

Jesus in Jerusalem



SABBATH—JUNE 13

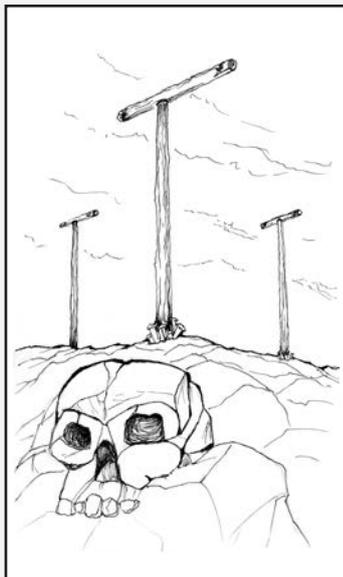
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 19:28–40; Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:45–48; Matthew 21:12–17; Luke 20:9–26.

MEMORY VERSE: “He [Jesus] approached [came closer to] Jerusalem. When he saw the city, he began to sob [cry]” (Luke 19:41, NlrV).

THE LAST WEEK OF JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE WAS SPENT IN JERUSALEM. Earth-shaking events happened during that week: (1) the victorious entry; (2) Jesus weeping over the uncaring city; (3) the cleansing of the temple; (4) the planning that took place behind His back by the leaders to turn against Him; (5) the emotion (strong feeling) of the Last Supper and the agony (suffering) of Gethsemane; (6) the mockery of a trial; (7) the Crucifixion; and, finally, (8) the Resurrection (return to life from the dead). Never before and never since has any city witnessed such critical steps of history within a week. This period really brought the war between good and evil to its high point. No one but Jesus could understand the importance of what was happening.

Jesus had passed through Jerusalem several times in His life. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record Jesus as an adult visiting Jerusalem. Other appearances of Jesus in Jerusalem are well-known. For example, (1) the baby Jesus being brought to the temple (Luke 2:22–38), (2) the debate of the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple (verses 41–50), (3) the tempter (Satan) taking Jesus to the highest point of the temple (Luke 4:9–13). But it is the closing week of Jesus' ministry (work done for God) in Jerusalem that holds the special attention of the Gospel writers.

THE VICTORIOUS ENTRY (Luke 19:28–40)



What began with shouts of Hosanna would end on Golgotha.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He grew up in Nazareth. He taught, preached, and healed throughout Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perea. But one city held His attention all the time: Jerusalem. Jesus “set His face to go to” the city (Luke 9:51, NKJV). His entry into the city began the most important week in world history. The week began with Christ’s march as a king into the city and saw His death on the cross. Through this we, who were enemies, “were reconciled [restored] to God through the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10, NKJV).

Read Luke 19:28–40. Imagine the excitement of the disciples. They must surely have thought that at this time King Jesus would take over King David’s earthly throne in Jerusalem. What important lesson about false expectations can we learn from this account?

When Jesus was born, wise men from the East came knocking at the doors of Jerusalem. They asked that heartfelt question: “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2, NKJV). And now, a few days before the Cross, His disciples and the crowds of people filled the city. A loud voice rang across Jerusalem’s sky: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Luke 19:38, NKJV).

This wonderful scene fulfilled prophecy.¹ “City of Zion, be full of joy! People of Jerusalem, shout! See, your king comes to you. He always does what is right. He has the power to save. He is gentle and riding on a donkey. He is sitting on a donkey’s colt” (Zechariah 9:9, NIV). Yet, Jesus knew that this march of history, which began with the shouts of “Hosanna,” would soon end up on Golgotha. That is where He would shout those words of victory, “It is finished.”

It was all done according to God’s eternal plan. But Jesus’ disciples’ minds were so excited by the traditions, teachings, and expectations of their own time and culture that they completely forgot Jesus’ earlier warnings about what would happen and what it all meant.

Christ spoke to them, but they did not listen. Or maybe they listened, but what He said went so much against what they expected that they blocked it out. How can we make sure we are not doing the same thing when it comes to Bible truth?

DEFINITIONS

1. prophecy—a special message from God to His people sent to warn them or tell them what will happen in the future.

JERUSALEM: CLEANSING THE TEMPLE (Luke 19:46)

“ ‘It is written that the Lord said, “My house will be a house where people can pray.” But you have made it a “den for robbers” ’ ” (Luke 19:46, NlrV).

Before the victorious entry, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. But after He entered the city, the first thing He did was to go to the temple.

Read Luke 19:45–48; Matthew 21:12–17; and Mark 11:15–19. What important lessons can we learn from what Jesus did? What should these stories say to us as members of a community that functions almost the same as the temple did? Read also Ephesians 2:21.

All four Gospels speak of the cleansing of the temple. John speaks of the first cleansing (John 2:13–25) taking place during Jesus’ visit to the temple at the Passover of A.D. 28. But the others speak of the second cleansing at the end of Jesus’ ministry. It was during the celebration of the Passover of A.D. 31. So, the two cleansings of the temple give additional information about the ministry of Jesus. They show how much He cared for the holiness of the temple and its services. They also show how carefully Jesus made clear His mission and authority as Messiah (Chosen One).

Jesus’ actions in the temple, during His second visit, came just before His death. This brings up an interesting question: Jesus knew that He was soon to die. He knew that the temple services would soon stop being effective. But Jesus drove out those who were polluting it with the goods (things) they were selling. Why did He not simply leave it alone since it would be destroyed in about forty years?

We are not given an answer. But most likely it is because it was still God’s house. And it was still the place where the plan of salvation was shown. But in a way, with Jesus’ upcoming death, the temple and its services still had an important part in helping faithful Jews to understand just who Jesus was and what His death on the cross really meant. So, the temple still could help show the entire plan of salvation, in which many could come to understand that Jesus is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

THE UNFAITHFUL (Luke 20:9–19)



The stone (Jesus) that was rejected is now the cornerstone of a great temple that will house the kingdom of God.

DEFINITIONS

2. parable—a very short story that teaches a spiritual lesson or truth.

3. stewardship—how we manage our health, money, time, talents, property, and so on.

The parable² of the wicked vinedressers (Luke 20:9–19) gives us a history lesson in saving people. The center of that history is God and His continual love for weak sinners. The parable was about the Jewish leaders of His time (“they knew He had spoken this parable against them” [verse 19, NKJV]). But it is timeless in its lesson to all people. It speaks of every generation, every church group, and every person on whom God’s love and trust have been poured out and from whom God expects a faithful return. We are today’s “renters,” and we can learn from this parable some lessons on history as God sees it.

Read Luke 20:9–19. What does the principle (important rule) taught here mean for us if we make the same mistakes as those in the parable?

Instead of giving to God the fruits of love and purity, the workers of God’s vineyard failed Him. But God, as the owner of the vineyard, sent servant after servant (verses 10–12), prophet (special messenger) after prophet (Jeremiah 35:15). God was faithful in His love to woo (try to persuade) and win His people to their responsibility of stewardship.³ But each prophet became a victim of abuse from the people. “ ‘Was there ever a prophet your people didn’t [did not] try to hurt?’ ” (Acts 7:52, NIV).

God’s history is a long love story. Sad things will raise their heads again and again. But glory (honor and praise) will succeed in the end. Resurrection must follow the Cross. The stone that was rejected is now the cornerstone of a great temple that will house the kingdom of God, where all the saved, the rich and the poor, the Jew and the Gentile (non-Jew), the male and the female, will live as one people. They shall walk in heaven’s vineyard in the end and enjoy its fruit forever.

We might not have living prophets today to abuse, but we can still turn down God’s messengers as people of old did. How can we make sure that we, who have been called to give the Lord “the fruit of the vineyard,” do not turn down these messengers and their messages?

GOD VERSUS CAESAR (Luke 20:20–26)

Read Luke 20:20–26. How do we learn from what Jesus taught here and use it in our own situation in whatever country we live?

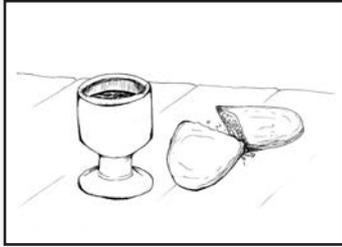
During the time of Jesus, tax collection by Rome was very unpopular with people. Around A.D. 6, according to Josephus, Judas the Galilean, a revolutionary leader, declared that paying taxes to Caesar was rebellion (war) against God. The issue set off anti-Roman rebellions from time to time. Taxes were such a sensitive issue that the religious leaders sent spies to ask Jesus whether it was lawful to pay taxes. But they had hidden reasons for asking these questions. For example, if Jesus answered that it was lawful to pay taxes, then the answer would have put Jesus on the side of Rome. It would show that He could not be the king of the Jews as declared by the crowds at His entry into Jerusalem. If Jesus answered, No, it would mean that He was following the Jewish mood and was saying that the Roman rule was unlawful. Then He would open Himself to the charge of treason. They had hoped to put Jesus in a trap from which He could not escape.

But Jesus saw right through them. He pointed to the picture of Caesar on a coin and announced, “ ‘Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. And give to God what belongs to God’ ” (Luke 20:25, NIV). People living under Caesar, whose money was used for day-to-day business needs, had responsibility to pay taxes to Caesar. But there is another responsibility, which is a greater one. Because we are made in the image of God, then to Him we owe our full loyalty.

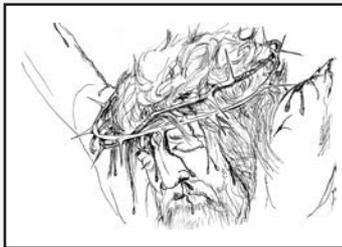
“Christ gave an honest answer to the question. . . . He said that, because the people were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should give that power the support it claimed. This could be done as long as there was not conflict [disagreement] with God’s principles [important rules]. But while peaceably obeying the laws of the land, the people should at all times give their first and full loyalty to God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 602.

What are ways we can continue to be good citizens in whatever country we live, while at the same time remembering that our true citizenship belongs to a city “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10, NIV)?

THE LORD'S SUPPER (Luke 22:13–20)



The bread and the wine are symbols of Jesus' body and blood. They remind us of the price Jesus paid to save us.



The death of Jesus was the only way of saving us from sin.

DEFINITIONS

4. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

Read Luke 22:13–20. Why is it important that the Lord's Supper took place during Passover?

Jesus connected the Lord's Supper with the historic timing of the Passover feast. The Passover setting shows human weakness in comparison with God's great power. It was not possible for Israel to free itself from Egyptian slavery. In the same way, we cannot free ourselves from the results of sin. Freedom came from God as a gift of His love and grace.⁴ And this is the lesson Israel was to teach its children from generation to generation (Exodus 12:26, 27). The freedom of Israel was so rooted in history by the saving act of God. In the same way the freedom of men and women from sin depends on the historic event of the Cross. Jesus is our "paschal [Passover] lamb" (read 1 Corinthians 5:7). And His Last Supper is "an example in which believers call the attention of the public to the importance of the death of Christ."—Adapted from G. C. Berkouwer, *The Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969), page 193.

The Lord's Supper is a reminder that "on the same night in which He was betrayed" (1 Corinthians 11:23, NKJV) and on the night before He was crucified (put to death on the cross), Jesus gave an important message to His disciples that they needed to remember. They were to remember that the bread and the wine are symbols (word-pictures; examples) of His body, which was about to be broken, and of His blood.

Jesus' teaching that His blood was to be " 'poured out to forgive the sins of many' " (Matthew 26:28, NIV) is to be remembered even to the end of history. To refuse this teaching and choose any other way of salvation is to deny God and His chosen method of salvation.

Two important lessons (of many) stand out. "Christ died for us" is the first lesson to be remembered at the table of the Lord. The second lesson is that we sit as one body (group) because of that death, which has brought us all into one fellowship. Even as we sit at the table, we sit as Christ's saved group of the end time. And we await the Lord's return. Until then, the table of the Lord is a reminder that history has meaning and life has hope.

Christ gave His body and blood in order to give you the promise of eternal life. How can you make this wonderful truth yours in a way that will always give you hope?

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Savior. By doing so, we believe that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding [watching] His love, by thinking upon it, by ‘drinking’ it in, that we are to become partners of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot help us if we do not eat it. And it cannot become a part of the reason for our being alive. So, in the same way, Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Savior. Just knowing Him will do us no good. We must ‘feed’ upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be absorbed into our souls.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 389.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Think about the scenes in which Jesus cleansed the temple. In what ways can we put our faith and purity on sale? How can religion be used for profit, ambition, and position? More important, how can we as a church make sure we do not fall into these traps?
- 2 Atheist writer Alex Rosenberg believes that everything can and must be explained through science. Everything on the earth is without design, goals, purposes, or God. “What is the purpose of the universe?” he asks. “There is none. What purposes are at work in the universe? Same answer: none.” He argues that life has no real meaning or purpose. And this may depress you (make you very sad). Then he warns against taking your “depression [deep sadness] seriously.” Why? Because our emotions, and depression, are nothing but the arrangements of cells in the body and the result of chemicals. “What is so serious about that?” he adds. But Rosenberg, however, does have an answer for those who feel discouraged because their lives seem meaningless. Because depression is a certain arrangement of cells and chemicals, he argues that you can solve this problem with drugs. “If you do not feel better in the morning . . . or three weeks from now, then you can change to another drug. Three weeks is often how long it takes drugs like Prozac, Wellbutrin, Paxil, Zoloft, Celexa, or Luvox to work well. And if one does not work, another one probably will.” The surprising thing about Rosenberg’s answer is that he is serious: if depressed, take drugs. Think about the big difference between Rosenberg’s idea and what we believe about Jesus Christ and what He has done for us on the cross. Why is our taking part in the Lord’s Supper an act of disagreement with Rosenberg’s idea that life is meaningless and that there is no God?