

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

### STUDY ONE

## That's Who? Riding on What? Why?

*Matthew 21:1–11*

*Jesus entered Jerusalem in a way no one could miss. He was riding on the back of a donkey, and the crowd was shouting and praising God. Jesus was living out prophecy . . . what a great moment!*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HEN Matthew began recording the final days of Jesus' earthly life, he must have put down his stylus, closed his eyes, and taken a deep breath in a moment of awe. Sacred, profound scenes awaited him of the period of Jesus' life now known as Holy Week.

Matthew had been building up to the events of this week. In Matthew 1–2, he covered the first thirty years of Jesus' life. In 3–20, he featured snapshots from Jesus' three years of ministry. Then, in 21–28, he slowed his pace to detail each event surrounding Jesus' passion and death, devoting a third of his gospel to just one week.

Indeed, this was a week like none other, one that remains fixed at the pinnacle of history. God's Spirit moved Matthew to take his time, to write slowly and carefully about the events that occurred from Sunday to Sunday, from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to His triumphant resurrection from the grave.

Matthew included every key moment of Jesus' passion: His agony in Gethsemane, the treacherous betrayal, Jesus' trials and torture, and His last gasp on the cross. The Lamb of God had come to suffer for sin and be raised in victory. This was the reason the Savior was born and is the heart of Matthew's message to the world.

As we step into this sacred space, we, too, must take our time, read slowly, and pause often to let the wonder in. Palm Sunday begins our journey where we'll join throngs of jubilant people walking with Jesus as He rides a donkey down a dusty road to Jerusalem.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## **That's Who? Riding on What? Why?**

*Matthew 21:1–11*



### **PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Begin by inviting the Lord to stir your heart with love for Jesus and to lift your spirit with the magnitude of His sacrifice on your behalf.

*Father, all that came before in Matthew's gospel has led me to the dramatic events of Holy Week. As I step across this threshold, help me enter the scenes with my heart fully receptive to Your Spirit's movement in me. Amen.*



### **TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES**

As we open Matthew 21, we walk across a thematic bridge—Jesus' statement to His disciples at the end of chapter 20, "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

For more than three years, Jesus served His people by healing the sick, performing miracles, and teaching. Now at the triumphal entry, Jesus formally presents Himself to His people as their humble servant, their King who is willing to spill His divine blood for their sakes. Before digging into the passage, review Pastor Chuck Swindoll's chart on Matthew below and see where our passage fits in the flow of the whole book.



**That's Who? Riding on What? Why?**

*Matthew 21:1–11*

**MATTHEW**

	<b>Announcement and Arrival of the King</b> Main Emphasis: His Credentials Birth Baptism Temptation  CHAPTERS 1–4	<b>Proclamation and Reception of the King</b> Main Emphasis: His Message Sermon on the Mount Miracles Discourses Parables CHAPTERS 5–15	<b>Opposition and Rejection of the King</b> Main Emphasis: His Suffering and Death Spread of opposition Preparation of disciples Final predictions Crucifixion CHAPTERS 16–27	<b>Resurrection and Triumph of the King</b> Main Emphasis: His Conquest God's power Great Commission CHAPTER 28
<b>The King</b>	His identity: Israel's promised King		His destiny: "Crucify Him!"	
<b>Scope</b>	Teaching the vast multitudes		Teaching the Twelve	
<b>Location</b>	Bethlehem and Nazareth	Ministry in Galilee	Ministry in Judea	
<b>People's Reaction</b>	Increased popularity		Increased hostility	
<b>Theme</b>	Jesus is the King, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.			
<b>Key Verses</b>	16:16–19; 28:18–20			
<b>Christ in Matthew</b>	Jesus, the Messiah, fulfills the prophecies, promises, types, and expectations of the Old Testament Scriptures (16:16–19; 28:18–20).			

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**Observation: Preparing, Fulfilling, Responding**

In the observation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we highlight key locations, nouns, and actions.<sup>1</sup> Let's use our observation skills to view the passage from three angles: Jesus preparing to enter Jerusalem, His fulfillment of messianic prophecy, and the people's responses to their King.



## That's Who? Riding on What? Why?

*Matthew 21:1–11*

### Preparing to Enter—Matthew 21:1–3

Jesus usually traveled by walking, but this time, He purposefully chose to enter Jerusalem riding a donkey—and not just any donkey. According to [Matthew 21:1–3](#), what specific instructions did Jesus give two disciples?



#### *Searching the Scriptures Study Tool*

Jesus traveled from Jericho to Bethany and then to Bethphage. Find these cities on the maps in the back of your Bible. You can also locate the cities by going to the map titled, “[Bethany, Jerusalem, Emmaus, Mount of Olives, and Jerusalem](#),” at [insight.org](#). Take a few minutes to follow Jesus’ route from Jericho to Bethany (where Jesus stayed in the home of Lazarus, John 12:1–11), Bethphage, and Jerusalem.

Thousands of Passover pilgrims followed Jesus’ route to Jerusalem. Only Jesus, however, caused so much excitement. *Why?*

### Fulfilling Messianic Prophecy—Matthew 21:4–5

According to [Matthew 21:4–5](#), what messianic prophecy did Jesus fulfill by entering Jerusalem as He did? Look carefully at the details of this verse. Note who was foretold to ride what and the characteristics of this person.



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*Matthew 21:1–11*

In the interpretation section, we'll dig into the significance of Jesus' fulfillment of this prophecy. For now, let's observe the ways three groups of people received Jesus.

### Responding to the King—Matthew 21:6–11

In *Matthew 21:6–7*, what did the *disciples* do and why?

The *crowd* consisted of followers of Jesus who may have been Galilean pilgrims who had witnessed Jesus' messianic ministry. What did they shout, according to *21:8–9*? Notice how they surrounded Jesus as He descended the Mount of Olives, walking with Him and not simply watching Him pass by as if viewing a parade.

Pilgrims often sang their way to Jerusalem for festivals. But this crowd shouted. “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:9 NASB)! The whole spectacle put “the *entire city* . . . in an uproar” (21:10, emphasis added). In *21:10–11*, what were they asking, and how did Jesus' followers answer?



## That's Who? Riding on What? Why?

*Matthew 21:1–11*

*Until now, Jesus had stayed out of the limelight. Remember how often He said after healing someone, "Don't tell anyone about this." Now, He enters the limelight as if to say, "Don't hold back. Let your praise sound forth. I'm coming as your Messiah."  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Interpretation: The Meaning of Jesus' Triumphal Entry

Let's dig into the meaning of Jesus' triumphal entry.

#### A Public Entrance

Jesus usually discouraged publicity, telling His disciples "not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah" (Matthew 16:20). Once, He slipped away from a crowd wanting to make Him king (John 6:15). Yet, this Passover was different. Why was Jesus going public now?

#### Riding a Young Donkey

Why did Jesus ride a young donkey? Why not a horse like most kings? What unmistakable claim was Jesus making about His *identity* and His *intentions*, according to [Zechariah 9:9–10](#)? For help with the answer, read pages 140–141 in Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*. For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).



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### Receiving Praise

The crowd called Jesus a kingly name, “Son of David” followed by the kingly honor of spreading their garments and branches before Him (see [2 Kings 9:13](#)). In addition, He received praise as the people shouted, “Hosanna.” According to Pastor Chuck, “Hosanna” is a “one-word prayer that means, ‘O Lord, save now!’ It was a petition for deliverance from oppression.”<sup>2</sup>

What is the significance, for them back then and for us today, of Jesus receiving these words and gestures of praise?

*In a word familiar to every Jew, Hosanna, this messianic expectation is now at the point of realization. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: The Pharisees' Anger

Not surprisingly, Jesus' actions angered the Pharisees. They heard the people showering Jesus with praise: “Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Matthew 21:9). This line comes directly from Psalm 118, which is a song of thanks for God's protection, praise for His power over the nations, and a plea for salvation.

Read this quote and its context in [Psalm 118:25–28](#). According to Luke's account, how did the Pharisees react to Jesus receiving this blessing ([Luke 19:38–39](#))?



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What did Jesus' response communicate to the Pharisees, according to *19:40*?

Now, all the actors had made their entrance—Jesus at centerstage, His closest disciples, a crowd of adoring followers, the curious Passover masses, and the hateful religious leaders who would stop at nothing to kill Jesus. The drama of Holy Week had now begun.

### **Application: What about Us?**

The groups surrounding Jesus related to Him with a range of responses:

1. The disciples *served* Jesus.
2. The crowd *praised* Jesus.
3. The pilgrims *sought out* Jesus.
4. The unbelieving Pharisees *sneered at* Jesus.

We may resemble any of these groups during different seasons of our spiritual journey. But the person who we truly long to emulate is the one at the center, the humble king who came in peace to the City of Peace to make peace between God and humankind.

Here is a list of qualities Jesus displayed at His triumphal entry.

1. **Courage:** Jesus walked directly into a deadly storm knowing the danger.
2. **Humility:** Jesus arrived as King to serve His people.
3. **Peacefulness:** Jesus came on a mission of peace.
4. **Surrender:** Jesus submitted Himself to the Father's plan.



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*Matthew 21:1–11*

In what current circumstances would you like to ask Jesus for help to display these qualities like He did?

Commit this situation to the Lord as you seek His strength today. Then close your study in praise. It doesn't have to be Palm Sunday for you to wave your branches and sing *hosannas*. For your final prayer, use the hymn below to help you lay your life in surrender before the King of Kings.



### A FINAL PRAYER

#### All Glory, Laud and Honor<sup>3</sup>

All glory, laud, and honor  
To Thee, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of children  
Made sweet hosannas ring:  
Thou art the King of Israel,  
Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's name comest,  
The King and blessed one! . . .

To Thee, before Thy passion,  
They sang their hymns of praise;  
To Thee, now high exalted,  
Our melody we raise:  
Thou didst accept their praises—  
Accept the praise we bring,  
Who in all good delightest,  
Though good and gracious King!

#### ENDNOTES

1. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](https://www.insight.org/how-to-study-the-bible-for-yourself)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org). This page provides you an introduction to four important methods in Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—along with other helpful study tips.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 142.
3. Theodulph of Orleans, trans. John M. Neale, "All Glory, Laud and Honor," *Hymns for the Family of God* (Nashville: Paragon, 1976), hymn 249.

