

# The Last Days in the Temple



SABBATH—MAY 21

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 11:27–12:44.**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind and with all your strength’ ” (Mark 12:30, NIV).

**CONTROVERSY (WAR).** Probably all the events<sup>1</sup> of this week's lesson happened on the last Tuesday of Jesus' earthly life. These were hours of fighting with hot words as the religious leaders tried to embarrass Jesus publicly. They tried to get Him to say something they could use against Him with the Roman government's leaders. Here we see different groups—Pharisees,<sup>2</sup> Sadducees,<sup>3</sup> Herodians.<sup>4</sup> Normally they were fighting among themselves. But this time they were united in working against Jesus.

In the middle of enemies and fighting, Jesus stands alone. No one comes to His defense. But He does not need anyone. He answers every trick question with an authority<sup>5</sup> that confuses His enemies. Meanwhile, He takes the lead against His enemies with parables<sup>6</sup> and questions that show how two-faced they are.

At the end of the long, trying day, Jesus takes a last look around Him. Then He leaves the temple. He will never return to it.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: How did Jesus answer people who**

<sup>1</sup>events—things that happen.

<sup>2</sup>Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

<sup>3</sup>Sadducees—There were two groups responsible for government and temple services in Israel. One was the Pharisees, and the other was the Sadducees.

<sup>4</sup>Herodians—a group of men who supported King Herod Antipas. King Herod Antipas was king of Galilee during Jesus' life on earth. The Jews liked this king because he followed the Jewish religious laws.

<sup>5</sup>authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust; power.

<sup>6</sup>parables—simple stories that give moral or religious lessons.

questioned His authority? What was Jesus' message in the parable of the wicked tenants?<sup>7</sup> How did Jesus deal with flattery? For Jesus, what was the most important part of all true religion and faith?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 28.

## SUNDAY—MAY 22

### WE CANNOT TELL

(Mark 11:27-33).

**When Jesus cleansed the temple, He showed proof that He had greater authority than the temple, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law who served at the temple. Their first challenge to Jesus on His last day in the temple was about authority. Study Jesus' challenge to these people in Mark 11:27-33. (Also read Matthew 21:23-27 and Luke 20:1-8.)**

**Why did Jesus' enemies not answer His question?**

Jesus never used "smooth" talk. His speech was always open, direct, and pure. He turned His enemies' question back to them. Jesus was trying to break through the mental blocks they had built against Him. The answer to His question was the same as the answer to their question. God commanded both Jesus' and John the Baptist's words and work. If Jesus' enemies could see their own blind-

ness toward John, perhaps their eyes would be open to Him. Jesus was still working to help those people who opposed Him!

Also notice their answer to Jesus—"We cannot tell." That is, "We cannot tell it out loud. If we do so, we would lay ourselves open to the crowd." Jesus both confused them and gave them another chance to repent.<sup>8</sup> But they did not take advantage of this chance.

**Why else could they not answer Jesus' question? Mark 1:7, 8; John 1:29.**

Jesus really trapped them. If they admitted John was from God, then what were they going to do with John's testimony about Jesus? If they admitted John was sent by God, then how could they explain why they were so opposed to Jesus?

**We must not be too quick to judge Jesus' enemies, because we might judge ourselves, too (Romans 2:1). How do we make excuses to avoid God's authority in our lives?**

<sup>7</sup>tenants—people who rent or care for property.

<sup>8</sup>repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.

MONDAY—MAY 23

### THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS (Mark 12:1-12).

Mark 12:1-12 is one of the most powerful parables Jesus ever told. Its message was so direct and terrifying that it must have made a deep impression on all who heard it. Here Jesus clearly foretells His own death and His rejection<sup>9</sup> by unfaithful people in Israel. He had already given His disciples a private lesson about Israel. He taught them this lesson when He cursed the fig tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20, 21). Now He declares the same truth in the parable of the wicked tenants.

**Jesus was thinking about Isaiah 5:1-7 when He told this parable. Read Isaiah 5:1-7.**



The vineyard symbolized Israel.

Many of Jesus' parables teach a single point without using a lot of details. But in this parable, we see a special meaning for each of the characters and things in the parable.

<sup>9</sup>rejection—when a person is not accepted by other people.

Write down what each of the following means in Mark 12:1-11. Isaiah 5:1-7 will help you.

The vineyard

The owner of the vineyard

The tenants

The servants sent to collect the fruit

The owner's son

The wall or hedge (Hint: What did God give Israel to separate it from other people?)

The tower (Hint: What was the most important building in Israel?)



God's law was a hedge to protect Israel from evil.

**What result did Jesus' parable have on the religious leaders? Why did they not quickly arrest Jesus? Mark 12:12.**

But time was running out for Jesus and for Israel. He hoped that this parable with its strong warning might help some people change their minds.

**Suppose someone came to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and gave the same message to us as Jesus gave to Israel. How would you answer? Why?**

**TUESDAY—MAY 24**

**SMOOTH WORDS  
(Mark 12:13-17).**

The next plan against Jesus brought together two groups that normally were not friendly toward each other. The Pharisees were strict keepers of the laws of Judaism.<sup>10</sup> These laws included what God had given Israel through Moses. These laws also included many, many laws that the scribes<sup>11</sup> had added over many hundreds of years. The Herodians were a political party, not a religious group. They supported King Herod Antipas and his family. The king's family ruled as puppets of Rome.

<sup>10</sup>Judaism—the Jewish religion.

<sup>11</sup>scribes—men who made copies of the Jewish religious laws and other books of the Old Testament; men who taught the law and Old Testament.

**What trick did these men try on Jesus before asking their question? Who tried the same thing on Him once before? Mark 12:13-17; John 3:1, 2.**

Jesus had said, “ ‘By your words you will be found guilty or not guilty’ ” (Matthew 12:37, NIV). By their words these men made themselves guilty. This is because they admitted Jesus was true and that He taught the way of God. If they never repented, these men will meet their words again in the final judgment.

**What are the following verses talking about? Why do you think the Bible says so much about this topic? Psalm 5:9; Psalm 12:2, 3; Proverbs 20:19; Proverbs 26:28; Proverbs 28:23; Proverbs 29:5.**

The Hebrew word for flattery comes from a word that can mean smoothness or slippery. This is a perfect description of flattery. Flattering words slip past a person's defenses and catch that person at his or her weakest point. A person's weakest point is his or her sense of self-worth. The people who tried to flatter Jesus failed to fool Him.

**We all need to be on guard against using flattery to make**

**other people do what we want them to do. We also need to guard against being tricked by flattery. What was it about Jesus that helped Him not to fall for flattery? We like receiving flattery. But how can we avoid being tricked by flattery?**

**WEDNESDAY—MAY 25**

**A TRICK QUESTION  
(Mark 12:18-27).**

The Sadducees were a religious and political party made up of wealthy, worldly minded people. They accepted only the five books of Moses.<sup>12</sup> They did not believe in the resurrection.<sup>13</sup> Now they came to Jesus with a trick question that would embarrass Him. It was the same question they had used in arguing with the Pharisees and others about the resurrection. It was a foolish question: Which of the seven brothers will be married to this woman in heaven? If Jesus disagreed with them, the Sadducees thought they could trap Him. But if He agreed with the Sadducees, He would insult the Pharisees.

**Notice Jesus' answer to the Sadducees in Mark 12:24-27. Why was His answer such a rebuke (scolding) to them?**

The Sadducees accepted only the

books of Moses. So Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6 (read again Mark 12:26). Jesus did not quote from other parts of the Old Testament that point to the resurrection (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2). This is the first time Exodus 3:6 is used in connection with the resurrection. The Sadducees, who thought of themselves as experts in the first five books of the Bible, suddenly found themselves looking foolish.

**How does Exodus 3:6 show the power of God to raise the dead? Also read John 11:26; 1 John 5:11, 12. How does Mark 12:27 help answer this question?**

In Jesus' own teachings to the people, He made the same point. People who believe in Him, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, already have crossed over from death to life and will surely come forth from the grave at His call (John 5:24, 25). Our body may turn to dust. But we are in the life of God. And we will live again. For us, death is only a sleep. Death is just a quiet rest for people whom God considers as living, even if they are still in the grave.

**If someone were to ask you, Do you know the power of God? how would you answer? Why?**

<sup>12</sup>five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

<sup>13</sup>resurrection—coming back to life after dying.



Jesus is the God of the living.

THURSDAY—MAY 26

**THE GREATEST COMMAND  
(Mark 12:28-34).**

Read Mark 12:28-34.

“The wisdom of Jesus’ answer had touched the scribe’s heart. The scribe knew that the Jewish religion was just a ‘show’ rather than true inner religious feelings. He had some sense that the ceremonial offerings were worthless. And he knew that animal sacrifices for forgiveness of sin were useless, too. Love and obedience to God appeared to be more important to him than all these services. The man was ready to accept that Jesus’ reasoning was correct. And his quick answer before the people showed a truly religious spirit, very different from the priests’ and rulers’ spirits. Jesus’ heart went out in pity to the honest

scribe. The scribe had dared to face the frowns of the priests and the threats of the rulers to speak his heart’s true feelings. ‘And when Jesus saw that the man had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from God’s kingdom”’”(NirV).—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 608.

**You have read what Jesus said, what the scribe said, and what Ellen White said. Write what you believe it means to love God and to love our neighbor. How can we show this love in positive, useful ways? How do we trick ourselves about our so-called love for God and our neighbors? What changes should we make to better follow these commandments? Share your answers with each other in class.**



Love is the greatest commandment.

FRIDAY—MAY 27

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 593–616.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is the resurrection something we can accept only on faith?
2. Kathryn Cravens once wrote that if a man is proud, flatter him. If he is timid (humble), flatter him. If he is boastful, flatter him. In all history, too much flattery never lost a gentleman. Why do you think most people like to be flattered? How can Christians be careful about thinking that it is necessary to give flattery and to receive flattery?
3. What is the difference between honest praise and flattery?
4. Discuss as a class what your church could do to show your town that you are a group of people who

truly love God and their neighbors. Are you doing anything as a church group that would give anyone the idea that you are following those commandments? Or is your church nothing more than a Saturday morning social club?

5. Discuss as a class what Jesus meant by giving God what belongs to Him and giving Caesar what is his (Mark 12:13-17). Think of the historical background in which Jesus made that statement. Why would Jesus have had the right to start a rebellion against such a dishonest religious system? Why do you think He did not start a rebellion? What lesson does that have for us today?

**SUMMARY:** In His last day in the temple, we find Jesus on guard, but always in command of the situation. He was always trying to reach with His love the people who hated Him.