

## **Glorious Entrance into Jerusalem**

### **Matthew 21:1—9**

Before continuing into Mathew 21 I would like to comment on Matthew 20:28 which states that Jesus came to be a ransom for many. This contradicts what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:6, that Jesus gave Himself to be a ransom for all. Those who accept Covenant Theology interpret this verse to mean that Christ died only for those who would be saved (Limited Atonement). They would say that Jesus wouldn't waste His grace on those who would not believe. This idea must assume that God selected those He wanted saved in eternity past and it was only for this particular group that He died. Those who were not chosen by God would be condemned to hell. Many Covenant Theologians believe in double predestination—that God elected those who would be saved to eternal life and elected those who would remain unsaved to eternal damnation. Verses such as 2 Corinthians 5:14—15 and 1 Timothy 2:4—6 contradict this teaching. I believe these verses can best be understood simply by rightly dividing Scripture or separating truth from truth—something Covenant believers don't do. Making a dispensational distinction between these two verses will clarify what Jesus was teaching.

When Jesus said He was a ransom for many in Matthew, He was dealing only with Israel and was in the process of gathering the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5—6; 15:24). He did not come to minister to Gentiles. The many, in this case, refers specifically to Israel. Once Israel was saved, they were to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel (Isaiah 60:1—3; 56:6—7; Zech 8:22—23; Matthew 28:19). Since Israel failed to accept their Messiah they were not qualified to bring Christ to the Gentiles. Once Israel was set aside (Romans 11) and the Mystery program for the Church, the Body of Christ was introduced through the Apostle Paul, the Gospel of Grace went directly to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

#### **Entrance into Jerusalem** (Mark 11:1—10; Luke 19:29—38; John 12:12—15)

As mentioned in past lessons, Jesus headquartered mostly out of Galilee and seldom came into Jerusalem. It appears that He came into Jerusalem three times each year to observe the three feasts that had to be celebrated in Jerusalem according to the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 16:16). He had announced previously to His Disciples that He would be going into Jerusalem to die but that He would rise again in three days (Matthew 16:21). His time had now arrived that He and His Disciples needed to head for Jerusalem.

As they came to Jericho (about 15 miles ENE of Jerusalem) Jesus healed two blind men. When they went through Bethany (about 2 miles east of Jerusalem) Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead showing the people that He had power over death. Bethphage was midway between Jerusalem and Bethany and just west of Bethphage is the Mount of Olives. As Jesus and the Disciples were leaving Bethphage He told two of them to go into the town opposite them and fetch a donkey and a colt both tied up. If anyone questioned what they were doing they were to answer that the Lord had need of them. As they were coming down off the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:37) and heading toward Jerusalem a crowd of His followers honor Him as their King by laying their coats or branches in the path of Jesus and shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David." They fully expected Him to go into Jerusalem to defeat their enemies and sit on David's throne.

There are a number of prophecies fulfilled in Matthew 21. Jesus used Scripture to show the leaders of Israel that He was their Messiah. I believe that Jesus had a perfect understanding of Old Testament prophecy and was actively fulfilling these things to point the people to Him. The events of Matthew 21:1—9 are found in Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:25. These passages speak of the Messiah coming into Jerusalem to set up the Millennial Kingdom. Those who knew Scripture should have immediately connected Old Testament Prophecy with the events that were happening right in front of their eyes.

The word hosanna is a plea for salvation now. Psalm 118:25 interprets it as “do save.” These people were not looking for a spiritual salvation that leads to eternal life but a physical salvation from their enemies. They had been downtrodden for at least 800 years and were ready to receive their Messiah as the One who would defeat Israel’s enemies (Isaiah 2:4; Psalm 110:1; Zechariah 14:9—11). It’s significant that the people were doing this as they were coming down from the Mount of Olives because at Jesus’ Second Coming He will come down and set His feet on the Mount of Olives before entering Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). Also significant was the use of branches cut from trees to pave the way for Jesus. During the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:39—43; Nehemiah 8:15—18) the people would cut down branches to build temporary shelters. This feast looks forward to the setting up of the Kingdom and the final rest for Israel (Hebrews 4).

### **Christ to be sacrificed on the altar**

An obscure teaching that is beginning to find some traction is the idea that when Jesus was being ushered into Jerusalem that the people were to lead Him to the temple and He was to be sacrificed on the altar by faithful Israel. This idea is built on Psalm 118:27 and is tied to Abraham sacrificing Isaac by binding him on the altar (Genesis 22:2—13) with Isaac as a picture of Jesus Christ. The argument is capped with Acts 2:22 showing Jesus sacrificed by wicked hands instead of righteous hands in faith.

**Psalm 118:27** God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

I believe there are several problems with this theory. The first problem arises by the use of one main proof-text and a couple of support verses to come up with this theory of how God the Father intended Jesus to die. The context of Psalm 118 is Jesus Christ taking the throne, not focused on His death. I believe the sacrifice that is being talked about is the one mentioned in Zechariah 14:16—20 during the Feast of Tabernacles. It will be a commemoration of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross.

The support verses used comparing Abraham (God the Father) and Isaac (God the Son) do not fit because Abraham would have to represent Israel, not God. They would argue, however, that God did sacrifice His Son through the hands of faithful Israel.

It seems strange that there are many, many verses that tell us that Jesus would die on the cross at the hands of wicked men but yet this one ambiguous verse is used to prove otherwise. Isaiah 53 says He was wounded for our iniquities, bruised, chastised and by His stripes we are healed (verse 5). It actually pleased the Lord to bruise Him and put Him to grief (verse 10). If Jesus was sacrificed on the altar it would have been a glorious event, not one of grief. Why did Jesus never even hint that He was to be sacrificed on the altar instead of on the cross? Why would Israel ever sacrifice a human on their altar when human sacrifice was condemned in the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:2; Deuteronomy 18:10—14; 12:31)?

This is a teaching coming from people I generally respect but in this case I believe they have left solid hermeneutic principles in the dust. I’ll have to admit that there is something compelling about “discovering” a new way to interpret Scripture but we should always be careful about new teaching even coming from respected men of God. We are each responsible to test the things that are taught to make sure they line up with all of God’s Word (Acts 17:11).

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