

A New King Enters Jerusalem (Matthew 19-21)

- The Pharisees again seek to pit Jesus against Moses by asking him about the question of divorce.
 - ◇ The Jews allowed men to divorce their wives for most things.
 - ◇ Jesus reminds the Pharisees that it is God that creates a marriage and that it is not man's invention. It is the Pharisees who are out of touch with the model of marriage outlined in the Torah.
 - ◇ Jesus invokes his own authority to forbid divorce and remarriage.
 - ◇ "The hardness of your hearts." Moses allowed divorce as a concession to human sinfulness but Jesus restates God's original plan for marriage.
 - ◇ The disciples were shocked this and thought then it would be easier simply not to marry.
 - ◇ Jesus then raises those up who have embraced celibacy for the sake of the kingdom and encourages all who can do so to accept the call.
 - ◇ Immediately after this teaching we read that Jesus blesses the children. Jesus' care for marriage is directly related to his care for children. Marriage and children are linked.
- The Rich Young Man
 - ◇ Jesus' conversation highlights three stages of the spiritual life generally taught as 1. purgative; 2. illuminative and 3. unitive.
 - ◇ Jesus tells the young man to follow the commandments (purgative), go sell all that he has and give it to the poor (illuminative) and follow him (unitive).
 - ◇ "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
 - ◇ Jesus is reminding all that wealth can be a serious threat to sanctity. Only with God's grace can the wealthy detach themselves from the love of material goods. The young man's sadness is an example of this.
 - ◇ The new world that Jesus speaks of is a restored Israel under the leadership of the Twelve. Jesus is the Davidic king who reestablishes the Davidic Kingdom that governed the twelve tribes. He appoints his apostles as his royal governors and invests them with authority to govern, minister and judge. See Psalm 122:3-5.



When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Matthew 19:22

- The Laborers in the Vineyard, the Chalice and the Two Blind Men
 - ◇ This parable has a link to the Old Testament as well as a New Testament understanding.
 - ◇ Salvation history is the story of Israel's labor which reaches its zenith with the inclusion of the gentiles. The gentiles are those who enter the vineyard at the latest hour and begin to work. God is not unfair. He is generous.
 - ◇ The mother of James and John asks Jesus to have her sons flank him in the coming kingdom.
 - ◇ The chalice Jesus is to drink is an allusion to an Old Testament metaphor that describes the wrath of God as being poured out on the wicked (God's justice is poured out on the wicked). In light of Christ we should see this as the punishment for sin (death) which is in the chalice that Jesus will drink.
 - ◇ Jesus assures James and John that they will have a taste of this chalice. They will endure suffering for the sake of Christ but they cannot drink the cup that Jesus will.
 - ◇ The two blind men cry out to Jesus and are persistent in their appeals. They show a faith in Christ and, at their pleading, are healed.
 - ◇ They use the term Son of David as is used in Mt 12:23. Again, there was a belief that the Messiah would possess the power to heal as did David's son, Solomon.

- Jesus Enters Jerusalem



- ◇ Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is similar to Solomon's coronation as king: 1. both are son of David; 2. Jesus rides a colt while Solomon rode a mule; 3. both involve a great amount of fanfare; 4. in both cases Jerusalem was in a state of commotion.
- ◇ The choice of the donkey is important. Oftentimes a great ruler entered the city as a conquering hero on a war horse. The kingdom Jesus is establishing is not one that is brought about by force but by conversion.
- ◇ Matthew's quote 21:5 is a combination of two prophecies: Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9.
 - * *See, the LORD proclaims to the ends of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, your savior comes! Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him.*
 - * *Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, Meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.*
- ◇ They spread their garments for Jesus to ride upon as a sign of humility.
- ◇ The crowd cries out "hosanna, son of David." Hosanna or הוֹשַׁעַנָּה which translates to "save us".
- ◇ Jesus cleanses the Temple (see Temple diagram on pg. 43)
 - * Jesus is filled with righteous anger at the money changers who inflated their prices and thereby placed a large burden on the faithful.
 - * He views what is happening as a profaning of the Temple.
 - * Yet, we should raise an eyebrow at this. Hasn't Jesus seen this before? Why did he choose to do this now?
 - * Matthew has Jesus quoting taking two Old Testament prophets:
 - * And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, ministering to him, Loving the name of the LORD, and becoming his servants - All who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Isaiah 56:6-7
 - * Has this house which bears my name become in your eyes a den of thieves? I too see what is being done, says the LORD. Jeremiah 7:11



- * The Jews were meant to be a magnet drawing other people to God. The Temple was not supposed to be exclusive and slowly whittle people down to who was worthy and who was not. The Temple was supposed to give all access to God.
- * The Jews looked to the Temple as a sign that God was with them and they did not need to change their lives. Jeremiah preached that this wasn't so and, when they did not heed the warning of Jeremiah, God allowed the Temple to be destroyed. Jesus is indicating the same judgment upon the Jews of his time.
- ◇ When there are healings performed by Jesus in the Temple there isn't joy by the chief priests and scribes. They are indignant that Jesus is being acclaimed with a Messianic title.
- ◇ Jesus responds with a line from Psalm 8 in which the psalmist describes that infants bring glory to God. Jesus uses this as a hint to his divinity from the moment of his conception.
- Jesus starts to draw lines
 - ◇ Jesus cursing the fig tree is symbolic of Old Covenant Israel. It is cursed because it is barren and does not produce the fruit of repentance and a desire to draw close to God. The rejection of the Messiah brings the curse. It does not come from God but comes by rejection of him.
 - ◇ Jesus' authority is questioned and Jesus places those questioning him in a bind. They act more as politicians playing to a crowd than those that should be entrusted with the souls of the faithful.
 - ◇ The Parable of the Two Sons illustrates the point that Jesus was making with his previous question. The first group are those who repent from their sins and the second group is made of the religious leaders who do not heed John's call even when harlots and tax collectors do.
 - ◇ The Wicked Tenants is an example of Israel's past reluctance to hear God's call. God is the householder and the vineyard is Jerusalem. The tenants are the Jewish leaders who persecute the servants, the prophets, of the householder. The son is Jesus who is thrown out of the vineyard and killed as Jesus was crucified outside of the walls of Jerusalem. Putting them to death is an allusion to the coming destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. God will entrust a new covenant to other tenants within the Church.
 - ◇ The stone rejected by builders is a restatement of the wicked tenants. The builders, Jewish leaders, reject the stone given by God which results in God transferring the kingdom from the leaders of the Old Covenant to the New Covenant shepherds, the bishops.

"May no fruit ever come from you again." And immediately the **FIG TREE WITHERED.**"
Matthew 21:19



REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 19-21

How does Jesus' elevation of marriage more accurately portray humanity "in the beginning"?

What can we also come to know by Jesus' definition of what a marriage is?

What are the three stages of the spiritual life highlighted in Jesus' conversation with the rich young man?

Why do you think possessions and money can be so seductive for mankind?

What is important about the way Jesus enters Jerusalem?

What is the greater truth behind Jesus' cleansing of the Temple?