



Matthew Lesson 28

April 27, 2021

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

21:18-32

Last session, we discussed Matthew chapter 21 up until verse 17. This chapter began with Yeshua entering Jerusalem, receiving praise and adoration from the crowds, entering the Temple, overturning the merchant’s tables and then returning to Bethany for the night. My understanding of Scripture is that this happened on *Shabbat*, 10 *Nisan*, 3790 which was the Hebrew year 30 CE. Last time, in Lesson 27 I discussed the possible contradictions to Yeshua’s entrance into Jerusalem on a *Shabbat*. For the present time, I am going ahead with this same understanding, entering on *Shabbat*, which will place Yeshua’s crucifixion on Wednesday, 14 *Nisan*. It is very difficult to synchronize Yeshua’s days by comparing the four Gospels, but we will continue to try align his last days as best we can. As was said before, after His resurrection we will compare three possible days for Yeshua’s crucifixion, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, and give pro and con for each.

With that being said, we face this question: “are events sequential in each Gospel account? The answer seems to be yes and no. Sometimes they are and sometimes they aren’t. Regarding Yeshua’s overturning of the moneychanger’s tables, there is an account of this happening in John chapter 2. It was right after He turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Most commentators agree that this was at a Passover early in His ministry. Now, we are approaching His last Passover. After He entered the city, Matthew chapter 21, Mark chapter 11 and Luke chapter 19 all record Yeshua’s confrontation with the moneychangers. However, “Houston, we have a problem!” Matthew and Luke place this event on the day that Yeshua made His grand entry into Jerusalem. But, Mark does not, and records it as being on a separate day. John does not report on it at all. What shall we do?

I suggest that for now that we use Mark’s account and then come to a conclusion when we’ve put all the evidence together. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (chapter 12) all reported that Yeshua neared Jerusalem, sent for the colt, and received praise from the crowds. But, regarding the moneychangers, Mark is different. Here are his last two verses regarding Yeshua’s entry into Jerusalem: *9 Those going before and those following kept shouting, “Hoshia-na! Baruch ha-ba b’shem Adonai! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hoshia-na in the highest”* (Mark 11:9-10 TLV)! This was reported in the other three Gospels. But now, Mark says something different. *11 And He entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around at everything, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve, since it was already late* (Mark 11:11 TLV). Mark is saying that after Yeshua’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem that He did not confront the merchants and moneychangers. He just looked around a bit and then went back to Bethany.

Here is what Mark said next: *12 The next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. 13 Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He would find any fruit on it. When He came up to it, He found nothing except leaves, because it wasn’t the season for figs. 14 And He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were*

listening (Mark 11:12-14 TLV). We will look at this same event in Matthew chapter 21 in just a moment, but for now, Mark's next verses are very important: *15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the Temple and started to drive out those selling and buying in the Temple. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those selling doves, 16 and He wouldn't let anyone carry goods through the Temple. 17 And He began to teach them, saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" 18 The ruling kohanim and Torah scholars heard this and began looking for a way to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, because the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching. 19 Whenever evening came, Yeshua and His disciples would leave the city* (Mark 11:15-19 TLV). Mark 11, verses 1 through 11 tell of one day, the day that Yeshua entered Jerusalem on a colt, received praise from the people, entered the Temple and looked around and then returned to Bethany because it was late. Mark 11, verses 12 through 19 tell of the next day. He left Bethany in the morning, saw a fig tree with no fruit and cursed it. Then He entered the Temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers. After that, He was examined by the *kohanim* as "the Lamb of G-d."

Obviously, we have a contradiction. Matthew, Luke and John say that Yeshua turned over the tables of the merchants in the Temple on the same day as His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Mark says that it was the next day that He drove out the merchants. Since we don't believe that these different accounts are errors or that they contradict each other, we will continue to try and find the answer. For now, we will follow Mark regarding when the merchants were driven out. Continuing to use our Wednesday crucifixion scenario, here is Yeshua's schedule so far. He arrived in Bethany Friday afternoon, joined Lazarus and family for *Shabbat* meal and spent the night there. Saturday morning, *Shabbat* morning, He travelled from Bethany to Bethpage which is on the Mount of Olives. There He mounted a donkey's colt and made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, entered the Temple and looked around before returning to Bethany for the night since it was late. The next day, Sunday, Yeshua walked from Bethany toward Jerusalem and became hungry. He saw a fig tree that had leaves and examined it for figs, but found none. We are not told where the tree was, but possibly on the Mount of Olives.

Let's now consider the fig tree event using both Matthew and Mark, the only two Gospels which tell about it. Matthew also says that Yeshua saw the fig tree the next morning which in our account was a Sunday. *18 Now early in the morning, as He was returning to the city, He became hungry. 19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came up to it and found nothing on it except leaves only. And He said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree shriveled up at once. 20 When the disciples saw it they were astonished. "How did the fig tree shrivel on the spot?" they asked. 21 Yeshua answered them, "Amen, I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, trusting, you shall receive"* (Matthew 21:18-22 TLV). Mark devotes only two verses to this story, but they include information not found in Matthew. *13 Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He would find any fruit on it. When He came up to it, He found nothing except leaves, because it wasn't the season for figs. 14 And He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again!" And His disciples were listening* (Mark 11:13-14 TLV). Mark said that the tree had leaves, but that it wasn't the season for figs. This was early spring, and according to the 10,000 year calendar, it would have been Sunday, April 2nd in the year 30 CE (Julian calendar). Passover, *Nisan* 14, would have been April 5th, three days later. It was the season for fig trees to have leaves, and they had come out just a few days before. But, why would Yeshua expect to find fruit so early in the season.

Theologian F. F. Bruce answers this for us: He says that “When the fig leaves appear about the end of March, they are accompanied by a crop of small knobs, called *taqsh* by the Arabs, a sort of fore-runner of the real figs. These *taqsh* are eaten by peasants and others when hungry. But, they drop off before the real fig is formed. But, if the leaves appear and there are no *taqsh* on the tree, there will be no figs on that tree that year.” (Bruce, *Are The New Testament Documents Reliable?* [Intervarsity Press; Downers Grove, Ill, fifth revised edition 1992], pp. 73-74). This must mean that Yeshua was actually looking for these early *taqsh* knobs. I’m also certain that He knew before he looked that the tree had no fruit, but had planned to use this to teach His disciples (and us). Without the *taqsh*, the indicator of real fruit to come, this individual tree would have borne no figs in June, the time for the fig harvest. It was a fruitless and a hopeless tree. Yeshua’s cursing of the tree was a lesson to His disciples; and to us. We are like the barren tree if we do not produce fruit and Yeshua’s cursing of it was an example of what “can” happen to the fruitless. We can take this even further. A fruitless person claiming to follow Yeshua would be like a fig tree with leaves. If that person does not have the *taqsh*, he will not bear summer fruit either. I said that is an example of what can happen. But, there is always the opportunity for repentance and a return to fruit bearing. Earlier in His ministry, Yeshua had said: 19 “*Every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will recognize them by their fruit*” (Matthew 7:19-20 TLV). And then, the night before He went to the stake, He said: 1 “*I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He trims so that it may bear more fruit*” (John 15:1-2 TLV). Some theologians say that when Yeshua cursed the fig tree, He was cursing the Jewish people and the Temple. I tend to think that that was not the case. He could have been using this example to refer to the hypocritical *kohenim*, Scribes and Pharisee, but I don’t believe that it was a reference to the Jews or the Temple. On His entry into Jerusalem in Luke’s account, He had just wept over Jerusalem and her people. And the Temple, with all its flaws of the 1st century, was still a representation of the Tabernacle in heaven. But, His message is clear to us, His disciples. We are expected to bear fruit.

Matthew added a second point which Mark did not discuss at this point in time, the discussion about faith. Mark does add it, but it comes in the evening of this same day when they were leaving Jerusalem while Matthew has it in the morning on the way in to Jerusalem. 20 *When the disciples saw it they were astonished. “How did the fig tree shrivel on the spot?” they asked. 21 Yeshua answered them, “Amen, I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. 22 And whatever you ask in prayer, trusting, you shall receive*” (Matthew 21:20-22 TLV). They were standing on the Mount of Olives when this took place and Yeshua’s *p’shat*, the plain meaning of His statement, referred to casting the Mount of Olives into the sea. But, there was also a secondary meaning to this phrase. The “mountain” could refer to any situation or any problem facing one of His followers. We can overcome any obstacle by faith. But, this is not “name it and claim it.” We can’t say that we have faith for just anything that we want. We must ask in accordance with G-d’s will. Just because we pray for a new car does not mean that we will get it. Yeshua said that “the mount will be cast into the sea:” “when you have faith and do not doubt.” The Greek word translated as “doubt” is *diakrinó*. This very same word is used by Ya’acov in James 1:6: 6 “*But let him ask in faith, without any doubting—for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind*” (James 1:6 TLV). *Diakrinó* means to discern one thing from another; not to doubt or waver. This means that our faith must be deep. In reality, the faith that we must have to move mountains is not our faith that the mountain will move, but

faith in them in whom we have faith, Yeshua and ADONAI; faith that they will move the mountain. We can't have wishy-washy faith, faith which rises up and down like a wave blown and tossed by the wind. Our faith must be steady and deeply rooted in our Father and our Messiah. If we have that overcoming kind of faith, any mountain or obstacle which faces us will be overcome.

Leaving the fig tree, Yeshua continued into Jerusalem and then into the Temple. 23 *Now when He entered the Temple, the ruling kohanim and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, saying, "By what authority are You doing these things? Who gave You this authority?"* 24 *Yeshua replied to them, "I also will ask you one question. If you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 John's immersion, where was it from? From heaven or from men?"* They began to dialogue among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the crowd, for all hold up John as a prophet." 27 So answering Yeshua, they said, "We don't know." Then He said to them, "Neither am I telling you by what authority I do these things" (Matthew 21:23-27 TLV). The Greek word translated as authority here is *exousia*. It means "power to act" and actually "authority." The Complete Jewish Bible takes it all the way back to the Hebrew and instead of authority uses "*s'micha*." *S'micha* actually means to lean on or to lay hands on, what we know today as ordination. The *kohenim* were asking, "who ordained you?" Who gave you the authority to make these kinds of decisions? The answer is obvious to us. It was given by ADONAI. But, it was not the time to directly reveal it and Yeshua very cleverly avoided answering their question by posing His own question.

He didn't answer their question, but continued to speak directly to them. 28 *"Now what do you think? A man had two sons, and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go work in the vineyard today.'* 29 *The son answered, 'I won't,' but afterward he had a change of heart and went. 30 The man went to the second son and said the same thing. But he answered, 'I will, sir,' and didn't go. 31 Which of the two did the will of the father?"* "The first," they said. Yeshua said to them, "Amen, I tell you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are going ahead of you into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 21:28-31 TLV). The Father, of course, is ADONAI. The *kohenim* and Torah teachers were like the second son. They say they do the will of the Father, but don't.

32 *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and even after you saw this, you had no change of heart to believe him"* (Matthew 21:32 TLV). Yochanan was teaching and immersing at the Jordan River and many went out to him. Back at the time that it was happening, Matthew 3 says: <17> 5 *Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were being immersed by him in the Jordan River* (Matthew 3:5-6 TLV). Those that went out to the Jordan River to hear John saw the tax collectors and prostitutes repenting in response to John's message. They had responded positively and were like the first son in the parable. Matthew 3 goes on. Speaking of John it says: 7 *But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his immersion, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance;"*.. (Matthew 3:7-8 TLV). But, even after seeing the tax collectors and prostitutes repent and be immersed, the *kohanim*, Scribes and Pharisees generally did not. And, Yehusa knew it. The Hebrew equivalent of repentance is *teshuvah*, turning from sin. These men had a form of godliness, but were far from G-d. They were primarily interested in maintaining their authority in the religious system and the governmental status

quo with Rome. Don't rock the boat Yeshua! And, very soon after this, they began to plan to get rid of Him.

Tonight, we leave Yeshua in Jerusalem. He is now in His second day of examination as the Lamb of G-d and He will undergo examination for two more days before He willingly becomes the required blood sacrifice for the remission of our sins. *Shalom aleichem!*