

## Keys to Jesus' Royal Entry into Jerusalem - Matthew 21:1-17

(An excerpt from my self-study course on Matthew)

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*These keys are a summary of Alva McClain's comments on pages 346–354 in The Greatness of the Kingdom.*

**1. Importance of this event.** All four Gospels picture the so-called “Triumphal Entry” at the beginning of our Lord’s Passion Week. They all see it as an event of major importance. The Lord regarded it as crucial in relation to the Old Testament prophecies of His kingdom and the future of the nation Israel. His preparation for this entry was most impressive, including months of deliberate progress toward Jerusalem. Seventy heralds had announced Him in all the cities and villages (Luke 9:51; 10:1).

Various circumstances—both planned and “unplanned”—combined to make this entry notable. Among them: (1) the important words and miracles of the Seventy, (2) the personal follow-up ministry of our Lord, (3) His raising Lazarus from the dead, (4) the Passover celebration, (5) a general expectation that some kind of announcement would be made about the coming of the kingdom (Luke 19:11). These circumstances worked together to assemble in Jerusalem an impressively large and important section of the nation to witness His arrival. Jesus’ entry was royal: He offered Himself as the King of Israel (Matt. 21:5; Luke 19:38).

**2. Fulfillment of prophecy.** To enter Jerusalem the Lord secured a donkey’s colt to ride on, with its mother. Matthew shows that He considered this necessary in order to fulfill the Zechariah 9:9 prophecy that the Messianic King would arrive this way in Jerusalem. And since the King fulfilled verse 9 literally, so will He fulfill verse 10 literally: He will proclaim peace to the nations and rule over the whole earth in His still-future kingdom. Entering on the donkey did not emphasize His humility—He could have done that by walking—but the fact that He needs none of the usual means of authority. His Word alone will enable Him to rule “with a rod of iron.”

**3. Words and actions to honor the King.** What the people did and said showed that they considered this a regal entry. They spread garments and palm branches in the way, as was done for kings. They praised Him for the mighty works He had done (Luke 19:37)—works predicted for the still-future kingdom (Isa. 35:5-6; 26:19).

The people’s joyous language came from Psalm 118, one of the greatest Messianic psalms: “Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matt. 21:9); “Blessed is the King” (Luke 19:38; John 12:13). Later in this Passion Week the Lord Jesus quoted from the same psalm regarding Israel’s judgment (Matt. 21:42) and future repentance (Matt. 23:38-39).

**4. Something new.** The Pharisees’ protest against the multitude’s praises (Luke 19:39) shows that something new had come. The Pharisees knew that Jesus had not previously allowed His disciples to publicly call Him King (that is, Messiah, Matt. 16:20; Luke 9:21).

His answer to the Pharisees (Luke 19:40) showed that the time had finally come for such testimony. If no one else gave it, the stones would do so. Israel could not later say, "Jesus did not tell us that He was Messiah."

**5. A crisis for Jerusalem.** When the Lord saw Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, He lamented over the city and pronounced judgment on it (Luke 19:41-42). This proved that His final entry was a crisis-point in relation to the kingdom. He wept over Jerusalem because He saw how fickle it was—how quickly it would turn from love to hatred. "This thy day" (Luke 19:41, KJV) had arrived for Jerusalem on schedule as predicted in Daniel 9:25; Messiah was being officially offered to the theocratic nation. But He wept because He saw that Jerusalem would lose its golden opportunity, would reject Him, and consequently be judged.

**6. Royal takeover.** His acts after entering the city confirmed the regal character of His entry. He asserted His Lordship over the temple, (a) casting out those who by their business kept others from praying there, (b) healing the blind and lame, (c) teaching, (d) accepting perfect praise from children (Psa. 8:1-2).

**7. His fickle people.** Jesus' weeping over His city and nation warns us not to take too seriously the people's acclamation (praise and honor). He knew that they would soon turn against Him and bring about His death, the only means by which He could give eternal life to many (John 12:20-24). In other words, their awful decision would accomplish God's purpose. Yet, Jesus' tears showed that they were responsible for that decision.

This royal entry was the decisive and irrevocable turning point for Israel, an opportunity when they were all free to choose for or against Jesus. Yet, Jerusalem did not know the things that belonged to her peace (Luke 19:42). Since these things

now remained hidden from her eyes, the die was cast, and after the hen [the Lord] had vainly essayed [attempted] to gather her brood together, the eagles [the Romans], forty years after, stretch out not in vain their talons upon the carcass.

(McClain quoting Van Oosterzee)