

The Entrance of the King

Zech 9:9-10; Matt 21:1-11
SS Lesson for 03/30/2014

Devotional Scripture: Ps 2:6-12

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND APPROACH TO LESSON

Key Verse: Matt 21:9

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

THE PROPHECY (ZECH 9:9-10)

Rejoice because He is mighty and humble (9)

Mighty

Because of His mighty deeds (Ps 118:15)

Because of His mighty hands (1 Peter 5:6)

Because of His mighty power (Eph 6:10)

Humble

Because of His humble heart (Matt 11:29)

Because God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1-4)

Because His humble attitude (Phil 2:5-8)

Rejoice because He is powerful and peaceful (10)

Powerful

Because the prophets testified about Jesus and His power (Acts 10:43)

Because Jesus has authority power in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)

Because Jesus and God are One (John 10:27-30)

Peaceful

Because He overcame the world (John 16:33)

Because He justifies through faith (Rom 5:1)

Because He destroyed the barrier between God and man (Eph 2:14-18)

Because He reconciled all things (Col 1:19-20)

THE PREPARATION (21:1-7)

What God does to prepare us for His fellowship

God has sovereignty over the world and therefore over us (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

God's preparation includes the use of others (1)

Use of others to help us along the way (Acts 9:10-16)

Use of others to keep us from pride (Acts 10:19-23)

God's preparation is perfect because He knows the future (1-2)

God knows our every thought and actions before we do it (Ps 139:2-4)

God's will is the future (James 4:15)

God's preparation is part of His plan and is unchangeable (4)

Because God cannot lie, He also cannot change (Heb 6:18)

God's provisions are perfect and therefore does not change (James 1:17)

God always takes the initiative in His preparation of us (5)

God first took the initiative by choosing us (Eph 1:4)

God has prepared an inheritance for us (Matt 25:34)

God's preparation is never overbearing (5)

God's way of life is not hard (Matt 11:30)

God never allows us to be overcome by temptation (1 Cor 10:13)

Our responsibility in the preparation steps

- Know that we will face opposition (3)
 - Opposition of our faith (Matt 10:22)
 - Opposition of our actions (1 Peter 5:8)
- Ensure that God's priorities come first in our life (3)
 - Our first priority must be to seek God (Matt 6:33)
 - We need to seek God's will for our life as if it was wealth (Prov 2:2-4)
- We must be obedient to God (6)
 - Obey God not man (Acts 5:29)
 - Obedient in the face of harm (Dan 3:16-18)
- We must always reverence God and be willing to sacrifice for Jesus (7)
 - Relationship between sacrifices and fellowship with God (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)
 - We must be willing to die for God (Matt 16:25)
 - We must be self-controlled out of reverence for God (2 Cor 7:1)
 - Reverence God for His unshakable power (Heb 12:28)

THE PRESENTATION (21:8-11)

Our response to Jesus being presented to us

- Contributing whatever we have (8)
 - To help other children of God (Matt 10:42)
 - To give up worldly possessions for God (Mark 10:29-30)
- Praise (9)
 - Meaning of Hosanna (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)
 - Praise God for His faithfulness (Ps 56:4)
 - Praise God for His mercy (Rom 15:8-11)
 - Praise God for His compassion and comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)
 - Praise God for His spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)

The work of the Holy Spirit in presenting Jesus to us

- Stirs our spirit (10)
 - By making God's word a burning desire (Jer 20:9)
 - By making our witness bold (Ps 39:2-3)
 - By compelling us to tell what God has done for us (Acts 4:20)
 - By God's compelling love (2 Cor 5:14)
- Provides the identification and working of Jesus (11)
 - The Holy Spirit guides me into the truth of God (John 16:13)
 - The Holy Spirit testifies about God (John 15:26)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM ALLEN ROSS

OBSERVATIONS IN THE TEXT

ANALYSIS OF THE PASSAGE

I. The Preparation for the Triumphal Entry (21:1-6).

II. The Triumphal Entry (21:7-11).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches us what **The Entrance of the King** means to us. The **study's aim** is to show that the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 has been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ. The **study's application** is to know through the proof of the fulfilled prophecy that Jesus is the One and only true Messiah.

Key Verse: *Matt 21:9*

9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!"

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jesus and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem from the east as they came up the road from Jericho. When they reached the town of Bethphage on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to find a donkey and its colt. Though all four Gospel accounts include the Triumphal Entry, only Matthew mentioned a donkey along with the colt. A simple explanation of what some call a contradiction is that when Jesus rode the colt, the mother donkey naturally went along. Perhaps He rode each animal part of the distance (v. 7). Jesus told the disciples to bring the animals to Him. If anyone questioned their actions, they were to say the Lord needed them. As Messiah He had the right to request whatever He needed. Matthew mentioned (vv. 4-5) that this act fulfilled a prophecy, namely, Zechariah 9:9 (cf. Isa. 62:11), which spoke to the nation of the coming of her King in a gentle manner riding on... a colt, the foal (lit., son) of a donkey. This was not the normal manner in which kings arrived, for they usually came as conquerors riding on horses. A colt was a symbol of peace. The disciples got the animals, threw their garments on them to make saddles, and people in the large crowd spread their cloaks (cf. 2 Kings 9:13) and tree branches on the road. Most of these people were pilgrims from Galilee on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They were familiar with Jesus and the many miracles He had performed in Galilee. As the people walked along, some before Jesus and some behind Him, they were probably singing some of the pilgrim psalms. Matthew noted that they (including children, v. 15) shouted the words of Psalm 118:26, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. To Him they shouted, Hosanna to the Son of David. "Hosanna" is from the Hebrew hôšâh nâ, "Save (us), we pray," taken from Psalm 118:25. It came to be a note of praise as well as petition. While the crowd did not fully understand the significance of this event, they seemed to be acknowledging that this One is the promised Seed of David who had come to grant them salvation. Both their actions and words bestowed honor on this One coming into the city, at last presenting Himself publicly as their King. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the entire city was moved and asked, Who is this? Since Jesus had usually avoided the city, its inhabitants did not know Him. Those accompanying Jesus from out of town kept answering, This is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee (cf. v. 46). As the Prophet, He is the One promised by Moses (Deut. 18:15). Luke recorded that Jesus wept over the city (Luke 19:41) and told the religious leaders that the day was a significant time for the nation: "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42). Jesus may well have had in mind the significant prophecy of Daniel concerning the time of Messiah's coming and that He had arrived in Jerusalem at the very time predicted by Daniel over 500 years previously (Dan. 9:25-26). This event marked the official presentation of Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel as the rightful Son of David.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The outline of the lesson came from a previous SS Lesson dated 02/06/2000 and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
Zech 9:9	Behold, your King is	The Prophecy

Verse	Phrase	Commentary
	coming to you	
Matt 21:2	Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me	The Preparation
Matt 21:11	This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee	The Presentation

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The first king of Israel was Saul, by direct appointment of God (1 Samuel 10:1). But God did not recognize any sense of "royal blood" flowing in that man's veins, as evident by God's choosing someone outside Saul's family to be the successor. Saul's outward appearance had been impressive (10:23), and the prophet Samuel seems to have been evaluating possible successors on that basis when God corrected him (16:5-7). David, the one eventually chosen, also had an impressive appearance (16:12), but that wasn't God's criteria. God promised that David's house and kingdom would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Thus we sense a royal bloodline here, especially since the lineage leads to and ends with Jesus, king of kings. But we quickly note that all this was due to God's choice and promise. Nationalistic expectations ran high on the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Yet it should not have been a time for spotting earthly "blue blood," but of recognizing God's provision for the nation. This week's lesson examines passages from the prophet Zechariah and the Gospel of Matthew. Zechariah (which means "the Lord remembers") is a very common name in the Bible, with 30 or more men so designated. The Zechariah of the book by that name was called by God to be a prophet, along with Haggai, to urge the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (see Ezra 5:1). This Zechariah returned with the freed exiles to Judah to do so in about 536 BC. His recorded prophecies began in 520 BC (Zechariah 1:1) and continued for several years. The temple restoration was completed in 515 BC (Ezra 6:15). The book of Zechariah is filled with symbolic images, making it difficult to interpret. It is also one of the most messianic of the Old Testament books, with many defining references to the coming Christ. There is an underlying sense in Zechariah's message that the temple had to be finished so that the king could come. Perhaps some Jews expected the promised king, the promised son of David, to be made known shortly after the rebuilt temple was finished in 515 BC. But God had a plan that required another five and a half centuries before the promised king made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Matthew, drawing on Zechariah, interprets that event as nothing less than fulfilled prophecy.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Prophecy (Zech 9:9-10)

9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth

Rejoice because He is mighty and humble (9)

Mighty

Because of His mighty deeds (Ps 118:15)

15 Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"

Because of His mighty hands (1 Peter 5:6)

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Because of His mighty power (Eph 6:10)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Humble

Because of His humble heart (Matt 11:29)

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Because God chose Jesus as His servant (Isa 42:1-4)

42 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

Because His humble attitude (Phil 2:5-8)

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!

Rejoice because He is powerful and peaceful (10)

Powerful

Because the prophets testified about Jesus and His power (Acts 10:43)

43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Because Jesus has authority power in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Because Jesus and God are One (John 10:27-30)

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

Peaceful

Because He overcame the world (John 16:33)

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Because He justifies through faith (Rom 5:1)

5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Because He destroyed the barrier between God and man (Eph 2:14-18)

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Because He reconciled all things (Col 1:19-20)

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The Preparation (21:1-7)

1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.' "

6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.

What God does to prepare us for His fellowship

God has sovereignty over the world and therefore over us (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

In the first-century world, royalty had the right of requisitioning animals for their use. In addition, some of the rabbis claimed the same prerogative. As the Messiah, Jesus certainly had the right to do at least what human kings and religious leaders could do. At a different level, Jesus was the Creator and Sovereign of the world. Because He had made all things, in reality these animals belonged to Him. They were His by right of creation.

God's preparation includes the use of others (1)

Use of others to help us along the way (Acts 9:10-16)

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Use of others to keep us from pride (Acts 10:19-23)

19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." 21 Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?" 22 The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

God's preparation is perfect because He knows the future (1-2)

God knows our every thought and actions before we do it (Ps 139:2-4)

2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

God's will is the future (James 4:15)

Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

God's preparation is part of His plan and is unchangeable (4)

Because God cannot lie, He also cannot change (Heb 6:18)

God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

God provisions are perfect and therefore does not change (James 1:17)

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

God always takes the initiative in His preparation of us (5)

God first took the initiative by choosing us (Eph 1:4)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

God has prepared an inheritance for us (Matt 25:34)

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

God's preparation is never overbearing (5)

God's way of life is not hard (Matt 11:30)

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

God never allows us to be overcome by temptation (1 Cor 10:13)

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Our responsibility in the preparation steps

Know that we will face opposition (3)

Opposition of our faith (Matt 10:22)

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Opposition of our actions (1 Peter 5:8)

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Ensure that God's priorities come first in our life (3)

Our first priority must be to seek God (Matt 6:33)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

We need to seek God's will for our life as if it was wealth (Prov 2:2-4)

2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

We must be obedient to God (6)

Obey God not man (Acts 5:29)

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Obedient in the face of harm (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

We must always reverence God and be willing to sacrifice for Jesus (7)

Relationship between sacrifices and fellowship with God (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

The Old Testament sacrificial system had been established by God as a means for His people to maintain spiritual fellowship with Him. The sacrifices in themselves could not provide spiritual cleansing, but they were God's prescribed way for His people to approach Him and seek His forgiveness. As they offered the sacrifices in humble repentance, God removed their guilt. Once their sins were forgiven, they were able to resume their praise and worship of the Lord.

We must be willing to die for God (Matt 16:25)

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

We must be self-controlled out of reverence for God (2 Cor 7:1)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Reverence God for His unshakable power (Heb 12:28)

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

The Presentation (21:8-11)

8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Hosanna in the highest!"

10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"

11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

Our response to Jesus being presented to us

Contributing whatever we have (8)

To help other children of God (Matt 10:42)

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

To give up worldly possessions for God (Mark 10:29-30)

29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields-and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.

Praise (9)

Meaning of Hosanna (from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator)

"Hosanna" (Matt. 21:9) means "save now, we pray." or "save, we pray thee." These verses were sung in conjunction with the Feast of Tabernacles. "On that occasion the *Hallel*, consisting of Psalm 113-118, was chanted by one of the priests, and at certain intervals the multitudes joined in the responses, waving their branches of willow and palm, and shouting as they waved them hallelujah, or hosanna" (Unger, *Ungers Bible Dictionary*, Moody). "Son of David" is a messianic title and stresses Jesus' kingly role. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" is a cry that God has indeed fulfilled His Word! "Hosanna in the highest" is probably equivalent to "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). This acclamation was from the great Hallel (the praise psalms, 113 - 118), specifically Psalm 118:25-27. This was sung at the Passover. What the people were doing was praising God for sending His Messiah.

Praise God for His faithfulness (Ps 56:4)

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Praise God for His mercy (Rom 15:8-11)

8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs 9 so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; will sing hymns to your name." 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."

Praise God for His compassion and comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Praise God for His spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit in presenting Jesus to us

Stirs our spirit (10)

By making God's word a burning desire (Jer 20:9)

9 But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

By making our witness bold (Ps 39:2-3)

2 But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased. 3 My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:

By compelling us to tell what God has done for us (Acts 4:20)

For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

By God's compelling love (2 Cor 5:14)

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Provides the identification and working of Jesus (11)

The Holy Spirit guides me into the truth of God (John 16:13)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

The Holy Spirit testifies about God (John 15:26)

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts From Allen Ross

From the series: An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew

Observations in the Text

This passage is a short narrative report about the public presentation of Jesus as the Messiah. It falls into four little parts, each of which is tied to the fulfillment of Scripture. There is first the preparation for the ride and the reference to Zechariah made by Matthew; then there is the ride into Jerusalem and the cries of the people from Psalm 118; third is the cleansing of the temple and Jesus' use of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and finally there is the report of the healings and the children, and Jesus' use of Psalm 8. All these events, and the Scriptures that they fulfilled, declare again that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

But each section of the passage reveals a different aspect of the work of Messiah. In the first part He is revealed as the **sovereign King**, the one who has authority, but who comes in peace. As He entered Jerusalem, He was recognized as the coming Messiah who brings **salvation**. When He cleansed the temple, He demonstrated that He was the **divine Lord**, the messenger of the covenant, who would come to His temple. And when He was praised by the little children, He indicated that He was the fulfillment of Psalm 8, the incarnate **Son of Man** who should raise human life to the level God intended and should receive praise for it.

There are some who think that this triumphal entry did not take place at the Passover time, but in the fall at the Feast of Tabernacles, primarily because of the mention of the palm branches, and because the figs (in the next episode of the cursing of the fig tree) usually do not grow until the fall. But there are better explanations for these difficulties, as will be pointed out in the discussion; and making this a fall festival entry would mean that what the gospels present as the events of the last six days of Jesus' life were actually spread over the last

six months. That radical change in the chronology would require a lot more evidence than the things mentioned.

The setting of the events comes into play as well. The journey from Jericho to Jerusalem by the old Roman road is about 17 miles, and it ascends some 3000 feet. So it was normal to speak of going up to Jerusalem, or down to Jericho. The road passed through Bethany and nearby Bethpage (“house of figs”) which were on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives. The road crossed over the top of the mount and then down through the narrow Kidron Valley to ascend again to Jerusalem. These are not long distances--from the top of the Mount of Olives one can see the holy city on one side, and the Judean desert on the other. From Bethany to Jerusalem would be about a half hour walk (less if it were flat land). During these last days of Jesus’ public ministry, it is likely that He spent the nights in Bethany with His good friends Mary and Martha and Lazarus, and went back and forth to Jerusalem. But in the night in which He was betrayed He spent the night in the garden, on the other side of the Mount of Olives, because Jewish law required that the night of Passover be spent within the precincts of the holy city. The city limits had been extended to the top of the Mount of Olives, but not to the other side where Bethany lay.

The method of Bible study that must be employed here is to show how the Old Testament passages give the full and proper meaning to the events. The story without the Scripture citations would say very little; it is the prophecies that explain what all this meant. Therefore, a detailed study of the Old Testament passages is important to the reading of Matthew 21.

Analysis of the Passage

I. The Preparation for the Triumphal Entry (21:1-6).

Jesus sent two disciples (Luke 22 says Peter and John) ahead to Bethpage to get the animals for the ride into town. The disciples were instructed to go and find the donkey and its colt tied there in the village; they were to loose them and bring them to Jesus, and if anyone asked what they were doing, they were to say that the Lord needs them and then they would be sent right away. This little preparation was designed by Jesus to demonstrate His authority: He knew the animals would be there, and He knew that if they said the Lord needed them they would be given to them. This was a planned sequence, designed to be an acted parable, a revelation for those who had faith. After the resurrection the disciples could look back and see how Jesus had demonstrated in this and the other events that He had authority, that He was in control of the events, and not losing control to wicked men or evil times.

There have been several suggestions for the interpretation of “Lord” in the words they were to use. Some have suggested the word would refer to the animal’s owner--the master needed his animals. But that would be a lie unless Jesus owned the animals. Besides, Luke tells us the owners asked them what they were doing and then released the animals to them. Some have thought it would refer to Yahweh, that is, the animals would be needed for the service of God at the sanctuary. But why that would be the case is unclear. The simplest explanation is that Jesus was referring to Himself as “Lord,” a title that He accepted from His followers and frequently used of Himself. In the later part of His ministry Jesus used such clear titles for Himself more frequently, and this would be a good example. He clearly was claiming authority as the Lord, even over what appeared to be the possessions of people.

Matthew then records the verses from the prophet Zechariah to say that this event was the fulfillment of that oracle. It is possible that Jesus said these verses to His disciples, introducing them with “This has taken place to fulfill.” That would mean that this introductory formula was said *proleptically*, just prior to its fulfillment. The other possible interpretation is that the inclusion of the verses was Matthew’s comment on the event afterward. In either interpretation, the point is clear that the event was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah given some 500 years earlier.

The introductory words of the prophecy come from Isaiah 62:11 but the main part of it from Zechariah 9:9. The whole passage is not included here: the expression “righteous and having salvation” was probably understood as part of the quotation used, or, it may be that the focus at this point was on the humility and peace that the King would have.

If we look at Zechariah more closely, the first “burden” begins in chapter 9 and continues through chapter 11. It concerns the anointed King who would be rejected. The second burden, beginning in chapter 12 and going through 14, concerns the rejected King who would be enthroned. This is clearly, then, the part of the prophecy leading up to the rejection and death of messiah. The core of the oracle is that the King would enter the holy city with humility and peace, riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Kings at times rode on donkeys in times of peace (Judg. 5:10; 1 Kings 1:33). And the Jews certainly knew that Zechariah 9:9 was a prophecy of the coming King--the Messiah. Thus we may observe that Jesus was proclaiming His Messiahship, His fulfillment of Scripture, and His coming in peace to offer salvation to the people. By this entry Jesus was compelling the people to recognize Him, at least for the moment, as the coming King predicted in Zechariah. They would have to consider this event in the light of that prediction.

There is some question about the number of animals involved. In the oracle in Zechariah the normal understanding would be that the two lines, one mentioning the donkey, and the other the colt, were Hebrew parallelism referring to one animal and not two. In the New Testament Matthew alone of the four gospels mentions that there were two animals. It is possible that Matthew did this to make the distinction that Jesus rode on the colt, for Mark said Jesus rode on an animal which no one had ever ridden. The point is that Matthew gives a little more detail of the animals to be found tied up, to make it clear that Jesus rode on the colt. So then, in the midst of the excitement of the crowd, a young, unbroken animal remained calm when Jesus rode it, a sign that Jesus controlled nature. This symbolism pointed to the peace of the Messianic kingdom. Matthew, in mentioning the two animals, stresses that Jesus fulfilled the detail of this prophecy--he rode the colt.

The disciples fulfilled their mission and returned with the animals. They then spread their cloaks over them, over both animals. When the text says that Jesus sat on **them**, it is most likely referring to the cloaks and not the animals. Jesus rode on the colt into the city. Both animals were in the procession, but Jesus rode the colt.

II. The Triumphal Entry (21:7-11).

There was a very large crowd that went with Jesus along the way. Some of them spread their cloaks on the path to acknowledge Jesus’ kingship, and others cut branches and lay them in the way.

Many scholars have noted that cutting down tree branches was a custom of the Feast of Tabernacles, which was held in the fall and not the spring. But for that feast they would cut the branches and make little booths to dwell in--not spread them in the road. Those were larger branches, strong enough to make a lean-to shelter. These are lighter branches, certainly not large ones that might trip the animals. This was again an act of homage at the entrance of the king, and not a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. 1 Maccabees 13:51 and 2 Maccabees 10:7 show similar customs, indicating that the act of spreading the branches was in recognition of the king.

The Gospels also tell us that throngs of people came with Him in the procession. The news had spread of His arrival in Bethany, and so there was time for the crowds to gather, especially His followers from Galilee, and certainly all those who were looking for the Messiah. Messianic expectations were high at this time, and when the word spread of Jesus’ arrival in the area, people naturally thronged to see Him. After all, His miracles and His teachings had drawn crowds everywhere He went.

The words that the crowds shout along the way come from Psalm 118. That passage, in fact, Psalms 113-118, belong to what is called the Hallel Psalms, psalms sung at all the major festivals in Jerusalem. The words, then, would have been well known even by the common person, much like Christmas Carols and Advent Hymns are known by nominal Church members. The cries included: “Hosanna to the Son of David”; “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD”; and “Hosanna in the highest.”

The word “hosanna” is a Greek writing of the Hebrew verb from the Psalm, “Save!” (Hebrew *hosi’ah-na’* [pronounced *ho-she-ah-nah*]). It is an imperative, a cry for help. In time it became an acclamation, much like the Hebrew word *hallelu-yah*, which is an imperative (“praise the Lord”) but became an acclamation. The cry is addressed to Jesus as “Son of David.” There was no doubt in the minds of the faithful that this Jesus was the Messiah, the heir to the throne of David. This is confirmed by the exclamation, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.” In Psalm 118 the sentence was a priestly blessing for the king who led the people in

procession to the sanctuary to offer praise to the Lord. But it came to be a praise to God for the coming of Messiah--Jesus had been widely recognized by His followers as "the Coming One." And so when the people repeat their "Hosanna" to God in the highest, which is like saying "Glory to God in the highest" (in Luke) except it is a call for deliverance, they are praising God for sending them the Messiah, the Savior of Israel.

Of course it was fairly easy for the crowds to get caught up in the Messianic fervor in the light of Jesus' miracles and teachings. They knew He was a prophet, as the text says; and they hailed Him as their coming King. But they had not grasped the inevitable suffering of the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. It was difficult for the people, even those who were the closest to Jesus, to understand that His ride into Jerusalem as the promised Messiah was not to ascend the throne, but to die on the cross.

Luke records that on the way down Olives He was criticized by the leaders for receiving such praise. But Jesus answered that if they did not praise, the stones themselves would cry out. He was--and is--that great. He alone is worthy of such praise; and everything in creation will praise Him.

The whole city was in a stir when Jesus entered triumphantly. When they asked "Who is this?" they probably wanted to know who this Jesus really was that there should be such a stir over him. The answer that was given in the crowds was that He was a prophet of Nazareth. The reference to Nazareth probably indicates some surprise since it was such an unlikely place. But there were people there who recognized Him as the eschatological prophet (see Deut. 18:15-18; John 7:40; Acts 3:22; 7:37). The account here in Matthew leads the reader to the proper conclusion, that Jesus was more than a prophet--He was the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, who came to save the world.

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Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The triumphal entry of Jesus was the opening act of what we call Passion Week. That entry was an extraordinary moment of glory for Jesus, but one that he could not savor for long. He was not fooled by the fickle crowd, and he knew the threat posed by the Jewish leadership was real. The cross lay ahead, and his fate was sure. He did not conquer Jerusalem; he did not claim the earthly crown of David; he raised no triumphal arch; he did not lead an army against the Romans. He was dead by the end of the week. I wonder ... why do we continue to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry? Why is it mentioned in all four Gospels and given a day on the church calendar? Maybe the answer is something like this: we celebrate Christ's coming into the city because we so desperately want him to come again. We want him to make the words "on earth peace" (Luke 2:14) and "peace in heaven" (19:38) a final reality. We long for him to come, save us, and take us home. Hosanna to the king! May he be king forever.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God approaches us with grace and love, not with vindictive judgment (Zech. 9:9)
2. We often experience God's plan for us in unanticipated and unexpected ways (Matt. 21:1 -3)
3. Fulfilled prophecy helps us see God's presence in history as well as in our lives (vss. 4-5)
4. No task done to glorify Christ is ever small or unimportant (vss. 6-7)
5. Serving Christ is not difficult in good times; we truly show our love for Him when we do His will even in hard times (vss. 8-9)
6. When we consistently serve Christ, it enables others to recognize Him as Saviour and Lord (vss. 10-11)