

The Book of Matthew Jesus in Jerusalem

Lesson #10 for June 4, 2016

Scriptures: Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-46; 22:1-15; Romans 4:13-16; Revelation 14:7-12; Acts 6:7; 15:5.

1. One week before His crucifixion, Jesus traveled from Jericho up to Jerusalem. This lesson will cover events which took place from Sunday through Tuesday of that final week of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Those events included:

The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19);

Jesus Goes to the Temple (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48; [Note that the events recorded in John 2:13-22 occurred 3 years earlier.]);

Jesus Curses the Fig-Tree (Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14,20-24);

The Question about Jesus's [and John the Baptist's] Authority (Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8);

The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32);

The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19); and,

The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24).

2. Read Matthew 20:27-28. In these final days of the life of Jesus on this earth, He ministered to the needs of many—the poor, the sick, and the needy—and at the same time spoke parables with tremendous implications. It is hard for us even to imagine the scenes in Jerusalem during those days. Have we grasped all that He tried to teach them and us?

3. The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Saturday, May 28, 2016 suggests:

But as incomprehensible as His servanthood is, the marvel goes even deeper, for He, the eternal God, is now facing the *whole purpose* of His coming here: to “ ‘give His life a ransom for many.’ ” This self-denial, this self-abnegation, will soon climax in a mystery that even “angels desire to look into” (*1 Pet. 1:12, NKJV*)—and that is the Cross. [Italics for *whole purpose* are added.]

4. What was His *whole purpose*? What were the beings in the rest of the universe learning about God? (Ephesians 3:8-10)

The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes....

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the *whole purpose* of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” [John 17:6,4] **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the**

character of the Father was made manifest to men.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. [Bold type, italics, and content in brackets are added.]

5. How does His revelation of the character of God fit with the “ransom”? Which was more important?
6. A very small group of Jews accepted the challenge of Zerubbabel and Joshua and returned home to Jerusalem in the year 536/535 B.C. About 15 years later, they were in the process of rebuilding their own homes; but, basically, nothing had been done to rebuild the temple. Haggai and Zechariah appeared on the scene as two God-ordained prophets to stimulate that process. Haggai 2:9 (*GNB*):

“The new Temple will be more splendid than the old one, and there I will give my people prosperity and peace.” The Lord Almighty has spoken.

7. Zechariah added his thoughts in Zechariah 9:9 (*GNB*) when he said:

Rejoice, rejoice, people of Zion! Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey—on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

8. Ellen White commented:

But the second temple had not equaled the first in magnificence; nor was it hallowed by those visible tokens of the divine presence which pertained to the first temple. There was no manifestation of supernatural power to mark its dedication. No cloud of glory was seen to fill the newly erected sanctuary. No fire from heaven descended to consume the sacrifice upon its altar. The **Shekinah** no longer abode between the cherubim in the most holy place; the **ark, the mercy seat, and the tables of the testimony** were not to be found therein. No voice sounded from heaven to make known to the inquiring priest the will of Jehovah.

For centuries the Jews had vainly endeavored to show wherein the promise of God given by Haggai had been fulfilled; yet pride and unbelief blinded their minds to the true meaning of the prophet’s words. The second temple was not honored with the cloud of Jehovah’s glory, but with the living presence of One in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—who was God Himself manifest in the flesh. The “Desire of all nations” had indeed come to His temple when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in the sacred courts. **In the presence of Christ, and in this only, did the second temple exceed the first in glory.** But Israel had put from her the proffered Gift of heaven. **With the humble Teacher who had that day passed out from its golden gate, the glory had forever departed from the temple. Already were the Saviour’s words fulfilled: “Your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:38.**—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* 24.1-2. [Bold type is added.]

9. Read Matthew 21:1-11. What was Jesus—looking like a king—trying to accomplish by allowing this triumphal entry and orchestrating the actual details of that entry?

Christ was following the Jewish custom for a royal entry. The animal on which He rode was that ridden by the kings of Israel, and prophecy had foretold that thus the Messiah should come to His kingdom. No sooner was He seated upon the colt than a loud shout of triumph rent the air. The

multitude hailed Him as Messiah, their King. **Jesus now accepted the homage which He had never before permitted, and the disciples received this as proof that their glad hopes were to be realized by seeing Him established on the throne. The multitude were convinced that the hour of their emancipation was at hand. In imagination they saw the Roman armies driven from Jerusalem, and Israel once more an independent nation. All were happy and excited; the people vied with one another in paying Him homage.** They could not display outward pomp and splendor, but they gave Him the worship of happy hearts. They were unable to present Him with costly gifts, but they spread their outer garments as a carpet in His path, and they also strewed the leafy branches of the olive and the palm in the way. They could lead the triumphal procession with no royal standards, but they cut down the spreading palm boughs, Nature's emblem of victory, and waved them aloft with loud acclamations and hosannas.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 570.1. [Bold type is added.]

10. Try to imagine what was going on in the hearts of the people of Jerusalem that day. While the crowds—many of whom had followed Him from Galilee—had come with Jesus and were so excited about His becoming King, the hatred of the Jewish leaders was at an all-time high. Both sides were motivated by a false idea of what the Messiah was to be and do.
11. Do we have any false ideas about His second coming? Or, perhaps about the events that will lead up to that finale? Or, do we have all the details clearly in mind?
12. On Monday and Tuesday of that week, Jesus spent His hours in the temple. From the days of Adam to that point, animal sacrifices had been part of God's chosen method for teaching the world about the plan of salvation. But, unfortunately, by the time of Jesus, the handling of the sacrifices, including the marketplace in the Gentile area of the temple courtyard, had made a farce out of the whole process.
13. Is it obvious to us today how animal sacrifices teach about the plan of salvation? Animal sacrifices were supposed to teach them that sin leads to death. The sacrifices and especially the scapegoat ceremony were part of a system that was to teach them that God wanted to help them separate permanently from their sins.
14. Things had deteriorated so seriously in connection with the temple in Jerusalem that "in the eyes of the people the sacredness of the sacrificial service had been in a great measure destroyed."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 590.1.
15. Read Matthew 21:12-17. Compare John 2:13-22, describing events 3 years earlier. In the account recorded in Matthew, Jesus was actually cleansing the temple for the second time. Remember that God's original plan was for the outer courts—a large open area surrounding the temple—to be open for Gentiles to enter and observe and learn about the true worship of God. But, unfortunately, the Jews had come to believe that salvation did not extend to anyone except Jews; so, they had turned the Gentile area into a marketplace. During His earthly ministry, Jesus did everything He could to break down that false idea.

[At the first cleansing,] The priest and rulers fled in terror and awe; but after they had recovered from their fright, they said, "Why did we go from the presence of that one man?" They did not know who He was. They did not know that He was a representative of the Father; that He had clothed His divinity with humanity; and yet they had a consciousness of His divine power.—*Bible Echo*, October 1, 1894 par. 6. [Content in brackets is added.]

Christ's exercise of authority in the cleansing of the temple had roused the

determined hatred of the priests and rulers. They feared the power of this stranger. Such boldness on the part of an obscure Galilean was not to be tolerated. They were bent on putting an end to His work. *Desire of Ages* 167.2.

What were they afraid of? Did “divinity flash through humanity”?

[At the second cleansing, remembering the first cleansing] Three years before, the rulers of the temple had been ashamed of their flight before the command of Jesus. They had since wondered at their own fears, and their unquestioning obedience to a single humble [592] Man. They had felt that it was impossible for their undignified surrender to be repeated. Yet they were now more terrified than before, and in greater haste to obey His command. There were none who dared question His authority. Priests and traders fled from His presence, driving their cattle before them.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 591.1-592.0. [Content in brackets is added.]

16. Are our churches sacred and free from any worldly distractions? Do we ever let worldly gain enter our thoughts and actions on the Sabbath?
17. How do you think it happened that the desire for gain had led the very people—the priests and the Levites, the Pharisees and Sadducees—who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Jews to turn the temple precincts into a large marketplace? Their desire for gain outweighed every possible guilt they had about what they were doing. How can we make sure that we are not letting our desire to gain or maintain anything here, even something good, jeopardize what really matters: Eternal life in Jesus? Are we living lives that show that we are prepared to make Jesus number one? How would our lives be affected if we all did that?
18. The cleansing of the temple was an act of compassion. Jesus was trying His best to show the Jewish people what was supposed to happen in the house of His Father. But, the cleansing was more than just a teaching exercise; it was an act of judgment. Those who had been using the temple courtyard as a marketplace knew that they were being condemned by this Galilean Rabbi. And He recognized that God’s curse was on their activities.
19. Read Matthew 21:18-22. On Monday morning of that week—prior to the cleansing of the temple—Jesus and His disciples were on their way to the temple. He saw a fig tree with many large green leaves. That particular type of fig tree was supposed to produce its figs before it put out its leaves. So, Jesus expected to find fruit on that tree; He found none. Then He cursed that tree. The next morning as they came that way, they found that tree completely dead. This behavior seemed very strange to the disciples. But, they recognized that this was a lived-out parable representing the Jewish leaders. Fortunately, not all, even of the Jewish leaders, ended up rejecting Jesus. Read Acts 6:7 and 15:5. Many Pharisees and priests later became followers of Jesus.
20. While the disciples and many of the other people, especially the ones from Galilee, were waiting minute by minute for Jesus to declare Himself King, Jesus knew that He had only a few days left to live. So, for what did He use those precious hours?
21. Read Matthew 21:33-46; compare Isaiah 5:1-7. This parable about the tenants and the vineyard is included in all three of the synoptic Gospels and was a very pointed accusation of the Jewish leaders. They recognized that He was talking about them.

In quoting the prophecy [from Psalm 118:22-23] of the rejected stone, Christ referred to an actual occurrence in the history of Israel. The incident was

connected with the building of the first temple. While it had a special application at the time of Christ's first advent, and should have appealed with special force to the Jews, it has also a lesson for us. When the temple of Solomon [598] was erected, the immense stones for the walls and the foundation were entirely prepared at the quarry; after they were brought to the place of building, not an instrument was to be used upon them; the workmen had only to place them in position. For use in the foundation, one stone of unusual size and peculiar shape had been brought; but the workmen could find no place for it, and would not accept it. It was an annoyance to them as it lay unused in their way. Long it remained a rejected stone. **But when the builders came to the laying of the corner, they searched for a long time to find a stone of sufficient size and strength, and of the proper shape, to take that particular place, and bear the great weight which would rest upon it.** Should they make an unwise choice for this important place, the safety of the entire building would be endangered. They must find a stone capable of resisting the influence of the sun, of frost, and of tempest. Several stones had at different times been chosen, but under the pressure of immense weights they had crumbled to pieces. Others could not bear the test of the sudden atmospheric changes. **But at last attention was called to the stone so long rejected.** It had been exposed to the air, to sun and storm, without revealing the slightest crack. The builders examined this stone. It had borne every test but one. If it could bear the test of severe pressure, they decided to accept it for the cornerstone. The trial was made. **The stone was accepted, brought to its assigned position, and found to be an exact fit.** In prophetic vision, Isaiah was shown that this stone was a symbol of Christ. —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 597.5-598.0. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

22. No doubt, the story was well-known to the Jewish leaders.

23. As one of His conclusions to this parable, Jesus made the statement recorded in Matthew 21:44 and Luke 20:18: "Everyone who falls on that stone will be cut to pieces; and if that stone falls on someone, it will crush him to dust." Compare those words with Psalm 51:7 and Daniel 2:34.

In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them.

At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed "with the Spirit of His mouth," and destroyed "with the brightness of His coming." 2 Thessalonians 2:8. **The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 107.4-108.0.

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own

choice. **By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire.** The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 764.1. [Bold type is added.]

24. Read Matthew 22:1-15. What was Jesus trying to tell us in this parable about the wedding feast that the king prepared for his son, followed by the separate mini-parable of the man who did not wear the wedding garment. This king seemed to behave in a very arbitrary, vindictive manner. Is there any way in which that could correctly represent our loving heavenly Father? Doesn't the king seem harsh in his actions? But when we are talking about gaining or losing eternal life, doesn't very strong language seem appropriate? How do you understand the following words from the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, June 2?

We are talking about One Person of the eternal Godhead bearing upon Himself the full brunt of God's own wrath against sin.

25. What does it mean to say that Jesus bore the "full brunt of God's own wrath against sin"? How does that relate to Matthew 27:46?

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. **But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 753.1. [Bold type is added.]

26. In the parable the king, realizing that people from the streets would not have nice wedding garments to wear, provided one for everyone who was willing to come. Thus, the man who was found in the wedding festival without a garment had no excuse. So, what is the meaning of that wedding garment?

Revelation 19:7-8 (GNB): [The crowd at the wedding feast of the Lamb will say:]

⁷"Let us rejoice and be glad; let us praise his greatness! For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself for it.

⁸She has been given clean shining linen to wear." (The linen is the good deeds of God's people.) [Content in brackets is added.]

How do you understand those verses?

27. How do we as Christians put on the garment of Christ's righteousness? Is it intended to cover over our sinful lives? Or, as suggested by Zechariah 3, are our old garments to be removed—the sin to be taken away—before we put on the righteousness of Christ? Surely, it cannot mean that Christ's righteousness somehow covers over our sinful selves so that the Father cannot see who is being admitted to the kingdom!

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