

# The Son of David & the Hopes of God's People

Thomas Robinson, *Palm Sunday*, April 13, 2014

## Matthew 21:1-17 [Cf. Mk]

<sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, '**Their Lord needs them,**' and he will send them at once."

<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup> "Say to the **daughter of Zion**, [Isa 62:11]

*'Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and **mounted on a donkey,**  
on a **colt**, the foal of a beast of burden.'*" [Zech 9:9]

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their **cloaks**, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their **cloaks on the road**, and others cut **branches** from the trees and spread them on the road. [2Kg 9:13; 2Mac 10:7]

<sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting,

*"**Hosanna** (Save, I pray) to the **Son of David!**"* [Psa 118:25]

***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*** [Psa 118:26; Mt 23:39]  
*Hosanna in the highest!"*

<sup>10</sup> And when he **entered Jerusalem**, the whole city was **shaken**, saying, "**Who is this?**"

<sup>11</sup> And the crowds said, "**This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.**"

<sup>12</sup> 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 [Zech 14:21].

<sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written,

*'**My house shall be called a house of prayer,**'* [Isa 56:7]

*but you make it 'a **cave of bandits.**'"* [Jer 7:11]

<sup>14</sup> And the **blind** and the **lame** came to him in the temple, and **he healed them** [2Sam 5:8].

<sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> 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?'"* [Psa 8:2]

<sup>17</sup> And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

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## Matthew 21:42-43

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*"**The stone that the builders rejected** has become the cornerstone;  
this was **the Lord's doing**, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'"* [Psa 118:22-23]

<sup>43</sup> Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits."

## Matthew 23:37-39

<sup>37</sup> "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, the city that **kills the prophets** and **stones** those who are **sent to it!** How often would I have gathered your children together as a **hen gathers her brood** under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>38</sup> See, **your house** is left to you **desolate**. <sup>39</sup> For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, '**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**'" [Psa 118:26]

## Song and Sign, Prophecy and Politics Collide

Today, a decisive event. We have listened to Jesus' parables, watched his signs, actions as parables, his promise and call to God's kingdom, to be learners/disciples. To hear, see, understand. To trust the mustard seed, search for the Pearl, make Sabbath holy by healing, feed throngs in the wilderness, get out of the boat, even celebrate the faith of a Canaanite.

At Passover, he approaches the final great confrontation – with the Temple and the high priests, the power of imperial Rome behind them, and the power of violence and death they wield.

What do you do? What is at stake? Israel, the world, the future. Jesus reflects on the songs Israel sang for Passover, on the poetry of prophets, on their hopes and expectations.

## The King on the Donkey Colt

Jesus chooses a donkey. A colt. It comes from a poem/prophecy/image from Zechariah (520 bc).

Jesus turns it into event. The God who transforms Israel and its enemies, uniting them, destroying oppression, comes as a just king, humble on a donkey colt, to cut off violence, bring peace and rule the world. What a vision! But that only starts the reverberations of the donkey.

Mt draws a phrase from Isa 62, a similar poetic vision – awaiting the coming of God's salvation.

Traditionally the Temple stood on Mt. Moriah to which Abraham rode a donkey to fulfill God's dark command to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise. The future at stake. God will provide?!

Jesus rides like Abraham, like Isaac, like the ram God gave, up Mt. Moriah, to test the future.

Echoes of Isa 1's donkey. Diagnosis of Israel's sickness, judgment on Temple, purification.

## Son of David, Save Us

The people see, understand, and join in the prophetic drama in word and act. They lay down cloaks to recognize the anointed king. They cut branches to celebrate the purifying of the Temple.

They shout and sing one of the great Songs of Ascent (Psa 118), adapting it to the Son of David, God's Anointed/Messiah/King, blessed, coming "in the name of Yahweh." They cry for God's deliverance: "Hosanna! Save us!" They see Heaven and Earth meeting in this deliverance.

If only it could have lasted. Jesus later quotes other verses from the same song about a stone that expert builders reject, but that God nevertheless uses. Later Jesus anticipates Jerusalem's desolation, rejection of Jesus' protective wings, and he quotes again Psa 118.

## Whose Temple Is This?

Jesus' coming shook the city like an earthquake. Who is this?! People anticipate, hope, for what?

Jesus enacts a judgment on the Temple, driving out the sellers, a new holiness for God's house as Zechariah sang, when even the horses' bells and the ordinary pots will be "Holy to the Lord."

Jesus quotes the transforming promise of Isa 56, a prophetic poem that welcomes the excluded – the foreigner and even the eunuch – to hope in the Lord and keep his Sabbaths, with the promise that God would give them a monument and name in his house – a house of prayer.

That contrasts with Jesus' judgment from Jer 7 on the priests' regime, which made conflicts worse and sold out to Rome's ways, sliding down the violent slope of injustice toward war.

## Healing and Renewal

Jesus reaches back to David's first conquest of Jerusalem – a proverbial pattern of exclusion – to mark a new era, welcoming the blind and lame into the Temple and healing them. Every action, every word, flows from the songs and signs of the psalms, prophets, hopes of Israel.

Even the children knew the songs of Passover: Hosanna! Son of David! The leading priests challenged Jesus. He again responded with poetry: God's praise breaks forth from the highest heaven and the tiniest baby. Can you hear it? Can you see him? Can you join in the song?