

The Last Journey



SABBATH—MAY 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 10:32; Mark 11:25.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Even the Son of Man did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free’ ” (Mark 10:45, NlrV).

TO JERUSALEM. Through the past several chapters of Mark, Jesus has been on a long, wandering journey. Now Mark tells us the goal of this trip south from Galilee: “They were on their way up to Jerusalem. Jesus was leading the way. The disciples were amazed [surprised]. Those [people] who followed were afraid” (Mark 10:32, NlrV).

It is a powerful scene. Jesus is going ahead. The disciples are a step behind. They are wondering about what is going to happen. The people in back of them feel anxious and worried. The closing events¹ in Jesus' earthly life are about to begin.

As the other Gospel² writers do, Mark devotes much space to this short period of Jesus' life—6 of the 16 chapters in his book. For Matthew, the numbers are 7 chapters out of 28; for Luke, 6 chapters out of 24; and for John, 10 chapters out of 21. This clearly shows us how important Jesus' death and resurrection³ really are.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Why do we sometimes pray for the wrong things? What does it mean to live in light? Why did Jesus cleanse the temple a second time? Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 21.

¹events—things that happen.

²Gospel—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the Gospels.

³resurrection—coming back to life after dying.

SUNDAY—MAY 15

A FOOLISH REQUEST⁴
(Mark 10:32-45).

Read Mark 10:32-45. Why did James' and John's request seem so reasonable to them? How do we make "reasonable" requests from God that He does not answer the way we think He should?

As humans, we judge the world from our own narrow ideas. We may learn much from God. But we still judge what we learn through our narrow and limited ideas of the world. Often we ask for things we believe would be good for us. But these things really are not good for us.

How did James' and John's request show they really did not know what they were asking for?

How does Jesus' answer in Mark 10:42-45 show their ignorance?

The disciples spent a lot of time with Jesus. But they showed that they were still spiritually blind to the most spiritual things. Jesus' words show a very different idea of what leadership, power, and success mean. It is a great example of how narrow and limited our own ideas of the world are. The same as the disciples, we can pray for things we think are good and

needed. But we do not know what we are asking for.

Are you still waiting for God to answer certain prayers? Why can you believe there is a good reason why God has not answered these prayers as you wish?

MONDAY—MAY 16

BLIND BARTIMAEUS
(Mark 10:46-52).

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. Jericho was the last place He would pass through before He came to Jerusalem. His mind must have been filled with the events that the next days would bring. He had come to the last week of His life. He was coming to the close of His work that would decide the future of the world forever. He was so busy with His thoughts. But He took the time to help a blind beggar.

Study the meeting between Jesus and blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). What happened after Jesus healed him? How is this event a symbol of what everyone has experienced when the saving power of Jesus came into their lives?

The Bible says that people who do not know God are "walking in darkness" (John 8:12; Acts 26:18;

⁴request—to ask a favor.



Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:6; 1 John 2:11). People who walk in darkness wander and fall. They do not know which direction they are going in.

All this is different when we come to Jesus. Jesus is light. “Here is the message we have heard from him [God] and announce to you. God is light. There is no darkness in him at all. Suppose we say that we share life with God but still walk in the darkness. Then we are lying. We are not living by the truth. But suppose we walk in the light, just as he is in the light. Then we share life with one another. But the blood of Jesus, His Son, makes us

pure from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7, NIV). Darkness means lack of knowledge about spiritual things. Darkness means sin, hatred, prejudice,⁵ jealousy, and greed. People who walk in darkness live without the saving knowledge of God. They live without understanding who God is. They do not experience the love He has for us. Light is the opposite of darkness. So spiritual light is the opposite of spiritual darkness.

Before Jesus saved you, you lived in darkness. After coming to Jesus, you came to the light. What new things did you understand after coming to the light? How did these things change your life? Where would you be now if you had remained in the darkness?

TUESDAY—MAY 17
THE VICTORIOUS ENTRY
(Mark 11:1-11).

Jesus’ victorious entry occurred on Sunday, one week before His resurrection. Christians in different denominations⁶ celebrate His coming to Jerusalem in different ways. Some Christians call that day Palm Sunday. They sing hymns about it. They read what the Bible says about it. And they listen to sermons about it. Seventh-day Adventists also are very interested

⁵prejudice—judgment based on feelings without knowing facts; prejudged feelings against a certain group of people because of their color or strange beliefs.

⁶denominations—different churches, such as the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, and the Catholic Church.

in Jesus' last days. The events of the last Sunday of Jesus' life require deep study.

How did Jesus attract attention to His entry into Jerusalem? Mark 11:1-11.

What was the meaning of Jesus riding on a colt? Why did He come from the Mount of Olives? (Zechariah 9:9).



Jesus could have come up to Jerusalem quietly. But He chose to attract attention to Himself. He sent His disciples to get a colt. He entered the city from the Mount of Olives. The crowd knew these acts pointed to the Messiah. So they were waiting for Him to say He was the long-awaited Messiah. But He was not the political Messiah they were hoping would save them from Roman rule.

“The word *hosanna* comes from the Aramaic *hoshar’na*. *Hoshar’na* means ‘save, now’ or ‘save, I pray thee [you].’ . . . Here the word may mean a prayer to God that salvation

may come to Israel through Messiah King.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 471.

What a start to the Passover week! But the same people who shouted “Hosanna!” to Jesus on Sunday were shouting “Crucify Him!” on Friday.

There are times when we feel very enthusiastic about God and our faith. At other times, we are discouraged and filled with doubt. One minute, we are praising God. But the next minute, we turn away from Him. How do you work your way through these spiritual lows? What lessons have you learned from these times that you could share with someone who is going through a low time? What Bible verses do you find helpful?

WEDNESDAY—MAY 18

A GROUP OF THIEVES

(Mark 11:12-19).

Read Mark 11:12-19. In Mark 11:17, Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7. What was the temple supposed to be? What had it become? What important lesson is here for us as persons, and for the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Jesus had on purpose attracted attention to Himself by the way He entered Jerusalem. In the same way, Jesus' first act in Jerusalem was sure to make the religious leaders angry. In public, Jesus challenged the prac-



tices of the leaders in charge of temple services. He did so by setting His authority over their authority.⁷ Jesus' act of cleansing the temple showed His authority was greater than all other authority.

In Jesus' time, the Sadducees⁸ were responsible for the temple services. By controlling the temple services, the Sadducees received great wealth. The pilgrims⁹ who came up to Jerusalem three times each year could not bring their sacrifices with them. Instead, they had to buy their sacrifices in Jerusalem. The priests controlled this sale of animals. The animals could be bought only with temple money. So the pilgrims first had to change their money into temple money. Then they could purchase their animals for sacrifice. Both the

money changing and the sale of animals made a great profit for the Sadducees.

In these ways, temple worship had become dirty business. What should have been a house of prayer for all nations had become a money-making plan that took advantage of common people. This is why Jesus burned with righteous (holy) anger. Words were not enough. He drove out the animals and overturned the tables of the people who changed the money. In this way, Jesus sealed His doom (end). There could be no way now for the religious leaders to tolerate (accept) Him any longer. He had touched their wallets. They would not rest until He was out of their way.

How can we, either as persons or as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, turn away from our mission and focus on improving ourselves financially? How do we sometimes think wrongly that focusing on improving our finances is an acceptable part of the truth?

THURSDAY—MAY 19

**JESUS CURSES THE FIG TREE
(Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matthew
21:18-22; Luke 13:6-9).**

**Read Mark 11:12-14; Matthew
21:18-22; and Luke 13:6-9. Jesus**

⁷authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust; power.

⁸Sadducees—there were two groups responsible for government and temple services in Israel. One was the Pharisees, and the other was the Sadducees.

⁹pilgrims—travelers who came to Jerusalem for religious reasons.

is the Creator (John 1:1-3). So does it seem strange for Jesus to kill the fig tree? What is He trying to teach us?



Jesus is hungry. He sees the fig tree sprouting leaves. But He is disappointed when He does not find any figs on it. So He says a curse against it. The fig tree slowly withers and dies. But the Gospel writers were embarrassed by what Jesus did. They did not try to cover up this strange act. Instead, the Holy Spirit led them to include the story because it has an important lesson for Jesus' followers at the end of time.

Every word and action of Jesus during His last week is full of mean-

ing. We already have studied Jesus' victorious entry on Sunday and His very public act of clearing the temple. These two events were for all the people to see. But cursing the fig tree was just for the disciples. It was probably early Monday morning when Jesus cursed the fig tree. But something important had taken place the night before. Luke writes that Jesus looked on Jerusalem and wept over it. He foretold how Jerusalem would be surrounded by foreign armies (Luke 19:41-44). Then, the next morning, Jesus cursed the fig tree. The connection between Jesus crying over Jerusalem and cursing the fig tree is clear.

Notice what Jesus said to Peter after he asked Jesus about the dead tree (Mark 11:22-26). How do Jesus' words fit in with what Peter said about the tree?

“Have faith in God,” Jesus says to His disciples. Trust in God. Pray to Him. Rest in His goodness. Forgive other people their sins. Jesus pointed His followers away from earthly things to the great principles¹⁰ of truth. What earthly things and earthly principles are you holding on to? Will they die like the cursed fig tree? What does Jesus say in Mark 11:22-26 that can help you change?

¹⁰principles—laws upon which other laws are based. For example, the Ten Commandments are based on two principles: (1) love for God and (2) love for other people.

FRIDAY—MAY 20

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Law of the New Kingdom,” “Thy [Your] King Cometh [Comes],” “A Doomed¹¹ People,” and “The Temple Cleansed Again” in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 547–551, 569–579, 580–588, and 589–600.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What proof from this week’s lesson shows that Jesus’ sufferings and death were not just an accident of history?
2. How did Jesus directly challenge the religious leaders of His day? Think of other times when He challenged the religious leaders. Why do you think He challenged them? Are there times when we should challenge the church? If so, when and how can we do it in the same way Jesus did? (Remember that Jesus cried over Jerusalem.)
3. Contrast¹² Jesus’ words in Mark

11:22-26 with what we studied in Sunday’s lesson about prayers God does not answer as we wish. Why do these two lessons on faith not disagree with each other?

4. In class, talk about prayers asked in faith that have not been answered. How do class members deal with this test of faith? What can others in the class share that could help someone who struggles with unanswered prayers?

SUMMARY: Our study this week is high drama. For years, Jesus has expected this entry into Jerusalem. He prepared for it. With a sure step, He leads the way. He enters Jerusalem as the King foretold by prophecy. He also shows the authority of the Messiah. For the disciples, the few days of the week are filled with hope for Israel; these days are the last opportunity to accept Jesus as their King.

¹¹doomed—to have no hope.

¹²contrast—show how things are different.