people with skin diseases are healed, the deaf can hear.

Luke 14:13

Instead, when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus makes room for the broken in God's house.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus drove out the greedy and welcomed the needy.

XV. CHILDREN SHOUTING HOSANNA

Matthew 21:15 — The Leaders Were Indignant

“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.”

The **chief priests and the teachers of the law** saw two things.

The wonderful things He did.

The blind seeing.

The lame walking.

And the children shouting in the temple courts.

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

The children had picked up the praise of the crowds.

They were calling Jesus the Messiah.

How did the religious leaders respond?

They were indignant.

They were angry.

They saw miracles and heard worship, and it made them furious.

Cross References

Mark 11:18

> The leading priests and the teachers of the law heard all this and began trying to find a way to kill Jesus.

Luke 19:47

> Jesus taught in the Temple every day. The leading priests, the experts on the law, and some of the leaders of the people wanted to kill Him.

Psalm 8:2

> You have taught children and babies to sing praises to You because of Your enemies.

Spiritual Warning

A hardened heart is angered by what should bring joy.

XVI. FROM THE LIPS OF CHILDREN

Matthew 21:16 — Perfected Praise

“They asked Him, ‘Do You hear what these children are saying?’ ‘Yes,’ replied Jesus, ‘have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants You, Lord, have called forth praise”?’”

The leaders asked:

“Do You hear what these children are saying?”

They expected Jesus to stop them.

Instead, Jesus said:

“Yes.”

Then He quoted Psalm 8.

“From the lips of children and infants You, Lord, have called forth praise.”

In Psalm 8, this praise is given to **God.**

Jesus accepted it for Himself.

This was another claim to be God.

The experts in the law could not see what the children saw.

Cross References

Psalm 8:2

> You have taught children and babies to sing praises to You because of Your enemies.

Mark 11:18

> The leading priests and the teachers of the law heard all this and began trying to find a way to kill Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:27

> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

Spiritual Principle

God often receives the purest praise from the humblest hearts.

XVII. TO BETHANY

Matthew 21:17 — He Spent the Night

“And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where He spent the night.”

Jesus **left them.**

He did not stay to argue.

He went out of the city to Bethany.

Bethany was a small village about two miles from Jerusalem.

It was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Jesus likely stayed with His friends there each night during this final week.

Cross References

Mark 11:11

> Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After He had looked at everything, since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve apostles.

Luke 21:37

> During the day, Jesus taught the people in the Temple, and at night He went out of the city and stayed on the Mount of Olives.

John 11:1

A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in the town of Bethany, where Mary and her sister Martha lived.

Spiritual Principle

Even Jesus found rest in the homes of friends.

XVIII. HE WAS HUNGRY

Matthew 21:18 — Early in the Morning

“Early in the morning, as Jesus was on His way back to the city, He was hungry.”

The next morning, Jesus was walking back to Jerusalem.

He was hungry.

This small detail reminds us that Jesus was fully human.

He got tired.

He got thirsty.

He got hungry.

Cross References

Mark 11:12

The next day as Jesus was leaving Bethany, He became hungry.

Matthew 4:2

Jesus ate nothing for forty days and nights. After this, He was very hungry.

John 4:6

Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from His long trip, so He sat down beside the well.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus understands our human needs because He experienced them.

XIX. NOTHING BUT LEAVES

Matthew 21:19 — May You Never Bear Fruit Again

“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.”

Jesus saw **a fig tree by the road.**

It was full of **leaves.**

Fig trees often produced small early figs at the same time as their leaves.

A tree full of leaves seemed to promise fruit.

But Jesus **found nothing on it except leaves.**

It looked fruitful.

But it was not.

Jesus said, **“May you never bear fruit again!”**

Immediately the tree withered.

This was not an act of temper.

It was an acted-out parable.

The fig tree was a picture of Israel's religious leaders.

They had all the outward signs of religion.

The temple.

The sacrifices.

The rituals.

But they had no real fruit of faith and obedience.

And judgment was coming.

Cross References

Jeremiah 8:13

> “I will take away their harvest,” says the LORD. “There will be no grapes on the vine and no figs on the fig tree. Even the leaves will dry up.”

Luke 13:6

> A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came looking for some fruit on the tree, but he found none.

Mark 11:14

> So Jesus said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And Jesus' followers heard Him say this.

Spiritual Warning

Leaves without fruit is religion without reality.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is not looking for leaves of religious show; He is looking for the fruit of a changed life.

XX. HOW QUICKLY IT WITHERED

Matthew 21:20 — The Disciples Were Amazed

“When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. ‘How quickly the fig tree withered!’ they said.”

The disciples **were amazed.**

“How quickly the fig tree withered!”

Jesus' word had immediate power.

What He said happened at once.

Cross References

Mark 11:20

> The next morning as Jesus was passing by with His followers, they saw the fig tree dry and dead, even to the roots.

Isaiah 40:7

> The grass dies and the flowers fall when the breath of the LORD blows on them.

Psalm 90:6

> In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it dries up and dies.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' word has power over all creation.

XXI. FAITH THAT MOVES MOUNTAINS

Matthew 21:21 — If You Do Not Doubt

“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 you can also say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done.’”

Jesus used the moment to teach about faith.

If you have faith and do not doubt.

Faith that trusts God completely.

You can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done.

This mountain may have been the Mount of Olives, which they were walking on.

Or it may have been the temple mount.

Moving a mountain was a picture of doing something that seemed impossible.

Faith in God can overcome what seems impossible.

Cross References

Mark 11:23

> I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, “Go, fall into the sea.” And if you have no doubts in your mind and believe that what you say will happen, God will do it for you.

Matthew 17:20

> I tell you the truth, if your faith is as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move.

1 Corinthians 13:2

> I may have so much faith that I can move mountains. But even with all these things, if I don't have love, then I am nothing.

Spiritual Principle

Faith in God can face the impossible.

XXII. WHATEVER YOU ASK IN PRAYER

Matthew 21:22 — If You Believe

“If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

Jesus gave a promise about prayer.

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

This is not a blank check to get anything we want.

Other Scriptures teach that we must ask according to God's will and in Jesus' name.

But this promise teaches that believing prayer is powerful.

God answers the prayers of those who trust Him.

Cross References

Mark 11:24

> So I tell you to believe that you have received the things you ask for in prayer, and God will give them to you.

John 14:13

> And if you ask for anything in My name, I will do it for you so that the Father's glory will be shown through the Son.

1 John 5:14

> This is the confidence we have when we come to God: if we ask for anything that agrees with what He wants, He hears us.

Spiritual Principle

Believing prayer, in line with God's will, is powerful.

XXIII. BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

Matthew 21:23 — Who Gave You This Authority?

“Jesus entered the temple courts, and while He was teaching, the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him. ‘By what authority are You doing these things?’ they asked. ‘And who gave You this authority?’”

Jesus went back to **the temple courts.**

He was **teaching.**

The chief priests and elders of the people came to Him.

These were the official leaders of Israel.

They asked two questions.

“By what authority are You doing these things?”

“And who gave You this authority?”

These things included riding into the city as King, clearing the temple, healing, and teaching.

The leaders believed they were in charge of the temple.

Jesus had no official position.

They wanted to know who gave Him the right.

Cross References

Mark 11:28

> They said to Him, “What authority do You have to do these things? Who gave You this authority?”

Luke 20:2

> They said, “Tell us what authority You have to do these things. Who gave You this authority?”

John 2:18

> Some of His own people said to Jesus, “Show us a miracle to prove You have the right to do these things.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' authority comes from God, not from human institutions.

XXIV. ONE QUESTION

Matthew 21:24 — If You Answer Me

“Jesus replied, ‘I will also ask you one question. If you answer Me, I will tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

Jesus answered with a question.

This was a common way of teaching among rabbis.

“I will also ask you one question.”

“If you answer Me, I will tell you.”

Jesus was not avoiding the question.

His question would show whether they were honestly seeking truth.

Cross References

Mark 11:29

> Jesus answered, “I will ask you one question. If you answer Me, I will tell you what authority I have to do these things.”

Luke 20:3

> Jesus answered, “I will also ask you a question. Tell Me.”

Job 38:3

> Be strong like a man! I will ask you questions, and you must answer Me.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus often answers our questions by asking us to examine our own hearts.

XXV. JOHN'S BAPTISM

Matthew 21:25 — From Heaven or from Men?

“John's baptism—where did it come from? From heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among themselves and said, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will ask, “Then why didn't you believe him?”’

Jesus asked:

“John's baptism—where did it come from?”

“From heaven, or from men?”

In other words, was John sent by God or not?

This was not changing the subject.

John had pointed to Jesus as the Messiah.

If John was from God, then Jesus' authority came from God too.

The leaders **discussed it among themselves.**

They saw the problem.

If we say, “From heaven,” He will ask, “Then why didn't you believe him?”

They had rejected John.

They did not want to admit they were wrong.

Cross References

Mark 11:30

> Tell Me: When John baptized people, was that authority from God or just from other people?

Luke 20:4

> When John baptized people, was that authority from God or just from other people?

Luke 7:30

> But the Pharisees and experts on the law refused to accept God's plan for themselves. They did not let John baptize them.

Spiritual Principle

Rejecting God's messenger means rejecting God's message.

XXVI. AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE

Matthew 21:26 — They All Hold That John Was a Prophet

“But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

They saw the other problem too.

If we say, “From men,” we are afraid of the people.

The crowds believed John was a true prophet.

If the leaders said John was not from God, the people might turn against them.

Notice what they did not ask.

They did not ask, **“What is true?”**

They only asked, **“What is safe?”**

Cross References

Mark 11:32

> But if we say, “It was from other people,” the crowd will be against us.

Luke 20:6

> But if we say, “It was from people,” all the people will stone us to death, because they believe John was a prophet.

Matthew 14:5

> Herod wanted to kill him, but he was afraid of the people, because they believed John was a prophet.

Spiritual Warning

When we care more about what is safe than what is true, we lose the truth.

XXVII. “WE DON'T KNOW”

Matthew 21:27 — Neither Will I Tell You

“So they answered Jesus, ‘We don't know.’ Then He said, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

They gave a cowardly answer.

“We don't know.”

They did know.

They just would not say.

These were the religious leaders of Israel.

It was their job to judge whether a prophet was from God.

And they claimed they could not tell.

So Jesus said:

“Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

They were not seeking truth.

So Jesus would not give them more.

But then He told them parables that made the answer clear.

Cross References

Mark 11:33

> So they answered Jesus, “We don't know.” Jesus said to them, “Then I won't tell you what authority I have to do these things.”

Luke 20:8

> Jesus said to them, “Then I won't tell you what authority I have to do these things.”

John 9:29

> We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don't even know where this man comes from!

Spiritual Principle

Those who refuse the light they have will not be given more light.

XXVIII. TWO SONS

Matthew 21:28 — Go and Work in the Vineyard

“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.’”

Jesus told a parable.

“What do you think?”

He invited them to judge the story.

A man had two sons.

He asked the first son:

“Son, go and work today in the vineyard.”

Notice the word **today.**

The work was urgent.

Cross References

Luke 15:11

> Then Jesus said, “A man had two sons.”

Matthew 20:1

The kingdom of heaven is like a person who owned some land. One morning, he went out very early to hire some people to work in his vineyard.

James 1:22

Do what God's teaching says; don't just listen and do nothing.

Spiritual Principle

God calls each of us to work in His vineyard today.

XXIX. “I WILL NOT”

Matthew 21:29 — But Later He Changed His Mind

“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.”

The first son said:

“I will not.”

He was rude and rebellious.

But later he changed his mind and went.

He repented.

His first answer was wrong.

But his final action was right.

Cross References

Ezekiel 18:21

But suppose the wicked stop doing all the sins they have done and obey all My rules and do what is fair and right. Then they will surely live; they will not die.

Jonah 3:10

When God saw what the people did, that they stopped doing evil, He changed His mind and did not do what He had warned.

Luke 15:18

I will leave and return to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you.”

Spiritual Principle

It is never too late to change your mind and obey God.

XXX. “I WILL, SIR”

Matthew 21:30 — But He Did Not Go

“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.”

The father asked the second son the same thing.

The second son answered politely.

“I will, sir.”

He said the right words.

He was respectful.

But he did not go.

His words were empty.

Cross References

Titus 1:16

> They say they know God, but the way they live shows they don't really know Him.

Ezekiel 33:31

> They come to you... They hear your words, but they will not obey them. With their mouths they show love, but their hearts are greedy.

James 2:14

> My brothers and sisters, what good is it if someone says he has faith but does nothing to show it?

Spiritual Warning

Saying the right words is not the same as doing the right thing.

XXXI. WHICH SON OBEYED?

Matthew 21:31 — Tax Collectors and Prostitutes First

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”

Jesus asked:

“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

The answer was obvious.

“The first.”

The leaders had judged themselves.

Then Jesus applied the parable.

“Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”

The first son represented the open sinners.

At first, they said **no** to God.

But when John preached repentance, they changed their minds.

The second son represented the religious leaders.

They said **yes** to God with their words.

But they did not obey Him.

They rejected John and they were rejecting Jesus.

Cross References

Luke 7:29

> When all the people, even the tax collectors, heard this, they agreed that God's teaching was good, because they had been baptized by John.

Luke 18:14

> I tell you, when this tax collector went home, he was right with God, but the Pharisee was not.

1 Timothy 1:15

> Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the worst of them.

Spiritual Principle

God welcomes sinners who repent over religious people who refuse to obey.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God is more interested in the son who says “no” and then obeys than in the son who says “yes” and never moves.

XXXII. YOU DID NOT BELIEVE HIM

Matthew 21:32 — Even After You Saw This

“For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

Jesus explained.

John came to you to show you the way of righteousness.

You did not believe him.

But the tax collectors and prostitutes did.

Then Jesus said something even more serious.

Even after you saw this, you did not repent.

They saw sinners' lives changed.

They saw the fruit of John's ministry.

And still they would not repent.

Cross References

Luke 3:12

> Even tax collectors came to John to be baptized. They said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

Luke 7:30

> But the Pharisees and experts on the law refused to accept God's plan for themselves.

2 Peter 2:21

> It would have been better for them never to have known the right way than to know it and then turn away from the holy command that was given to them.

Spiritual Warning

Seeing God change others' lives and still refusing to repent hardens the heart.

XXXIII. THE LANDOWNER'S VINEYARD

Matthew 21:33 — He Rented It to Farmers

“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.”

Jesus told a second parable.

A landowner planted a vineyard.

He did everything to make it successful.

A wall for protection.

A winepress for making wine.

A watchtower for guarding it.

Then he **rented the vineyard to some farmers.**

This parable is based on Isaiah 5.

In Isaiah's song, the vineyard was Israel.

Everyone listening would have understood.

The **landowner** is God.

The **vineyard** is Israel.

The **farmers** are Israel's religious leaders.

Cross References

Isaiah 5:1

> Now I will sing a song to my friend about his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a hill with very rich soil.

Isaiah 5:2

> He dug and cleared the field of stones and planted the best grapevines there. He built a tower in the middle of it and cut out a winepress as well.

Mark 12:1

> Jesus began to use stories to teach the people. He said, “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it and dug a hole for a winepress and built a tower.”

Spiritual Principle

God has given His people everything they need to bear fruit.

XXXIV. COLLECTING THE FRUIT

Matthew 21:34 — Harvest Time

“When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.”

When the harvest time approached, the landowner sent his servants.

They came **to collect his fruit.**

The fruit belonged to the owner.

The tenants were only supposed to care for the vineyard.

The servants in the story represent God's prophets.

God sent them again and again to call His people to bear fruit.

Cross References

Mark 12:2

> When it was time for the grapes to be picked, he sent a servant to the farmers to get his share of the grapes.

Luke 20:10

> When it was time for the grapes to be picked, he sent a servant to those farmers to get some of the grapes.

Isaiah 5:4

> What more could I have done for My vineyard than I have already done? I expected good grapes to grow, but only bad ones grew.

Spiritual Principle

God expects fruit from what He has given us.

XXXV. THEY BEAT, KILLED, AND STONED

Matthew 21:35 — The Servants Mistreated

“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.”

The tenants did terrible things.

They **seized** the servants.

They **beat one.**

They **killed another.**

They **stoned a third.**

This is exactly how Israel had often treated God's prophets.

Jeremiah was beaten and thrown into a pit.

Zechariah the priest was stoned in the temple courtyard.

Many prophets were rejected and killed.

Cross References

2 Chronicles 24:21

> But the people made plans against Zechariah. At the king's command, they threw stones at him until he died in the courtyard of the Temple of the LORD.

Nehemiah 9:26

> But they disobeyed You and turned against You... They killed Your prophets who had warned them to come back to You.

Mark 12:3

> But the farmers grabbed the servant and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

Spiritual Warning

Rejecting God's messengers is rejecting God.

XXXVI. MORE SERVANTS SENT

Matthew 21:36 — Treated the Same Way

“Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.”

The landowner was patient.

He **sent other servants.**

More than the first time.

But **the tenants treated them the same way.**

God sent prophet after prophet.

He was patient again and again.

But His people kept rejecting His messengers.

Cross References

2 Chronicles 36:15

> The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent prophets to warn them again and again, because He had pity on His people and on His Temple.

Jeremiah 7:25

> Since the day your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have sent My servants the prophets to you again and again.

Mark 12:5

> So the man sent another servant, whom they killed. The man sent many others. The farmers beat some of them and killed others.

Spiritual Principle

God is amazingly patient with His people.

XXXVII. HE SENT HIS SON

Matthew 21:37 — They Will Respect My Son

“Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.”

Last of all, he sent his son.

This was his final appeal.

His greatest act of love.

“They will respect my son.”

The son represents Jesus.

God had sent prophets.

Now He sent His own Son.

Jesus was not just another prophet.

He was the Son of the owner of the vineyard.

Cross References

Mark 12:6

> The man had one person left to send, his son whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, “They will respect my son.”

Hebrews 1:1

> In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets many times and in many different ways. But now in these last days God has spoken to us through His Son.

Luke 20:13

> The owner of the vineyard said, “What will I do now? I will send my son whom I love. Maybe they will respect him.”

Spiritual Principle

God's final and greatest message to the world is His Son.

Key Truth

Jesus was telling the religious leaders exactly who He was — the Son of the Owner.

XXXVIII. THIS IS THE HEIR

Matthew 21:38 — Let's Kill Him

“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.’”

The tenants recognized the son.

“This is the heir.”

They knew who he was.

And they made a plan.

“Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.”

They wanted the vineyard for themselves.

The religious leaders wanted to keep control of Israel.

They saw Jesus as a threat to their power.

And they were already plotting to kill Him.

Their words echo the words of Joseph's brothers: **“Come, let's kill him.”**

Cross References

Genesis 37:20

> “Come, let's kill him and throw him into one of the wells. We can tell our father that a wild animal killed him.”

Mark 12:7

> But the farmers said to each other, “This son will inherit the vineyard. If we kill him, it will be ours.”

Psalm 2:8

> Ask Me, and I will give You the nations. All the people on earth will be Yours.

Spiritual Warning

People reject Jesus because they want to keep control of their own lives.

XXXIX. THREW HIM OUT AND KILLED HIM

Matthew 21:39 — Out of the Vineyard

“So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”

They took him.

They threw him out of the vineyard.

They killed him.

This is exactly what would happen to Jesus a few days later.

He would be arrested.

He would be taken outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

And He would be crucified.

Jesus was predicting His own death in the parable.

Cross References

Hebrews 13:12

> So Jesus also suffered outside the city to make His people holy with His own blood.

Mark 12:8

> So they took the son, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

John 19:17

> Carrying His own cross, Jesus went out to a place called the Place of the Skull.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus knew exactly what was coming and spoke about it openly.

XL. WHAT WILL THE OWNER DO?

Matthew 21:40 — When He Comes

“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

Jesus asked the leaders to judge the story.

When the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?

They had just heard about murder and rebellion.

What would a just owner do?

Cross References

Mark 12:9

> So what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those farmers and give the vineyard to other farmers.

Luke 20:15

So they threw the son out of the vineyard and killed him. What will the owner of this vineyard do to them?

Isaiah 5:5

Now I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge, and it will be burned.

Spiritual Principle

God will hold accountable those who reject His Son.

XLI. A WRETCHED END

Matthew 21:41 — Other Tenants

“They replied, ‘He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.’”

The leaders answered.

“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end.”

“He will rent the vineyard to other tenants.”

They had judged themselves without realizing it.

Just like David did when the prophet Nathan told him a story.

The new tenants would **give him his share of the crop.**

They would produce the fruit the owner wanted.

Cross References

Romans 11:11

So I ask: When the Jews fell, did that fall destroy them? No! But their failure brought salvation to the non-Jews.

Acts 13:46

Paul and Barnabas spoke very boldly and said, “We must speak the message of God to you first. But you refuse to listen... So we will now go to the non-Jewish people.”

Isaiah 5:6

I will ruin it. It will not be trimmed or hoed, and weeds and thorns will grow there.

Spiritual Principle

Those who judge others often unknowingly judge themselves.

XLII. THE REJECTED STONE

Matthew 21:42 — The Cornerstone

“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”?’”

Jesus quoted Psalm 118.

This is the same psalm the crowds sang when He entered Jerusalem.

“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

The builders were the religious leaders.

They were supposed to be building God's people.

The stone was Jesus.

They rejected Him.

But God made Him **the cornerstone.**

The **cornerstone** was the most important stone in a building.

It held everything together.

“The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

The rejection of Jesus would not stop God's plan.

It would accomplish it.

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus became the foundation of God's people.

Cross References

Psalm 118:22

> The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone.

Psalm 118:23

> The LORD did this, and it is wonderful to us.

1 Peter 2:7

> This stone is worth much to you who believe. But to the people who do not believe, “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

Spiritual Principle

What people reject, God can make the foundation of everything.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The stone the builders threw away became the stone God built everything on.

XLIII. GIVEN TO A PEOPLE WHO PRODUCE FRUIT

Matthew 21:43 — The Kingdom Taken Away

“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.”

Jesus applied the parable directly.

The kingdom of God will be taken away from you.

He was speaking to the religious leaders who had rejected Him.

And given to a people who will produce its fruit.

This **people** is the community of all who follow Jesus.

It includes Jews and Gentiles alike.

The first followers of Jesus were Jewish.

The apostles were Jewish.

God did not reject Israel.

But the leaders who rejected the Son would lose their place.

And God's kingdom would be given to all who trust in Jesus and bear fruit.

Cross References

Romans 11:20

> They were broken off because they did not believe, and you stand only because you believe. Do not be proud, but be afraid.

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, a nation that belongs to God.

Spiritual Principle

God's kingdom belongs to those who produce its fruit.

Spiritual Warning

No one should become proud; the same warning applies to all who claim to follow Jesus.

XLIV. BROKEN OR CRUSHED

Matthew 21:44 — This Stone

“Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

Jesus gave a final warning about **this stone.**

Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces.

Those who stumble over Jesus and reject Him will be broken.

Some also see this as a picture of humbly falling before Jesus, being broken in repentance.

Anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.

In Daniel 2, a stone cut out without human hands destroys the kingdoms of the world.

Jesus will come one day as Judge.

Those who reject Him will be crushed.

Everyone will meet this stone.

We can either fall on it in humility now or be crushed by it in judgment later.

Cross References

Isaiah 8:14

He will be a stone that causes people to stumble. He will be a rock that makes them fall.

Daniel 2:34

> While you were looking at the statue, you saw a rock cut free, but not by human hands. It hit the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.

Luke 20:18

> Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken, and the person on whom it falls will be crushed.

Spiritual Warning

Everyone will meet Jesus — either as Savior now or as Judge later.

XLV. THEY KNEW HE WAS TALKING ABOUT THEM

Matthew 21:45 — The Leaders Understood

“When the chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew He was talking about them.”

The leaders understood.

They knew He was talking about them.

They were the son who said **yes** and did not go.

They were the tenants who killed the servants.

They were planning to kill the Son.

They understood the parables perfectly.

But understanding is not the same as repenting.

Cross References

Mark 12:12

> The Jewish leaders knew that the story was about them. So they wanted to find a way to arrest Jesus.

Luke 20:19

> The teachers of the law and the leading priests wanted to arrest Jesus at once, because they knew the story was about them.

John 8:37

> I know you are Abraham's children, but you want to kill Me because you don't accept My teaching.

Spiritual Warning

It is possible to understand the truth and still refuse it.

XLVI. THEY WANTED TO ARREST HIM

Matthew 21:46 — Afraid of the Crowd

“They looked for a way to arrest Him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that He was a prophet.”

Instead of repenting, they **looked for a way to arrest Him.**

But **they were afraid of the crowd.**

The people believed Jesus was **a prophet.**

The leaders feared people more than they feared God.

They would wait for a better time.

Within days, they would find it.

Cross References

Luke 22:2

> The leading priests and teachers of the law were trying to find a way to kill Jesus, because they were afraid of the people.

John 7:30

> When Jesus said this, they tried to take Him. But no one was able to touch Him, because it was not yet the right time.

Matthew 21:11

> The crowd answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from the town of Nazareth in Galilee.”

Spiritual Principle

Nothing can happen to Jesus before the Father's appointed time.

XLVII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 21

1. Jesus Enters as King

He fulfilled prophecy by riding humbly into Jerusalem as the promised Messiah.

Principle:

Jesus is the gentle King who comes to save.

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2. Worship Belongs to Him

The crowds and even children praised Him, declaring His kingship.

Principle:

Jesus is worthy of our loudest praise.

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3. True Fruit Matters

The cursed fig tree represents fruitless faith.

God calls for genuine fruit in our lives.

Principle:

Leaves of religion are not enough; God wants the fruit of obedience.

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4. Jesus' Authority Is Divine

His power and mission came directly from the Father, not from men.

Principle:

Jesus does not need human permission to be Lord.

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5. Obedience Proves Faith

The parable of the two sons shows that actions matter more than empty words.

Principle:

Do not just say yes to God; go.

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6. Rejecting God's Son Brings Judgment

The parable of the tenants warns that those who reject Christ will face destruction, but God's kingdom will advance through others who believe.

Principle:

The Son God sent is the Stone everyone must face.

XLVIII. THE KING'S FIRST DAYS IN JERUSALEM

Sunday — The Triumphal Entry

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The crowds shout, **“Hosanna!”**

Monday — The Fig Tree and the Temple

Mark tells us that Jesus cursed the fig tree and cleared the temple on the next day.

Matthew groups these events together to show their connection.

Tuesday — Authority Challenged

The leaders question His authority.

Jesus tells parables of judgment.

Key Truth

Every step of Jesus' final week moved toward the cross, and He walked it with purpose.

XLIX. THE FIG TREE AND THE TEMPLE

The fig tree and the temple are connected.

The Fig Tree

- Had leaves.
- Looked fruitful from a distance.
- Had no fruit.
- Was cursed and withered.

The Temple

- Was busy with religious activity.
- Looked holy from the outside.
- Had no true prayer or righteousness.
- Would be destroyed in A.D. 70.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God sees past the leaves to look for the fruit.

L. TWO PARABLES OF REJECTION

The Two Sons

- One said no but later obeyed.
- One said yes but never obeyed.
- Tax collectors and prostitutes repented.
- Religious leaders did not.

The Wicked Tenants

- The owner gave everything needed for fruit.
- The tenants beat and killed his servants.
- They killed his son.
- The vineyard was given to others.

Key Truth

Both parables show that God judges not by words or position, but by repentance and fruit.

LI. WHAT MATTHEW 21 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 21 presents Jesus as:

The Promised King

He fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy.

The Gentle King

He came riding on a donkey.

The Son of David

The crowds hailed Him as the Messiah.

The Lord Who Needs

“The Lord needs them.”

The Purifier of the Temple

He drove out the greedy.

The Healer

He welcomed and healed the blind and lame.

The One Worthy of Praise

He accepted the praise of children as God.

The Judge of Fruitless Religion

He cursed the fig tree.

The One with Divine Authority

His authority came from God.

The Son of the Owner

He is the beloved Son sent last of all.

The Rejected Stone

God made Him the cornerstone.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The King who rode in on a donkey is the Stone on which the whole world will stand or fall.

LII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey?

To fulfill Zechariah 9:9 and to show that He was a King who came in peace and humility, not as a warrior.

Question 2

What does “Hosanna” mean?

It means **“Save us now!”**

It also became a shout of praise.

Question 3

Why did the crowd spread cloaks and branches on the road?

To honor Jesus as King, like rolling out a royal welcome.

Question 4

Why did Jesus drive the sellers out of the temple?

They had turned God's house of prayer into a marketplace, cheating people and crowding out the Gentiles who came to pray.

Question 5

Who came to Jesus after He cleared the temple?

The blind and the lame, and He healed them.

Question 6

Why were the religious leaders angry when the children praised Jesus?

The children were calling Jesus the Son of David, the Messiah, and the leaders rejected that.

Question 7

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

It was an acted-out parable.

The tree had leaves but no fruit, like religion that looks good outwardly but has no real faith or obedience.

Question 8

What did Jesus teach about faith after the fig tree withered?

That faith without doubt can do what seems impossible, and that believing prayer is powerful.

Question 9

Why did Jesus ask about John's baptism?

Because John pointed to Jesus.

If John was from God, then Jesus' authority came from God too.

Question 10

Why wouldn't the leaders answer Jesus' question?

They cared more about what was safe than what was true.

They were afraid of looking wrong and afraid of the people.

Question 11

What does the parable of the two sons teach?

That obedience matters more than words.

Sinners who repent will enter the kingdom ahead of religious people who refuse to obey.

Question 12

What does the parable of the wicked tenants teach?

That God sent prophets and finally His Son, and those who reject the Son will face judgment.

Question 13

What does it mean that the rejected stone became the cornerstone?

The religious leaders rejected Jesus, but God made Him the foundation of His people through His death and resurrection.

Question 14

Who receives the kingdom that is taken away?

A people who produce its fruit — all who follow Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles.

Question 15

What should Matthew 21 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 21 should cause believers to live:

- Welcoming Jesus as their King.
- Giving gladly whatever the Lord needs.
- Praising Him with joy.
- Keeping worship pure and centered on prayer.
- Making room for the broken.
- Bearing real fruit, not just leaves.
- Praying with faith.
- Obeying God, not just saying yes.
- Honoring God's messengers.
- Building their lives on Jesus, the Cornerstone.

LIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 21 asks several important questions.

Have I Welcomed Jesus as My King?

Is There Something the Lord Needs from Me?

Is My Praise Real, or Only Shallow Excitement?

Is There Anything in My Life That Needs to Be Cleared Out?

Am I Making Room for the Broken and Needy?

Does My Life Have Fruit, or Only Leaves?

Am I Praying with Faith?

Do I Care More About What Is Safe or What Is True?

Am I the Son Who Says “Yes” but Does Not Go?

Am I Trying to Keep Control Instead of Giving It to Jesus?

Have I Built My Life on Jesus, the Cornerstone?

LIV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Leaves or Fruit?”

From a distance, the fig tree looked healthy.

It was covered with leaves.

Anyone passing by would think it had fruit.

But when Jesus came close, He found nothing but leaves.

The temple looked the same way.

It was busy.

It was crowded.

It was full of religious activity.

But when Jesus came close, He found greed instead of prayer.

The second son looked the same way.

He said, **“I will, sir.”**

But he never went.

This creates a powerful principle.

It is possible to look fruitful from a distance and be empty up close.

Jesus does not stay at a distance.

He comes close.

And He looks for fruit.

Principle:

Jesus is not impressed by the leaves of religious activity; He comes close looking for the fruit of a changed life.

LV. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 21 begins with a royal parade.

The King rides into Jerusalem.

Not on a war horse, but on a donkey.

The crowds spread their cloaks.

They wave branches.

They shout, **“Hosanna to the Son of David!”**

But the King does not go to a palace.

He goes to the temple.

And He cleans house.

He drives out the greedy.

He welcomes the blind and the lame.

He receives the praise of children.

Then He curses a tree with leaves but no fruit.

He silences leaders who will not tell the truth.

And He tells two stories.

A son who says yes but does not go.

And tenants who kill the owner's son.

Matthew 21 therefore reminds us:

Jesus is the King.

He comes in humility, but He comes with authority.

He welcomes the broken and judges the proud.

He looks for real fruit, not religious leaves.

He values obedience over empty words.

And everyone must decide what to do with the Son God has sent.

The story of Matthew 21 does not end with:

A shouting crowd.

An empty fig tree.

Or angry leaders plotting in the shadows.

It ends with:

The rejected Stone becoming the Cornerstone.

And the kingdom given to those who bear its fruit.

The same call still stands:

Welcome the King.

Give Him what He needs.

Praise Him.

Let Him clean your heart.

Bear real fruit.

Obey, don't just agree.

Build your life on the Cornerstone.

And until He returns:

Keep praising Him.

Keep bearing fruit.

Keep obeying Him.

Keep building on the Rock.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for sending Jesus as our King.

Thank You that He came humbly, riding on a donkey, to bring peace.

Lord Jesus, we welcome You as our King.

Hosanna! Save us now!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

Whatever You need from us, help us give it gladly.

Make our praise real and not shallow.

Keep us from shouting Your praise one day and turning away the next.

Come into the temple of our hearts and clear out anything that does not belong.

Drive out greed, pride, and anything that keeps us from true prayer.

Make our lives a house of prayer.

Help us make room for the blind, the lame, and the broken.

Give us the simple, honest praise of children.

Lord, we do not want to be like the fig tree with leaves but no fruit.

Produce real fruit in our lives by Your Spirit.

Teach us to pray with faith.

Keep us from caring more about what is safe than what is true.

Help us not to be the son who says yes but never goes.

Make us people who obey.

Thank You for Your patience in sending messenger after messenger.

Thank You for sending Your Son.

Forgive us for the times we have tried to keep control of our own lives.

Thank You that the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

Help us build our lives on Jesus.

Let us bear the fruit of Your kingdom.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“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!’” — Matthew 21:9

Central Truth

Jesus enters Jerusalem as the humble King with divine authority, calling for true worship and real fruit, and warning that those who reject God's Son will lose the kingdom He offers.

Matthew 21 in One Sentence

Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the humble King, cleanses the temple and heals the broken, curses a fruitless fig tree, silences those who question His authority, and tells parables showing that those who reject God's Son will lose the kingdom while it is given to those who bear its fruit.