

# Jesus in Jerusalem

**THEOLOGICAL THEME:** Jesus is the Messiah who cleanses the temple and welcomes the unworthy into God's presence.

Over the past decade or so, the phrase “Easter egg” has entered into our cultural vocabulary as a way of referring to things intentionally hidden in books and movies as an inside joke or bonus for die-hard fans. I think of this phenomenon when I think of the way Scripture unfolds. I've been studying the Bible for years and yet still find Easter eggs—golden trinkets containing treasures untold, intentionally hidden by a good Father for our delight as we see how Jesus fulfills Old Testament hopes, longings, and expectations. And the New Testament sets us up for this search (Luke 24:27; 24:44-47; John 5:39,46; see also Rom. 1:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 3:14-15).

## Voices from the Church

“‘Hosanna’ is an old Hebrew word that means ‘Save us, now!’, which the Jews employed while they waved their palm branches and welcomed the Messiah into Jerusalem for the last time. Only in God's Kingdom is a cry for help equal to a shout of praise.”<sup>1</sup>

—Andrew Peterson



Based on your previous study of the Bible, what are some ways Jesus fulfills Old Testament Scripture?

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How does fulfillment within Scripture help to strengthen your trust in God's Word?

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Date of My Bible Study: \_\_\_\_\_

In this session, we will walk through three scenes in Matthew 21 that occurred on the day Jesus entered Jerusalem during the week prior to His crucifixion. Jesus' entry into the city was welcomed with great fanfare, even though He approached in humility while sitting on a donkey. He cleansed the temple of those there to take advantage of the worshippers. And as the true Son of David, He permitted and welcomed the praise of children. In these events, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament expectations and longings for the Messiah, who would redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise.

## 1. Jesus is the Savior who comes to redeem His people (Matt. 21:1-11).

*<sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once."<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,*

*<sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion,  
'Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

*<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"<sup>10</sup> And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?"<sup>11</sup> And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."*

As Jesus was about to enter the holy city of Jerusalem, the crowd sensed the significance of the moment: “The anointed King is coming. The long-awaited Messiah is finally here.” Ages of angst and hope and longing were coming to their consummation before their very eyes. The fringes of Jerusalem were in an uproar of hopeful expectation and praise. In recognition of the gravity of the occasion, the crowds removed their robes and laid them and palm branches before the feet of the King riding on a donkey.

In Matthew 21:4, Matthew provides the ninth of ten formula quotations found scattered through his Gospel regarding the fulfillment of Old Testament types and prophecies. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Matthew saw this event of Jesus on a donkey as a fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah 9:9-10.

Zechariah prophesied of the day when Jerusalem’s Messiah-King would come riding on a donkey. And what would be the result? He would usher in a reign of peace. Jerusalem, the city of peace—as its name means—would be the center of peace, shalom, wholeness, and security rippling out to the ends of the earth.



How should Matthew’s emphasis on Old Testament fulfillment shape the way we read and understand the Old Testament?

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How has studying the Old Testament helped you appreciate the first coming of Christ more fully?

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So picture the scene. Thousands of pilgrims were making their way into Jerusalem for the annual Passover festival, and then they began removing their cloaks and laying them and palm branches upon the road. This was five-star treatment for the entrance of a king into a city. But then came Jesus riding on a donkey. Typically conquering kings would enter their capitals on warhorses or in glorious chariots or leading a march of pomp and privilege. But Jesus came on a young donkey, victorious yet humble.



Why do you think God chose to have His Son enter Jerusalem in a picture of humility?

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What were the people crying out? “Hosanna,” or “Save us.” In this the people were echoing the words of Psalm 118:25-26: “Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.”

Why were they celebrating? Messianic expectations in the first century were diverse, but most viewed the Christ as one who would purify the Jewish faith, punish the unrighteous, and judge Israel’s enemies. They had waited hundreds of years for a day like this. The people celebrated because they thought the drought was done, the famine was finished. The King was finally coming.

And of course, they were correct. Jesus will purify the faith, punish the unrighteous, and judge His enemies. But that was not why He was coming on this occasion. One day He will ride a warhorse as the conquering King of kings, but on this day He was riding a donkey as the Suffering Servant.



### Voices from Church History

“Let his coming in the name of the Lord be mentioned with strong affections, to our comfort, and joyful acclamations, to his glory. Well may we say, Blessed is he; for it is in him that we are blessed. Well may we follow him with our blessings, who meets us with his.”<sup>2</sup>

—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

We call this small section of Scripture “the triumphal entry,” but that is perhaps a misnomer. This is not the coming of a conquering king (at least not yet) but of a suffering servant. His true triumph is not marked by a late-afternoon entry from a mount but a mid-afternoon public execution on a cross followed by an early-morning exit from a tomb.

**?** What comes to mind when you hear the word *redemption*?

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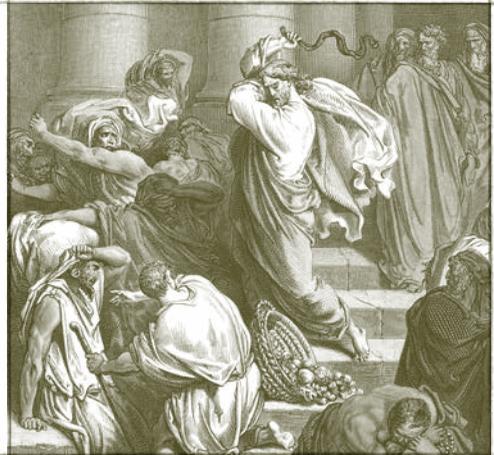
**?** Why is it significant that we recognize the purpose for which Jesus came?

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## 2. Jesus is the Savior who comes to restore true worship (Matt. 21:12-13).

*<sup>12</sup> And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>13</sup> He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”*



Unlike the cultural caricatures of a “happy hippie” Jesus, Scripture presents a Jesus of passion and humanity. He experiences the gamut of human emotions because He is fully human (Heb. 2:17-18). Jesus experienced compassion and pity (Mark 8:2). He marveled at people (Matt. 8:10). He experienced sorrow (Matt. 26:38) and sadness (John 11:33-35; cf. Heb. 5:7).

Although the Scripture doesn’t reveal exactly the emotional motivations for Jesus’ actions in the temple, it is clear that He is acting from some combination of anger and frustration. Unlike our frustration with traffic or bills or our favorite sports team, Christ’s frustration arises from a place of holy discontentment. He is not frustrated by selfish desires but rather by the sights and sounds of His Father’s will undone.

According to Jesus, the Father seeks true worship from true worshipers (John 4:23-24). Jesus was looking for those who sought His Father’s face in the temple, but as He entered, He saw a façade instead. Rather than a place of gathering for the nations to pray, it was a spectacle of commerce with shimmering coins and cooing doves. Far from shining with the glory of God, the temple glimmered with the gilded glory of man.

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 80. Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwells the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live our lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous fruit that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also equips individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:11).



When have you been compelled to action by a desire for the glory of God, and why were you so compelled?

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### 3. Jesus is the Savior who comes to receive all praise (Matt. 21:14-17).

*<sup>14</sup> And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. <sup>15</sup> But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, <sup>16</sup> and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?” <sup>17</sup> And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.*

Though we live as though the world revolves around us, there are actually very few days for most of us in which we have honest elevated expectations of our will being done completely. Perhaps on your wedding day or birthday, you have a greater sense of anticipation of getting your way, but the rest of the time, most of us realize that our kingdom is not ultimate.

For most of Jesus’ life, He had remained hidden. Living in the rural backwoods of Galilee and working as a common carpenter certainly didn’t arouse suspicions that history and time itself would bend around Him. Even in His ministry to the multitudes, He tended to command caution and discretion as if His mission should be veiled in secrecy (see in particular what is called the “messianic secret” in Mark; cf. Mark 1:34,43-45; 3:12; 7:24,36; 8:30; 9:9).

But finally the time had come when Jesus no longer quieted the crowd. He was praised, and rather than rebuking the rejoicing crowd, Jesus received and relished the moment because the praise was right and so was the time. The temple was in an uproar as the children cried out.

Meanwhile, other eyes and ears were watching and listening, eyes and ears observing with disdain all that was happening as their glory and authority crumbled around the feet of Jesus. The voices of the chief priests and scribes joined with the chorus of the children, but with a decidedly different tune.

Disgust dripped from their mouths as they took up their critique of this spectacle—would this man really receive praise and honor and glory in the midst of this temple built for the Lord’s glory alone? This is a great and appropriate question. Had Jesus been anyone else, we would celebrate the priests for their courage and discernment. But Jesus is not an imposter or pretender. Unlike the façade of worship typical of the temple, Jesus is Himself the very face of faithfulness. He is the King who has come to redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise. He alone is worthy of the worship.

 Why do you think Jesus was willing to receive praise in this moment when before He had remained resistant?

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 What might a life more abandoned to praise and worship of Jesus look like for you?

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## Conclusion

The good news of “hosanna” is that Christ has come to save us. In our inadequate worship, we join the people in this narrative by crying out in faith the words of Psalm 118—“Save us!”—and He does. It is only through Christ that we are forgiven for our misplaced worship, in all its various forms. And through Him, we are able to worship as those who were previously unworthy to stand in God’s presence. In Christ, we are welcomed into the presence of God. So let us put away hypocritical and hollow worship and choose instead to exalt Jesus above ourselves.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** By entering Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy about the coming Messiah. Through His actions in the temple, Jesus conveyed His judgment toward those who would misuse God’s house for exclusionary and greedy purposes. For the sins of His people, Jesus offered His own body as a temple to be destroyed and then raised again.

# HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

**MISSIONAL APPLICATION:** God calls us to put away hypocritical and hollow worship and to exalt Jesus as Savior of the world.

1. In what ways should our ministry of the gospel mirror Jesus' actions and attitude in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem?

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2. How should we evaluate and correct our acts of worship in light of Jesus' passion for true worship?

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3. What are some ways we can encourage one another to give all praise to Jesus the Savior?

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