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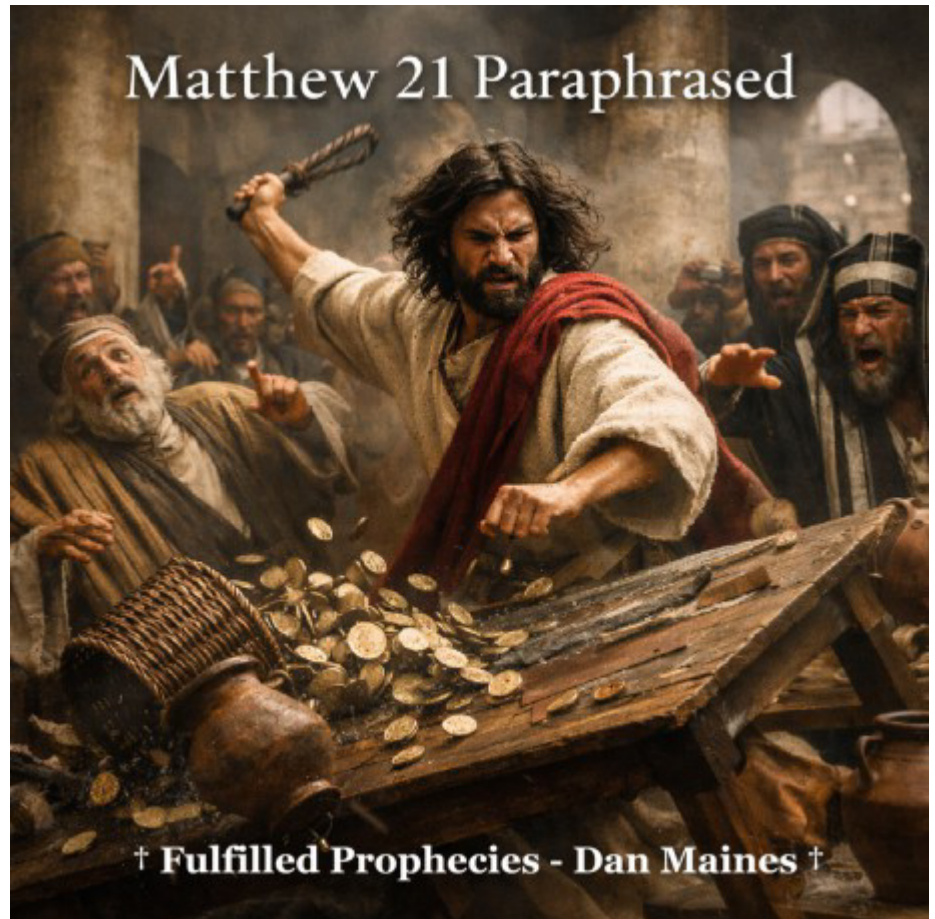
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Matthew 21 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Matthew 21 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Matthew 21 records the public arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem during the final week before His crucifixion. This moment openly revealed Him as the promised King and fulfilled prophecy spoken centuries earlier.

† The crowds celebrated His arrival, shouting praise and spreading branches along the road. Yet most of them misunderstood the nature of His kingdom and expected political

deliverance.

† This chapter also begins the open confrontation between Jesus and the religious leadership of Israel. Their rejection of Him would soon lead to the covenant judgment that Jesus later predicted.

† From the fulfilled perspective, these events set the stage for the coming destruction of Jerusalem that occurred within that generation (Matthew 23:36-38; Matthew 24:1-2).

Matthew 21:1

As Jesus and His disciples approached Jerusalem and came near Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, He sent two disciples ahead.

† The Mount of Olives held prophetic significance connected with the coming of the Lord (Zechariah 14:4).

† Jesus deliberately approached Jerusalem from this location in fulfillment of prophecy.

† Bethphage was a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, just outside the city.

† This approach marked the beginning of the final week leading to the crucifixion.

Matthew 21:2

He told them to go into the village ahead where they would immediately find a donkey tied there and a colt with her, and they were to untie them and bring them to Him.

† Jesus demonstrated knowledge of events before they occurred.

† The donkey symbolized peace rather than military conquest.

† Ancient kings sometimes rode donkeys when entering a city in peace.

† This action fulfilled prophecy describing the arrival of the Messiah.

Matthew 21:3

If anyone asked what they were doing, they were to say that the Lord needed them, and the owner would send them immediately.

† Jesus referred to Himself as Lord.

† The owner's cooperation suggests Jesus was already known and respected.

† This moment shows the providence of God in even small details.

† The events of the final week unfolded according to divine purpose (Acts 2:23).

Matthew 21:4

This happened so that what had been spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled.

† Matthew consistently highlights prophetic fulfillment.

† The life of Christ confirmed the truth of the Scriptures.

† Nothing in this moment was accidental.

† God's promises spoken centuries earlier were now being fulfilled.

Matthew 21:5

Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your King is coming to you gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

† This prophecy comes from Zechariah 9:9.

† Daughter of Zion refers to the people of Jerusalem.

† The prophecy described a humble king rather than a conquering warrior.

† Jesus fulfilled the prophecy exactly.

Matthew 21:6

The disciples went and did exactly as Jesus instructed them.

† Their obedience allowed prophecy to unfold.

† The disciples trusted Jesus' authority.

† Their actions became part of the fulfillment recorded in Scripture.

† Faithful obedience played a role in God's plan.

Matthew 21:7

They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.

† Placing cloaks on the animal was a gesture of royal honor.

† The crowd was recognizing Jesus as the promised King.

† Similar acts occurred when kings were proclaimed in Israel (2 Kings 9:13).

† The event symbolized royal recognition.

Matthew 21:8

A large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from trees and placed them on the road.

† This was a public celebration of royal arrival.

† Branches symbolized victory and deliverance.

† The crowd believed the Messiah had come.

† Their actions reflected Messianic expectation.

Matthew 21:9

The crowds going ahead of Him and those following behind were shouting Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest.

† Hosanna means save now.

† Son of David is a Messianic title connected to God's covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

† The crowd quoted Psalm 118:26.

† Their praise recognized Jesus as the promised King.

Matthew 21:10

When He entered Jerusalem the entire city was stirred and people were asking who He was.

- † Passover crowds filled Jerusalem.
- † News about Jesus had spread widely.
- † The city reacted with curiosity and excitement.
- † His arrival could not go unnoticed.

Matthew 21:11

The crowds were saying this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

- † Many recognized Him as a prophet but not yet fully as Messiah.
- † Nazareth was a small and often overlooked town (John 1:46).
- † His reputation had spread through His miracles and teaching.
- † The people were still forming their understanding of Him.

Matthew 21:12

Jesus entered the temple and drove out those who were buying and selling there and overturned the tables of the money changers.

- † The temple had become a place of commercial profit.
- † Money changers exchanged currency for temple offerings.
- † The system was often abused by corrupt leadership.
- † Jesus exposed the corruption of the temple system.

Matthew 21:13

He told them God's house was meant to be a house of prayer but they had turned it into a den of robbers.

- † Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7.
- † He also echoed Jeremiah 7:11.
- † The prophets had long condemned corruption in Israel's worship.
- † Jesus stood in the tradition of the prophets.

Matthew 21:14

The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them.

- † Even while confronting corruption Jesus showed compassion.
- † The miracles confirmed His authority (Isaiah 35:5-6).
- † The temple became a place of restoration through Christ.
- † The healing demonstrated the power of the Messiah.

Matthew 21:15

When the chief priests and scribes saw the miracles and heard children shouting Hosanna to the Son of David they became angry.

- † The leaders feared losing their authority.
- † The recognition of Jesus as Messiah threatened their control.
- † Jealousy blinded them to the truth.
- † Their reaction revealed hardened hearts.

Matthew 21:16

Jesus replied that Scripture says praise will come from the mouths of children and infants.

- † He quoted Psalm 8:2.
- † Children recognized what leaders rejected.
- † God often reveals truth to the humble.
- † The praise of children exposed the blindness of the rulers.

Matthew 21:17

Jesus left the city and went to Bethany where He spent the night.

- † Bethany was the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (John 11:1).
- † The village was located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.
- † Jesus often stayed there during His final week.
- † It provided a place of rest away from the hostile leadership in Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:18

Now in the morning when He was returning to the city, He

became hungry.

† This simple detail shows the genuine humanity of Jesus.

† The event introduces the lesson of the fig tree that immediately follows.

† The location is still near Jerusalem during the final week.

† What happens next becomes a living parable about Israel.

Matthew 21:19

Seeing a fig tree by the road, He went to it but found nothing on it except leaves. He said that no fruit would ever come from it again, and immediately the fig tree withered.

† The fig tree often symbolized Israel in the Scriptures (Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 8:13).

† The leaves represented outward religion without true fruit.

† The withering illustrated the coming judgment on unfruitful Israel.

† The act served as a prophetic sign of the fate awaiting Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:20

When the disciples saw this they were amazed and asked how the fig tree withered so quickly.

† The disciples recognized the miracle but had not yet understood its deeper meaning.

† Jesus used the moment to teach them about faith and authority.

† The miracle was both a sign and a lesson.

† The event illustrated the seriousness of spiritual fruitlessness.

Matthew 21:21

Jesus told them that if they had faith and did not doubt, they could do what had been done to the fig tree and even say to a mountain to be removed and cast into the sea.

† The mountain imagery reflects prophetic language often used

for kingdoms and powers (Isaiah 40:4).

† Faith connects believers with the authority of God.

† Jesus emphasized confidence in God's power.

† The disciples would soon need this faith in the years ahead.

Matthew 21:22

He said that whatever they asked in prayer believing they would receive.

† Prayer was tied to trust in God's will and power.

† The statement emphasized dependence on God rather than human strength.

† Faith and prayer were essential for the mission of the disciples.

† The promise encouraged them during difficult times.

Matthew 21:23

When Jesus entered the temple again the chief priests and elders questioned His authority and asked who gave Him the right to do these things.

† The leaders were threatened by the authority Jesus displayed.

† Their question revealed their refusal to accept Him as Messiah.

† They were protecting their religious and political power.

† The confrontation between Jesus and the leadership intensified.

Matthew 21:24

Jesus answered by asking them a question about the authority of John the Baptist.

† Jesus exposed their unwillingness to answer truthfully.

† John had prepared the way for the Messiah.

† Their response would reveal their true motives.

† The question placed them in a difficult position.

Matthew 21:25

They debated among themselves because admitting John's authority came from heaven would condemn their own unbelief.

- † Their concern was not truth but reputation.
- † They feared losing credibility before the people.
- † Their reasoning was political rather than spiritual.
- † Their hearts were hardened.

Matthew 21:26

They also feared the crowd because the people believed John was a prophet.

- † Public opinion controlled their actions.
- † The leaders were more concerned with popularity than truth.
- † Fear of the people prevented them from answering honestly.
- † Their authority was built on influence rather than righteousness.

Matthew 21:27

They said they did not know, and Jesus told them He would not answer their question either.

- † Their dishonest response exposed their hypocrisy.
- † Because they rejected John's authority they could not recognize Christ's authority.
- † Jesus refused to play their political game.
- † The exchange revealed the spiritual blindness of Israel's leadership.

Matthew 21:28

Jesus then asked them about a man who had two sons and told the first son to work in the vineyard.

- † This parable illustrated the difference between words and actions.
- † The vineyard again symbolizes Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7).
- † Jesus used simple stories to expose deeper truths.

† The parable directly challenged the leaders.

Matthew 21:29

The first son refused at first but later changed his mind and went to work.

† This represents sinners who later repented.

† Repentance matters more than initial resistance.

† Many who were considered outsiders responded to the message of John and Jesus.

† Their obedience revealed genuine change.

Matthew 21:30

The second son said he would go but never did.

† This represents religious leaders who claimed obedience but rejected God.

† Their words sounded righteous but their actions proved otherwise.

† Hypocrisy defined their response to God's call.

† Their outward religion lacked genuine obedience.

Matthew 21:31

Jesus asked which son did the will of the father, and they answered that the first one did.

† Their answer condemned their own behavior.

† Jesus explained that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom before them.

† Repentant sinners responded to the message of God.

† The leaders refused to believe.

Matthew 21:32

John came in the way of righteousness and they did not believe him, but sinners believed.

† The ministry of John the Baptist exposed the hearts of the nation.

† Many sinners repented when they heard his message.

† The religious leaders remained hardened.

† Their refusal continued even after seeing others repent.

Matthew 21:33

Jesus told another parable about a landowner who planted a vineyard and rented it to tenants.

† The vineyard imagery again points to Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7).

† The landowner represents God.

† The tenants represent the leaders of Israel.

† The story describes Israel's history with God's messengers.

Matthew 21:34

When harvest time came the owner sent servants to collect the fruit.

† The servants represent the prophets.

† God repeatedly sent messengers to Israel.

† The expectation was for righteousness and faithfulness.

† The prophets came calling the nation back to obedience.

Matthew 21:35

The tenants seized the servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

† This reflects the history of Israel rejecting the prophets.

† Many prophets were persecuted or killed (2 Chronicles 36:15-16).

† The leaders consistently resisted God's warnings.

† The pattern continued generation after generation.

Matthew 21:36

The owner sent more servants and they were treated the same way.

† God's patience with Israel lasted many centuries.

† The repeated rejection revealed the hardness of the nation's leadership.

† Yet God continued sending messengers.

† His patience demonstrated mercy.

Matthew 21:37

Finally the owner sent his son thinking they would respect him.

† The son represents Jesus Christ.

† God sent His Son after generations of rejected prophets.

† This moment describes the climax of the story.

† The coming crucifixion is foreshadowed.

Matthew 21:38

The tenants plotted to kill the son so they could take the inheritance.

† This reveals the intentions of the religious leadership.

† They desired power and control.

† The parable mirrors the plot forming against Jesus.

† Their rejection of the Son was deliberate.

Matthew 21:39

They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

† Jesus would soon be crucified outside the city walls.

† The parable closely parallels the events that were about to happen.

† The rejection of the Son sealed the fate of the leadership.

† The story revealed their coming guilt.

Matthew 21:40

Jesus asked what the owner would do to those tenants.

† The question forced the leaders to pronounce judgment on themselves.

† Jesus often used questions to reveal truth.

† Their response would expose the justice of God's judgment.

† The parable reached its conclusion.

Matthew 21:41

They said the owner would destroy those wicked men and give the vineyard to others who would produce fruit.

- † Their own answer predicted the outcome.
- † The kingdom privileges would be transferred.
- † God expected fruit from those entrusted with responsibility.
- † Failure to produce fruit led to judgment.

Matthew 21:42

Jesus quoted Scripture about the stone rejected by the builders becoming the cornerstone.

- † This quote comes from Psalm 118:22.
- † The rejected stone represents Christ.
- † Though rejected by leaders He became the foundation.
- † God's plan could not be stopped.

Matthew 21:43

Jesus said the kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to a people producing its fruit.

- † The corrupt leadership of Israel would lose their privilege.
- † The kingdom would extend beyond the boundaries of national Israel.
- † Fruitfulness became the requirement.
- † This statement pointed forward to the expanding church.

Matthew 21:44

Whoever fell on that stone would be broken, but whoever it fell on would be crushed.

- † Christ is either the foundation of salvation or the stone of judgment.
- † The imagery comes from Isaiah 8:14-15.
- † Acceptance of Christ brings life.
- † Rejection leads to destruction.

Matthew 21:45

The chief priests and Pharisees realized that Jesus was speaking about them.

- † The meaning of the parable was unmistakable.

† They understood the accusation.

† Their hearts grew even harder.

† The conflict intensified.

Matthew 21:46

They wanted to arrest Him but feared the crowds because the people believed He was a prophet.

† Public opinion delayed their plans.

† The leaders acted out of fear rather than conviction.

† The arrest of Jesus would soon follow.

† Their rejection of Him set the stage for the events leading to the cross.

Historical References

† Josephus described the corruption and political struggle among the priesthood in the first century.

† Tacitus wrote about the unrest throughout Judea before the destruction of Jerusalem.

† Eusebius later recorded how early Christians remembered the warnings Jesus gave about the coming judgment on the city.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Outward religion without true obedience produces no fruit.

† Genuine repentance matters more than reputation or status.

† Christ must be accepted as the cornerstone of our lives.

† Rejecting the truth leads to spiritual ruin.

Q & A Appendix

Q What did the fig tree represent?

A It symbolized unfruitful Israel facing covenant judgment (Hosea 9:10; Matthew 21:19).

Q Why did Jesus cleanse the temple?

A Because the temple system had been corrupted by the leadership (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11; Matthew 21:13).

Q What does the vineyard parable represent?

A It describes Israel rejecting the prophets and ultimately rejecting the Son (Matthew 21:33-39; Isaiah 5:1-7).

Q Why did Jesus choose to enter Jerusalem publicly at this time?

A The timing was connected with Passover, when Jerusalem was filled with people from all over Israel. This ensured that the prophetic entry of the Messiah would be widely witnessed (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:4-5; John 12:12-13).

Q Why were palm branches used by the crowd?

A Palm branches were symbols of victory and celebration in Jewish culture. By spreading branches and shouting Hosanna, the people were expressing their expectation that the Messiah had arrived (Psalm 118:25-26; Matthew 21:8-9).

Q Why did Jesus allow the people to call Him the Son of David?

A Son of David was a recognized Messianic title tied to the covenant promise that a descendant of David would rule God's kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 21:9; Luke 1:32-33).

Q Why did the religious leaders react with anger when children praised Jesus?

A Their authority was being challenged. The recognition of Jesus as Messiah threatened their position and influence over the people (Matthew 21:15; John 11:47-48).

Q Why did Jesus curse the fig tree instead of simply ignoring it?

A The fig tree served as a prophetic sign. Just as the tree appeared healthy but had no fruit, Israel's religious system looked impressive outwardly but lacked true righteousness (Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 9:10; Matthew 21:19).

Q What did Jesus mean when He spoke about moving a mountain?

A Mountain imagery was often used in Scripture to represent kingdoms or major obstacles. Jesus was teaching that faith in

God allows believers to overcome barriers that appear impossible (Isaiah 40:4; Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:21).

Q Why did Jesus refuse to answer the leaders about His authority?

A Their question was not sincere. They had already rejected the authority of John the Baptist, who testified about Jesus, so answering them directly would have accomplished nothing (Matthew 21:24-27; John 5:33-36).

Q Why did Jesus say tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom ahead of the religious leaders?

A Many sinners repented when they heard the message of John and Jesus, while the religious leaders refused to believe despite seeing the same evidence (Matthew 21:31-32; Luke 7:29-30).

Q What is the meaning of the vineyard in the parable?

A The vineyard represents Israel. The imagery comes from Isaiah where Israel is described as God's vineyard that failed to produce good fruit (Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 21:33).

Q Who are the servants sent by the vineyard owner?

A The servants represent the prophets whom God sent throughout Israel's history. Many were rejected, persecuted, or killed by the leaders of the nation (2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Matthew 21:34-36).

Q Who is the son in the vineyard parable?

A The son represents Jesus Christ, whom God sent after generations of rejected prophets (Matthew 21:37-39; Hebrews 1:1-2).

Q What does the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone mean?

A It means that although the leaders rejected Jesus, He became the foundation of God's kingdom. This prophecy comes

from Psalm 118:22 and is applied directly to Christ (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11).

Q What does it mean that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to another people?

A Jesus was referring to the loss of kingdom privilege by the corrupt leadership of Israel and the expansion of God's kingdom to those who would bear its fruit (Matthew 21:43; Romans 9:30-31; 1 Peter 2:9).

Q Why didn't the leaders arrest Jesus immediately?

A They feared the reaction of the crowd because many people believed Jesus was a prophet. Their fear of public opinion delayed their actions (Matthew 21:46; Luke 20:19).

Q How does this chapter point toward the coming judgment on Jerusalem?

A The withered fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, and the vineyard parable all pointed toward the coming judgment against the corrupt leadership of Israel that would culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 21:19; Matthew 21:43; Matthew 24:1-2).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 21; Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:22, 26; Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 8:14-15; Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11; Hosea 9:10; 2 Samuel 7:12-16

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews; Tacitus, Histories; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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