

How Jesus Responded To His Critics

The gospel of Matthew quotes from the Old Testament almost one hundred times in order to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. That is more than the other gospels do. So, it is important for us to notice all of the prophecies that Matthew quotes. They are the proof that Jesus was and is the Messiah that Yahweh had promised would be coming. Two studies ago our understanding was illuminated when we learned that two prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Even though the crowd of adults and children cheered for Christ, we discovered that when Jesus reached the top of the Mount of Olives, He strongly wept for the city of Jerusalem and the temple below. If He felt joy due to the crowd's reactions, that joy had turned to sorrow for He knew the city and temple would be destroyed. But that did not stop the procession from going down to the city. We are about to discover what happened in the city when Jesus arrived. We will discover they did not share the joy of the crowd who cheered, "Hosanna to the Son of David," along the road from Bethphage to Jerusalem. Nor did the religious leaders. Our study is from Matthew 21:10-11, 14-17 and Mark 11:11.

Most Were Curious About Jesus. Jesus has just descended the western slope of the Mount of Olives and entered the city of Jerusalem. He would have seen the temple as He approached the city. If you were to visit Jerusalem today, you would find the Dome of the Rock occupying the location where the temple existed in Jesus' time. The Dome of the Rock is an Islamic shrine. Matthew 21:10-11 tells us that as Jesus entered, the city was stirred.

When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was

stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee." Matthew 21:10-11 (NASB)

We are told that when He entered, the entire city was "stirred." The Greek word for "stirred" is *sieo*. It is more dramatic than

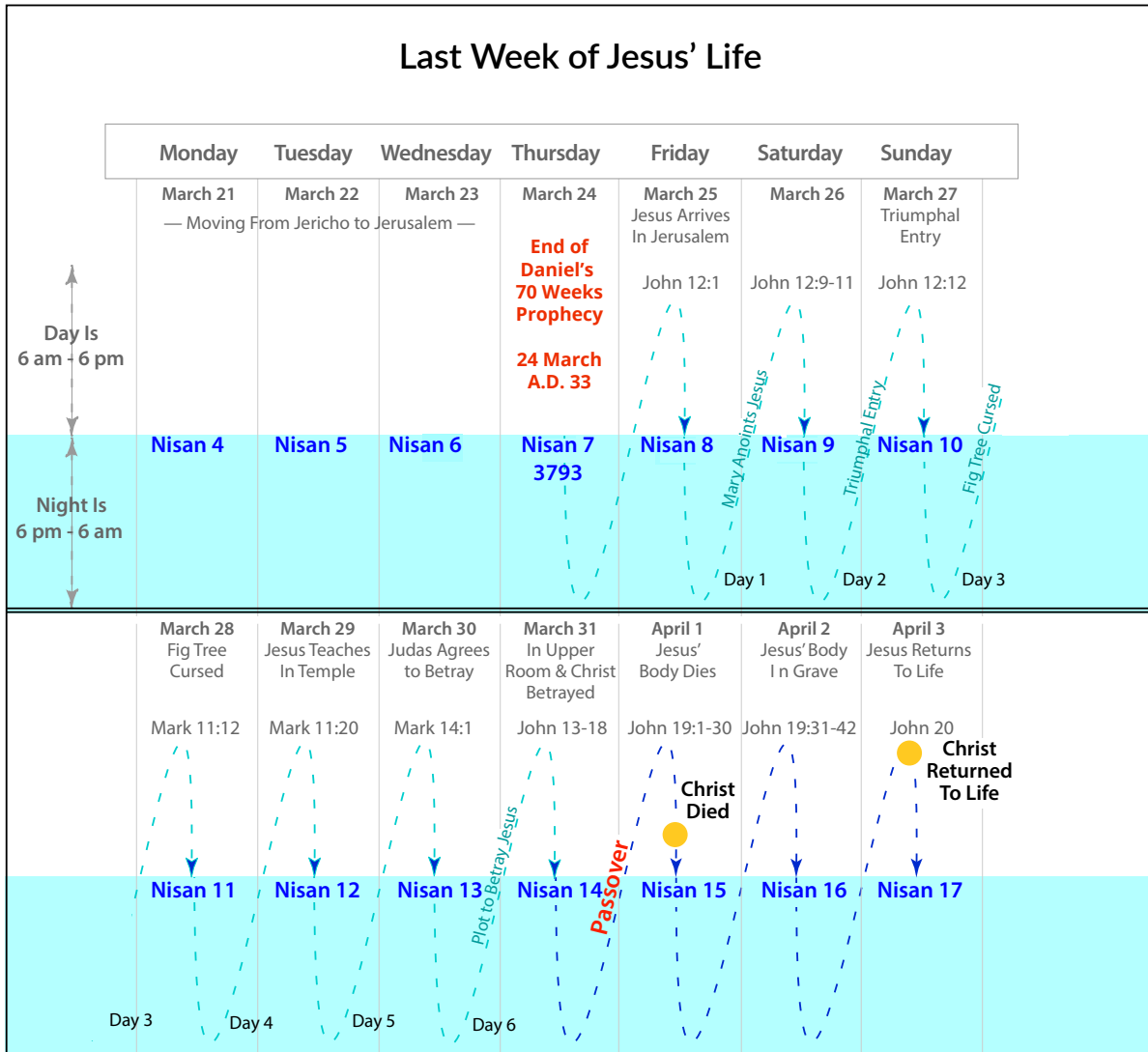
the English word "stir." This Greek word was used to refer to an earthquake in Matthew 27:51. In Revelation 6:13, it explained that a fig was shaken from its tree. That means it was used to refer to a strong, shaking reaction or an extreme anxiety (Matthew 28:4). That is, the city was not just casually

wondering about Jesus. They were very shaken and anxious about this person. They wondered who this person was. It is obvious they had heard about the Triumphal Entry and the shouting of "Hosanna to the Son of David," as they descended



the western slope of the Mount of Olives.

Yet, the people in the city wondered, "Who is this?" They seriously wanted to understand who this person called Jesus was. The reason so many people were wondering may be that the city was flooded with one to two million people just days before the Passover. As we discovered in the last study, Flavius



Josephus stated at that time about one million people would come for the Passover. Even though many of them may have heard about Jesus, they still did not understand who He was.

Matthew 21:11 says some of the people knew He was from Nazareth. Some thought Jesus was a prophet. The truth was and is that Jesus was both the Son of David and the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15.

When John the Baptist had started his ministry, he was asked if he was a prophet, Elijah, or the Messiah (Christ in the Greek). John truthfully replied that he was not any of those individuals (John 1:19-23). Here is John's reply,

“I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.” John 1:23

(NASB)

He was the forerunner of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1), the Son of David. This reveals the people were expecting the Messiah to arrive. So, the city was shaken by this news. Who is this person?

Sick Believed Christ Could Heal. Matthew 21:14¹ tells us that some blind and lame people found Jesus at the temple. Verse 14 says,

And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple,

1. We are skipping Matthew 21:12-13 because it belongs with Matthew 21:23. Once again, Matthew had arranged his gospel topically. Both Mark 11:12-14 and Luke 45-46 reveal that Matthew 21:12-13 should follow Matthew 21:22 if Matthew's gospel was arranged chronologically. It appears that Matthew wanted to combine all of the crowd's responses together.

and He healed them. Matthew 21:14 (NASB)

This verse reveals that after Jesus entered the city He moved to the temple. We should not be surprised that He did that. Where else would we expect Jesus to be? The temple was where He was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), and dedicated 40 days after His birth (Luke 2:22-32). The temple was where Mary and Joseph found Him when was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-50). At the age of twelve, he was teaching in the temple (Luke 2:48-51). When Jesus began His ministry, He entered the temple and cleansed it (John 2:13-17). He taught in the synagogues (John 18:20 and in the temple (Mark 12:35; John 8:20) during His ministry. So, it is obvious the temple was a favorite place for Him. Today, the church should be a favorite place to perform ministry for every believer. It should not be a workplace or a place where a pastor just performs a job.

So, the blind and lame, and others came to the temple for healing. This reveals that Jesus must have been at the temple for some length of time because it would have taken time for the sick to come to Him. Someone had to tell them that Jesus had arrived in the city and was at the temple. Then imagine how long it took the blind and the lame to travel to Christ. Matthew 21:14 says they were not disappointed for Jesus healed them. We can imagine the compassion that the blind and lame felt from Jesus. Jesus loved them and His compassion was not limited to the wealthy or the middle class. 1 Peter 5:7 reminds us that our God cares for us too!

Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (NASB)

He is a God who heals. He is Yahweh Rapha. He lovingly heals our illnesses.

Religious Leaders Were Angry. Verse 15 introduces us to the chief priests and the scribes.

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant . . . Matthew 21:15 (NASB)

Sadly, verse 15 tells us that the chief priests and scribes were not very happy with Jesus. They did not like the wonderful things that Jesus had done. I am always amazed that the religious leaders disliked Jesus. The Sadducees who did not understand the Scriptures (Matthew 22:29-30) disliked Jesus. The Pharisees who controlled the synagogues and taught the people hated Jesus. Here we are told that even the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things and were indignant. But we are never told the people hated Him. It was these religious critics of Jesus who were unhappy with the wonderful things Jesus had done and with the people’s shouts of, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” I am amazed because as religious leaders, one would think they would have at least rejoiced that the sick were healed. How could they be indignant that Jesus did wonderful things? But later Matthew 27:18 will tell us they were indignant because of envy.

The Greek words for “wonderful things” is *thaumasios*. It has the idea of wonders or marvelous. It refers to more than something that is very nice. The chief priests and the scribes who saw Jesus heal and heard the children shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David,” had a different opinion about Jesus. They were indignant. The Greek word for “indignant” is *anagakteo*. The basic meaning is “vexed” or “incensed.” They did not like the fact that Jesus was doing these wonderful things.

The word “wonderful” has the sense of being angry at something a person thinks is wrong. The chief priests and the scribes thought the healings of people and their praises of Jesus were wrong. These religious leaders had already concluded multiple times that Jesus performed His miracles by demonic power (Matthew 9:27-34; 12:28-30; Luke 11:14-23). They did not believe in Christ but believed that what Jesus did and the praises the children gave Him were wrong. They had it backwards. How ironic that they considered something that was wonderful to be wrong.

I remember listening to a preacher some years ago admit that he had asked one of the leaders in the church to preach one Sunday morning. He discovered the man was an excellent preacher. In fact, he concluded the man was a better preacher than himself. So, he responded in anger. He was jealous. We

could say he was indignant. He recognized that he was in sin. So, he confessed his sin. Then he recognized that if the man could glorify God better than he could, then he should rejoice in what God had done through him. But that was not the response of these religious leaders. They were indignant. What a horrible heart! At least they could have been happy the people were healed, but they did not care! They had calloused, hardened hearts. Ice cubes would have felt hot to these religious leaders.

Jesus Said He Was Yahweh. Verse 16 tells us the chief priests and scribes then asked, “Do You hear what these children are saying?”

... and said to Him, “Do You hear what these children 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 FOR YOURSELF?’” Matthew 21:16 (NASB)

Jesus replied, “Yes!” He had heard. He did not correct them but accepted their praise. Then He said, “Have you never read,” and then paraphrased Psalm 8:2. His paraphrase is close to the Septuagint (LXX) Bible. In order to understand the significance of this quote, we need to read Psalm 8:3 from the Septuagint and Psalm 8:2 from the NASB.

From the mouth of infants and nursing babies you created praise. Psalm 8:3 (Septuagint)²

From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength. Psalm 8:2 (NASB)

The Septuagint appears to be a better translation of the Hebrew word, *az*, that is translated as “strength.” The Hebrew word has the sense of “strong” or “intense.” It may be that the translators of the Septuagint understood the word to be closer to “praise.” The NET Bible translates “strength” as “praise.” This agrees with Jesus’ paraphrase. It is also the best sense of the verse.

King David is the author of this Psalm. He is praising

2. Rick Brannan et al., eds., The Lexham English Septuagint (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Ps 8:3.

Yahweh. The Psalm is directed to Yahweh. So, the context is about Yahweh. Jesus’ paraphrase was then that Yahweh had prepared praise for Himself from the mouth of infants and nursing babies. This must have made the chief priests and scribes more angry. Why? First, Jesus had just declared that He was Yahweh. That is the context of the quote. Second, He claimed that the praise was prepared for Himself. That is, He deserved the praise!

Once again, Jesus declared that He was God. He had repeatedly declared to the religious leaders that He was Yahweh during His ministry (John 5:218; 8:24, 58; 10:30-33). But we are told this time the religious leaders planned to kill Him because their decision was already in place. We can be confident that this would be more proof that He must be killed.

Conclusion. Then we are told that Jesus left for Bethany and spent the night there.

And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there. Matthew 21:17 (NASB)

Mark 11:11 adds the twelve disciples went with to Bethany. It was Sunday night, March 27 A.D. 33, when Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany. It must have an interesting two-mile walk back to Bethany. I wonder what did Jesus and the twelve talk about. It is now four days to Jesus’ death on the cross. I wonder what Jesus thought about? I wonder what the disciples were dwelling on? There is much for us to think about.

All of the gospels recorded the Triumphal Entry. We studied that event in the last study. But why did Matthew include these pieces of information that we have just studied? There were three reasons.

First, Jesus’ popularity has reached a pinnacle. Four groups of people responded positively to Jesus. The people along the Triumphal Entry hailed Jesus was their King. Those in the city of Jerusalem had heard about Him and wanted to know more.

The blind and lame at the temple and the disciples believed Jesus could heal. His healing was a sign that He was God. No human healed like He did. He did not heal as some today

claim they heal. When Jesus healed, it happened instantaneously and completely. The healing did not occur over time in response to their faith. In fact, Jesus healed some who did not believe. Dead people do not have faith. The blind and lame may not have cared if He was the prophet, Elijah, or the Messiah. All they knew was that Jesus could heal, wanted to be healed, and He did. They are perfect examples of James 1:6-8,

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man unstable in all his ways. James 1:6-8 (NASB)

We can imagine the joy of those who were healed and the joy of their family members. Jesus' popularity among the sick and those who loved them was at a peak.

Jesus was popular with the children. They may not have understood that Jesus was Yahweh, but they shouted that He was the Messiah. Matthew 18:2-3,

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:2-3 (NASB)

Jesus was honored by these little ones. The crowd at the Triumphal entry hailed Him as King, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. And adults and children declared He was the Messiah. So, Jesus was popular with adults, children, and everyone who was sick. He was popular, but few believed He was God. His popularity miracles did not result in widespread belief. Only the elect believed in Him.

Second, the hatred for Jesus by the chief priests and scribes was increasing. It is hard to imagine such callous and hard hearted men as the chief priests and scribes who were indignant because of the wonderful things that Jesus had done, and because the children were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David." They did not like anything that Jesus did and they did not like His popularity.

The same thing happens to anyone who serves Christ.

Even though servants of the Lord only plant and water, people do become indignant when they see the Lord give the increase. They fail to realize that God causes the increase. So, jealous and anger are common in the ministry. The servant of the Lord will experience many trials and hardships.

Then Jesus put the crowning on the afternoon. He declared that He was God. He repeatedly declared that He was God to these unbelieving critics. That seems strange to us. Why did He keep declaring that He was God to those who hated Him? The first part of the answer seems to be that He told them the truth, just as He had shared the gospel with them. The second part of the answer is that He also showed His enemies love by telling them the truth.

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:43-44 (NASB)

How they responded was their own decision. Yet, we will discover later in John 12:36-42 that from God's perspective they were not among God's elect. The third part of the answer is that they were without excuse if they stubbornly continued to reject Christ. The fourth part of the answer is that Christ fulfilled Romans 12:20-21.

BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:20-21 (NASB)

Jesus gave us an example to follow. When our critics attack us, continue to share the gospel and the love of Christ.

Third, the disciples believed He was the Messiah. They were committed to Him. But they did not fully understand yet that He was God, even though they were the most committed.

All of these events were designed by God the Father to fulfill the ancient messianic prophecies, and to further

motivate the religious leaders to kill Jesus so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. At the same we have learned how to respond to unbelieving critics.

What a mixture of people. Five different groups with different views of Jesus. Praises, healing, and confrontation dotted the day. The day had been wonderful and rewarding. Jesus, Our God in human flesh, was honored that day. He was exalted as the King of Israel and rejected as if He was a heretic. He was exalted at His incarnation by angels and in four He was humiliated by death on a cross. Yet, that is the purpose for His coming. The real Triumphal Entry will occur at His second coming. It is our joy to give Him the thank yous and praises that He deserves. We must remember to exalt Christ each day for He deserves it.