

02

SESSION TWO

Jesus Entered Jerusalem

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, we will walk through three scenes from the day Jesus entered Jerusalem during the week before His crucifixion. Jesus' entry into the city was welcomed with cheering and celebration, even though He approached in humility while sitting on a donkey. He cleansed the temple of those who took advantage of the worshipers. And, as the true Son of David, He permitted and welcomed the praise of children. In these events, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament expectations and longings for the Messiah; the One who would redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:1-17

THE POINT

Jesus is the Savior who came to restore true worship.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Every year, many people look forward to dyeing and decorate boiled eggs for Easter. Not only that, but the hunt that often follows is always a hit, with kid's running frantically through an open yard looking to snatch every egg in sight, whether real or plastic. Having a basket full of eggs brings with it a sense of accomplishment, especially if that person was fortunate enough to find an egg with some change or a crumbled up dollar bill inside.

Over the years, the phrase "Easter egg" has entered into our cultural vocabulary as a way of referring to things intentionally hidden in books or movies as an inside joke or bonus for die-hard fans. If you go to Disney World, books are devoted to finding Hidden Mickeys. There are cross-references in several Pixar movies, many of them containing hidden references to one of the *Toy Story* movies. Television series do this as well. In fact, there are websites dedicated to finding the hidden "Easter eggs" in many top rated shows today.

The "Easter egg" phenomenon is something not only for Disney and television—the Bible does this as well. The more you study Scripture, the more you begin to realize that there are golden eggs containing treasures untold, intentionally hidden by a good Father for our delight as we see how Jesus fulfills Old Testament hope, longing, and expectation. As we walk through Matthew 21, we will see what "Easter eggs" might be hidden for us to find as Jesus fulfills Old Testament expectation and longing for the Messiah.

- **What immediately comes to mind when you think of the ways Jesus fulfills Scripture?**

Option 2

Imagine this scenario: Your parents promise you that they will take you on a trip if you make As in all of your classes. They made this promise to you at the beginning of the school year, and at the end of every month, they will give you one clue about where you'll get to go if you keep up your grades. The promise of the reward encourages you to focus on doing your work well, and each clue you receive makes you even more excited for the possibility of the trip ahead.

- **If this were a deal between you and your parents, where would you hope they'd take you?**

Just like your parents would give you clues to what was to come, God also told His people what would come through prophecies. The people were excited to meet God's Son, the Messiah, their king. The One promised in the prophecies from long ago had finally come—the Messiah.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus is the Savior who came to restore true worship.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity

PLOT

The last week leading up to Christ's crucifixion is known as Passion Week. There are several notable events surrounding the days leading to the crucifixion, with Jesus entering Jerusalem and cleansing the temple being among them. An incredible amount of Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in these texts—all in the days leading up to the Passover.

TIMELINE

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM
Jesus enters the city riding on a donkey.

THE LAST SUPPER
The fulfilling of the New Covenant.

JESUS IS ARRESTED
Jesus agrees to drink the cup of suffering.

JESUS ENTERED THE CITY ON A DONKEY

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all present the ministry of Jesus as building in a crescendo leading to the capital city. Where we pick up our reading today, with Jesus entering Jerusalem, Jesus was only days away from His death. Let's see what happens:

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, **2** saying to them, "Go into the village in front 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, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." **4** This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, **5** "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" **6** The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. **7** They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. **8** Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" **10** And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" **11** And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. 21:1-11)

Rolling out the red carpet is a sign of respect and hospitality for the head of state or a celebrity making a grand entrance. Jesus, the anointed King, was entering the city. The long awaited Messiah had finally come. Ages of sorrow, hope, and longing were being fulfilled before their very eyes. In recognition of the gravity of the occasion, the crowds placed their robes and palm branches before the feet of the King who was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The first stop mentioned was Bethphage—an obscure village about a mile or two outside of Jerusalem to the east. In light of Ezekiel's prophecies, it is significant that Jesus and the disciples approached from the east. In Ezekiel 11, the glory of God departed from the temple and went out over the mountains to the east as a symbol of Israel's unfaithfulness (v. 23). But in chapter 43, Ezekiel's vision showed the glory returning from the east (v. 1).

Jesus came from the east, over the Kidron Valley and into the city of Jerusalem. And what did He immediately do? He entered the temple. This seemed to be the realization of hundreds of years of waiting and longing. Surely, this was when the glory of God would return to the temple and restore the kingdom.

JESUS CLEANSED THE TEMPLE

But something unexpected happened when Jesus arrived. Take a look:

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” (Matt. 21:12-13)

The Jesus of our culture is a caricature; He is often pictured kneeling beside a group of children, carrying a sheep, or hugging a stranger. He is always happy and smiling. The idea of Jesus getting mad or sad is completely foreign to the version of the happy hippy Jesus our culture often portrays.

Unlike these cultural caricatures, Scripture presents a Jesus of passion and humanity. However, unlike our frustration with school or responsibilities, Christ’s frustration came from a place of holy discontentment. Jesus was not offering a critique of fair trade or making a statement on economic policy, but was instead declaring that this was neither the time nor the place to be selling. He turned the temple upside down as a sign of cleansing, much like a person might take all the clothes out of a drawer in order to rearrange a dresser.

According to Jesus, the Father is seeking true worship (John 4:23-24), and Jesus seeks those who seek His Father’s face. However, when Jesus entered the temple, He saw inauthentic worship. Rather than a place of gathering for the nations to pray, the temple was a demonstration of commerce with shimmering coins and cooing doves. Far from shining the glory of God, the temple glimmered with the glory of man.

Jesus not only turned the tables on the money changers, but also on the hopes and expectations of the people. For as quickly as Jesus entered the temple, He departed as a sign that the prophecy was not yet fulfilled. Something else would have to happen before God and man could dwell together.

- **Does Jesus’ reaction surprise you? Why or why not?** (*p. 17, PSG*)
- **How would you have responded if you were with Jesus or in the temple when this occurred?** (*p. 17, PSG*)

JESUS HEALED THE LAME AND THE BLIND

For most of Jesus' life, He had remained hidden. His living in the rural backwoods of Galilee and working as a carpenter certainly didn't cause suspicions that history and time itself would bend around Him. Even in His ministry to the multitudes, He tended to command caution and discretion as if His mission was veiled in secrecy, but not this time. The time had come when Jesus would no longer quiet the crowds.

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, "Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?" ¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there. (Matt. 21:14-17)

Once the tradesmen and animals were driven out of the temple, many of the hurt, lost, and broken filtered in. The blind, lame, and children came to see, hear, and touch Jesus—He healed them all. The temple was in an uproar as the children cried out, calling Him *Hosanna*.

Meanwhile, other eyes were watching and ears were listening. These eyes and ears observed with disdain all that happened as their glory and authority crumbled around the feet of Jesus.

The voices of the chief priests and scribes issued their critique. Would this man really receive praise, honor, and glory in the midst of this temple built for God? It is a great question in and of itself. Had Jesus been anyone else, we would celebrate the priests for their courage and discernment. But Jesus was not an imposter or pretender. Unlike the charade of worship typical of the temple, Jesus is the very face of faithfulness. He is the king who came to redeem His people, restore true worship, and receive all praise. He alone is worthy of the worship.

- **How did the priests and scribes accuse Jesus?** (*p. 18, PSG*)
- **How did Jesus respond to them?** (*p. 18, PSG*)

TIMELINE

THE CRUCIFIXION

Jesus as our substitute sacrifice.

HE IS RISEN

The resurrection of the Son of God.

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Temple of the Holy Spirit (p. 17, PSG)

The Holy Spirit indwells the church, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 12:13). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, we live lives differently than before, bearing the virtuous fruit that comes only by the indwelling work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This indwelling work of the Spirit also equips individual members of the church with gifts for the work of the ministry (1 Cor. 12:11).

CHRIST CONNECTION

By entering Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. Through His actions in the temple, Jesus conveyed His judgment toward those who would misuse God's house for their greedy purposes. And for the sins of His people, Jesus offered His own body as a temple to be destroyed, and to eventually be raised again.

YOUR STORY 10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think the prophecy predicted that the Messiah, the King, would enter the city on a donkey? What does this say about Jesus' humility?**

Answers will vary.

- **What is the difference between regular anger and a holy anger?** *It is important that we distinguish between the selfish and vindictive anger we experience from the holy anger of God over the sinfulness of man. Of course, as Christians, we can also experience anger over sin, and rightly so. However, it is still important to realize that our anger will always be out of proportion to the sin that was committed, unlike God's. God's anger is both holy and justified because of who He is and what He has done for us, and His anger will always be in perfect proportion since He Himself is ultimately the One being sinned against.*

- **What do you think motivated Jesus in this mission of cleansing the temple? What is the takeaway for us today?** *Jesus saw the greed and extortion that was taking place among the people. Wanting to restore true worship and draw people to the fact that God's house is one of prayer, Jesus drove the money changers away. One takeaway along those lines is just that—we should pay more attention to the fact that God's house is a house of prayer. Of course, it is not one of prayer only, but Jesus highlights the importance of the role of prayer in the house of God, something we should do as well.*

- **What is something new and important you have learned from this session?**

Answers will vary.

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The fact that Jesus entered the city riding a donkey is significant. According to 1 Kings 1:32-35, we see that it wasn't the first time a Jewish king had ridden into Jerusalem on a mule. Solomon, the last great king of the united kingdom of Israel, entered the city riding a donkey. The son of David rode into the city on a donkey to be anointed as king. But later, the greater Son of David rode into the city, the One whose reign would be eternal.

- **Why do you think it is important that Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament prophecies?** *These prophecies were given for our benefit—as signs and evidences that Jesus is who He claimed to be, God's Son.*
- **What kind of confidence in your faith does it give you to know that Jesus fulfilled all of these Old Testament prophecies?** *Answers will vary.*



HEART

The good news of *Hosanna* is that Christ has come to save us from our inadequate worship. Just like the blind, lame, and children who came to see, hear, and touch Jesus, we too can be healed. Jesus embodies faithfulness. He is the king who came to restore true worship, even in our unfaithful hearts. He is able to replace a cold or even lukewarm heart with one that overflows with genuine praise for Him.

- **When have you experienced gratitude and hope in Christ to such a degree that it overflowed into praise?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What does a life of praise and worship look like?** *A life of praise and worship is both visible and invisible. Worship starts within the heart and eventually makes its way outward into the very life of the worshiper—in that person's talk, pursuits, actions, and so forth.*



HANDS

It's solely on the basis of what Jesus has done for us that we can boldly and confidently share with others news of the salvation that only He can give. Whether we share with someone who has never heard the gospel or with a believer who is struggling with lukewarm worship, it is easy to point others to Jesus—the only One capable of transforming our lives from the inside out.

- **When have you been driven by a desire for the glory of God?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How do our actions and attitudes change for the better when we are driven by the glory of God?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject