

MATTHEW 21:1-17

THE SECOND SHAKING

The first shaking: Jesus' birth.

We have now arrived at the last week of Jesus' life here on earth. If that is always in the background of your thinking, then things do seem to be more ominous. This last week is so important in establishing Jesus' Messianic claims that Matthew has devoted the last eight chapters of his Gospel to it. That averages out to around one chapter per day. Once again that's an average, but it goes to show how much emphasis he places on this last week of Jesus' life. The preceding 20 chapters cover roughly 33 years of Jesus' life. We cannot miss this point.

We will pick up with Jesus, his disciples and the large group with whom they are traveling as leave Jericho and come to Jerusalem.

From Jericho, it would take some eight hours of uphill walking to reach Jerusalem before dark. You didn't want to be on this section of road after dark, as bandits were known to be there even though their traveling as a group offered protection. As they approached Jerusalem from the east, they came to Bethany, about two miles southeast of Jerusalem. This is where Jesus stayed during the week of Passover until His arrest. Most likely He stayed at the home of Lazarus. Lazarus lived in Bethphage, (house of the early fig). This was just down the road from Bethany. Both of these places are situated on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. Therefore when the bible says that Jesus and His disciples stayed on the Mount of Olives, it doesn't necessarily mean that they camped on the mountainside. They can be staying in Bethphage and still be on the Mt. of Olives.

John 12:1-11

1 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8

For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”
9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

If you take all the Gospel accounts together you can get the traditional chronology of Jesus’ movements in the first few days.

According to this chronology, Jesus and His disciples arrived in Bethany on Friday afternoon, celebrating the Sabbath there. The upcoming Sabbath was another motivating factor to get there before sundown. Once the Sabbath began, they would be able to travel for more than a mile or so. The Sabbath lasted from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. This is what we read of in John chapter 12. This is when Mary anointed Jesus’ feet. On Sunday morning Jesus directs the disciples to make preparations for His entry into Jerusalem.

Please note that the resurrection of Lazarus was a big deal. So much so that people were coming to the home of Lazarus to see him alive as well as to see Jesus. This is part of what is feeding all the frenzy when Jesus comes to town.

***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.’ ”***

- The cat is out of the bag!
- Go get the donkey and her foal. (Doesn’t necessarily have to be a miracle)
- Why a donkey in the first place? Why her foal? Gentile kings road large steeds when going or coming from war. Occasionally they would ride a donkey, but only if they were seeking peace.
- Jesus does this in order to fulfill a prophecy. But it also had an historical context that to any first century Jew would have spoken volumes. Matthew loosely quotes Zech. 9:9. This quotation references the return of a humble and peaceful king David returning to Jerusalem after having defeated Absalom. (2 Samuel 19-20) When Jesus came down the Mt. of Olives in the same fashion it spoke volumes, especially as He has people proclaiming Him to be Messiah and king. Most people would have been on foot. A rider would

stand out in the crowd.

- There are two crowds. The Galilean crowd with Jesus and the Jerusalem crowd already in the city, who seem to know very little of Jesus. This was akin to the Beverly hillbillies and all their kinfolk invading Jerusalem at once in a large regal procession.

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. 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.”

- Notice that all the palm fronds and such are thrown down PRIOR to entering Jerusalem. When they get to Jerusalem, the people already inside the city (for the most part) are at a loss as to whom Jesus is and what is going on. This is what *seio* (*shook*) the city.
- Hosanna – save now!
- Palm fronds were a symbol of nationalism both to the Jews and the Romans.
- So there is a great nationalistic fervor in the air. They are expecting Jesus to rid them of the Romans. And when He doesn’t at the end of the week, most desert Him. Politics trumped theology/eschatology in this case.

12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”

14 Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant 16 and 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 babes and nursing infants

You have perfected praise?’ ”

17 Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

It was some time on Sunday, the first day of the week that Jesus entered the Temple.

- First and only cleansing or second? John has Jesus cleansing the Temple

earlier in His account. But John is known to group things more according to theme than chronology. It is possible that this is Jesus' first time in Jerusalem since his childhood. There are good arguments either way.

- Since Jesus didn't draw the ire of the Roman guards who observed the Temple complex from the Roman fort just up the hill, it is likely that the skirmish wasn't that large. We see in the case of Paul that they were on the scene very quickly in the case of the riot started there. It was more symbolic than anything. Jesus was giving notice of a judgment.
- Den of thieves or Bandit's cave? Was it that they were extorting people or was it the location that was the issue? Practically speaking, people had to rely on the sale of animals. They couldn't have been expected to bring their animals. I'm sure there was some extortion going on, but the location seems to be the bigger issue. People couldn't pray in the market-type atmosphere of the moneychangers who were in the outer court of the Gentiles. Holy space was being used for trade instead of prayer. That cannot be. If the issue was just extortion it would not explain Jesus' expulsion of the buyers AND the sellers. It was WHERE the transactions were carried out rather than HOW they were done.
- Cave of Bandits rather than den of thieves.
- This raised the ire of the religious officials in the Temple complex.
- The CHILDREN were now crying out to Hosanna, son of David as opposed to the adults. The children's cries as opposed to the same thing being exclaimed by the adults just outside the city. The children had no political motive.

And then Jesus left, going back to area of Lazarus' home.

In Jesus' denunciation of the trade in the Temple, there are four things on which He focuses and they all have to do with worship.

- **This is to be a house of prayer.** Corporate prayer is essential in the life of a Christian. When we are unified many great things can happen. But it can't happen in an atmosphere that isn't centered or focused on prayer.
- **This is to be a place where people are helped and even healed.** Jesus healed the blind and lame there. We who were blind spiritually as well as those with physical maladies are to congregate in a place where the atmosphere is that of healing and prayer - not just business as usual.
- **This is to be a place where the power of God is sought and released.** The religious officials sought to squelch that when they saw what Jesus was doing and the accolades He was getting. We can't squelch the Spirit.
- **This is to be a place where praise is expressed.** It is hard to do that in a place where worldly business is taking place and actually had priority.

Jesus was protecting the sanctity of the Temple as holy ground. And He was

protecting those who genuinely wanted to worship. **Religion/ religious practices and worship can't become a business or just another everyday occurrence. It is to be special, set apart, sanctified.** We are to come with our hearts prepared to worship. This is why we need to be punctual and ready to enter the sanctuary, not staying in the foyer talking about whatever may be the topic of the day.

- If you were told some famous person wanted to meet you and talk – and that they had moved heaven and earth in order to do so, meaning they had totally rearranged their schedule, making sacrifices to meet you, would you make sure you were there for the meeting?
- God created a universe and in that universe He placed the only planet capable of supporting life. On that planet He created a garden for the first of His creation. It was a Utopia. When His creation fell, He then had a tabernacle and eventually a temple built. The garden, the Tabernacle and the Temple were to represent Heaven on earth – the dwelling place of God. And these places put here in order that God could commune with His family on earth as in Heaven.
- Now we all believers are the “Temple of God” because the Spirit of God resides inside us.
- But, that doesn't eliminate the fact that we were created as social beings. We need each other in order to be healthy. We need each other and there is a natural form of power and protection found in a group.
- **Hebrews 10:24,25**
- **And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

God, the creator of the universe and all that is in it, created all of this because He wanted a family with whom He could interact and converse. He wants the relationship more than we do. He has literally not just moved Heaven and earth, but created them in order for this relationship to happen. God is protective of us and wants to have time with us. And this is why Jesus went into the Temple to cleanse it. He has come in order that we might be with Him. And we should gather together with worship and praise on our minds in order that we can commune not only with Him but each other as a family – God's family.