

Introduction

During much of Jesus' ministry, He had declared to His disciples that he would go to Jerusalem, die and be resurrected. Such a declaration was difficult for them to process, to accept and to believe. Now it was time to go to Jerusalem and fulfill this prophetic declaration. He and His disciples had traveled from Galilee, along the King's Highway, crossed at Jericho and began the ascent from 800 feet below sea level to Jerusalem, 2,500 feet above sea level. It was an arduous trek, ending at Bethany. He and His disciples had dinner at the home of Lazarus and were ready to go to Jerusalem itself.

The Preparation, 21:1-7

They left Bethany and entered the village of Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives, about one mile east of Jerusalem. Jesus then directed two disciples to go into the village, find a donkey and her colt and secure them for Jesus. Should anyone question their act, they were to declare, "The Lord needs them." Understand the importance of the emphasis, "Lord" here. No questions; no debate; no controversy. The Lord needs them.

Matthew interjects that this very act was a fulfillment of one of the most important Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, Zechariah 9:9. Their Messiah, their king, would come to them "humble, mounted on a donkey, even on a colt." For His disciples, for the Jewish people, for the leaders, Jesus was presenting Himself to the nation as their Messiah; offering Himself to them as their Messianic, Davidic King. How would they respond?

The Procession, 21:8-11

The disciples had placed their "cloaks" on the colt, serving somewhat as a saddle. As Jesus began the descent from the Mount of Olives, down the steep decline to the Kidron valley below, "most of the crowd" spread their cloaks on the road, an act of submission. What an extraordinary sight!! Others cut palm branches from the trees (a symbol of Jewish patriotism, often shown on their coins) and spread them on the road.

Note the language of v. 9, there were crowds who "went before Him" and those who "followed Him." The processional was swarming with people, more than likely Jewish pilgrims who had followed Him from Galilee and the

villages around the city. They were shouting "Hosanna ["Yahweh save us"] to the Son of David"--a clear declaration that He was their Messiah. Then they quoted from one of the Hallel psalms (Psalm 118:26), "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." The electricity and the excitement of expectation, of fulfillment, of hope filled the air that day!

As He entered Jerusalem, no doubt through the Sheep Gate to the north of the city, "the whole city . . . stirred up" questioned, "who is this?" [These were Jewish people of the city, not the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for Passover.] Jerusalem was in turmoil; the energy of the crowds was overcoming the city itself. The answer of the pilgrims was "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." Were they pronouncing that Jesus was the fulfillment of Moses' declaration in Deuteronomy 18:15-18? If so, this would have heightened the Messianic fervor of the city.

The Purification, 21:12-17

What occurs in this paragraph no doubt occurred on Monday of Passion week (see Mark 11:12-19). Matthew merely wants to stress the Messianic acts of Jesus once He entered Jerusalem. Astonishingly, Jesus carried out three distinct Messianic acts in the Temple complex on Temple Mount:

- He cleansed and purified the Temple. [Jesus cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His public ministry (see John 2:13-17) and did so again at the end of His ministry]. It was an act of judgment on the spiritual leadership of the nation. In the Court of the Gentiles, a sprawling plaza, the High Priest and His family sanctioned the erection of a marketplace for Jewish pilgrims to exchange their coins into the coins used to pay the Temple tax and a market to sell animals for sacrifice in the Temple. For each transaction, the High Priest took a commission! Jesus indicts the leadership for transforming a "house of prayer" into a "den of robbers" (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11).
- In v. 14 Jesus performed Messianic miracles of healing on Temple Mount! How amazing that must have been.
- In vv. 15-16, Jesus accepted worship and adoration from "the children", who were crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Messianic worship on Temple Mount from children!! The "chief

priests and scribes" were indignant at these acts of worship. As they protested, Jesus quoted from Psalm 8:2, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes, you have prepared praise." Jesus was accepting praise and worship from children, fulfilling the Messianic Psalm 8.

Conclusion

Each one of the acts on Monday on Temple Mount gave the final evidence to the spiritual leaders and to the nation that He was the Messiah. Did they accept Him? Did they, as a nation, bow down and worship Him? Some did, but most did not. Hence Jesus' lament in Matthew 23:37ff.

They would not bow down and worship Him as Messiah until Psalm 118 was fulfilled at his Second Coming!