

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written
for our learning:
Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MATTHEW 21²

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." [a] 4 This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd [b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

12 Then Jesus entered the temple [c] and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer,'
but you are making it a den of robbers."

¹ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

² All Bible quotations and footnotes are from Biblegateway.com, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)
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14 The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did and heard[d] the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry 16 and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself?'

17 He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

18 In the morning, when he returned to the city, he was hungry. 19 And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. 20 When the disciples saw it, they were amazed, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 Jesus answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. 22 Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive."

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

23 When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why, then, did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' 29 He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went. 30 The father[e] went to the second and said the same, and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. 37 Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected
 has become the cornerstone;[f]
 this was the Lord's doing,
 and it is amazing in our eyes'?

43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."[g]

45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

Footnotes

21.3 Or *'The Lord needs them and will send them back immediately.'*

21.8 Or *Most of the crowd*

21.12 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) add *of God*

21.15 Gk lacks *heard*

21.30 Gk *He*

21.42 Or *keystone* (in an arch)

21.44 Other ancient authorities (manuscripts) lack 21.44

GOSPEL COMPARISON³

Pericope ⁴	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	11:1-10	21:1-9	19:28-40	12:12-19
Jesus Cleansing the Temple, Return to Bethany	11:11, 15-17	21:10-17	19:45-46	
The Cursing of the Fig Tree	11:12-14	21:18-19		
The Second Cleansing of the Temple	11:15-17	21:12-13	19:45-46	
The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree	11:20-26	21:20-22		
The Question about Jesus' Authority	11:27-33	21:23-27	20:1-8	
The Parable of the Two Sons		21:28-32		
The Parable of the Wicked Tenants	12:1-12	21:33-46	20:9-19	

³ Source: <http://www.gospelparallels.com/>

⁴ An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, "a book of pericopes"

PERSPECTIVE

21:1-11 Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Mark 11:1-10	Matthew 21:1-9	Luke 19:28-40	John 12:12-19
9 Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,	9 The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,	37 Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying,	12 The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,
"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"	"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"	"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"	"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord— the King of Israel!"
			14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: 15 "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.[a] 18 It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.
	10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."	39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."	19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

There must be some historical event behind the Mark and John stories of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but it is difficult to reconstruct. Was Jesus appearance a major event, as Matthew and Mark would have it, or just the coming through the gates of another pilgrim group? Did Jesus enact a king's arrival symbolically, or was that constructed later? Given that two independent sources attest to a significant entry by Jesus into Jerusalem, Mark and John, it is probable that Jesus enacted some symbolic action upon entering the city.⁵

Note: what Matthew adds to Mark is vv.10-11 regarding the reaction of the crowd who conclude "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." Most of the time prophets are referenced in Matthew in the

⁵ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

context that some action has been to fulfill the prophets. Here the reference is different, and it speaks to the perception in Matthew among the crowd that Jesus maybe a prophet:

And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor except in their own hometown and in their own house." (13:57)
Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet. (14:5)
And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (16:14)

The entry into Jerusalem is based on Mark with an addition of the citation of Isaiah 62:11 and Zech 9:9 that stress the meekness and peacefulness of the messianic king. 21:7 designation of an ass and a colt is famously illogical and may be parallel descriptions of the same animal.⁶

This story carries forward several threads from the previous chapters: the theme of prophetic fulfillment (1:22-23); Jesus trek to Jerusalem (16:21; 20:17); his status as king (2:1-12); the Son of David (1:1-18); the coming one (3:11; 11:3) and prophet (13:57).⁷ It also offers two firsts: Jesus public claim (albeit indirect) to messianic kingship; and recognition by "the crowds" of that kingship (21:6-9). These two actions challenge Jerusalem's elites to decide: who is this Jesus (21:10).⁸

Jesus as Israel's eschatological king has the Mount of Olives charged with eschatological overtones; the Son of David is a messianic title; and the responses from the crowd herald him as Israel's new king. Eschatological kingship does not mean eschatological glory. Jesus in his Mosaic weakness does not insist on his rights as Jerusalem's king. And the elites of Jerusalem wonder "Who is this?". The passage records not triumph or glory – it is in fact filled with irony and pathos – and it prepares the reader for the dark days which are ahead.⁹

21:12-17 Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Mark 11:15-17	Matthew 21:12-17	Luke 19:45-46
15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves, 16 and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.	12 Then Jesus entered the temple[c] and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.	45 Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things[b] there,
17 He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."	13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of robbers."	46 and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."
18 And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him, for they were afraid of him because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.	14 The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did and heard[d] the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry 16 and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies	47 Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him, 48 but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

⁶ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 195-6

⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

⁸ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

⁹ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

	you have prepared praise for yourself?"	
19 And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples[a] went out of the city.	17 He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.	

Matthew's cleansing the Temple and cursing the fig tree are reorganized from Mark. The cleansing now happens on the same day that Jesus entered Jerusalem and the fig tree the next day. The context is that the city of Jerusalem is stirred up by Jesus arrival and the crowds recognize him as a prophet. The fig tree is cursed and withers on the spot which adds to the demonstrated power of Jesus.¹⁰

Note: Matthew also eliminates the rather underwhelming entry of Jesus to the Temple in Mark "11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve." (Mark 11:11)

Having entered the capital as a king, Jesus now enters the temple, the symbol of national identity, and there through a prophetic deed and scriptural word declares divine disfavor on the Temple leadership. Those who appear to be in charge are not and judgement is coming for them.¹¹

Note: The contrast between Jesus as the suffering servant with Mosaic meekness, and the Prophet declaring divine displeasure with the Temple, is stark and shows the complexity of the roles/personas that Jesus displays and plays in Jerusalem.¹²

Matthew writing after 70 CE and the fall of the Temple is careful not to attack the Temple itself. Rather he assumes the propriety of the Temple's foundation in the Torah. Its sanctity, God's intent to have it as a house of prayer (21:13), a place for offering sacrifices (5:23-24), and a holy site sanctifying objects in it (23:16-22). If the temple had ceased to be these things, and then ceased to be altogether by the time of Matthew's writing, then the explanation was simply God's judgement had come upon Jerusalem; the corruption of the priests and elders (21:13; 22:7) and the rejection of Jesus (21:42-43; 22:7). The result is the destruction of the city and temple.¹³

In all of this Matthew falls in line with 1st century CE Jewish thought in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham that all attribute Jerusalem's destruction to Jewish failing. Matthew is also offering a rabbinic replacement for the Temple with Jesus Hos 6:6 "I desire mercy, not sacrifice". What Matthew adds to the 1st Century CE Jewish perspective is a Christological and ecclesiastical slant on these things: Jesus himself and his new church absorb the functions and role of the temple for his new followers.¹⁴

21:18-22 Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

Jesus performs a symbolic action that is prophetic. The visual parable inaugurates judgement against that for which it stands. That the fig tree is "near the road", we should envisage a wild tree. Jesus does not damage the property of a tree owner. Jesus curse and the tree's withering is a symbol of judgement reflecting the following OT texts:¹⁵

Isaiah 34:4	Jeremiah 8:13	Hosea 2:12
"All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf withering on a vine or fruit withering on a fig tree"	13 I will surely gather them,[a] says the Lord; there are no grapes on the vine nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.[b]	12 I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, "These are my pay, which my lovers have given me."
	Footnotes	

¹⁰ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 195-6

¹¹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor*, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

¹² Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

¹³ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

¹⁴ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. *Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII*, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

¹⁵ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew Contributor*, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

	8.13 Or make an end to them 8.13 Meaning of Heb uncertain	
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The judgement is not against all of Israel but against Jerusalem and the people who control the temple and City. 21:18-22 is between two passages dealing with the Temple, in the first Jesus protests, and the second the leadership protests against Jesus. So in context, the passage shows that divine wrath has begun to manifest itself against the temple establishment.¹⁶

In the early church's interpretation of Matthew, the Temple has been replaced by the church. So the sequence of 21:12-22, judgement of the old place of prayer promise of prayer's efficacy within the church, reflects the course of salvation history as well as the deterritorialization of Matthean religion: the portable community (18:20) substitutes for a fixed holy space.¹⁷

This is Jesus third symbolic prophetic action since leaving the Mount of Olives for Jerusalem. The Fig Tree symbolizes the Temple hierarchy and practices which are not longer bearing fruit for God. The tree and the authorities are cursed, and the tree instantly withers.¹⁸

21:23-27 The Authority of Jesus Questioned

The dramatic tension between Jesus and his opponents is heightened. The passage illustrates why the Temple aristocracy is doomed, the leaders have become deaf to God's messengers. The section is not about Jesus or JohnBap. It is about the chief priests and the elders. The multitudes recognize JohnBap, and they do not.¹⁹

The three versions of the story in Mark, Matthew and Luke are virtually identical.

The effect of this story is to set the passion of Jesus within a moral context. Jesus death is not the upshot of an unfortunate misunderstanding by uninformed authorities. Instead it is brought about by the plotting of self-serving men of ill will. The passion narrative depicts a struggle between good and evil.²⁰

The core of the exchange between Jesus and the chief priests and elders (the pinnacle of Jewish religious power) is widely thought to rest upon some historical encounter. If so, it teaches that Jesus was opposed by the Sanhedrin, held JohnBap in high esteem, did not feel bound to give an account of himself to those who opposed him, and was probably reticent to speak in public about his own person, all of which harmonizes with what we already know about Jesus. Bultmann argued in his *History*, pp 19-20 that the passage provides an argument for followers of JohnBap that Jesus respected JohnBap and they should follow Jesus.²¹

"The baptism of John" is a reference to John's prophetic ministry. "From heaven" means from God. "From man" in effect means not from God. It is an implicit comparison of JohnBap's prophetic authority (21:26) and Jesus's authority (21:11, 46). In Matthews Gospel JohnBap has testified to Jesus (3:14) so acceptance of JohnBap requires acceptance of Jesus.²²

21:28-32 The Parable of the Two Sons

This parable is unique to Matthew. Jesus compares the authorities who are questioning his authority to a son who says he will obey his father but does not. Jesus offers that the tax collectors and prostitutes that believed JohnBap are entering the kingdom of heaven before the authorities.²³

¹⁶ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

¹⁷ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

¹⁸ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

¹⁹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

²⁰ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

²¹ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

²² Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

²³ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 195-6

This polemical parable is allegorically interpreted in 21:31-32. The father represents God; the first son represents toll collectors and prostitutes, those who are lax in the law, but come to obey God through Jesus ministry; the second son represents the chief priests and elders, those who, despite their religious profession, disobey God by not believing in JohnBap. The main function of the parable is to characterize Jesus' opponents.²⁴

One can interpret this passage as: a depiction of a divided Israel; characterization of Jesus' opponents as hypocrites; and illustration of the first (chief priests and elders) becoming last, and the last (tax collectors and prostitutes) becoming first.²⁵

Chrysostom, *Hom. On Mt. 67.2*, wrote that the two sons of the parable "declare what came to pass with respect to both the Gentiles and the Jews. For the Gentiles, not having been hearers of the Law, showed forth their obedience in works; and the Jews having said "All the Lord shall speak, we will do and hearken" (Exodus 19:8) in their works were disobedient. This interpretation in terms of salvation history has dominated Christian exegetical history, that is the process of discovering the original and intended meaning of a passage of scripture.²⁶

A newer interpretation is that the parable has to do with a depiction of a divided Israel: the first son are the chief priests and elders; and the second son are the prostitutes and toll collectors. In this view the first will become last and the last first and is a characterization of the hypocrisy of the elites toward God and Jesus.²⁷

21:33-46 The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

Synoptic Gospel Comparison:

Mark 12:1-12	Matthew 21:33-46	Luke 20:9-19
12 Then he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the winepress, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went away.	33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away.	9 He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and leased it to tenants and went away for a long time.
2 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard.	34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.	10 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard,
3 But they seized him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. 5 Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed.	35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way.	but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. 12 And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out.
6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, "They will respect my son."	37 Then he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son."	13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him."
7 But those tenants said to one another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." 8 So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.	38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance." 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.	14 But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, "This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours." 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.
9 What then will the owner of the vineyard do?	40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"	What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

²⁴ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

²⁵ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

²⁶ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

²⁷ Davies, W.D., Allison, Dale C. Jr. Matthew Volume II Chapters VIII-XVIII, The International Critical Commentary pp. 111-192

<p>He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.</p> <p>10 Have you not read this scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;[a] 11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?'</p>	<p>41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."</p> <p>42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;[a] this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes?'</p>	<p>16 He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Heaven forbid!"</p> <p>17 But he looked at them and said, "What then does this text mean: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?'[a]</p>
	<p>43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."[b]</p>	<p>18 "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."</p>
<p>12 When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.</p>	<p>45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.</p>	<p>19 When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.</p>

This parable is an allegory about faithlessness and judgement. The vineyard stands for Israel; the householder stands for God; the tenant farmers are the leaders of Israel; the fruit stands for what is owed to God; the rejection of the servants stands for the rejection of the prophets; the sending and rejection of the son stand for the sending and rejection of Jesus; the punishment of the tenants stands for the destruction of Jerusalem; and the new tenants stand for the church.²⁸

Note: what is unique to Matthew and Luke in the three versions of the parable is: "41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." What is unique to Matthew in the three versions is, "43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."[b] Matthew much more explicitly says that the tenants will be destroyed by God for their actions and that the vineyard will be given to others.

The traditional views are of prophecy, what happens to prophets and Israel as God's vineyard. What is new is the joining of the two themes in the service of Christology: the rejection of Jesus is the climax in the story of rebellion against Israel's God.²⁹

The passage is not about God's rejection of Israel and the Gentiles' acceptance of Jesus. The parable identifies the tenants with the leaders of Israel and the conflict is between Jesus and the leadership, not Jesus and Judaism, It is not the vineyard that suffers judgement. It is the tenants. So the kingdom is taken from the Jewish leaders and given to the Christian church of Jews and Gentiles.³⁰

Jesus parable about the wicked tenants and the vineyard is understood by the Pharisees as a warning that they and the Jewish authorities will have the kingdom of God taken away from them and given to a nation that will produce fruits. Matthew is thinking of the church composed of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus.³¹

²⁸ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

²⁹ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

³⁰ Barton and Muddiman Editors, Dale C. Allison Jr., Matthew Contributor, Oxford Bible Commentary, pp. 871-872

³¹ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 195-6

REFLECTION

Entering Jerusalem brings into stark relief the following:

Identity

Who is Jesus?

- Palm Sunday: Messiah or Prophet – Jesus of Nazareth
- Cleansing of the Temple: Prophet declaring divine displeasure with the Temple
- Parable of the Wicked Tenants: Son of God

Leadership

- Have the leaders of Israel and the Temple authorities become deaf to God's messengers (21:23-27 The Authority of Jesus Questioned)
- Hypocrites
- Who will kill the Son of God and be punished and lose God's favor

Opposition

- The conflict is between Jesus and the leadership, not Jesus and Judaism

Antisemitism

- Does the parable of the Wicked Tenants provide grounds for an antisemitic view of the leadership of Israel, saying that the tenants killed the son, will be killed by God for their actions and that the vineyard will be given to others, i.e. gentiles and the church?
- How will "Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (27:25) expand on this view?
- Are the gentiles and the church presented as the inheritors/replacements of the leadership and the Temple?

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you, heavenly Father,
for the witness of your apostle and evangelist,
Matthew, to the Gospel of Beatitude and Grace
which you have given us in your Son, our Savior;
and we pray that, after his example,
we may with ready wills and hearts obey
the calling of our Lord to follow him;
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun

SLOW RELIGION: GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW



The Inspiration of St. Matthew, Caravaggio, 1602

Slow Religion, The Gospel According to Matthew is a lay person-led adult education weekly class for Christians and seekers. Slow Religion uses a literary and historical approach to the ancient texts to identify and apply insights from the Gospel to today's world.

Matthew's gospel is worth studying because the author attempts to uphold Jesus' Jewish past, with Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection, in the context of the 1st Century CE Jesus movement and early church, and in a hostile Hellenistic and Jewish world.

21st Century readers recognize Matthew as the source of many of the best-known stories and sayings of Jesus as well as a social philosophy that many non-Christians believe in. Famous for its Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes, and other teachings, Matthew is often called the most Jewish of the Gospels, while also contributing with the Gospel of John to antisemitism.

The class is created and led by Joe Jennings and advisors include: the Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Belvedere, CA; the Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, Episcopal Church of our Saviour, Mill Valley, CA; the Rev. Heather Wenrick, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Seattle; and the Father Vincent Pizzuto, PhD., vicar at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Inverness CA and Full Professor at the (Jesuit) University of San Francisco, New Testament and Christian Mysticism, in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Prior Slow Religion Classes include the Gospel of According to Mark (2021-22), the Foundations of Christian Faith (2020-21), the Holy Spirit (2020), the Gospel According to John (2019-20), and Paul's Letter to the Romans (2017-8).

For more information, to see class videos, our bibliography or to join the Slow Religion mailing list go to: www.slowreligion.com