

Do you recognize God in your midst? April 13, 2014

In Luke chapter 11 verses 11, the Scriptures tell us that people thought the Messiah's kingdom would appear immediately. They expected a militant conqueror which would overthrow the Romans and free them from their oppressors.

Jesus began to tell them a parable of the master who gave money to his servants and then took a long journey. When he returned, he rewarded each of them for the investments they made in his absence. Only the wicked servant who hid his talent got a rebuke. He ended the story by saying in verse 27, the master said, "Now where are my enemies who didn't want me to be king? Bring them here and kill them before me." After these words, he started his journey towards Jerusalem. I wonder if the disciples concluded from these statements that they were about to enter into the promised kingdom of God. Jesus had just told a story about a man being crowned king and now they were heading towards Jerusalem, the royal city, the capital of Israel and they were hoping that Jesus would be crowned the king of the Jews.

In verse 29, Jesus came to Bethphage meaning (House of Unripe Fruit) and Bethany which means (House of Many Figs). The fig tree, throughout the Bible, is used to represent God's blessing on Israel. One of the Covenant promises God made to Israel was that their obedience would guarantee his peace and prosperity in their lives. It was stated as this: "Each man will have his own vine and his own fig tree."

1 King 4:25, Hosea 9:10, Isaiah 36:16.

The parable Jesus told revealed his desire for his people to be productive and fruitful until his return.

Luke mentions both Bethphage (House of unripe figs) and Bethany (House of many figs).

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, which type would he find among the Jews? He found a spiritually barren Jerusalem, a fig tree of unripe fruit. The very next day he illustrated his findings by cursing a barren fig tree. That night when they returned, the tree had withered and died. Matthew 21:19-20 and

Mark 11:13-20. It wasn't the season for figs, but Jesus used it as a symbol of the barrenness of the Jewish people. As they came to the Mount of Olives, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that depicts the Messiah as the olive shoot out of the stump of Jesse. During his final week, he spent a lot of time on the Mount of Olives. His final night was spent praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Garden of the Olive Press). It is important to note this as it was here that the Lord struggled with the weight of the burden that was his to bear. He agonized until drops of blood spilled from his forehead. His soul was in agony. The Mount of Olives has spiritual significance for other reasons. In Zechariah 14:34, it reveals that when the Messiah returns to set up his earthly kingdom, He will come to the Mount of Olives. See Zechariah 14:9-11. The Mount of Olives will split in two and he will set up his throne in Jerusalem. As Jesus drew to the Mount of Olives, the disciples were filled with anticipation. They even argued over who would be the greatest in Christ's future kingdom. They were expecting him to overthrow the Romans and set up his earthly kingdom. (See verse 29) Jesus told them to go to the village and there they would see a colt that had never been ridden. They were to untie her and bring her to him. If anyone asked them why they were untying the donkey, they were to say that the Lord had need of her. They followed Jesus' instructions and the owner allowed them to take the donkey when they answered that the Lord had need of him. They brought the colt to Jesus and set him on the colt that they had covered with their clothing. The wild colt was suited for sacred purposes because it had never been ridden.

(Numbers 19:2, Deuteronomy 21:3) The red heifer that was used for ceremonies had to be one that had never had worn a yolk. The cart that was used for the ark of the Lord was one that was set apart for that purpose only. (See 1 Samuel 6:7). Jesus borrowed the colt; he didn't own it. This was a common practice among visiting dignitaries. The difference was that usually there was a beautiful, proud stallion used to transport the dignitary through the city. It was a symbol of victory and conquest. The donkey

represented humility and peace so Jesus didn't wear a crown, carry a sword or ride in a chariot. Donkeys usually were used for civil ceremonies rather than for military processions. (1 Kings 1:33) People were expecting a military Messiah, a person who would judge, fight and rule. Jesus came to show them he had come in peace. He didn't come to destroy; he came to create. He didn't come to condemn the world but through him the world would be given salvation. He didn't intend to use military force to conquer; he would win with love. He was certainly making a statement. The crowds spread their clothing along the road also. They showed honor and acceptance to him as they waved palm branches and cheered. As he drew near to the base of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude began to rejoice and praise God with loud voices for all of the mighty works they had seen. There were pilgrims from Galilee and Jericho (Luke 19:37, Matthew 20:29) for they had come to celebrate the Passover and Feast of Unleavened bread. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! Hosanna! (Save us O God). These words came from the Psalms. They were reciting Psalms 118:25-27. We would think that they recognized Jesus' divinity and Messiah-ship. History tells us that the pilgrims would sing Psalms as they entered the city gates of Jerusalem. They would start with Psalms 113, then 114 and move to 115 and 116 and then Psalms 117 as they entered the city and finally Psalms 118. Multitudes would welcome them at the gates of the city and join in their song. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" What a sight that must have been. What a greeting. As they sang "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord," the religious leaders understood the meaning of the moment. They seized upon it and demanded that Jesus stop the crowd from worshipping him. "Teacher, rebuke your disciples," they said. Jesus answered, "I tell you that if they should keep silent, the rocks would cry out". As Jesus entered the city, he wept over the city. He prophesied that because they didn't recognize him and accept him in the day that he visited them, they would suffer the consequences. Their enemies would overtake them, surround them, and close in on them. The stones of the temple would be thrown down and much destruction would come to this beautiful city because they refused to accept Him as their King.

Prior to this, Jesus had forbidden his disciples to reveal his identity because his time hadn't come, but today they should have recognized who he was. Matthew 8:4, 12:16, 17:19, and John 6:5. In Daniel 9:24-26, it was written when the Messiah would come. It was calculated to be April 6, AD 33. See Jeremiah 6:26, and Lamentations 1:1-4. These people honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from him. Even though the Scriptures were clear and being fulfilled before their eyes, their hearts were hardened and they refused to accept the Holy Son of God as their Messiah. They missed it because they were looking for something quite different. They wanted a warrior, a handsome military minded individual who represented royalty and wealth. Jesus had come clothed in humility, poverty, taken on a form of a servant and meekness. So he was rejected. In 70 AD, His prophecy came to pass as the enemy came against Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and conquered the inhabitants. They were dispersed among the nations and had no homeland until 1948 when Israel once again was called a nation.

What are we looking for? What do you want? The Kingdom of God is a threat to the kingdoms of this world. Are you looking and watching for his return? Look at James 5:7-9, 1 Peter 4:7, Hebrews 10:24.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4, and Revelation 19. The church must prepare for the coming of the bridegroom for the season is upon us and the time is getting closer to the Lord's return to earth lest we be like the five foolish virgins who slept as they waited for the bridegroom and their oil went out in their lamps. When they went to the city to buy more oil, the bridegroom came and the five wise virgins went in to the marriage supper. The foolish ones knocked on the door, but it was too late. Let us take heed and be watchful. He is coming for those who are looking and longing for his return to this earth. AMEN