

# THE END OF THE BEGINNING

MATTHEW 21



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

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**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

The End of the Beginning: Matthew 21  
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## Matthew 21: Introduction

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem signals the beginning of the end of His earthly ministry. But that's not the whole story. The events that will follow in this week are but the end of the beginning of what Jesus continues to do in bringing His Kingdom to earth, as it is in heaven.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, hailed as the Son of David and King of Israel, Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders, who are eager to control Him, and to assert their authority over Him. They do not believe in Him, and they are threatened by His popularity.

Yet their attempts to thwart His work and destroy His credibility are met with disappointment, embarrassment, and Jesus' increasing popularity and acclaim. This will only lead to their becoming more desperate to silence Him, once and for all.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 The King's Entrance

*Pray Psalm 118.7-9.*

The LORD is for me among those who help me;  
Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.  
*It is* better to trust in the LORD  
Than to put confidence in man.  
*It is* better to trust in the LORD  
Than to put confidence in princes.

*Sing Psalm 118.7-9.*

(St. George's Windsor: [\*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come\*](#))  
For the Lord stands next to me; He will give me victory!  
Over all who hate my life, I will triumph through the strife!  
In His grace I refuge find; in His steadfast love so kind.  
Trust not princes, trust not men – Christ shall be our haven then!

*Read and meditate on Matthew 21.1-11.*

*Prepare.*

1. How did Jesus enter Jerusalem?
2. How did the people respond to His entrance? What did they say about Him?

*Meditate.*

Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem might seem like the beginning of the end of His story. We know what will take place over the next week or so. But Luke reminds us that the accounts of Jesus in the gospels are just the *beginning* of Jesus' work (Acts 1.1). That being the case, Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem marks the *beginning* of the *end* of the *beginning* – the end of His work of redemption, which He will accomplish over the course of the next week. He entered Jerusalem at the first of the week, and He would finish the beginning of His work by the beginning of the next week.

Jesus had been to Jerusalem before, but never with such fanfare and display. He staged this entry to fulfill the ancient prophecy of Zechariah 9.9 (v. 5). He waited while the two disciples procured the donkey and her colt, and He allowed the people – “a very great multitude” (v. 8) – to announce His arrival in the words of Psalm 118.26 (v. 9). That psalm ends – as this week will – with the sacrificial lamb being offered to God for His praise and glory (Ps. 118.27-29).

The sovereignty of Jesus is demonstrated in the finding of the donkey and her colt. As other gospel accounts report, the owners of those animals questioned why the disciples were taking them, but acquiesced in the Lord's will, just as Jesus said they would (vv. 3, 4; cf. Mk. 11.4-16; Lk. 19.32-35). He demonstrates His humility by riding, not on a powerful steed (think: Alexander the Great on Bucephalus), but on a lowly donkey's colt. And He demonstrates the truthfulness of His claim to be the Son of God and King of Israel by allowing the people to declare Him as the Son of David Who brings the salvation of God to His people (v. 9).

But the people are perhaps more enthusiastic than truly perceptive. They still regard Jesus merely as “the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee” (vv. 10, 11) – rather than their true King. No wonder it will be so easy for them to abandon Him, when they see Him beaten and bloody on Friday.

*Reflect.*

1. How did the crowds welcome Jesus? How did they actually regard Him? Is it possible to be *excited* about Jesus, but *wrong* about Who He is? Explain.
2. What do we learn about Jesus from His entrance into Jerusalem?
3. If someone would ask you Who Jesus is, what would you say?

*Even when the crowds grasped that something great was happening, their inward thoughts remained uninformed, lowly, unworthy and lacking in understanding. But Jesus did these things in their presence not to display pomp but as I have said, to fulfill prophecy, teach self-denial and to comfort his disciples, who were grieving for his death. He was showing them that he would suffer all these things willingly. Mark well the accuracy of the prophets, how they foretold all these things, some from David's psalms, some from Zechariah. They had proclaimed them beforehand. John Chrysostom (347-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 66.3**

*Lord, give me an opportunity to tell someone about You today, and I will...*

*Pray Psalm 118.14-29.*

Call on the Lord for His strength today. Seek His power to do His ongoing work of bringing the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Pray that He will grant you a greater measure of His salvation.

*Sing Psalm 118.14-29.*

**Psalm 118.14-29** (St. George's Windsor: [\*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come\*](#))

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!  
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!  
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.  
Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!  
Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.  
Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!  
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

Blessed are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.  
God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.  
Praise and thanks to You, O Lord; we extol Your holy Word!  
Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

## 2 A House of Prayer?

*Pray Psalm 122.1-4.*

I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”  
Our feet have been standing  
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!  
Jerusalem is built  
As a city that is compact together,  
Where the tribes go up,  
The tribes of the LORD,  
To the Testimony of Israel,  
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

*Sing Psalm 122.1-4.*

(Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

I was glad when they said to me, “To the Lord’s house let us go!”  
Holy City, let our feet be firmly planted in your soil.  
Jesus builds His Church forever, where His people sing His praise!  
As Your Word decrees forever, we will thank You all our days.

*Read Matthew 21.1-17; meditate on verses 12-17.*

*Prepare.*

1. Whom did Jesus drive from the temple?
2. Why did He do that?

*Meditate.*

The temple in Jerusalem was constructed to be a place of worship, where God’s people – and indeed, people from all nations (Mk. 11.17) – might come to seek the Lord in prayer and with offerings. Here God would be honored. Here sinners would be restored to fellowship with Him. Here the praises of psalms would be sung to the glory of God.

In other words, the focus of the temple, all its architecture, décor, services, and staff, was to be on God. Seeking Him, honoring Him, communing with Him by offerings and prayer – this was to be the business of the temple.

In Jesus’ day, much of the focus had turned to the “needs” of the people. A whole gamut of programming was available for the convenience of worshipers. Need to exchange currency? Got a table for that. Need to buy an animal for offering? Can do – not the best stuff, you understand, but it’ll do in a pinch. Need a little refreshment from your long journey? Right over here. Kiosks, booths, and tables were set up in the temple court to accommodate the “needs” of “worshippers.” And from it all, the religious leaders turned a nice profit from renting space and taking a piece of the profits.

Jesus showed what He thought about this. Imagine the chaos! Bistro tables turned upside down. Coffee urns and latte machines knocked off their shelves. Special group rooms – with fun video stuff, ping-pong tables and foosball stations, cushy chairs, and whatnot – trashed, and the people manning all this sent scurrying for their lives. Staff offices savaged and all that nice furniture ruined.

Oh wait, that's not the temple. Or is it?

Notice what happened right after Jesus trashed this faux worship center: People with serious needs flocked to Him (v. 14), while the religious leaders "were indignant" and got in Jesus' face. They were especially galled about the children who greeted Him as the "Son of David" Who was bringing salvation to Israel. Jesus, in response, quoted from Psalm 8, and showed them that God had prophesied even this about His coming.

People who know they have no hope but in Jesus will find their way to Him, one way or another. Those who feel threatened by His exposing the farce of the "faith" will look for a way to control Him for their purposes or get rid of Him altogether.

In which of those camps do we stand?

*Reflect.*

1. What would a church look like that was a true "house of prayer"?
2. Since all believers are temples of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2.19-22), what place should prayer have in our lives?
3. What are the greatest obstacles to your having a stronger and more consistent life of prayer?

*Pretexts, indeed, were not wanting for that custom of keeping a market, which relieved the people from trouble, that they might not have far to go to find sacrifices; and next, that they might have at hand those pieces of money which any man might choose to offer. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 10.12*

*Lord, help me to set my mind on You, so that in all I do I...*

*Pray Psalm 122.5-9.*

Pray for your church and its leaders, that they might seek the Kingdom of Jesus, and make His house a house of prayer.

*Sing Psalm 122.5-9.*

**Psalm 122.5-9** (Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

On the throne of David, Jesus sits to judge the nations all.

As our holy peace increases we are safe who on You call.

Grant us peace, Lord, by Your favor; for Your people's sake we pray.

For the Church's sake, O Savior, we will seek Your good today.

### 3 When Jesus Comes Seeking Fruit

*Pray Psalm 92.1-4.*

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;  
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,  
And Your faithfulness every night,  
On an instrument of ten strings,  
On the lute,  
And on the harp,  
With harmonious sound.*

For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work;  
I will triumph in the works of Your hands.

*Sing Psalm 92.1-4.*

(Sweet Hour: [\*Sweet Hour of Prayer\*](#))

How good it is to thank the Lord and praise to God Most High accord.  
By day to let His kindness ring, His faithfulness by night to sing.  
With ten-stringed lute, resounding lyre, and sweetest harp we'll lift You higher.  
For You have made our souls rejoice; we sing Your praise with blended voice!

*Read Matthew 21.1-19; meditate on verses 18, 19.*

*Prepare.*

1. What was Jesus seeking?
2. What happened to the fig tree?

*Meditate.*

I suppose to some readers, Jesus' action here might seem a bit petty. He came looking for something to eat, and when He didn't find anything, He cursed the tree, and it withered away "immediately".

In order to understand what's happening here, and what the lesson is for us, we need to take a few steps back and look at this passage from Jesus' perspective, rather than our own. We only see a momentary action; Jesus sees an eternal truth. We see a kind of petulance; Jesus sees an opportunity to spare us from withering before Him.

Locked as we are in our materialistic view of the world, we tend to think that whatever the order of things is, that's the way things are supposed to be. Mark tells us (11.12-14), that the reason Jesus didn't find any figs on this tree was that "it was not the season for figs." It was "unreasonable" for Jesus to expect otherwise, we might think.

But when the Lord comes looking for fruit, not even that excuse will hold up.

We may expect that, on the last day, when all people are judged according to their works (Jn. 5.28, 29), we will hear many inventive reasons why fruit was lacking in their lives. "I didn't have the time to do good works." "I wasn't sure about what to do." "Those people You put in my life didn't deserve any good from me." "I didn't think You meant it; after all, I prayed to receive You, didn't I?"

Such reasons are merely excuses for disobedience. A day is coming when Jesus will identify those who truly believe in Him by the abiding fruit they have borne in their lives (Jn. 15.4-6). If we abide in Him, *nothing* can prevent us from bearing fruit. Whatever excuses we might use today for failing to bear fruit for the Lord, simply won't hold up when Jesus comes again, looking for fruit.

Let the lesson of the fig tree sink deep into your soul. Abide in Jesus, and bear fruit for Him day by day, in all you do.

*Reflect.*

1. What kind of fruit is Jesus expecting us to bear? When?
2. What are some reasons we often fail to bear fruit for the Lord?
3. How can you prepare each morning so that, at every opportunity throughout the day, you will bear fruit for the Lord?

*It was not his will to exhibit his anger upon men. Rather upon the plant he furnished the proof of his might in taking vengeance. But when such things are done, whether to places, or to plants, or to brutes, do not be overly curious about the divine will. Do not say, "Was it just that the fig tree withered?" especially if it was not yet the time of figs. This sort of question is the utmost trifling. Just behold the miracle and admire and glorify the worker of it. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 67.1**

*Lord, I will have many opportunities to bear fruit for You today, so help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 92.5-15.*

What's before you today? Pray that God will make you fruitful for Him and His Kingdom in all you do.

*Sing Psalm 92.5-15.*

**Psalm 92.5-15** (Sweet Hour: [\*Sweet Hour of Prayer\*](#))

How sweet Your works, Your thoughts how deep: The fool cannot such knowledge keep.  
Like grass the wicked rise each day; in judgment they are swept away.  
But You, O Lord, abide on high; Your enemies shall fall and die.  
All those who sin shall scattered be, but, Lord, You have exalted me!

My eye my vanquished foe shall see; my ears hear those who threaten me.  
Yet in God's house, where he belongs, the righteous like a tree grows strong.  
Then let us green and fruitful be and flourish like a mighty tree,  
to tell God's righteousness abroad: He is our Rock, our sovereign God!

## 4 The Lesson of the Fig Tree

*Pray Psalm 63.1, 2*

O God, You are my God;  
Early will I seek You;  
My soul thirsts for You;  
My flesh longs for You  
In a dry and thirsty land  
Where there is no water.  
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,  
To see Your power and Your glory.

*Sing Psalm 63.1, 2.*

(Nun Danken: [\*Now Thank We All Our God\*](#))

O God, You are my God, and earnestly I seek You!  
My soul thirsts and my flesh in weariness now greets You!  
Thus I would see Your face, with glory and pow'r arrayed,  
In this Your holy place – Your beauty here displayed.

*Read Matthew 21.1-22; meditate on verses 20-22.*

*Prepare.*

1. On what were the disciples focusing?
2. What did Jesus want them to learn?

*Meditate.*

The disciples were impressed. We would have been, too, I suppose. We're not used to seeing the natural order of things so abruptly altered. They couldn't help but wonder among themselves, "How'd He do that?"

Remember, the tree withered *immediately* (v. 19). They watched it wilt, shrivel, and die, right before their eyes. What kind of answer were they expecting? Certainly nothing scientific. Maybe they had no idea what Jesus would say in response?

Jesus did not rebuke them for asking. But He answered a question they may not have been asking. They asked about the withering of a tree; Jesus responded about the exercise of faith and the power of prayer.

Jesus' answer says, in brief, that faith and prayer can overturn the natural order of things. Think about that. Jesus used the example of the fig tree and of throwing a mountain into the sea as a hyperbole for the power of faith and prayer. If we *really believed* that God wanted those things to happen, and prayed earnestly and faithfully for them to be so, they would.

But that's not where God's agenda runs, so don't waste your time on requests that Jesus meant as symbols of where prayer really can have power. Lost people who aren't just indifferent to the Lord, but hostile? Prayer can change their hearts (Saul of Tarsus). Insurmountable obstacles standing in the way of ministry progress, chaining us to the *status quo*? God can free us from them and help us move

through them (Peter, released from prison). Relationships broken? Prayer can heal (Paul and John Mark). Forced to move to a new area? God can use it to advance His Kingdom (the people scattered from Jerusalem in Acts 8-11).

The more we pray *now* and *at all times*, and the more we exercise our faith in obedience to God's Word, the greater will be our readiness to move in directions of God's design in our Personal Mission Fields. If we only had faith (v. 21), we would pray for God to do in and through us things exceedingly, abundantly beyond what we've ever dared to ask or think (Eph. 3.20).

He is at work in you, to will and do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2.13). Fig trees and mountains are not the point. Faith, prayer, and obedience are. How is God leading you today?

*Reflect.*

1. What can you do to improve your use of prayer?
2. How does having faith and not doubting (v. 21) relate to your work in your Personal Mission Field?
3. What does it mean to ask in prayer, believing? What does Jesus promise if we will?

*This passage shows also that the true test of faith lies in prayer. If it be objected, that those prayers are never heard, that mountains should be thrown into the sea, the answer is easy. Christ does not give a loose rein to the wishes of men, that they should desire any thing at their pleasure, when he places prayer after the rule of faith; for in this way the Spirit must of necessity hold all our affections by the bridle of the word of God, and bring them into obedience. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 21.21*

*I believe, Lord; help my lingering unbelief, so that as I pray I...*

*Pray Psalm 63.3-11.*

What challenges are you facing today? Pray now and throughout the day for God to give you strength and wisdom to overcome those challenges for His glory.

*Sing Psalm 63.3-11.*

**Psalm 63.3-11** (Nun Danken: [\*Now Thank We All Our God\*](#))

Your steadfast love, O Lord, than life is better to me.  
So I will praise Your Name, and bless You, Lord, most truly.  
My soul is richly blest; to You my hands I raise,  
and open now my mouth to offer joyful praise.

By night, Lord, fill my mind with pleasant meditation;  
for You have been my help as 'neath Your wings I station.  
My soul clings, Lord, to You; I rest in Your Right Hand;  
may all who seek my life in Your displeasure stand.

Unto the sword's strong pow'r let our foes be delivered!  
Pursue them to devour their mortal lives forever!  
In God will we rejoice and glory in His grace;  
but all who live by lies shall perish from His face.

## 5 The Question of Authority

*Pray Psalm 2.7, 8.*

“I will declare the decree:  
The LORD has said to Me,  
‘You *are* My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.  
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*  
The nations *for* Your inheritance,  
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession..”

*Sing Psalm 2.7, 8.*

(Agincourt: [\*O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!\*](#))

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!  
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

*Read Matthew 21.1-27; Meditate on verses 23-27.*

*Prepare.*

1. Why did the religious leaders confront Jesus?
2. How did Jesus respond to them?

*Meditate.*

By this time, just a few days before the crucifixion of Jesus, the religious leaders have had enough of Him. The last straw was His entrance into Jerusalem, with people praising Him as the Son of David Who brings the salvation of God. In verse 15, the religious leaders recorded a mild protest. Jesus shut them down by turning to Scripture. That must have stung, especially as it was done publicly.

In our text today, the religious leaders barged in on Jesus as He was teaching in the temple (v. 23). Because they were the recognized “authorities” in all things pertaining to the temple, they decided to show Him up and reassert their authority over what can and can’t be taught in those precincts.

Clearly, they did not understand Whom they were dealing with.

Their question has two parts, each designed to put the matter of authority to teach on the table: “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?” Undoubtedly, they thought that would both impress the crowd and leave Jesus stammering and stuttering. He was, after all, unschooled and uncredentialed. This public confrontation on the matter of authority to teach ought to put an end to Him.

Right.

Calmly and graciously, Jesus agreed to answer their question. On one condition: First, they must answer a question from Him. His question is the ultimate “hoist-them-on-their-own-petard” question: “What do you say about John the Baptist? Prophet? Or phony?”

The religious leaders conferred (can you hear the *Jeopardy* music going in the background?). They knew that, where this question was concerned, either way they answered, they’d lose. So they decided

to leave the question blank. By doing so, they declared to everyone present that they were not competent to judge a man dead now for nearly three years, a man who had only preached repentance and baptized. And Jesus was not John the Baptist. He had done and taught amazing things (“these things”). If they couldn’t even decide about John, they were in no position to throw their weight around with Jesus.

So Jesus refused to answer their question, and left them standing dumb and embarrassed in front of the people.

Dumb and embarrassed, and angrier than ever. As we’ll see in our next installment, Jesus just adds more fuel to their fire.

*Reflect.*

1. People sometimes object to our faith in Jesus by asking what they consider to be a “gotcha” questions. Is it always necessary to answer these questions? Why or why not? (Prov. 26.4, 5)
2. On what authority was Jesus “doing these things”? By what authority do we do them (Matt. 28.18-20)?
3. What do we as followers of Jesus have authority to do? How should we exercise that authority?

*“They answered Jesus, saying, ‘We do not know.’ And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” He did not say, “Neither do I know.” It was as if he had said, “You know the truth because you are men, but you deny it because you are evil; I know it because I am God, but I will not tell you because you are unworthy.” Liars will lie to themselves if they have no one to deceive. Similarly truth will keep itself pure if it finds no one to save. Anonymous, *Incomplete Word on Matthew, Homily 39**

*Lord, in Your Name, and by Your authority, You have made me to be Your witness. Help me today as I...*

*Pray Psalm 27.1-6, 9-12.*

Pray for the nations of the world, and for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field, that they may turn to Jesus and worship Him.

*Sing Psalm 2.1-6, 9-12.*

**Psalm 2.1-6, 9-12** (Agincourt: [O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High](#))

Why do the nations vainly rage, conspiring together from age to age?  
Earth’s kings and all of their counselors stand against the Lord and His Right Hand:

“Now let us cast His yoke below, His Kingdom authority overthrow!  
Throw off His Law, reject His Word; no more be governed by this Lord!”

The Lord in heaven laughs in wrath at all who embark on this cursed path.  
His angry Word to them is plain: “Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.  
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus’ grace, and worship before His exalted face!  
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

## 6 Kingdom Identity

*Pray Psalm 142.5, 6.*

I cried out to You, O LORD:

I said, “You *are* my refuge,

My portion in the land of the living.

Attend to my cry,

For I am brought very low;

Deliver me from my persecutors,

For they are stronger than I.

*Sing Psalm 142.5, 6.*

(Dix: [\*For the Beauty of the Earth\*](#))

Hear my cry, Lord, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.

Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

*Refrain*

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!

O receive my plaintive song.

*Read Matthew 21.1-46; meditate on verses 28-46.*

*Prepare.*

1. What do these two parables have in common?
2. How did Jesus apply these parables?

*Meditate.*

This is a rather lengthy passage, I know; but I think these parables go together. Each has to do with helping us understand who is in the Kingdom of God and who isn't. To Jesus, establishing Kingdom identity was very important. It should be for us as well.

The first parable (vv. 28-32) addresses the question of which son did the father's will, the one who *said* he would work but didn't, or the one who said he *wouldn't* work but did. Not a difficult question for the religious leaders to answer. The one who actually *worked* did his father's will, not the one who merely *said* he would. Jesus used this teaching to condemn the religious leaders because, unlike the tax collectors and harlots who *heard* John the Baptist, and repented of their sins, the religious leaders did not believe his message. It was the Father's will that people should hear John, believe his message, and repent. Those who did were true citizens of the Kingdom, because they, having believed John, believed in Jesus, Whom John proclaimed.

The second parable (vv. 33-44) indicts the religious leaders for betraying their trust. God had given them charge over His “vineyard”, and they, rather than return fruit to Him, kept it all for themselves, and abused and murdered His servants the prophets. True citizens of the Kingdom of God recognize that everything they have comes from God; therefore, they are always eager to return fruit, praise, and glory to Him, and not to keep it for themselves. The religious leaders spoke their own condemnation (v. 41) by condemning the wicked vinedressers in the parable, and Jesus confirmed their conclusion. God would take the Kingdom away from them and give it “to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” That nation is the Church of Jesus-followers Who have fallen on Him alone for forgiveness and eternal life (v. 44).

The implications for Kingdom identity in these two parables are clear: The Kingdom does not consist in mere words, but in power, invested in good works to the glory of God (1 Cor. 4.20; 10.31). The religious leaders condemned themselves; but rather than repent, they determined to play out Jesus' second parable to the letter, and began to seek an opportunity to take and kill Him (vv. 45, 46).

*Reflect.*

1. How can we identify the true citizens of the Kingdom of God?
2. What kinds of works do Kingdom citizens do?
3. How would you explain what it means to be a Kingdom citizen to a new believer?

*"Which of these two did the will of the Father? They replied, 'the first.' "* Notice how, as we have already said above, attracted by the truth of the parable, they turned its meaning against themselves when they said that the first son, who represented the pagan Gentiles, had done the will of the father. It is better to do the righteousness of God without promising to do so than it is to promise and then to renege. Anonymous, *Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 40*

*Lord, I know You are seeking fruit from me, so help me today as I...*

*Pray Psalm 142.1-4, 7.*

Seek the mercy, grace, and power of the Lord to serve Him in your part of the Kingdom today.

*Sing Psalm 142.1-4, 7.*

**Psalm 142.1-4, 7** (Dix: [\*For the Beauty of the Earth\*](#))

With my voice, O Lord, I cry – hear my plea for mercy, Lord!

My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

*Refrain vv. 5, 6*

Lord, You are my Refuge strong!

O receive my plaintive song!

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know.

Where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

*Refrain*

Lord, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.

Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

*Refrain*

Out of prison lead me, Lord; thanks and praise to You shall be.

Righteous men armed with Your Word Will Your grace bestow on me.

*Refrain*

## 7 The King Arrives

*Pray Psalm 146.1, 2.*

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

*Sing Psalm 146.1, 2, 10.*

(Hallelujah! What a Savior: [\*Man of Sorrows\*](#))

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise!

And exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

*Read and meditate on Matthew 21.1-46.*

*Prepare.*

1. How was Jesus greeted as He entered Jerusalem?
2. In this chapter, what did Jesus teach about life in the Kingdom?

*Meditate.*

Jesus entered Jerusalem to the shouts of people who proclaimed Him as the Son of David and King of Israel. Contrary to what we have seen on previous occasions, Jesus did nothing to discourage that acclaim. The King had indeed arrived at Jerusalem, but it was not here that He would be enthroned, because His Kingdom was not of this world.

Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom over which He ruled was unlike earthly ones. Its focus was on honoring God, not making life easier for people. He demonstrated that God was to be honored through prayer by all nations, and He rejected the expediency and commercialization of faith which the religious leaders of the day encouraged and allowed. He expected fruit from those who would follow Him, fruit which comes from hard work in the Lord's vineyard – sowing, cultivating, pruning, and preparing souls for the harvest.

The religious leaders of the day sought to thwart Jesus' work by challenging His authority. Since He was neither schooled in religion nor credentialed for preaching and teaching, they hoped to discourage His followers and bring His ministry to a halt. He frustrated and embarrassed them at each stage. The King had come, and He would not be stopped. His Kingdom had been proclaimed, and He was making preparations to bring it. Nothing the religious leaders could do would be able to impede Jesus' work or prohibit the coming of His Kingdom.

Not even the cross.

*Reflect.*

1. What priorities did Jesus demonstrate for life in His Kingdom?
2. Why did He not discourage the people from proclaiming Him as the Son of David?
3. The religious leaders challenged Jesus' authority. How did He respond? What authority did Jesus acknowledge?

*So his detractors found many things to provoke them: the multitude, the cleansing out of the buyers and sellers from the temple, the miracles, the children.* John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 67.1*

*Although [the chief priests and the Pharisees] were hard of heart and on account of their unbelief and wickedness blunted in their understanding against the Son of God, nevertheless they were unable to deny Jesus' straightforward statements and understood that all the judgments of the Lord were directed against themselves. So they determined indeed to kill him...* Jerome (347-420), *Commentary on Matthew 3.21.46*

*There will always be detractors and opponents, Lord, but help me always to...*

*Pray Psalm 146.3-10.*

Use this psalm to renew your faith in Jesus as King and Lord, then commit your day to follow and serve Him in everything you do.

*Sing Psalm 146.3-10.*

**Psalm 146.3-10** (Hallelujah! What a Savior!: [\*Man of Sorrows\*](#))

Trust we not in prince or man – no salvation's in their hand;  
Death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.  
By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,  
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris'ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,  
lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand'ers in His grace are blessed;  
needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessèd Name,  
Them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Why this time did Jesus not discourage people from proclaiming Him Son of David and King of Israel?
2. What do we learn about life in Jesus' Kingdom from chapter 21?
3. On what basis did the religious leaders challenge Jesus? How did He answer them?
4. Who are true citizens of the Kingdom of God, according to Jesus?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 21.1-46? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.