

## **Matthew 21:1-17** **Discussion Guide**

### **Pray**

Apart from God, we can do nothing. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion. Throughout your time together, continue asking God for help.

### **Read Scripture**

Read Matthew 20:17-21:17 together with a special focus on 21:1-17.

### **Pray**

- Take time to pray for one another and ask for His grace to apply His Word to our daily lives.

**Open:** What aspects of Jesus does our culture tend to respect or even celebrate?

**Context:** “Matthew’s gospel presents a clear and thorough account of who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection in an explicitly Jewish manner. At the heart of Matthew’s account is the identification of Jesus Christ as the true King of the universe who ushers in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew’s Gospel also gives us a clear picture of discipleship, with all of Jesus’ radical demands on his followers amid a hostile world.

Matthew 16:21 is a turning point in Jesus’ ministry, for ‘from that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...and be killed, and on the third day be raised.’ The focus of Matthew 21-23 is on the religious leaders’ opposition to Jesus as he arrives in Jerusalem.” (ESV Study Bible Notes)

### **Observing the Text:**

- 1) How does the way in which this passage opens (20:17-19) help us to see the overall direction that the next chapters of Matthew will take? How do these verses show us what Jesus’ mindset and focus is, as our passage begins?
- 2) Notice the different responses that people have to Jesus throughout this passage (the disciples, blind men, the crowds, the religious leaders). How are people receiving Jesus? What do they want from Him?
- 3) What does Jesus seem most concerned with as he enters Jerusalem? As this passage concludes, what are you learning about the heart of Jesus—and about his priorities?

### **Understanding the Text:**

- 4) What does Jesus explicitly tell his disciples in 20:17-19)? Would you say that he leaves any room for misunderstanding? If not, why were they so confused?
- 5) How does the request of James and John’s mother reveal a continued lack of understanding about the kingdom of God (20:20-21)? What does Jesus seek to explain to James and John about the path that lies ahead for him—and for all of those who follow him (20:22-28)? Why would this have been radical then and still today?
- 6) What do you notice about the faith of the two blind men and about the way in which they approach Jesus (20:29-34)? How does Jesus respond to them? What do we learn through this interaction about the heart he has for needy and broken people, especially as we consider where Jesus is heading?

- 7) Why does Matthew quote from Zechariah as he begins to describe the scene of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem (21:4-5)? What details in this quote from Zechariah correspond with the scene that Matthew is describing? How would you describe the response of the crowds to Jesus's triumphal entry? What are we learning about Jesus from this moment?
- 8) How does Isaiah describe the "Way of Holiness" (see vs. 8)? Who will travel the highway that leads to Zion? Who won't? What is their condition as they travel (see 9-10)? How was this fulfilled?
- 9) What is Jesus most angry about as he cleanses the temple (21:12-13)? Notice what he says to the money changers and merchants—why does he condemn and rebuke them specifically? What is the significance of this cleansing He is performing?

**Bible Connections:**

- 10) In Zechariah 9:9-10, the prophet looks ahead toward a king who will come for God's people. What expectations would these verses have generated in the hearts and minds of God's people as they anticipated the King and Savior who was to come?
- 11) Read Isaiah 56:3-7—the passage from which Jesus quotes as he cleanses the temple. What do these verses reveal about the heart God has for the nations—and which he had even during the day of the Old Testament? How do these verses further explain the righteous anger that we see Jesus directing at what is taking place in the temple?

**Applying the Text:**

- 12) Even though we serve a Savior who suffered on a cross in order to redeem us, we often go down the same path that James, John, and their mother did. In ways do you tend to have a sense of entitlement or privilege in your spiritual life? How do you perhaps show that you desire power, affirmation, or comfort more than the way of the cross?
- 13) What can you learn from the attitude and approach of the two blind men who cry out to Jesus? How should they serve as a mirror for you—a sinner who has come to Jesus for grace, healing, and mercy? What distracts or prohibits you from doing so?
- 14) How should Jesus's cleansing of the temple serve as a warning for us today? What angers Him most about lifeless and hypocritical religion—and how can we learn from His rebuke?

**PRAY:**

- Take time thank God for sending Jesus to be the Promised Savior and King.
- Take time to thank Jesus that He was willing to walk the path of suffering for you.
- Ask God for grace to enable you to walk the path of humility and follow your crucified and risen Savior.
- Ask God for strength to reject a hypocritical and lifeless faith.
- Ask God to renew a joyful faith in Jesus like the faith of the blind men when they cried out for mercy.

NOTE: most questions taken from *Matthew: Making Disciples for the Nations Volume 2* by Jon Nielson and Daniel M. Doriani.