

## Matthew 20:17-21:17

### Overview

This entire section, introduced by the third announcement of the passion, begins with narrative (20:17-21:17), but once the Lord arrives in Jerusalem, reported speech dominates (21:18-25:45). Each of these in turn can be divided into two parts, based on the involvement of the Jewish leaders (Table 1, chart).

		Genre	
		Narrative	Exposition
Participants	Disciples	20:17-34 Final Ascent	Ch. 24-25 Olivet Discourse
	Jewish Leaders	21:1-17 Triumphal Entry	21:18-23:39 Great Debate

*Table 1: Structure of ch. 20b-25*

- The entry into Jerusalem proper (21:1-17) engages the final conflict with the religious leaders, which is not explicit during the journey up to the Mount of Olives (20:17-34).
- The audience for the extensive debate and exposition is first the Jewish leaders (21:18-23:39), then the disciples (ch. 24-25).

### 20:17-34 Going Up to Jerusalem

We find the Lord and his disciples in Jericho (cf. v. 29, which takes place as they leave the town), which is where one leaves the north-south road and heads west, up into the mountains, to approach the holy city (Figure 1, chart). The Jordan at this point is 347 m below sea level; the crest of the Mount of Olives is over 700 m above sea level, a change of over a kilometer, nearly 3500 feet. This is the only time in Matthew he is said to “go up” to Jerusalem, which fits the route from the Jordan valley up the red ascent and over the Mount of Olives to the Holy City.

### 20:17-19 Third Announcement of the Passion

20:17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the

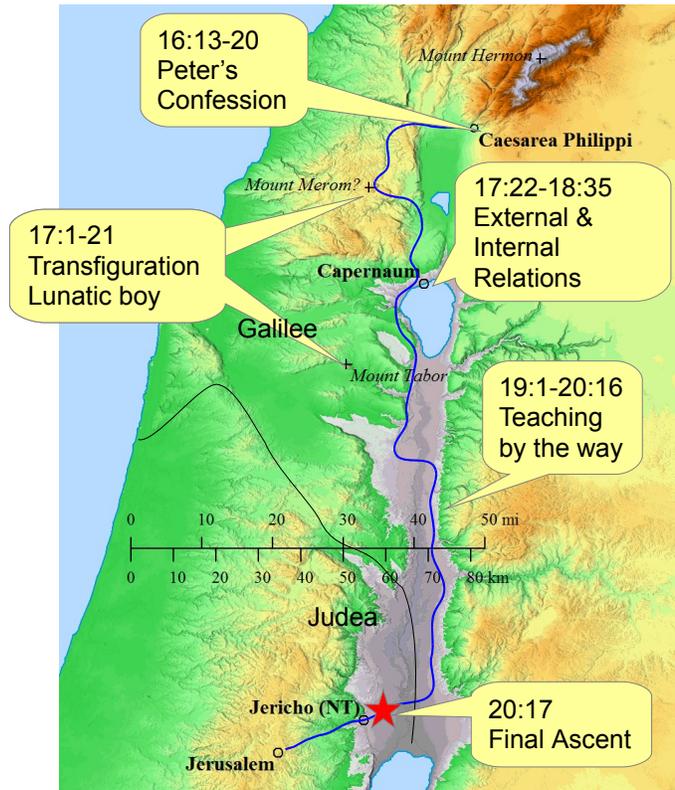


Figure 1: Going up to Jerusalem

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**way**,—They are traveling with a crowd of pilgrims, and the previous three episodes have all grown out of his discussions with the crowd. Now he draws aside to say something privately to the disciples.

**and said unto them, 18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.**—This is the third announcement of his passion. Compare it with the other three (Table 2, chart). Two details merit our attention.

16:21-22	17:22-23	20:17-20	26:1-2
21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples,	22 And <b>while they abode in Galilee</b> , Jesus said unto them,	17 And Jesus <b>going up to Jerusalem</b> took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,	1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,
how that he must go unto Jerusalem,		18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem;	2 Ye know that after two days is <i>the feast of the passover</i> ,
and suffer many things of <b>the elders and chief priests and scribes</b> ,	The Son of man shall be <b>betrayed</b> into the hands of men:	and the Son of man shall be <b>betrayed</b> unto <b>the chief priests and unto the scribes</b> , and they shall condemn him to death, 19 And shall <b>deliver</b> him to the Gentiles	and the Son of man is <b>betrayed</b>
and be <b>killed</b> ,	23 And they shall kill him,	to mock, and to scourge, and to <b>crucify him</b> :	to be crucified.
and be <b>raised</b> again the third day.	and the third day he shall be <b>raised</b> again.	and the third day he shall <b>rise</b> again.	
22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, ...	And they were exceeding sorry.	20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, ...	(Anointing in the house of Simon the Leper)

Table 2: Prophecies of the Passion

First, he gives much more detail now than he did in the previous two announcements. He has been preparing the disciples gently for what is coming, Now for the first time he mentions the disgrace of being delivered to the Gentiles, and the details of his suffering. There is an example for us here in dealing with younger believers, or with our children. All of us are naturally curious, and want all the details at once, but the Lord shows us the importance of preparing people for what we teach them.

Second, he continues to use the verb translated “betrayed” and “delivered,” παραδίδωμι, that we studied in connection with the previous announcement in 17:22. We are accustomed to associate

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this verb mainly with the activity of Judas (thus the translation “betrayed”), and indeed Matt 26:23 does use the verb of him. But when we studied 17:22, we saw that Paul consistently uses the verb to describe the joint sacrifice made by the Father and the Son for our redemption. For example (chart),

Rom 4:25 Who was **delivered** for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but **delivered** him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

He is probably following the LXX of Isaiah 53, which uses the verb three times to describe our Lord’s sacrifice:

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath **laid** on him the iniquity of us all. (LXX “The Lord **delivered** him up for our sins”)

Isa 53:12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath **poured out** his soul unto death: (LXX: “his soul was **delivered** to death”) and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and **made intercession** for the transgressors. (LXX: “was **delivered** because of their iniquities”)

When Paul reminds us in 1 Cor 11:23 that the Lord Jesus took bread the same night in which he was “delivered up,” the reference is not so much to Judas, as to this great divine action of offering the son of Man, our kinsman, for our redemption. In using this term, the Lord is not complaining darkly about the disloyalty that is harbored among the disciples, but he is taking the disciples back to Isaiah 53 to remind them of the divine purpose of what is unfolding. a—b

### **20:20-28 Grasping for Prestige**

**20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons,**—That is, James and John (4:21). They were already part of the inner circle. The Lord chose them, with Peter, to witness the transfiguration (chart):

Mat 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2 And was transfigured before them:

The same three will be close to him during the agony in Gethsemane:

Mat 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. 38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

So they already occupied positions of prestige in the little band of disciples.

**worshipping him,**—We have seen that this term does not simply indicate respect, but recognizes the deity of the one to whom the gesture is addressed. As she goes on indicate, she recognizes him as the promised king.

**and desiring a certain thing of him. 21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.**—Her request reflects two failings on the part of the disciples, failings that we must be careful to avoid.

First, in spite of the Lord's gentle introduction of the gruesome suffering that awaits him, the disciples still don't get it. The only thing they hear is "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," and their minds are so preoccupied with the coming glory of the kingdom that they miss his detailed prediction of his passion. He has just told them, twice, that those who would be first must be the last (19:30; 20:16), and reminded them of the repeated OT teaching that the saints who will rule the kingdom must first suffer. But they cannot see the suffering, and think only of the glory. It is wonderful and good for us to contemplate the glory that the Lord has in store for us, but we should not be surprised when the road to that glory must lead through suffering and tribulation.

Second, in spite of his example of humility, they continue the error of 18:1, seeking to be the greatest. They have not caught the lesson he has twice presented (18:1-4; 19:13) that they must be like little children.

The Lord gives two answers: clarifying what their request involves, and pointing them to the one who has the authority to make such appointments. Then, in vv. 25-28, he exhorts all the disciples once more concerning humility, presenting himself as the central example.

**22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask.**—The Lord's first answer to their request is to remind them of just what they are requesting. Their focus is on future glory; in fact, they are asking for persecution and suffering. In a few days, they will have a vivid illustration of what it means to be at his right and left hand (chart):

Mat 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Before they can be at his right and left hand in the kingdom, they must be there at the cross. Recall the principle we saw in our discussion of 19:28-29, that the future glory lies on the other side of suffering and persecution. The Lord describes this under two figures, drinking a cup and undergoing baptism.

**Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of,**—The cup is a common figure throughout the OT, and consistently represents judgment. It is rooted in the poetical books (chart):

Psa 11:6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be **the portion of their cup.** (see also Job 21:10; Psa 60:3; 75:8)

Isaiah picks it up, emphasizing the parallels between judgment and intoxication. Twice he speaks of "trembling" resulting from this cup, drawing a parallel between the lack of control in a

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drunken person and the uncontrolled shaking in fear of one undergoing severe judgment.

Isa 29:9 Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: **they are drunken**, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

Isa 51:17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD **the cup of his fury**; thou hast drunken the dregs of the **cup of trembling**, and wrung them out. (see also v. 22)

The sixth century prophets continue the image:

Jer 25:15 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the **wine cup of this fury** at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. (see also Ezek 23:31)

And we hear it in the Revelation:

Rev 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall **drink of the wine of the wrath of God**, which is poured out without mixture into the **cup of his indignation**; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

This is the cup of which the Lord is to partake. He is to suffer the wrath of God against sinners, as their substitute.

**and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?**—Baptism is much less common in the OT than is the image of the cup. The verb appears only twice. The first time, it describes Naaman, dipping in the Jordan to remove his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).

The second instance is in Isaiah 21, where the LXX uses it to represent a sense of being overwhelmed (chart):

Isa 21:4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: [LXX lawlessness baptized me, overwhelmed me] the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

Though this particular word is rare, the Israelites were not a seafaring people, and their terror of being overflowed with water appears repeatedly.

Psa 69:2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods **overflow** me.

Jon 2:3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves **passed over me**.

Isa 43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not **overflow** thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

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The word was in common use in Greek of the first century to describe violent destruction: Josephus uses it to describe a drowning (Wars 1:437; 3:423; 5:527), a sinking ship (Wars 2:556; 3:368; Life 1:15), both together (Wars 3:525), or the general destruction of a city:

Jwr 4:137 although these very men, besides the seditions they raised, were otherwise the direct cause of the city's destruction also [εβαπτισεν την πολιν “they sank the city”]; for as they were an unprofitable and a useless multitude, they squandered those provisions beforehand, which might otherwise have been sufficient for the fighting men. Moreover, besides the bringing on of the war, they were the occasions of sedition and famine therein.

Clearly, the Lord is describing a violent and disastrous outcome.

**They say unto him, We are able.**—The Lord’s challenge, and their positive answer, has been made the basis for a hymn, “ ‘Are ye able,’ said the Master...,” encouraging us to answer in the same way. But that attitude ignores the whole thrust of the episode. Their response shows their fleshly confidence and lack of appreciation for what the Lord is saying. This claim surely ranks with Peter’s boast (chart),

Mat 26:33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended.

In the end, Peter denied the Lord in spite of his boast, and all of them fled from him in the garden (26:56).

Consider Paul’s warning to the Corinthians,

1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Success in serving the Lord does not come from fleshly bravery. It comes from recognizing our weakness and casting ourselves on the Lord. With James and John, compare the father of the epileptic boy,

Mar 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

**23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with:**—In fact, those of us blessed to be members of the Lord’s body must also share in his afflictions. James was martyred for his faith (chart):

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

John was exiled to Patmos, and his description of that exile suggests that he finally got the message. In our version, we read,

Rev 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word

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of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In Greek, the article comes before “tribulation,” not after it. We should better translate, “the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” His mother asked for him a role in the kingdom, but by the end of his life he realizes that sharing the kingdom means sharing the tribulation and learning the patience as well.

This theme that believers must expect to share the sufferings of the Lord is consistent in the epistles as well (see notes). For example:

2Co 1:5 For as **the sufferings of Christ abound in us**, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Phi 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and **the fellowship of his sufferings**, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. *Note chiasm: Resurrection, suffering, death, resurrection*

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as **ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

**but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.**—The first answer to their request is that suffering comes before glory. Now the Lord turns to the second answer: he is not the one to make this decision. The administration of the kingdom is under the Father’s authority. This statement reminds us of what he will later teach concerning the time of his return, and of the end of the world (chart):

Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. 36 But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Throughout his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus describes himself as subject to the Father, seeking the Father’s will, and when he is exalted, it is the Father who exalts him:

Phi 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Asaph had long before articulated the general principle behind what the Lord here tells James and John:

Psa 75:5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not with* a stiff neck. 6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God *is* the

judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

**24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.**

—The attentive reader will recognize how fall short James and John fall of the Lord’s standard of childlike humility. But the response of the ten shows that they are no better. They wish that they had thought of asking for what Mrs. Zebedee requested.

**25 But Jesus called them unto him,—**He knows their hearts, and anticipates the discord.

**and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief**

Titled authority (prince, chief)	25 Ye know that the <b>princes</b> of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them,	27 And whosoever will be <b>chief</b> among you, let him be your servant (1401 δουλος):
Functional authority (great)	and they that are <b>great</b> exercise authority upon them.	but whosoever will be <b>great</b> among you, let him be your minister (1249 διακονος);
26 But it shall not be so among you:		

*Table 3: The Lord's Chiastic Rebuke*

**among you, let him be your servant:**—His instruction is a odd-membered chiasm,<sup>1</sup> where the center element pivots from the unacceptable conduct in the first panel to the desired conduct in the second (Table 3, chart). The outer members use titles of authority (prince, chief), while the inner pair simply describe greatness. But believers are not to seek either the title or the power. They are to take the position of servants and slaves, and the lower position, the slave, is associated with the higher aspiration among the gentiles, that of being chief or prince.

**28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**—He backs up the rebuke with his own example, and in the process returns to the announcement of vv. 17-19. He did not come to rule, but to die. In vv. 17-19 he presented the fact of his death. Now he spells out its motive: to give a ransom for his people.

In the NT, this noun λυτρον (Strong 3083) appears only in this saying, though its derivatives, the abstract noun “redemption” or the verb “to redeem,” are common. But the noun does appear in the LXX, notably in Numbers 3, which discusses the redemption of the firstborn males of Israel. At the Exodus, when the Lord killed the firstborn sons of Egypt, he laid claim to all of Israel’s firstborn males, both human and animal (chart):

Exo 13:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, **whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man** and of beast: it *is* mine. ... 12 ... thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall be* the LORD'S. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and **all the firstborn of man among thy**

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**children shalt thou redeem.**

In Exodus, he doesn't say how they are to redeem the firstborn of men, but Numbers 3 specifies that the Levites are to take their place, and the LXX actually calls them a ransom:

Num 3:12 (LXX) Behold, I have taken the Levites from the midst of the children of Israel, instead of every male that opens the womb from among the children of Israel: **they shall be their ransom**, and the Levites shall be mine.

When they counted up the firstborn males and the Levites, there weren't enough Levites to match the firstborn males, so the others had to pay a ransom price of five shekels, which both the LXX and the MT designate as a ransom.

So the idea of the ransom in the OT is that a group of people (firstborn males) are under sentence of death, and are delivered by substituting for them another group of people, the Levites. Our Savior comes as Israel's greater priest, not a Levite, but according to the order of Melchizedek. Like the Levites, his function is to redeem his people, to take their place in order to deliver them from death.

As often, Paul draws on our Lord's teaching in his epistles. Consider the relation of this entire passage, vv. 25-28, to Phil 2:5-8 (Table 4, chart). While the Lord uses a verb from the weaker word, διακονος (servant), to describe his role, Paul chooses the stronger term, δουλος (slave).

Matt 20	Phil 2
28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to <b>minister</b> <b>διακονεω</b> ,	5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a <b>servant</b> <b>δουλος</b> , and was made in the likeness of men:
and to give his life a <b>ransom</b> for many.	8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the <b>death</b> of the cross.

Table 4: 20:28 as background for Phil 2:5-8

**20:29-34 Healing the Blind Men in Jericho**

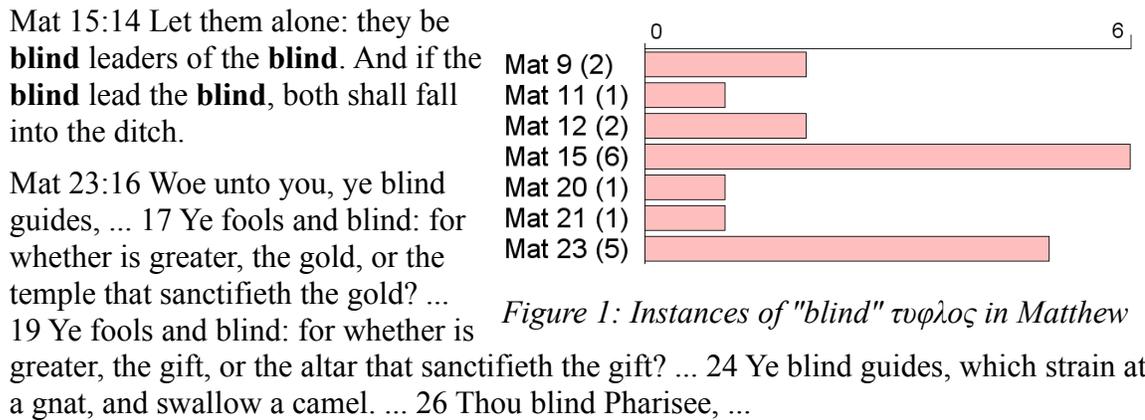
This section invites two questions.

First, it is very like the healing of two blind men early in the Lord's ministry, in 9:27-31. Such similarity suggests that Matthew means us to compare the stories with one another and draw a lesson from any differences between them.

Second, why does Matthew include this episode in his narrative? He is highly selective. Comparison with Luke's gospel shows that many things happened along the road that he doesn't mention at all. Why does he include this episode?

Let's start with the second question. Note the distribution of the word "blind" in Matthew (1, chart). The word is concentrated in ch. 15 and ch. 23, which contain the only instances of the word that do not refer to physical blindness. Four of the six instances in ch. 15, and all of those in ch. 23, describe the Jewish leaders.

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So the narrative prepares us for the blindness of the Jewish leaders. Throughout his ministry, and even in Jerusalem, he is able to heal the physically blind (21:14), as Isaiah promised (35:5-6), but the Jewish leaders persist in their blindness.

Compare John's contrast of physical and spiritual blindness in John 9, in an event that took place soon after the feast of Tabernacles the fall before the journey that we are studying here. The Lord heals a man who is physically blind (charts):

9:1 And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. ... 6 ... he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, 7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. ...

The Pharisees are offended because the healing happens on the Sabbath:

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. ... 24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. 25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. ... 28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. ... 30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. ... 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. 34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

The Lord makes the contrast explicit.

39 And *Jesus* said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. 40 And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? 41 *Jesus* said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

The similarity between the stories in Matthew 9 and Matthew 20 emphasizes how consistently he

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is able to heal blind people. But there are some distinctions that deserve our attention, particularly in view of the great confrontation with spiritual blindness that Matthew is about to report. Table 5 (chart) sets the two side by side.

<p>9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, <b>two blind men followed him</b>, crying, and saying, <i>Thou Son of David, have mercy on us</i>. 28 And <b>when he was come into the house</b>, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, <b>Believe ye</b> that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, <b>Lord</b>. 29 <b>Then touched he their eyes</b>, saying, <b>According to your faith</b> be it unto you. 30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See <i>that no man know it</i>. 31 But they, <b>when they were departed</b>, spread abroad his fame in all that country.</p>	<p>20:29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude <b>followed him</b>. 30 And, behold, <b>two blind men sitting by the way side</b>, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, <b>Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David</b>. 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. 32 <b>And Jesus stood still</b>, and called them, and said, <b>What will ye</b> that I shall do unto you? 33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus <b>had compassion on them</b>, and <b>touched their eyes</b>: and immediately their eyes received sight, and <b>they followed him</b>.</p>
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*Table 5: Two healings of two blind men*

**29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.**—The crowd is intermediate between the disciples and the Jewish leaders, at this point supportive, but ultimately turning against the Lord (when they ask for Barabbas and demand his death, 27:20-24).<sup>2</sup>

**30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side,**—Here the Lord comes to the vicinity of these beggars, while in ch. 9, they followed after him and sought him out.

**when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.**—In both episodes, their plea has the same three elements. These show an understanding about Jesus that far surpasses that of the Jewish leaders.

- They beg for his mercy. They are miserable, and know it, and want help.
- They recognize him as the promised Messianic king, the Son of David. They are the first Jews to recognize him thus (the first was the Canaanite woman in 15:22; the people in 12:23 simply question whether he is), and the only one until the multitudes proclaim him with this title at the triumphal entry (21:9, 15).
- They call him “Lord,” which is the LXX translation of the divine name in the OT, YHWH. Throughout Matthew, it anticipates the use of the title in the epistles, where it clearly indicates the Lord’s deity.<sup>3</sup> It is used by his followers, never by his enemies, who

<sup>2</sup> Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, Brill (Leiden), 2002

<sup>3</sup> See notes for summary of the uses in Matthew. In Greek in general, the vocative can simply be a title of respect, but only once in Matthew is the vocative addressed to someone other than Jesus, the Father, or a parabolic character who represents them. That is the last instance, 27:63, on the lips of the Jewish leaders toward Pilate. Throughout Matthew they never call Jesus Lord, but only Teacher. So their willingness to call Pilate Lord is

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call him “teacher.” (In ch. 9, they don’t add this title until he challenges their faith with his question.)

So at these two points in the history, they call out his identity. Ironically, they are the ones who can see who he really is.

**31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.**—These men are persistent—as are those in ch. 9, where they pursue him, right into the house where he is going.

**32 And Jesus stood still, and called them,**—In 9:28, he goes into a house, and they come to him. The question, their confession of him as Lord, and the healing all take place in the house, away from the eyes of the multitude, and he commands them (unsuccessfully) not to tell people what has happened. Here, the healing is public, in the midst of the crowd. The difference appears to be the stage of the Lord’s ministry at which we find ourselves.

The miracles in ch. 8-9 are early in his ministry, and he wants to avoid nationalistic fervor among the multitude. So not only in this last miracle of that series, but in the first (the leper), he commands secrecy (Mat 8:4 “See thou tell no man”).

Now he is on his way to Jerusalem, to present himself as the Messianic king. So he no longer needs to command secrecy.

**and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?**—The questions in the two accounts differ.

In 9:28, he questions their faith, and elicits from them the address as “Lord.”

In our passage, they have already confessed him as lord, so he asks what they want. This question is itself a puzzle. Isn’t it obvious that a blind person would want to be healed? But recall the metaphor emphasized in Figure 1. These blind people want to see. The spiritually blind leaders of Israel prefer to remain in their blindness.

**33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight,**—In both cases, healing comes through his touch.

**and they followed him.**—Their response is more positive than that of the blind men in ch. 9. That story ends with their disobedience: the Lord commands them to keep their healing secret, but they spread the news abroad. Here, they do not depart from him, but follow him.

While this is positive, it probably does not indicate discipleship, for the Lord does not summon them, and they bear no cost.<sup>4</sup> Rather, this is an inclusio with v. 29. The multitude followed him, and these two men take their place with that multitude.

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more than a courtesy. They are putting the representative of Rome higher than the representative of the kingdom of heaven.

4 Cousland ch. 7, and Kingsbury, JBL 97/1 (1978) 56-73

## 21:1-17 The Messiah Presents Himself to Jerusalem

### 21:1-11 The Triumphal Entry

**21:1** And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives,—According to Jewish sources, Bethphage was at the limit of a Sabbath day’s journey from Jerusalem, at the top of the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple (chart, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4), NW of Bethany less than 1km as the crow flies.

then sent Jesus two disciples, **2** Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. **3** And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.—Mark and Luke report that they were in fact challenged, and that the owners released the animals as the Lord had anticipated. Why would the owners would release their property so easily?

Compare the incident a few days later (chart),

Mat 26:17 Now the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? **18** And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. **19** And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

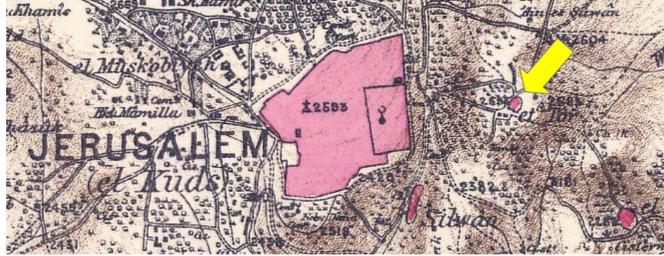


Figure 2: Likely location of Bethphage at At-Tur



Figure 3: From Bethphage toward the temple



Figure 4: Perspective of Bethphage (arrow) and Temple Mount from the north

The Lord has his people ready to meet the earthly needs of his work. We know from Luke and John that the Lord visited Jerusalem several times during the last year of his life. He had close

Matthew 20:17-21:17

friends in Bethany, and the owners of the ass and her colt, as well as the householder in ch. 26, may have met the Lord during these earlier visits.

Compare also the Shunammite woman and her husband in 2 Kings 4, who provided hospitality for Elisha:

2Ki 4:8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And *so* it was, *that* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. 9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. 10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

God rewarded her by giving her a son. A negative example is how Nabal was punished for failing to support David in 1 Sam 25.

1Sa 25:10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be*?

The Lord slew him (vv. 37, 38).

These examples have two lessons for us.

The first is that when we are serving the Lord, we should not worry about his provision. He can move his people to provide sustenance along the way.

The second is that we should always be alert for opportunities to support other believers in their ministry for the Lord.

Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

To put it succinctly: if Jesus needed your donkey, would you give it to him?

**4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.**—This is the first of five quotations in this chapter.<sup>5</sup> Here he combines two verses (chart). The first is good news to the daughter of Zion:

Isa 62:11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, **Say ye to the daughter of Zion**, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

Recall from our studies in Isaiah that the expression is really “Daughter Zion,” not “daughter of Zion.” Isaiah foretells that the good news will be brought to the city, and that’s exactly what is happening.

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew’s use of quotations is concentrated around the birth and death narratives—see notes.

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The second quotation focuses on the animal that carries the king into the city:

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

We should notice two things about this prophecy.

First, Matthew’s quotation omits the clauses “he is just, and having salvation” in Zech 9:9. The OT prophecies often collapse together the two comings of our Lord, and these two clauses were not true at the time of his entry, but will be true at his return. For each expression, consider its OT usage, the state of affairs at his first coming, and what is promised for the second coming (chart, Table 6).

“Just” (in the first column) refers not only to his personal righteousness, but to the justice that the king is to bring as judge. Isaiah promises that this will be a characteristic of the coming king. But at his first advent, the Lord did not come to judge, so Matthew omits “just.” At his second advent, he will receive authority from the Father to raise the dead and judge them.

“Having salvation” is passive, and most literally refers to his being the recipient of divine help. The verb (שׁוּׁ) Niphal) appears 21x in the OT, and this is the only place it is not translated, “Be saved.” It often appears in a military context, in which someone is “saved from enemies.” At his

	Just	Having Salvation (“Saved”)
OT Usage	Isa 11:4 But with <b>righteousness</b> shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. Isa 32:1 ... a king shall reign in <b>righteousness</b> ,	Num 10:9 And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be <b>saved</b> from your enemies.
First Advent	Joh 3:17 For God sent <b>not</b> his Son into the world <b>to condemn</b> the world; but that the world through him might be saved. Joh 12:47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for <b>I came not to judge the world</b> , but to save the world.	Mat 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; <b>himself he cannot save</b> . If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.
Second Advent	Joh 5:26 ...the Father... 27 ... hath given him authority to <b>execute judgment</b> also, because he is the Son of man. 28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.	Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin <b>unto salvation</b> .

Table 6: Messiah's Justice and Salvation at the Two Advents

Matthew 20:17-21:17

entry into Jerusalem the first time, he has not yet received God's salvation, and in fact, on the cross, his enemies mock him for not being able to save himself. Thus Matthew omits "having salvation." But at his second advent he comes bringing with him his accomplished salvation for his people.

The second thing that draws our attention is that he is riding on an ass, rather than a horse. We think that a royal figure would choose a horse rather than a donkey. But Zechariah goes on to explain the choice of steed (chart):

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.

The people of Jerusalem were looking for a militant king to overthrow the Romans, but the Lord comes meekly, and offers the nations peace. But again, Zechariah sees a collapsed vision. The donkey belongs to the first coming. When the Lord returns in victory to judge, he chooses a different mount, and deals with the nations in a very different way:

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold **a white horse**; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him **upon white horses**, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 **And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:** and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

**6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,**—This is always the definition of a good disciple!

**7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.**—The gesture<sup>6</sup> is very touching. We often think of someone laying down the red carpet for an honored visitor, and we love to watch the pomp of such a ceremony. But these people are not just watching. They are putting down

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6 The gesture itself has OT roots (2 Kings 9:13), when Jehu was anointed king over Israel. This was a particularly disruptive change of administration: Jehu's mission was to obliterate the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:6-7). Jehu goes on to slay the entire house of Ahab, including his son Joram, his wife Jezebel, and the rest of Ahab's sons. A reader who recalls this episode might well see the Lord's welcome as anticipating a similar overthrow of the existing power structure in Jerusalem.

Matthew 20:17-21:17

their own clothes, and after the donkeys walk over them with their sharp hooves, and do what donkeys sometimes do as they walk along, they are very likely to lose them. A slave's garment, likely the simplest and least expensive clothing available, cost 30 days' wages (see notes on 20:2). Like the owner of the donkey, these people gave more than lip service to the Lord. They were willing to suffer loss to receive him.

**9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.**—The people are quoting Psa 118:25-26 (chart):<sup>7</sup>

Psa 118:25 **Save now, †we beseech thee** הושיענו נא, O LORD: O LORD, †we beseech thee, send now prosperity. 26 **Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD:** we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

We studied this Psalm at Easter 2015.<sup>8</sup> There we saw that this Psalm was probably written at the dedication of the second temple in Ezra 6. It had a special role at Passover: It concludes the series of Psalms (113-118) known as the Hallel, which is sung at the close of every passover seder. The Lord would have sung it with his disciples at the last supper, and it is likely to be the hymn mentioned in Matthew,

Mat 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

The Psalm sets forth a little drama (Figure 5). A righteous Israelite, reporting his persecution and the Lord's defense (vv. 5-18), approaches the gates of the newly restored temple and asks admittance (v. 19). The priests reply (v. 20) that only the righteous may enter, and he claims that right on the basis of God's salvation (v. 21). Then the priests welcome him in.

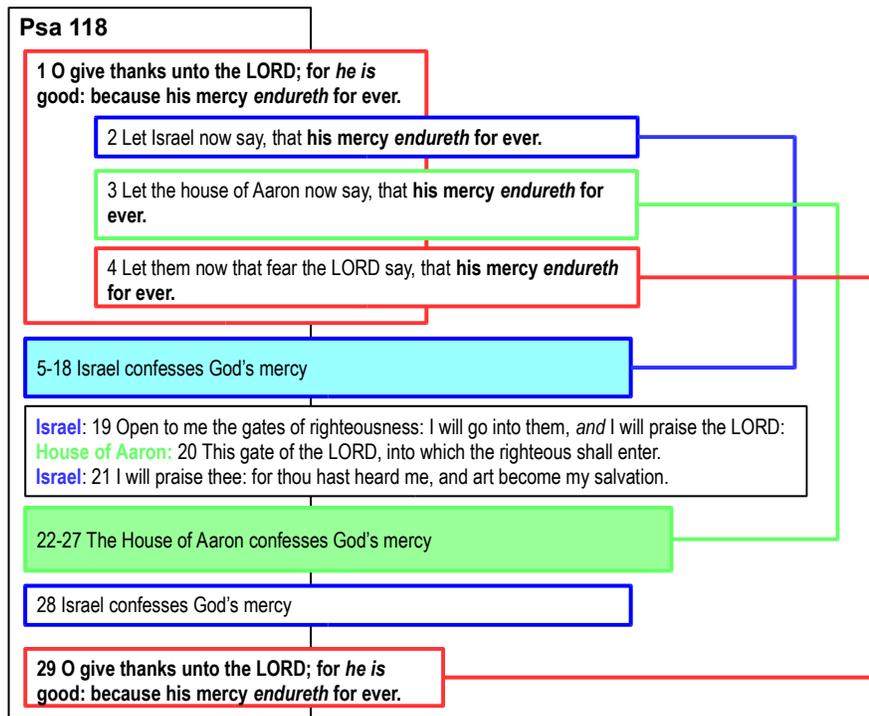


Figure 5: Structure of Psa 118

7 A close second, and the only parallel in the OT, is in Hezekiah's prayer against Assyria, 2 Kings 19:19. But the form there is הושיענו נא; the form uttered by the crowds is clearly that from Psa 118.

8 Notes are available at <http://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Psa118.pdf>.

## Matthew 20:17-21:17

The verses quoted by the people (118:25-26) are part of what the priests say in welcoming the righteous pilgrim into the temple. The use of the first person singular in v. 25 is not required by the Hebrew phrasing. The verse uses particles of request (אנא, אנא) that do not specify person, and may equally be rendered “we beseech thee,” or simply “please.” The structure of the passage shows that these words are spoken by the house of Aaron, which go on to say, “We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.”

To whom do the priests speak these words? They might be asking the Father to send salvation and prosperity, now that the righteous Israelite has arrived. But the words may reflect a deeper meaning, consistent with the shift in person that we see in other post-exilic literature, e.g.,

Zec 12:10 I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son,

It is simpler to understand them as spoken to the Israelite himself, recognizing his deity and asking him to send salvation and prosperity. In this case the people have exactly captured the sense of the verses in the original Psalm. They acknowledge Jesus as the righteous Israelite, both man and God, who has now come to the house of God.

The significant difference is that in the Psalm, it is the house of Aaron who offer this greeting. In Matthew, the priests refuse to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, so the multitudes do instead. Had they failed, the stones would have picked up the cry (Luke 19:40), for the single ideal Israelite anticipated by Isaiah has in fact arrived. They address the “hosanna” to the one whom they recognize as the Son of David, not to the Lord as someone distinct from him. Like the blind men, they are recognizing him as both “Son of David” and “Lord.”

**10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? 11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.**—Yet when they describe him, they drop back from the implications of the Psalm, and simply describe him as “the prophet.” They have a better insight into his true nature than do the Jewish leaders, yet they are unstable, and will ultimately (27:20) ask Pilate to release Barabbas and destroy the one they have recognized as king.

### **21:12-17 Cleansing the Temple**

**12 And Jesus went into the temple of God,**—This description of the temple appears only here in the canonical Greek Bible,<sup>9</sup> and calls our attention to this event. In the light of the OT, it has considerable significance.

Vv. 1-11 reported the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem from Bethphage, at the top of the Mount of

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<sup>9</sup> The apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Esdras use the expression four times: 1 Es. 5:43, 54; 8:17, 18. The genitive is lacking in א and B (4<sup>th</sup> century), b (a Latin text of the 5<sup>th</sup> century) and Greek texts from the 8<sup>th</sup> century on, but it is attested in both Greek and Latin copies in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, and its omission in the critical editions and modern translations is very unfortunate. Metzger’s commentary rates the omission a B.

## Matthew 20:17-21:17

Olives (chart, Figure 3). His entry recalls an event four hundred years earlier, seen by Ezekiel.

In a vision, the Lord reveals to Ezekiel the abominations in the temple. He leads him successively inward (chart, Figure 6).

- 8:5, At the gate of the altar he finds an image that makes God jealous because it competes with his place in the temple.
- 8:10, On the inner wall he finds images of idols and unclean beasts.
- 8:14, at the north door, he finds women engaged in worshipping Tammuz.
- 8:16, at the door of the temple building itself, he finds 25 men worshipping the sun.

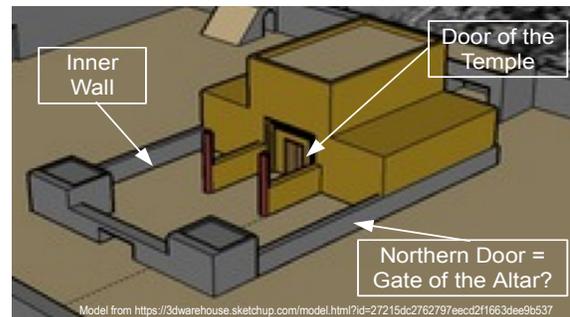


Figure 6: Abominations in the Temple

Then, in the climax of this section in ch. 10, the divine glory leaves the temple, moving outward from the holy of holies (chart, Figure 7), abandoning the temple, pausing for a moment on the mount of Olives. Ezekiel explains that this is the same vision he saw by the river Chebar in ch. 1. The glory of the Lord has left the physical temple, and come to dwell among his exiled people.

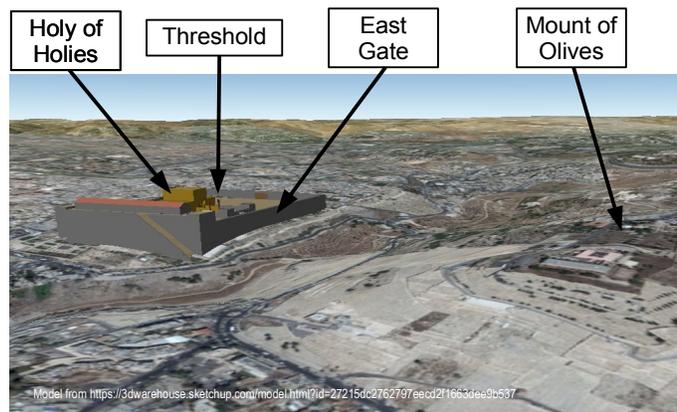


Figure 7: The Glory of the Lord leaves the temple

So at the beginning of the captivity, the glory of the Lord leaves the temple. But the prophets of the restoration anticipate that it will one day return to the restored temple build under Ezra (chart):

Hag 2:9 **The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former**, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and **the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple**, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

Now the Lord Jesus has returned to the temple, following the same route over the Mount of Olives by which the glory of the Lord left it 400 years before, and as Malachi promised, he

comes to purify it.

**and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,**—Jewish tradition preserves extensive descriptions of these institutions, which operated under the sanction of the high priesthood and returned considerable profit to the concessionaires and their priestly sponsors.<sup>10</sup> Compare the repeated insistence of Leviticus that all the sacrifices be “without blemish.” A worshipper bringing his own animal for an offering risked having it fail the priestly inspection. Offerings purchased from the temple concessions would naturally be “pre-approved,” but at a price inflated beyond the value of the animals.

**13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer;**—The Lord’s reference is to Isa 56:7 (chart).

Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in **my house of prayer**: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an **house of prayer** for all people[s].

There are two things to note about the promise in Isaiah.

First, the Lord twice calls the temple a “house of prayer.” This function of the temple goes back to its dedication by Solomon in 1 Kings 8. Solomon views this as the central function of the temple:

1Ki 8:28 Yet have thou respect unto the **prayer** of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the **prayer**, which thy servant **prayeth** before thee to day: 29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, *even* toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the **prayer** which thy servant shall make toward this place. 30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, **when they shall pray toward this place**: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

He goes on to call out seven specific circumstances in which God’s people may call upon him for help (vindication of oaths in v. 32, restoration from defeat in v. 34, drought in v. 36, deliverance from famine, disease, or siege in v. 39, delivery of the stranger in v. 43, victory in battle in v. 45, return from captivity in v. 49). The account in 2 Chr 6 preserves the same series of seven requests. Clearly, for Solomon, the main purpose of the temple is as a focal point for prayer.

The temple concessions have nothing to do with prayer. Instead, they focus on the temple as a place of offering sacrifices, which in many cases mostly accrue to the benefit of the priests. In God’s economy, the sacrifices exist to open the way for prayer. The purpose of the sanctuary

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<sup>10</sup> Gill has extensive documentation of these customs in his comment on this verse.

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even in the days of the tabernacle was not to give God gifts, but that he might dwell among his people:

Exo 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

The focus on sacrifices had distracted people from this central function.

We face a similar distortion in the function of the modern church. Its scriptural purpose is to be “a habitation of God through the Spirit”:

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We do indeed offer spiritual sacrifices in this spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5),

1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

but they consist of our praise and worship (Heb 13:15), not of material goods.

Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

Yet the modern church is preoccupied with “stewardship,” with offerings and building drives and budgets. The pastor of a modern church often prepares in business school as well as, or instead of, Bible school. Modern tradition, even in evangelical circles, has made the house of God a den of thieves.

This professional model is contrary both to the example of the apostles and to their teaching. Paul instructed the elders of Ephesus,

Act 20:33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Salaried pastors are a direct violation of the teaching of the NT.

The second thing to note about the prophecy that the Lord cites is the participants that it envisions. The house of the Lord is to be accessible to “the sons of the stranger” and “all peoples” (plural in Hebrew). In Isaiah, this promise of including people who were previously excluded from fellowship with God is a central theme of the passage. Consider the broader context, which is an ABBA summary chiasm. It begins with brief references to two categories of excluded people (chart):

Isa 56:3 Neither let the **son of the stranger**, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people:

neither let the **eunuch** say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree.

Then it expands the promise to each of these in detail:

4 For thus saith the LORD unto the **eunuchs** that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; 5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

6 Also the **sons of the stranger**, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; 7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Under the law of Moses, both eunuchs and gentiles were excluded from Israel's worship.

Deu 23:1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

Exo 12:43 And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: **There shall no [son of a] stranger בן נכר eat thereof :**

Isaiah envisions a change in the rules in the coming kingdom. This passage is embedded in ch. 49-57, the portion of Isaiah that most specifically describes the work of the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah. In his coming kingdom, salvation is no longer restricted to Israel, but offered to all.

**but ye have made it a den of thieves.**—Again, the Lord draws on OT language, this time recalling Jeremiah's condemnation of the Jerusalem hierarchy in his day. In chapter 7, he preaches a sermon "in the gate of the Lord's house," perhaps very near where the Lord finds the concessions six hundred years later, and issues a rebuke on which the Lord builds his (chart):

Jer 7:9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a **den of robbers** in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD.

Compare the consequences to Jeremiah of a similar message (or perhaps the same one) in ch. 26:

Jer 26:8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

When people profit personally from a particular form of religion, they are loathe to vary it. That was so in the days of Jeremiah, it was so in our Lord's day, and it is so today.

**14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.**—This brief

notice serves an important role in the development of the argument. All through Matthew, we have seen the Lord's healings as central to his claim to be the Messiah. Now he repeats in the very temple precincts the keynote miracles that link him to Isaiah's prophecy,

Isa 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

**15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,**—Two things displeased the Jewish leaders (chart):

1. The “wonderful things that he did,” which were the evidence he gave of being the Messiah;
2. The fact that others were not shy to recognize him as such.

Set alongside v. 14, this offers a stark contrast. He heals the physically blind, but the leaders of the people, who should have recognized him, remain in deep darkness.

**16 And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?**—We noted in v. 11 that the multitude muted their witness to the Lord when they entered the city. Instead of continuing to acknowledge him as the divine Messiah of Psa 118:25-26, they recognize him only as a prophet from Galilee. But the children continue to echo what they have heard their elders proclaim outside the city walls. The Lord accounts for their perspicacity with yet another OT quotation:

Psa 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

His citation will have stung them, for two reasons. First, they will recall that the verse goes on to mention “the enemy and the avenger,” describing the adversaries whom the Lord has stirred up. Second, the Jews may have understood this verse of the Messiah. The Zohar<sup>11</sup> writes,

"babes and sucklings, **יהבין תוקפא**, shall give strength to the king Messiah"

Certainly they did so here.

The Lord is not simply citing texts that coincidentally align with his circumstances, but is reminding them of the claim he has made by the way in which he entered the city, that he is indeed the Messiah.

**17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.**—This town was a frequent refuge for the Lord (Fig, chart):

- In Luke 10:38-42, on his way to the feast of Tabernacles as recorded in John 7, we find

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<sup>11</sup> This Kabbalistic text first appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There is strong suspicion that it was written at that time, rather than being more ancient, which is why its views may not be contemporary with the second temple.

Matthew 20:17-21:17

him dining with Mary and Martha.

- In the first part of John 11, after his trip for the feast of the dedication, he had withdrawn across Jordan, but returns to heal Lazarus.
- In John 12:1-9, he stays with them the night before the triumphal entry, and Mary anoints his feet.
- In our verse, Matt 21:17, he returns there the evening of the triumphal entry.
- Matt 26:6 records that two days later, on Tuesday of passion week, he is in Bethany “in the house of Simon the leper,” where a woman anoints his head. The relation of Simon to the household of Lazarus is uncertain. It may be another name for him (since Matthew never uses the name Lazarus); some have suggested it was Lazarus’ father.<sup>12</sup>

AD 32	Nisan (Mar-Apr) Passover	Iyyar	Siwan Weeks
	Tammuz	Ab	Elul
AD 33	Tishri Trumpets Atonement Tabernacles (John 7)	Marheswan	Kislev Dedication (John 10)
	Tabet	Shebat	Adar
	Nisan Passover (Passion Week)	Iyyar	Siwan

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thrs	Fri	Sat
Mar 22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Mar 29	30	31	Apr 1	2	3	4

Figure 8: Our Lord's visits to Bethany

If even the Son of God needed regular fellowship with other believers, how much more do we! He of all people could have been satisfied with the Twelve, his immediate “family.” But there is a small community of his followers in Bethany, and he meets with them whenever he can.

<sup>12</sup> It is very common to identify this anointing with that of John 12, but in both Matthew and Mark it is situated two days before passover, while John’s is six days before, the night before the triumphal entry, and there is no reason to question the sequence. In addition, here it is his head that is anointed, there his feet. Attempts to link this with the anointing in the house of Simon the Pharisee in Galilee in Luke 7:36ff also reject the historicity of the record.

## Notes

### ***Epistles on Sharing the Sufferings of Christ***

John in Rev 1:9 is not the only apostle who describes Christian suffering in terms of the suffering of Christ. So do Paul and Peter.

2Co 1:5 For as **the sufferings of Christ abound in us**, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

2Co 4:8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always **bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus**, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that **we suffer with him**, that we may be also glorified together.

Col 1:23 I Paul am made a minister; 24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of **the afflictions of Christ in my flesh** for his body's sake, which is the church: 25 Whereof I am made a minister,

Phi 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the **fellowship of his sufferings**, being made conformable unto his death;

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as **ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings**; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

### ***The Two Healings of Two Blind Men in Matthew***

Matthew twice records the healing of two blind men: once in ch. 9, and again in ch. 20. The two episodes bear comparison.

9:27 And when Jesus departed thence, **two blind men followed him**, crying, and saying, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us*. 28 And **when he was come into the house**, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, **Believe ye** that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, **Lord**. 29 **Then touched he their eyes**, saying, **According to your faith** be it unto you. 30 And

20:29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And, behold, **two blind men sitting by the way side**, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, **Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David**. 31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. 32 **And Jesus stood still**, and called them, and said, **What will ye** that I shall do unto you?

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their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See <i>that</i> no man know <i>it</i> . 31 But they, <b>when they were departed</b> , spread abroad his fame in all that country.	33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34 So Jesus <b>had compassion on them</b> , and <b>touched their eyes</b> : and immediately their eyes received sight, and <b>they followed him</b> .
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Similar features:

- Two blind men
- They address him as “Son of David” and “Lord” and ask for mercy
- He heals them by touching their eyes

Distinctions:

	Matt 9:27-31	Matt 20:29-34	Discussion
Location of the blind men	Following him	Sitting by the way side	
Address	They call him “Lord” only after he inquires about their faith	They use the title “Lord” at the outset	May account for the question he asks, which elicits a confession of faith.
His question to them	<b>Believe ye</b> that I am able to do this?	<b>What will ye</b> that I shall do unto you?	He does not need to ask about their faith in ch. 20, for they have already confessed him as “Lord.” But why ask what they want, when the answer is obvious? Perhaps to heighten the contrast with the “blind” Jewish leaders (cf. Figure 1), who do not know what they really need.
Place of healing	In the house	By the road	Early in his ministry, he sought to restrain the popular enthusiasm which their confession of him as “Son of David” would stimulate, but in ch. 20 he is on his way to present himself to the nation.
Focus	Their faith: he asks about this, and says that the healing is because of it	Their need: he has compassion on them.	
Subsequent conduct	They departed from him and disobeyed his command to be silent	They followed him	Again, this highlights the contrast with the Jewish leaders in ch. 23. (But keep in mind Cousland ch. 7, and Kingsbury’s JBL article, which argue that they are simply joining the crowd and have not become disciples)

### **The Plea “Have Mercy” ελεεω**

	קנח	מנח
Ελεεω	42	25
Δεομαι	16	
Οικτιρω	9	12

### **“Lord” in Matthew**

To whom is it addressed?

#### **Jesus:**

7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

8:25 And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

9:28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

13:51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

14:30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

15:25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

15:27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters'

## Matthew 20:17-21:17

table.

16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

17:4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

17:14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

20:31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David.

20:33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

26:22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

### **The Father**

11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

### **A character in a parable, representing Jesus or the Father**

13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

18:26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

21:30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not.

25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

25:20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord,

## Matthew 20:17-21:17

thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

25:22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

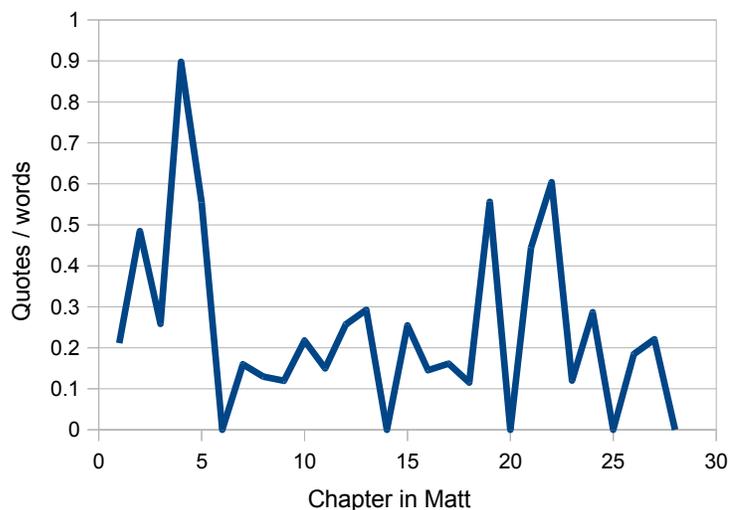
### Someone else:

27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

Consider the possibility that even here, the last use of the title in Matt, there are overtones of its divine reference, remind us that these Jewish leaders have chosen to bow before the civil authority rather than their own Messiah.

### ***OT Quotations in Matt***

Matt 21 and 22 show a peak in # of OT quotations: together with ch. 19, this concentration is unparalleled except for the birth narratives in 4. The plot shows entries in Archer and Chirichigno per chapter of Matt, times 100, divided by words per chapter.



*Figure 9: Density of OT quotes in Matthew*