



MONDAY 12 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21

Plug In...

There is a distinct change of scene and mood from this chapter. Jesus is heading to Jerusalem. Jesus does intentional and provocative actions. From here and through the next few chapters, Jesus' moves, words and actions culminate in the religious leaders acting in all-out war against Him.

The rate of Old Testament quotes from Matthew 21 steps up. There is a real sense of what happens next directly plugs in to the movement of Israel's story.

Read the whole chapter to immerse yourself into what is going on. Imagine being there on the sidelines watching it unfold. What do you think you would be feeling?

Chew It Over...

We don't become Christians because we read the Old Testament. It is because we are Christians, disciples of Jesus, that we read the Old Testament. Jesus is the one that says, you want to know more about me, you want to become a deeper disciple, then know my backstory. Being a *Christian* (in Christ) makes this our backstory too.

Prayer Suggestion

Lord help us to discover who we truly are, where we've come from, where we are going through learning Jesus' story. May we gain our identity and live our life directly out of your story.



TUESDAY 13 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:1-5 & Zechariah 14

Plug In...

Jesus starts His journey into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. It lays to the east of the city. From it you can look directly at the Temple and the suburbs of the city of Jerusalem.

Israel's story tells us that God dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem. But due to their idolatry, God's presence left the city; vividly portrayed in [Ezekiel 10-11](#). God's Spirit vacates sinful Jerusalem to a mountain to the east ([Ezekiel 11:23](#)). This is the Mount of Olives.

Israel's story continues with God promising to one day cleanse the temple and city so that He can return and dwell with His people. All of the prophets announce this. The prophet Zechariah speaks of a day when God will stand again on the Mount of Olives ready to fight the enemy ([Zechariah 14:1-5](#)) resulting in the cleansing of the temple ([Zechariah 14:20-21](#)).

Chew It Over...

We often go quickly to the category of Messiah, prophesied King, because of the [Zechariah 9](#) quote (v.5) and the crowd calling out "Son of David" (v.9). But before that, who is this person standing on the Mount of Olives? In Matthew 21, where does He go from here? What does He do? What is Matthew saying is going on?

Prayer Suggestion

Do you see Jesus as God. Whatever you pray, praying in the name of Jesus is praying to the God of the universe, the one that wins the battle, the one that fights for you!



WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:1-10 & Zechariah 9:9-17

Plug In...

Jesus deliberately walks into town on a donkey. Knowing Zechariah, this is a statement. Previously, Jesus has kept His messianic references hidden. Now, He actively takes up actions that go public with His identity. Clearly, people get the statement. They start treating Him like royalty, rolling out the 1st Century equivalent of the 'red carpet', and shout out His name, "Son of David".

In fact, they begin chanting from Psalm 118. A song that David wrote when He marched back into Jerusalem after he was forced to flee from Absalom; fleeing out of Jerusalem, up the Mount of Olives, weeping and barefooted with not military, horses, or many supplies – just donkeys (scan through: [2 Samuel 14-16](#)). David waits on God to do battle and his kingdom is restored ([2 Samuel 19](#)).

Chew It Over...

The profile of God's servants has always been suffering and humiliation, then victory and glory. Despite the red carpet and crowd cheering, where in the journey is this servant up to if on a donkey?

Our destiny is tied up to the king. We know where this story ends. How does that shape our view of suffering and humiliation, even deprivation, because we follow Jesus?

Prayer Suggestion

If you feel loss, down, deathly, cry out those words, "Save me" ('Hosanna) to the donkey-rider who is also victorious ([Zechariah 9:9](#)).



THURSDAY 15 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:12-17 & Jeremiah 7:1-15

Plug In...

Jesus sees the leaders of the day doing things in the temple that have the result of stopping people getting to God. After cleansing the temple, Jesus heals people in the temple (v.14).

Jesus uses the words of Jeremiah. Jeremiah once stood in the Temple gates and saw that the goings-on inside were corrupt. He announced that God sees it and will depart.

Chew It Over...

Psalm 8 shows that the whole of creation was to be a temple with humanity standing in the middle as the image of God. After the Fall, the temple in Israel was to be a place where humans find atonement and reconciliation with God, becoming fully human again. Restored to the image of God, forgiven of their sins, they were to head out and be a light to all nations; promoting restoration to being fully human again.

By the time of Jesus, this location of atonement and reconciliation had become the site of sustained corrupt humanity. Jesus, as the complete and full image of God, sees this and sets about cleansing God's temple. In Jesus, God's order for creation is upheld. No wonder the children cry out recognising in Jesus the role of humanity is rightly executed ([Psalm 8](#)) . Someone fully human walks among them!

All of Jesus' teaching so far there has been a demand for fruit of the image of God. However, we can't do it, our hearts are hard. The way of righteousness is given as a gift to those who acknowledge they need it. Therefore, we must always look at our life,

live a life of repentance, cast ourselves on Jesus, and expect the impossible to be made possible.

The character of God is to seek the lost, the helpless, the vulnerable and bring them to Himself. We image God, so our character must be the same. It cannot be that we do practices at church, in our families, in our lives that create an 'in-club'. Keep thinking into what things we do together, and individually, that may be a barrier to people accessing God (*cf.* [18:1-9](#)). We can be fully human again – to have the character of God is to seek the lost and bring them to the place of reconciliation: Jesus.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask for God to keep giving you His character. May we be image-bearers of God. May we carry the presence of God to others through our actions, behaviours, our love.



FRIDAY 16 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:18-22

Plug In...

Fig trees in the Old Testament were used symbolically to signal Israel's prosperity or adversity (e.g. [Micah 4:4](#); [Psalm 105:33](#)).

The symbolism even used the fact that fig trees were the first in Palestine to bear fruit. A few weeks before the season of fruit came, you could be assured the figs had burst forth. The love God had for Israel, the choosing of Israel, is described like figs appearing before everything else ([Hosea 9:10](#)).

Chew It Over...

Given the actions Jesus has done in the Temple, the hostility with Israel's leaders, what might this next action of Jesus dramatise?

The next statement needs to be figured out. Which mountain is the '*this* mountain' Jesus refers to. Is Jesus talking about the Mount of Olives (which He is standing on, possibly taking into account the [Zechariah 14](#) prophecy)? Or, the Temple mount which can be viewed from where He is talking with His disciples? As you think into this, what is the impact of what is being said with each option? Where does Israel's story so far lead you in your answer?

Prayer Suggestion

V.22 is obviously not a carte-blanche promise but deeply connected to the mountain talk. Given your reflections on the passage, what are we being asked to pray about and pray about wildly, boldly, believingly?



WEEKEND 17-18 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 21:22

Plug In...

Some of Jesus' promises with prayer are breath-taking in their expansiveness. There is powerful "whatever you ask" language on Jesus' lips at times.

Chew It Over...

These breath-taking promises, of course, are limited by prayer that asks after God's Kingdom, not seeking glory for oneself, or something self-serving. [John 14:13-14](#) is the qualification of Jesus' seemingly *universal* prayer promises. [Cf. [James 4:3](#) – we are to pray believing but with *right motives*.]

So, prayer is extravagantly powerful. Seek God's glory, ask Him to fulfil His promises, to deliver on His character. Ask with the motives to see God's fame enhanced, our reliance on Him enhanced. Ask God to do the impossible. Ask God to enable us to do things.

Prayer Suggestion

These promises show that prayer is powerful. Powerlessness in your Christian character, your opportunities to be about the Kingdom, all stem from prayerlessness. Let's pray, pray often, never give up.