



LENT BIBLE STUDY - 2022

ENTERING THE PASSION OF JESUS

#1

Jerusalem – Risking Reputation

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Matthew 21:1-11

Each of the four gospels includes the event of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Each gospel offers a different perspective, sharing details that contribute to the greater whole.

In this story from Matthew's gospel all aspects relate to the prophecies and characters of the Old Testament. For Jesus, entering Jerusalem is risky as he enters with his entourage at the Passover – the feast that celebrates freedom from slavery and oppression. This 'parade' is often referred to as Jesus' 'Triumphal Entry' into Jerusalem. It is a time when the city would be full to overflowing with people making their annual pilgrimage to the Temple. Jerusalem is the Holy City now occupied by the Romans.

Zechariah 9:9 gives us a prophetic context, which states that the king will come not with military power to conquer, but with righteousness and justice. The coming king is described as humble – not meaning meek or gentle - but poor or afflicted. He is one who is able to listen to others and to serve, rather than be served. Jesus does not enter with the trappings and pomp of royalty. (See **Psalm 33:16** and **Isaiah 62:12**)

When Jesus enters Jerusalem the crowds spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches and spread them on the road.

Q. What is missing from this account that you might expect to be mentioned?

Sometimes we insert details into Bible stories that are not there.

Hosanna - literally means 'save us, please' or even 'save, we pray.' It can be found in Psalm 118 – one that would be sung on the journey to Jerusalem or recited at the Passover. Psalm 118 is one of the Hallel (meaning 'to praise') Psalms (113-118). Hallel is part of the word Hallelujah – *praise you, Lord*. These psalms not only ask for salvation; they also show that salvation, in a sense, is already present.

Son of David – a reference to the great king who brought the ark to Jerusalem. This is David's capital city – so Jesus (*see Matthew's genealogy in chapter 1. Note Matthew 1:6*) is coming to the city which, according to the gospels, is rightfully his.

Jerusalem – the whole city is said to be in turmoil. People say that 'he is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee' – an allusion to **Deuteronomy 18:18**.

So, Jesus in this Bible passage from Matthew is associated with the meek king predicted in Zechariah, with king David and a prophet like Moses. Hopes are high – yet, at the same time Pilate is also entering Jerusalem with his soldiers. Confrontation is unavoidable.

However, we must remember that none of the gospel accounts of Jesus' entry into the city flags the Romans as the major danger, even though Jesus dies on a Roman cross. It is when Jesus disrupts the Temple activities on the following day that things escalate against him.

Jesus told his disciples earlier in Matthew that if they want to become his followers, they must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him (Matt 16:24). To take up the cross meant to risk severe punishment, in order to proclaim a better world - the Kingdom of God - and then work for it. Jesus' Triumphal Entry cannot be separated from the cross. When people witnessed Jesus entering the city and hailed him as son of David, they put his life in danger.

Q. Are we in the crowd shouting 'hosanna', or elsewhere, afraid to take part?



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DISCUSSION

EXPECTATIONS AND DETAILS

Remembering a parade that you have attended, what elements did these parades have that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem also has?

What is different?

How do you think the expectations of the people determine what they saw?

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE

Read the following passages:

Zechariah 9:9-10

1 Kings 1:33-40; 2 Kings 9:12-13

Psalm 118: 19-29

Deuteronomy 18:18

How do these passages shed light on our understanding of Matthew 21: 1-11?

JOINING THE PARADE?

Read Matthew 21: 9-11.

What two titles are given to Jesus?

What do the crowds know about his background?

Why is it important not to separate the Triumphal Entry from the cross?

Why is it important not to separate the Passion narrative from the rest of Jesus' life?

What does 'taking up the cross' mean for us?