

A ROYAL SHAKE-UP
MATTHEW 21.1-17

Jesus enters Jerusalem and the Temple as Israel's true king to announce in word and deed that his kingdom is overturning all the present structures and conceptions of the kingdom.

1. THE ROYAL ENTRY (1-11)

Entering Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives (1): Entering Jerusalem is a climatic moment in Mt. (cf. 16.21ff.) This is the destiny of the son of Abraham, the true Isaac who will be sacrificed; the son of David, Israel's true King (cf. 1.1f.).

Geography of entrance: from east to west (i.e. from Mt of Olives to Jerusalem). Movement toward the Garden (cp. Tabernacle construction; Magi in ch. 2).

Jesus is the new and last Adam that is coming back to take on the serpent; the serpent who is now embodied in the scribes, chief priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees (cf. 19.1f. and "testing" Jesus; cp. 4.1ff.)

Another major image: Jesus is the new David who is re-entering Jerusalem. Cf. 2Sam 15 when David is driven out of Jerusalem by Absalom, the usurper son of David. Goes by way of Mt of Olives (2Sam 15.30). Returns, but doesn't return by same route (at least not mentioned). Been waiting for David to return ever since.

Zech 14: prophecies that the Messiah, the son of David, will stand upon the Mt of Olives when he comes.

Lord of the beasts (1-3): Donkey and colt are associated with the tribe of Judah (i.e. the line from which David comes). Cf. Gen 49.10-11.

One symbol of the tribe of Judah—the royal tribe—is a donkey tied to a vine. Israel = the vine; the only one who can come and untie the donkey and ride it is the king. Jesus tells disciples to loose the donkeys. The king has come.

Image of Adam again as well. Originally given dominion over the beasts of the earth (Gen 1.28). Jesus is exercising lordship/dominion over the beasts. Not just Israel's king, but the king of the whole created order.

The King's humble mount (4-5): "fulfilled" – cp. (1.22-23; 2.15; 2.23; 4.14-16; 8.17; 12.16-21; 13.34-35; here; cf. also 5.17; 26.54, 56).

Everything that was written previously, while true in its own time, was always looking toward this climatic conclusion in Jesus.

Merges or conflates two passages of Scripture: first line from Isa 62.11 and rest from Zech 9.9.

Isa 62 – much about marriage (e.g. the land will be "married"). Daughter Zion was to be a bride for the Son. King is the Son of God (cf. 2Sam 7.14). Israel is a bride for the king (cf. Song of Songs; Ps 45; Eph 5).

What happens when the Son/Husband/King comes to the daughter and discovers through the test of jealousy that she has been unfaithful, an adulterous bride? He must clean her up or destroy her. Jesus will do both in different contexts.

Zech 9.9: YHWH is the king coming to save his people and destroy his enemies; not on a war horse, but a donkey. Donkey is a royal mount (cf. Gen 49.10-11; 1Kg 1.32-40; cf. also Jdg 10.4; 12.14; 1Sam 9.1-5; 2Sam 18.9). Humble, but this is what Israel's king was supposed to be: the servant king.

Meekness is not weakness. Mt 5.5: the meek will inherit the earth. This King will be victorious precisely b/c he does **not** come as an aggressive insurrectionist or building a mighty war machine. He will be victorious precisely b/c he is meek and lowly and willing to give his life a ransom for many.

The King's praise (6-9): "them" – the garments or the donkeys? Not literally riding two donkeys but image of riding on two beasts like the beastly cherubim on the ark over which YHWH is enthroned.

Garments: coverings which represent man himself and his vocation. They are his office, his vocation, his glory, his authority. This is an act of submission.

Recalls the story of Jehu (2Kg 9). Happens just before he goes to destroy the wicked house of Ahab and Jezebel along with the Temple of Baal (2Kg 10.18ff.).

Jesus is the King who has been anointed and will come in and overturn the present leadership of Israel and will cleanse the Temple of all of the false worshipers.

The branches: recall those leafy huts built one week per year at the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles; lit. *Succoth*, which means “clouds.” Trees connect heaven and earth (Garden, ark, Tabernacle, Temple, cross). Foliage = glory cloud. Live in the cloud.

Ps 68.4 – YHWH rides upon the clouds. This is what Jesus is doing.

Sing from Ps 118. Hosanna = “Save now, I pray.” Both prayer and praise. Recognition of the Son of David and praise for him is also the expectation for the son of David to do what is promised; namely save them.

Shaking up the city (10-11): city “moved” or “stirred” = same word in 27.51 to speak about the earth quaking when veil was torn and rocks were split. This is a world-altering event.

Jesus is *the* prophet, the one from Nazareth of Galilee. Prophets come into a place precisely to change things by their pronouncements, both verbal and non-verbal. Their pronouncements bring salvation and destruction. Jesus is the prophet.

2. OVERTURNING THE TEMPLE (12-17)

Overturning the temple commerce (12-13): Not primarily about corrupt financial practices or exchanging money in the Temple. That was necessary and expected (cf. e.g. Ex 30.13; Dt 14.22-27).

What is quoted gives us insight into the problem. Conflates two passages: Isa 56.7 & Jer 7.11.

In the Isa passage God is promising that he will bring in all of the nations to his house for worship.

In the Jer passage, YHWH is dealing with a people who trust in the fact that they have the Temple and its rituals and wrongly conclude that they may live contrary to God’s ways and still find refuge in the Temple.

Worship is equated to financial transactions in places like Rev 3. The worship of the people of Israel is “thievery.” They are not true worshipers. Their practices (something Jesus will outline specifically in ch. 23) betray their hearts.

Overturning the priesthood (14-16): blind and lame *in the Temple!* Not allowed in the priesthood; cf. Lev 21.17-20.

Also 2Sam 5.6-10 when David is overtaking the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. “The blind and lame” would keep David out. After David conquers, he excludes the blind and lame.

There is one common theme between these two images: those who were excluded are now included.

Is this a house of prayer or of healing? Not mutually exclusive. Goal of worship = healing (i.e. aspect of saving; “Hosanna”). Total person restoration so that man may draw near to God. Cf. Mt 8.17 quoting Isa 53.

Children *in the Temple!* Saying things just like the adults. Chief priests and scribes want Jesus to make them stop.

Jesus quotes Psa 8. God has ordained praise/strength in the mouths of children and nursing infants (!) to defeat his enemies.

This quotation is a double-edged sword. God has ordained that it will be through children that the enemies will be defeated. Those who stand against the children here are put in the position of being enemies of God. They are in this position b/c, unlike the children who recognize the true king, the leaders do not.

The Royal Exit (17): Jesus leaves the Temple just as YHWH did back during Babylonian captivity. He moves outside of Jerusalem. Those who wish to be loyal to YHWH must go with him.

1. *The call of Jesus to discipleship is a call to submit to him as King.*
2. *Beware of presumption*
3. *Serving others sometimes means doing difficult things.*