

Matthew 21

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Matthew 21

The parable of Jesus cursing the fig tree carries profound spiritual significance, conveying several key messages:

1. Outward Piety vs. Inner Substance

The fig tree symbolizes the people of Israel, particularly the religious leaders. They appeared devout, following the laws and religious rituals, yet lacked genuine faith and obedience. Like the tree, which had lush leaves but no fruit, they had an outward display of piety but lacked the spiritual fruit of righteousness. This reminds us that true faith is not about external appearances but about bearing spiritual fruit—love, faith, obedience, and righteousness (Galatians 5:22-23).

2. God's Judgment on Unfruitfulness

The withering of the fig tree represents God's judgment on Israel. Israel was meant to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3), but by rejecting the Messiah, they failed to bear fruit. As a result, God's kingdom would be given to others (Matthew 21:43). This warns believers that merely having the title of faith without producing spiritual fruit can lead to God's discipline and judgment (John 15:2, 6).

3. The Lesson of Faith

When the disciples saw the tree immediately wither, Jesus taught them, "If you have faith and do not doubt... even if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' it will happen." (Matthew 21:21). This highlights the power of faith—genuine faith can bring transformation and miracles, but it must be rooted in trust in God, not human willpower.

4. Seizing the Opportunity to Repent

Though it was not the season for figs, Jesus still expected fruit, illustrating that God is not bound by "seasons" but always expects His people to bear fruit. This teaches us not to wait for the "right time" to

pursue spiritual growth but to repent and respond to God's call immediately, lest we miss His grace and blessings.

Conclusion

The parable of the fig tree is not just about a tree—it is a warning against a fruitless faith. We must ask ourselves: Is our faith merely external religious practice, or are we truly bearing spiritual fruit? Do we live by faith, or do we only hold onto faith in name? This parable challenges us to produce the fruit of repentance, faith, obedience, and love, aligning our lives with God's will.

Matthew 21 records significant events from the final week of Jesus' life, revealing His identity, authority, and teachings on faith and repentance.

First, Jesus makes His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Following His instructions, the disciples bring a donkey and its colt, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy that the Messiah would enter the city humbly, riding on a donkey. The crowds welcome Him with great enthusiasm, laying down their garments and palm branches while shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!", acknowledging Him as their King. However, these same crowds would later turn against Him, foreshadowing the coming conflict and judgment.

Upon entering the temple, Jesus drives out the merchants in anger, condemning them for turning God's house into a "den of thieves." This act emphasizes that the temple is meant to be a place of worship and prayer, not a marketplace.

Next, Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to teach about faith and spiritual fruitfulness. Finding no fruit on the tree, He curses it, causing it to wither immediately. This symbolizes Israel's spiritual condition—outwardly religious but lacking true faith and action. His disciples are amazed, and Jesus teaches them that with unwavering faith, their prayers can accomplish great things.

When the religious leaders challenge His authority, Jesus responds with parables.

The Parable of the Two Sons describes a father who asks his two sons to work in his vineyard. The first initially refuses but later obeys, while the second agrees but does not follow through. This parable highlights that God values repentance and true obedience over empty promises. Jesus declares that tax collectors and prostitutes, because of their repentance, will enter God's kingdom ahead of self-righteous leaders.

The Parable of the Tenants illustrates the arrogance and rebellion of the religious leaders. A landowner rents out a vineyard to tenants, but they refuse to give him the harvest, mistreating and killing his servants—and ultimately, even his son. This represents Israel's rejection of God's prophets and Jesus Himself. As a result, God's kingdom will be given to those who accept Him, including the Gentiles.

Additionally, Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2: "From the mouths of infants and nursing babies, You have ordained praise." This underscores that true worship comes from pure faith, not religious status or knowledge.

The central message of this chapter is clear: Jesus enters Jerusalem as King and Messiah but is met with rejection by the Jewish leaders. He stresses the importance of bearing spiritual fruit, the necessity of repentance, and the coming judgment on those who refuse to accept Him. These events foreshadow His crucifixion and the shift of God's kingdom towards those who will truly receive His salvation.

We pray

Heavenly Father,

In the midst of uncertainty, trials, and the storms of life, we come before You, holding onto the only thing that remains unshaken—our faith in You. Though the world may shift and our hearts may grow weary, we trust that You are our firm foundation, our refuge, and our strength.

Lord, strengthen us when doubt tries to creep in. When the path ahead seems unclear, remind us that You are always guiding our steps. Help us to walk by faith and not by sight, knowing that Your plans are higher than our own.

Fill our hearts with peace that surpasses all understanding. Let our faith be like a mustard seed, growing and moving mountains in Your name. Teach us to trust in Your perfect timing, to rest in Your promises, and to believe that all things work together for our good.

May we not be shaken by fear, but instead, stand firm in the confidence that You are with us, that You fight for us, and that Your love never fails. No matter what we face, we declare today—we only hold onto faith.

In Jesus' mighty name, we pray. Amen

Matthew 21

The Triumphal Entry

21 When they approached Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples [ahead], ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and at once 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, you should say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and without delay the owner will send them [with you].” ⁴ This happened so that what was spoken by the prophet would be fulfilled, saying:

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“Tell the daughter of Zion (the people of Jerusalem),
‘Behold, your King is coming to you,
Gentle and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

⁶ Then the disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them, ⁷ and they brought the donkey and ^[a]the colt, and ^[b]placed their coats on them; and Jesus sat on the coats. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their coats on the road [as before a king], while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of Him, and those that followed Him, were shouting [in praise and adoration],

“^[c]Hosanna to the Son of David (Messiah);
Blessed [praised, glorified] is He who comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest [heaven]!”

¹⁰ When He entered Jerusalem, all the city was trembling [with excitement], saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Cleansing the Temple

¹² And Jesus entered the temple [grounds] and drove out [with force] all who were buying and selling [birds and animals for sacrifice] in the temple *area*, and He turned over the tables of the moneychangers [who made a profit exchanging foreign money for temple coinage] and the chairs of those who were selling doves [for sacrifice]. ¹³ Jesus said to them, “It is written [in Scripture], ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.”

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to Him in [the porticoes and courts of] the temple *area*, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful *and* miraculous things that Jesus had done, and *heard* the ^[d]boys who were shouting in [the porticoes and courts of] the temple [in praise and adoration], “Hosanna to the Son of David (the Messiah),” they became indignant ¹⁶ and they said to Him, “Do You hear what these *children* are saying?” And Jesus replied to them, “Yes; have you never read [in the Scripture], ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies You have prepared *and* provided praise for Yourself’?” ¹⁷ Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

The Barren Fig Tree

¹⁸ Now early in the morning, as Jesus was coming back to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹ Seeing a lone fig tree at the roadside, He went to it and found nothing but leaves on it; and He said to it, “Never again will fruit come from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

²⁰ When the disciples saw it, they were astonished and asked, “How is it that the fig tree has withered away all at once?” ²¹ Jesus replied to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, if you have faith [personal trust and confidence in Me] and do not doubt *or* allow yourself to be drawn in two directions, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen [if God wills it]. ²² And whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

Authority Challenged

²³ When He entered the temple *area*, the ^[e]chief priests and elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching and said, “By what [kind of] authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority [to exercise this power]?” ²⁴ Jesus replied to them, “I will also ask you a question, and if you tell Me the answer, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John—from where did it come? From heaven [that is, ordained by God] or from men?” And they *began* debating among themselves [considering the implications of their answer], saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe John?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the [response of the] crowd; for they 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 [kind of] authority I do these things.”

Parable of Two Sons

²⁸ “What do you think? There was a man who had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it *and* changed his mind and went. ³⁰ Then the man came to the second son and said the same thing; and he replied, ‘I *will*, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of the father?” The chief priests and elders replied, “The first one.” Jesus said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you [walking] in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and the

prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even change your mind afterward and believe him [accepting what he proclaimed to you].

Parable of the Landowner

³³ “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to tenant farmers and went on a journey [to another country]. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his [share of the] fruit. ³⁵ But the tenants took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Again he sent other servants, more than the first time; and they treated them the same way. ³⁷ Finally he sent his own son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son *and* have regard for him.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This [man] is the heir; come on, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they took the son and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes back, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ They said to Him, “He will put those despicable men to a miserable end, and rent out the vineyard to other tenants [of good character] who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons.”

⁴² Jesus asked them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The [very] ¹Stone which the builders rejected *and* threw away,
Has become the chief Cornerstone;
This is the Lord’s doing,
And it is marvelous *and* wonderful in our eyes’?

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to [another] people who will produce the fruit of it. ⁴⁴ And he who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces; but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was talking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were trying to arrest Him, they feared the people, because they regarded Jesus as a prophet.

Matthew 21 – Full Description, Important Verses, and Spiritual Influence

Matthew 21 is a pivotal chapter in the Gospel of Matthew, marking the beginning of Jesus’ final week leading up to His crucifixion. It covers key events such as His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, various parables, and confrontations with religious leaders.

Summary of Matthew 21

1. The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Verses 1-11)

- Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9**.
- The crowds welcome Him, shouting “**Hosanna to the Son of David!**”
- This moment declares Jesus as the Messiah and King.

2. Cleansing of the Temple (Verses 12-17)

- Jesus overturns the tables of money changers and merchants in the temple, saying: **"My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."** (Matthew 21:13)
- This act demonstrates His authority and zeal for true worship.
- Children praise Him in the temple, angering the chief priests and scribes.

3. Cursing of the Fig Tree (Verses 18-22)

- Jesus curses a barren fig tree, and it withers instantly.
- This symbolizes the judgment on Israel's spiritual barrenness and lack of faith.
- Jesus teaches the disciples about the power of faith: **"If you have faith and do not doubt... it will be done."** (Matthew 21:21)

4. Jesus' Authority Challenged (Verses 23-27)

- Religious leaders question Jesus' authority.
- He responds by asking about John the Baptist's authority, exposing their hypocrisy.

5. The Parable of the Two Sons (Verses 28-32)

- A father asks his two sons to work in his vineyard: one refuses but later obeys; the other agrees but does not go.
- Jesus teaches that tax collectors and sinners who repent are more righteous than religious hypocrites.

6. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Verses 33-46)

- A landowner rents a vineyard to tenants, who kill his messengers and son.
- This parable foreshadows Jesus' rejection and crucifixion.
- Jesus warns that the Kingdom will be taken from the unfaithful and given to those who produce fruit.

Important Verses

1. **Matthew 21:9** – *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"*
 - Declares Jesus as the Messiah.
2. **Matthew 21:13** – *"My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."*
 - Emphasizes purity in worship.
3. **Matthew 21:21-22** – *"If you have faith and do not doubt... whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."*

- Encourages strong faith in God's power.
 - 4. **Matthew 21:31** – *“Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.”*
 - Highlights God's grace for repentant sinners.
 - 5. **Matthew 21:42** – *“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”*
 - Refers to Jesus as the foundation of salvation.
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Spiritual Influence & Lessons

1. **Jesus is the True King** – The triumphal entry reveals Christ's role as the humble, yet powerful, Messiah.
 2. **Purity in Worship** – The temple cleansing teaches that worship should be genuine, not corrupted by greed.
 3. **Faith Can Move Mountains** – The fig tree lesson emphasizes unwavering faith and trust in God's power.
 4. **Repentance Over Empty Religion** – The parables warn against hypocrisy and stress true obedience to God.
 5. **Jesus is the Cornerstone** – Those who reject Christ will face judgment, but those who believe in Him will be saved.
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Matthew 21 is a powerful chapter that calls for faith, repentance, and true worship while showcasing Jesus' divine authority.