

Matthew 21-10-24a

Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 24th day of October, 2021. We're continuing our study of the Gospel of Matthew.

We have come to Jesus' final trip to Jerusalem and Bethany and Bethphage, the Mount of Olives. He will be in this area to and through the Passover week. And this is the portion labeled in your Bibles, the triumphal entry.

It's far more tragic than it is triumphant, but we're at the beginning of chapter 21, Matthew chapter 21. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our concentration, our understanding, our ability to grasp the truth that is in this portion of his word and to make good use of it in terms of faith, laying hold of righteousness by faith and the application that glorifies God. Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful that production in our lives, spiritual fruit is entirely dependent on what you have provided to us.

And simply by choosing to avail ourselves of it, we become productive. We reflect the glory of your son and your own glory here on this earth. We pray that as we look at this portion together, that the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding to see how pertinent it is and how applicable it is in the circumstances that we are navigating day by day, the relationships that we are a part of near and far, that we can be more Christ-like, we can be more spirit-filled, we can be more effective as lights shining in the midst of our generation, which is ever darkening.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 21.

Let's read this just to remind ourselves of the details that Matthew includes. This is one of those relatively unique episodes that is recorded in all four gospels. If you've got a Bible like mine, you will see the references there to Mark chapter 11, Luke chapter 19, and John chapter 12.

We will be observing a few details in those parallel gospels just for fullness of coverage, but we wanna concentrate as we have done in each of our gospel studies on the perspective that Matthew presents. He has a theme, he has a purpose. Do you remember of the four gospels what Matthew's emphasis is? It's always a handy reminder to reflect back on what each of the gospels has as its emphasis, because we have them given for a reason.

Let me give you a hint. Luke presents Jesus primarily, his emphasis is on Jesus as the son of man. John presents him as the son of God.

In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, the word was God. If you forget these, now look at me, I know you're flipping trying to find your notes. What did I write at

the beginning of each gospel? Let me give you a quick mental, I'll tell you how I do it, and I have to do it because I can't just spark these out of a deep storage.

Start with John, okay? Start with John and work backwards. What's John's emphasis? Just think about John 1.1. It's the divinity of Christ, son of God, right? Okay, son of God. Luke, what was his profession? We're working backwards now.

He was a doctor. Jesus is the son of man. This is Jesus in the flesh.

This is our great high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses. So Luke emphasizes Jesus' interaction. And these of course overlap greatly, but this is just the emphasis.

This is the perspective. It was so helpful looking at the perspective in Revelation and thinking about the seals and the trumpets and the thunders and the bowls. And can't wait to find out about those thunders, but seals down on earth, trumpets in the air, the angelic perspective, bowls pouring out from on high, these are the bowls of God's wrath.

And so that's the heavenly perspective. Three different perspectives of the same thing. And the thunders are the fourth hidden perspective, but you've got four perspectives in Revelation and you've got four perspectives at the beginning of the New Testament.

John, the son of God, Luke, the son of man. Mark is the suffering servant. And once you have that, what pairs with the suffering servant? What was the question of John the Baptist? Matthew is the conquering King, the Messiah.

Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Israel. How does Matthew start out? Jesus is the son of Abraham, the son of David, right? Son of Abraham, son of David, fulfilling covenant promises to Israel. So working back forward again, you have the conquering King in Matthew, the suffering servant in the gospel of Mark, son of man in Luke and the son of God in John.

Remember also that in the son of man section, you have the greatest sympathy and emphasis on Jesus' interaction with those outside Israel, the Syrophenician woman and so on. There's a fascinating passage in John that we were reminded of in an event that we went to Friday night down in Dallas. We had a great visit down there, got a chance to catch up with some of you in the church and it was a great blessing.

I enjoyed Saturday even more than Friday. But Senator Jim Lankford from Oklahoma was the keynote speaker at our event at the Criswell College or sponsored by the Criswell College. And in addition to being a former Congressman and now a Senator, he is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and spent 20 odd years as a youth pastor, pastor for young people.

And he was very effective. I very much enjoyed his talk because he drew it from one Old

Testament passage and one new. And the New Testament passage is close to where we are gonna be looking this morning.

And I'll talk about that when we get there. But here we are in Matthew chapter 21. So just by way of reminder, there is no more pertinent part of the gospels, all four of which focus on this entrance into Jerusalem, presenting Jesus formally as it were, as the son of David, the Messiah to Israel.

So keep that in mind as we read. Now, when they, this is Jesus and the disciples, drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, this is the house of figs, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, go into the village opposite you, immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her, loose and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say the Lord has need of them and immediately he will send them.

All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet saying, this is Zechariah 9.9 from our recent study. But this is actually a conflation because part of this is from Isaiah, the first part, tell the daughter of Zion. You remember in Zechariah, it said, rejoice O daughter of Zion and be joyful daughter of Jerusalem.

Here it says, tell the daughter of Zion instead of rejoice. Why? Because this is the formal telling. There has been much by way of visit, there's been much by way of evidence, the healings that Jesus has done in and around Jerusalem.

But this is a formal, prophetically recognizable presentation. And that's why the instructions that Jesus give fulfills the prophecy. It doesn't mention Zechariah as or after Jesus is riding into the city down the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

This, he requests the donkey in order to fulfill the prophecy. It is a conscious act on his part. So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them and set him on them. When it says, set him on them, it sounds like he's trying to ride two donkeys at the same time. But the clothes were laid on both animals.

Jesus sits on the colt, not on the mother. Verse eight, a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road. Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

We know from John that these were palm branches. If you took branches out of a palm tree, branches out of our woods and put them on the road, that would be an obstacle. These are flat.

Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out saying, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the

highest.

When he had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved saying, who is this? So the multitude said, this is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. Well, we have seen this many times in the past. We have reviewed it in our Passion Week studies a couple of times as well, beyond our coverage in the three gospels.

I wanna point out something new. There's many things we could say that have been said in the past. This is something else.

This is something I've not really reflected on in the past or really taken sufficient note of. But two things. First of all, the two donkeys, the other gospels don't necessarily distinguish these.

Matthew makes a point as he does with the two blind men on the outskirts of Jericho. There are two donkeys. In Zechariah, you remember there were two donkeys.

Why two donkeys? I suggested this in Zechariah and I'll review it. One is the progeny of the other, right? The second one would not exist if it were not for the first one. One is the mother, the other is the foal.

Which one does Jesus ride? He rides the foal. The mother leads the way. The mother is comforted because she's not been separated from her foal.

The foal is comforted because she's not separated from his mother, right? So they travel together. The younger donkey is guided by the mother. We know that from the other gospels, let's just take a quick trip through the others just to be sure we have all the information.

Turn over to Mark chapter 11. Each of the gospels gives us a piece of this puzzle. And because this is our last gospel coverage, we are going to look at verse two of Mark 11.

When Jesus said to the two disciples, "Go into the village opposite you, and as soon as you have entered it, you will find a colt tied on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it." On which no one has sat. Which of the two donkeys do you think this is? The mother or the colt? This is the colt.

This colt, up to this point, has been too young, too small, whatever. So no one has ever ridden it. But on this day, it is going to be able to support the Lord Jesus all the way into Jerusalem, down a hillside, up the other side, into the city.

But no one has ever ridden it before. Different people have tried to make different points out of this, that maybe it was a bucking colt and Jesus supernaturally tamed it and so on. The scripture says, on which no one has ridden.

So this is its unique service. It has not born anyone else anywhere. It is going to bear the

Lord Jesus into the capital city, Jerusalem, in the sight of the daughter of Zion.

So on which no one has ridden. Let me just say, to cut to the chase, in my view, you have a great picture here of a donkey that's been around a while, the mother donkey, but you're reminded of the old and new wineskins and the older donkey is not the one that Jesus is going to ride in. It's not an experienced donkey, a well-traveled donkey, one that Jesus has ridden before.

Stop and think about this. This, I suspect, is something we have never thought of. You think, wow, decades of Bible study, I never thought of this.

It's kind of embarrassing. Think about this. Maybe you've thought of this and I'm catching up late to the party.

How did Jesus travel? Always. He walked. When he went from Judea to Galilee, when he went from Galilee to Judea, when he went from Judea to Samaria, when he went to the Transjordan, when he went to Perea, when he went up to the region of Tyre and Sidon, did Jesus ever ride a donkey other than possibly when he was in his mother's womb? There is no record that Jesus ever rode anything anywhere.

This is the one unique and only time that Jesus isn't traveling on his own two feet. Why is that? I ask myself. Why didn't he just walk? Turn back to Matthew now, chapter 21.

They, Jesus, and the disciples are drawing near to Jerusalem and they come to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives. How are they traveling? Probably spent the night, in fact, we know that he spent the night in Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Bethphage is on the Jerusalem side of Bethany.

It's like a suburb, a smaller town. It has disappeared. Bethany's still there, but Bethphage kind of got absorbed.

But how is Jesus traveling as he goes west from Bethany toward the crest of the Mount of Olives? And he's coming to Bethphage on the Jerusalem edge. How's he traveling? He and the disciples, how are they traveling? They're walking. So they're going to go through Bethphage and then they're gonna exit Bethphage, top of the Mount of Olives, down the slope into Jerusalem, right? But what happens here in verse one and two? They came to Bethphage and Jesus stops.

And he says, you two go into the village opposite. You'll find a donkey tied and a colt with her. Loose and bring to me.

If you take out the italics, loose and bring to me. Jesus doesn't even walk over to the donkey. Everything by way of transportation and enunciation at this point is passive for Jesus.

He walked to the Sermon on the Mount. He walked to the Sermon on the plain. He climbed the mountain to call his disciples.

He climbed the Mount of Transfiguration. He walked everywhere. He and the disciples walked from the Jordan all the way to Cana for the wedding in John four.

He walked to Samaria, the woman at the well. Two was the wedding and four is the woman at the well. But here he doesn't even walk to the donkey.

He stops and he says, bring the two donkeys. They throw garments on, they set him on the colt and everybody starts throwing branches and clothing on the road. By the way, what was the purpose of that? You think of the Victorian era when a guy would throw his cape over a puddle.

What was the purpose? So the lady could walk across without being soiled in the mud, right? Well, it was the same idea. These roads are dusty. Anybody who's been to the Middle East will tell you, you know, it's dusty.

When they would see a rider coming, they would see the plume of dust and who's coming? Well, it looks like the riding of Jehu because look at that cloud of dust he's kicking up. It's like dust rooster tails. So throwing clothing on the road, of course it's symbolic, it's a mark of respect, but it is, this is such an important person, we don't want them to get dusty as they travel the road.

And so we'll make a carpet of clothing and palm branches, which are flat. There are no palms remaining anywhere in this vicinity, but in that day, 2000 years ago, there were. This event may have helped to extinguish the palm population.

But the idea here, if you think about it, is this is the one time that Jesus is passively traveling and he is being carried. He is being presented to Jerusalem, not under his own power, but born on the back of this cult. Now, if my suggestion last time has any traction that the mother donkey represents Israel and the cult represents or foreshadows the church, Israel is not qualified to present the Lord Jesus, their Messiah to the world as the savior.

That's the job of the church. We are beholden to Israel. Paul makes a great point of this in Romans chapter nine.

There wouldn't be a church without Israel. There wouldn't be an apostle Paul without Israel and without his training as a Pharisee and in the Old Testament law. There is no New Testament if there is no Old Testament.

There is no church if there is not Israel. We are beholden. We are a direct product of Israel.

Like the cult. But the presentation of Jesus even to his own people is by the cult. And this cult hasn't ever presented anybody else or taken anybody else anywhere.

This cult's unique job is to bring Jesus to his own people and then by extension to the world. So it's kind of a beautiful picture when you think of it in that light. And concomitant with that, you cannot help but think of John's first chapter when he says he came unto his own and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, they become children of God, those who believe on his name. And the celebration here would seem to suggest that there's gonna be great acceptance. There are two multitudes.

There is one that gathered at the top of the Mount of Olives and is following Jesus. There is another multitude that comes out from the city and meets him when they see the parade forming up at the top of the Mount of Olives. People come out from Jerusalem and John makes this very explicit.

Turn quickly over to John chapter 12. And while we're in John 12, we'll see something else. But turn over to John 12 and look at verse 12.

Remember John 11, I always remember John 11, John 11, 35, Jesus wept. Why? This is the raising of Lazarus. The whole chapter 11 is raising Lazarus from the dead, which fascinatingly is not recorded in the other gospels.

When you flip back and look for parallels to the whole first part of John 11, it's unique. It's only in John. And yet it's one of the most spectacular things Jesus ever did, raising a man that's been dead four days.

But then in the latter part, it picks up, there is a plot to kill Jesus beginning in 1145 of John. And that's recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke because this is immediately preceding the entry into Jerusalem on the colt that we're looking at now. And this is cooperative on the part of all of the members of the Sanhedrin.

Remember the Sanhedrin, this is the 70, the Jewish government under the Roman government. And it's made up primarily of the chief priests and scribes, right? Chief priests and scribes. These are your two political parties.

The chief priests are primarily Sadducees, scribes, primarily Pharisees. And they are like Democrats and Republicans in our day, usually adamantly opposed to one another. And it's a rare thing to see everybody get together behind one solid purpose.

But you can see in the plot to kill Jesus, look at verse 47 of John 11. The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, what shall we do? This man works many signs. If we let him alone, everyone will believe in him.

The Romans will come and take away our place in our nation. Caiaphas says, don't you consider it expedient that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. He didn't say this on his own authority.

Being high priest that year, verse 51, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. Not for the nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. That's what this parade we are looking at portends.

There are two donkeys, an older and a younger. It is the younger offspring donkey that is going to bear Jesus to his own people and to the world. But from that day on, verse 53, they, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the chief priests and the scribes plotted to put him to death.

There is a plot to kill Lazarus at the beginning of chapter 12. And then you come down to, in chapter 12, verse nine, 10 and 11. But because of the raising of Lazarus, many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

So now 12:12 of John, the next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, the only place that tells us it's palms, went out to meet him and cried out, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Jesus, when he had found a young donkey, notice the summary here. It's not a conflict.

It's not a contradiction. It's a summary. Jesus found a young donkey.

He actually went to great pains to secure this donkey, send two disciples and so on. Summarized in a phrase, found a young donkey sat on it as it is written, fear not daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. Again, a summary of the Old Testament prophecy.

Look at verse 16, his disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and that they had done these things to him. John throughout his gospel assumes that his audience already has one or more of the synoptic gospel accounts before him. This is why he can talk about John the Baptist with no introduction.

There is evidence throughout. In fact, there's a really great commentary that I refer to often that was published back during World War II actually by a Lutheran scholar named Lenski. And he has pointed out in his introduction to the gospel of Matthew, that one of the most powerful arguments for the existence and the authority, the authenticity of the synoptic gospels is the gospel of John.

John writing within his own lifetime as a disciple of Jesus Christ, obviously manifestly and demonstrably assumes the existence of authoritative gospels that have given many of the details that he chooses not to cover. He assumes that you know them. He assumes

that you have read them.

And without the synoptics, if you only had John, there are many portions that would be quite cryptic. We don't notice because we're familiar with all four gospels, but it's kind of a fun thing to show. And sometime you can take this up as a hobby.

I don't know how applicable for faith and practice it is, but it's very interesting, especially if you need to show somebody that the gospels didn't accrete, they weren't edited together long after the fact. Matthew really wrote Matthew. Mark really wrote Peter's recollections down.

Luke really wrote Luke. And John really wrote John. And John's gospel, by implication, authenticates the first three because he assumes you know their content and he does not repeat a lot of it.

And he brings something new. Much of what is in John is not in the other gospels. So in any case, this is one of those details.

His disciples did not understand these things at first, verse 16. But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered these things that were written about him and that they had done these things to him. Now this is very central to the point we're going to observe here this morning.

How can you not understand the direct fulfillment of Zechariah 9.9? Here comes the king. These people are shouting the king of Israel, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Here he comes, the king of Israel.

People are shouting this. The disciples know this. They've known it from the beginning.

And you think, well, really, didn't they kind of come to this knowledge? You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Christ, the son of the living God is something that the father reveals to Peter, according to the Lord Jesus. But the disciples have known from the beginning that Jesus was the king of Israel.

You know how I know this? Keep your finger in John 12 and turn back to John 2. And before that, turn to John chapter one. Remember, Jesus is there by the Jordan and in verse 35 of John one, John stood with two of his disciples, looking at Jesus as he walked. He said, behold, the lamb of God.

The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. We know who these two disciples are. John's gonna explicitly name one.

And by not naming the other, we know that it's John himself. So this is John and verse 40, one of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. So these first two disciples who hear John say, behold, the lamb of God are John

and Andrew.

John and Andrew. So Andrew found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, we have found the Messiah, which is translated the Christ. What does Andrew say here? We have found the Messiah.

And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, you are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Kephas, which is translated a rock, a stone.

In verse 43, the following day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee and he found Philip and said to him, follow me. Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Do you think he knows Andrew and Peter? Obviously he does.

He's from their town and he's right down there in the vicinity of John the Baptist. Philip found Nathanael and said, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote. We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote.

This is Philip talking to Nathanael. Nathanael said to him, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said, come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said, behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit, no guile, it says in the King James.

Nathanael said, how do you know me? Jesus said, before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered and said to him, rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the King of Israel.

So how many people have now affirmed on the very first day they meet Jesus and are introduced to Jesus who he is? John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael. And by extension, you figure Simon Peter probably comes and follows because he joins that. But we have a solid, definite, denoted affirmation that Jesus is the son of God, the King of Israel.

So in verse 49 of John one, Nathanael says, you are the King of Israel. You come back to John 12, and the people at the end of Jesus' career see him coming down the hillside and say, here comes the King of Israel. He is identified.

And there is great celebration, acclamation in this recognition, right? Jesus is brought to them. He is identified. He is recognized.

And he is greatly celebrated. Now, what happens in our modern day Christianity, not just in church, but on the web and films and media and so on? Is Jesus recognized as the son of God, as the King of Israel, as the savior of the world? Is he not widely recognized and celebrated as such throughout the whole realm of the church? Identified, recognized, and celebrated, right? Preached to the world as such. And there is a wonderful sense of community and momentum and hope that there's gonna be great revival.

There's gonna be a great turning to God through Christ. And everybody will be happy

over there, right? Hold that thought, this snapshot of Jesus descending the Mount of Olives, put beside that a modern day snapshot of Jesus, preached, celebrated, lifted up, called by his divine and human attributive names. Great hilarity, great celebration on both counts.

How did the first one turn out in less than a week? The Lord Jesus is despised, rejected, man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He is wounded, he is bruised, he is scourged, he is mocked. Everything that he told the disciples was gonna happen in our preceding chapter in Matthew, comes to pass immediately after this day of identification, celebration, acclimation, enthusiasm, quoting Old Testament scripture.

All the ingredients are here for a triumphal entry. But it is a hollow day. It is a hollow acclimation.

What is missing? What's missing? This is the question we need to ask ourselves. I don't think our modern day church asks the question. I think the modern day church, and I speak globally, I speak nationally, I speak denominationally, I speak what you see on the media, what you see on YouTube and Christian channels and so on.

There is great celebration of Jesus as Messiah to Israel, as Savior of the world, as the Son of God, as the Son of Man. He is identified and there is great celebration, especially in Christian worship on Sunday mornings. It's happening right now all over the place.

But there is a warning note in this scene that we have before us. What is missing? Well, we're gonna pause here and take our break. And when we come back, we're going to endeavor to answer that question.

I think you have a pretty good inkling. We've covered this many times before, but there is a clue in this very same chapter 12. It's one that was reviewed by our keynote speaker on Friday night, and I'm going to cover it when we come back from the break.

It was fascinating to me that that was brought up right in connection with the very study we were gonna do this morning. I don't think anything is accidental. I don't think the keynote speaker came and addressed us only to help me out with my Bible class on Sunday morning, but I think God works all things together for good.

And we're gonna see a fascinating truth when we come back from the break.