

Gospel of Matthew



Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 21:1-46

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. Some examples of the way in which Zechariah's prophecies relate to the last week of Jesus' life are: Zechariah 9:11 refers to the "blood of the covenant," which Matthew relates to the New Covenant to be instituted by Jesus the Messiah in his Passion and death on the cross. Zechariah 10:3a prophesies: "My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah." In this verse, God is expressing anger against the false shepherds of his people, and the scribes and Pharisees showed themselves to be such false shepherds. Zechariah 11:7 prophesies: "So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slain for those who trafficked in the sheep," just as Jesus is the true Shepherd doomed to be slain for his sheep. Zechariah 11:12 describes the prophet being paid off with "thirty shekels of silver," which foreshadows the 30 pieces of silver Judas receives for betraying Jesus. Zechariah 12:10 prophesies that the rejected king will be enthroned after great suffering: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born." Zechariah 13:1 foretells: "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." This is fulfilled by the piercing of Jesus' side on the cross when water and blood flowed out, and it also is seen as a symbol of Baptism.
2. 1 Kings 1:38-39 records that on the same day the usurper Adonijah made a bid for King David's throne by entering the city of Jerusalem in triumphal procession seated on a warhorse and surrounded by military pomp, Solomon rode into Gihon (a neighborhood in the eastern section of Jerusalem) on a mule (*1 Kings* 1:38) and then was anointed king. Jesus intentionally identifies himself with Solomon both to reveal the humble nature of his kingdom and to suggest by this prophetic gesture that he, too, is coming as a true king to break the power of the usurping "false shepherds"—the scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees. 1 Maccabees 13:51 recounts that on the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one-hundred-and-seventy-first year, the Jews entered the city of Jerusalem "with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel." 2 Maccabees 10:6-7 records: "And they celebrated [Hanukkah, the purification of the Temple at Jerusalem] for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals. Therefore bearing ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his holy place."

Matthew Lesson 21 Suggested Responses

3. Isaiah 62:11 predicts that Jesus will come as Savior: “Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.’” Zechariah 9:9 predicts that Jesus will come as King, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.”
4. Psalm 118 is the great Hallel, the holy psalm that’s always sung at the climax of the three holiest Jewish religious festivals—the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. By quoting Psalm 118:26: “Blessed be he who enters in the name of the LORD!” the crowds indicate their understanding that Jesus is the promised Messiah sent by God.
5. According to paragraph 559 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the subjects of Jesus’ kingdom on the day that he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey are “children and God’s poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds.” The acclamation of the people, “‘Blessed be he who comes in the name of the LORD,’ is taken up by the Church in the ‘*Sanctus*’ of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord’s Passover.”
6. The three prophetic gestures that Jesus performs at the beginning of Passion Week are his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Jesus is the humble messianic king of Zechariah’s prophecies), the cleansing of the Temple (Jesus is in authority over those who rule over the Temple), and the cursing of the fig tree (Jesus judges fruitless Israel).
7. Isaiah 56:7 prophesies: “[T]hese I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” Jeremiah 7:11 prophesies: “Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the LORD.” In Matthew 21:13, Jesus applies these words to the money-changers at the Temple.
8. The Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Hosea both use the image of a fig tree to refer to God’s chosen people of Israel. In Jeremiah 8:13, the prophet writes: “When I would gather them, says the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.” In Hosea 9:10, God’s words are recorded: “Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baalpeor, and consecrated themselves to Baal, and became detestable like the thing they loved.”
9. Matthew 21:32 explains how Jesus’ parable of the two sons relates to Jesus’ questions to the chief priests and elders about John the Baptist in Matthew 21:25: “The baptism of John, when was it? From heaven or from men?” In Matthew 21:32, Jesus says: “For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him.” One son in the parable represents the Israelites who give lip service to God but reject

Jesus the Messiah. The other son represents the tax collectors and harlots who repent and believe in Jesus and who obey God from their hearts.

10. In the parable of the wicked tenants, Jesus completes his message of the parable of the two sons. Not only are the chief priests and Pharisees insincere in their religious practices and refuse to repent and believe, but they ultimately will be responsible for the death of the Son and will be punished. In the parable of the wicked tenants, the householder represents God; the vineyard is God's chosen people, the Israelites; the tenants represent those who care for the vineyard Israel, the chief priests and Pharisees. In Isaiah 5:3-5, God speaks through the prophet, saying: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; and I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down." In Jeremiah 2:21, God asks: "Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?"

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.

Matthew Notes