

Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 20:1-8 – Jesus’ authority is challenged.

Although Luke doesn’t tell us, we can see from Matthew (chapter 21:18) that we are now on the Tuesday in the week of Jesus’ death. Jesus is back in the Temple, teaching the people and preaching the gospel of new life through faith in the Messiah.

However, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders will not go away. It’s a new day, and they are back on his case, and it seems like this is an orchestrated encounter, something which has an air of being pre-arranged about it because the three terms, i.e., priests, scribes, and elders, are used to speak to the three offices within the Sanhedrin. They wait; Mark (chapter 11:27) tells us until Jesus is walking in the Temple, possibly after he has been teaching, and then they gather around him. The word used in the original means that they appear and suddenly stand around or over Jesus. Numerically they are imposing, and their stance is physically threatening.

They have one question expressed in two parts for Jesus, but it amounts to the same thing – ‘who is giving you the authority to do what you’re doing?’ Of course, the ‘doing’ relates to more than his teaching, because he would have been allowed to teach in the Temple as he was in a synagogue as a Rabbi. It takes in the triumphal entry, his clearing out of the Temple, and the healings he had performed (Matthew 21:14). And since these men were responsible for what went on in the Temple and the city itself in terms of religious matters, the question itself came with a measure of legitimacy. That said, they, of course, know the answer to the question or at least they knew that Jesus claimed authority from God, his Father. So, their question is being asked for a different reason; it is part of the game plan to try and corner him so that they have a warrant to have him arrested and dealt with.

Jesus doesn’t question their right to ask him the question they do, but he does what he has done previously when dealing with these men and others; he asks them a question. We sometimes think it’s a sign of weakness not to give an answer when we are asked a question, but it is okay to respond to a question with a question. It’s not impolite to do so. Often it would be better if we did so, rather than just jumping in and speaking without much thought just because someone demands it.

Next week we will look in more detail at the question Jesus asks these men and how they respond.

Q1. Who approaches Jesus when he is in the temple?

Q2. What do they ask him?

Q3. How does Jesus respond, and what can that teach us?

Thursday – Luke 19:45-48 – Jesus begins to teach in the Temple.

Jesus now begins teaching in the Temple; it will not be a one-off sermon; rather, he will be teaching daily. Nor is it going to be faced with a welcoming environment. There is huge hostility, not because his actions of clearing out the Temple have caused a real stir; in fact, we are not told of what reaction, if any, he got from the traders he'd ejected from the Gentile court. The men who cause the trouble now are the same men who have opposed Jesus throughout his ministry, as he has taught authoritatively and performed his astonishing miracles. They are the chief priests and the scribes who comprise the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling court in Jerusalem. We have come across them before, and they will play a critical role in the days of the week as we progress through them.

But there's another group we haven't heard of before; they are called 'the principal men of the people'. This is not a term given to a recognized body of men; there wasn't an organization called the 'principal men of the people'; it's a term used to describe the prominent men in Jerusalem who were not in the Sanhedrin. So why were they getting involved? Well, businessmen like things to be stable, and maybe they looked at what Jesus did in the temple and didn't like what they saw because of its potential to create further disturbances, especially with so many people flooding into the city for the Passover celebration. Whatever the cause of the sudden galvanization of the priests and scribes with these prominent men, they were united in pursuing the same aim – the destruction of Jesus. The people may have been hailing him as, "King who comes in the name of the Lord!", but these men were having none of it. Let the people have their 'hooray day', but in the real world, this rabbi from Nazareth looked like he was being a problem, and they weren't going to sit back and let him do what he wanted. There was too much at stake; religiously, economically, and politically. Their intent is clear, and it's not hidden. They are actively seeking to destroy Jesus in whatever way they can.

So, what is preventing them from achieving what they are working together to attain? Well, it's the people who have flocked to Jerusalem. They are literally clinging to every word that Jesus was teaching them, and there was no way that anyone could lay a hand on him without incurring the wrath of this multitude of people. These pilgrims love Jesus and his teaching, and that is what is holding the Sanhedrin and their co-conspirators in check, at least for today.

Q1. Having cleared the Temple, what does Jesus begin to do?

Q2. How do the religious leaders and principal men react?

Q3. Why are these men prevented from harming Jesus?

Monday – Luke 19:41-44 – Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.

Of the four gospels, only Luke tells us that as Jesus reaches the top of the hill overlooking Jerusalem, surrounded by thousands of people calling out, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!', he stops and, taking in the scene before him, he begins to weep. Were they tears of joy? No, the Lord is overwhelmed with sorrow, literally, he wails at what he sees, because he sees this city, one he has known from childhood as Mount Zion, the City of God, laid bare before him in terms of her true spiritual state. It's not that he's been ignorant of it before, but now as the Passover pilgrims fill her streets, his heart is devastated at what he sees. The reality of the judgement that he will declare later, in chapter 20:9-18, descends upon him like a tsunami of grief. The multitude engulfing him shouts in unison at the top of their lungs, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" But the city before them that awaits Jesus' entrance knows nothing of true peace. Her inhabitants and thousands of the Passover pilgrims had heard him proclaim the good news of the gospel, but they had rejected the 'peace with God' of that gospel. They had refused to accept the free offer, presented to them by the Prince of Peace himself, to be reconciled to God, their Creator. If only Jerusalem had seen with eyes opened by God, then there would have been true rejoicing when Jesus enters the city, but they didn't, and they wouldn't. And Jesus knows that this will be the case and that hurts him deeply, for as we read in verse 10 (words from his own lips), he came "to seek and to save the lost". Yes, he knows that this is the will of God. Jesus knows that they had not bent the knee in confession and, in repentance, embraced him by faith as their Saviour and Messianic King, because the truth had been hidden from them; nevertheless, the consequence of it impacts him greatly. "Would that you, even you..." How can we read such words and not be moved by the humble compassion of the Lord Jesus for these people?

This begs the question of us, when we look around us at the people we live among and see their lives lived in rejection of Christ, how does that make us feel? Are we ambivalent, or are we like Jesus - do we weep over their refusal to repent and believe? And if that is our response, how does that impact our desire to share the gospel's good news with them?

Q1. As Jesus gets to a position where he can look over Jerusalem, what does he do?

Q2. Why does Jesus weep?

Q3. How should that make us think about the unbelievers around us?

Tuesday – Luke 19:41-44 – Jesus prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus now announces the coming destruction of Jerusalem. It's not a general statement of some possible future devastating event; it's specific and detailed. This underscores the absolute uniqueness of Scripture. The idea, as some suggest, that Luke added this section after the fall of the city is untrue and wholly undone by what Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 29:1-4.

Jesus states how the enemies of Jerusalem will build a siege rampart around her. This was typical of siege warfare of the day. The rampart or bank would be constructed both as a means of protection for themselves, but more significantly, as a base from which to launch their attacks. He then describes the carnage of the destruction that will take place. It will simply be a smash and grab raid; the entire city will be captured and destroyed. And why will it happen? Because the city will reject the Messiah sent from God, something we will come to again in chapter 20:9-18.

The following is lifted straight from Wikipedia with a replacement of CE with AD and a few grammatical changes. "On 14 April AD 70, three days before Passover, the Roman army started besieging Jerusalem. The city had been taken over by several rebel factions following a period of massive unrest and the collapse of a short-lived provisional government. Within three weeks, the Roman army broke the first two walls of the city, but a stubborn rebel standoff prevented them from penetrating the thickest and third wall. On Tisha B'Av, 4 August 70 AD or 30 August 70 AD, Roman forces finally overwhelmed the defenders and set fire to the Second Temple. Resistance continued for another month, but eventually, the upper city was taken, and the city was burned to the ground. Titus spared only the three towers of the Herodian citadel as a testimony to the city's former might. The contemporary historian Josephus wrote that over a million people perished in the siege and the subsequent fighting. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple marked a major turning point in Jewish history. The loss of the mother city and temple necessitated a reshaping of Jewish culture to ensure its survival, which eventually resulted in the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism. After Hadrian re-founded Jerusalem as a Roman colony named Aelia Capitolina in 130 AD, he introduced foreign cults and prohibited Jewish entry into the city."

It wasn't until 1947 that UN General Counsel asserted the right of the Jews to reform Israel as a nation. A resolution that was tangibly stated in 1967 when the city was reconstituted under Jewish rule.

- Q1. What did Jesus prophesy would happen to Jerusalem?
- Q2. Which OT prophet prophesied the same thing?
- Q3. Did this prophecy come true, and if so, when?

Wednesday – Luke 19:45-48 – Jesus clears out the Temple.

All four gospels tell us about the time when Jesus went into and cleared out the Temple, although John wrote about it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, while Matthew, Mark and Luke cite it here in the week leading up to his death, so it may be that Jesus did this twice.

What is distinct about Luke's account is that his emphasis seems to be on what Jesus said and not so much on what he actually did. But the facts are clear from Matthew (Matthew 21:12-17) and Mark (Mark 11:15-19). On the day following the 'triumphal' entry, that is the Monday, Jesus went to the Temple complex, and in the court of the Gentile, the only place in the Temple where a non-Jew could go to pray, he found it thronging with people who were trading. It was effectively used as a shopping mall for sacrificial offerings and a bureau de change. This wasn't a recent innovation; it had been going on for a long time, but today Jesus was going to put a stop to it.

Jesus' words, "It is written," is a quotation from Isaiah 56:7, and it sets the warrant and tone for what he will do. This isn't a rash action resulting from his emotional reaction to standing and looking down on Jerusalem. This is a calm, measured but profoundly telling and direct response to what he sees in the Temple complex. It's not that Jesus is saying by his actions that Jews coming from the surrounding nations shouldn't exchange their money or that they don't need to purchase birds, etc., to offer as sacrifices. Not at all. The issue is all about the location. Indeed, people need to exchange money and buy what they have to, in order to be able to offer sacrifices; but not in the Temple.

The use of the Temple has been made clear by God; it is to be a House of Prayer, literally a House of Worship. But those responsible for overseeing its proper use had turned it into a 'den of robbers'. Jesus is again quoting the Old Testament, this time the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7:11). So, with the approval of her spiritual custodians, the Temple has become a place where robbers could work with impunity. It's incredible when you think about it. These Jews saw themselves as serving the work of the Temple, while at the same time they were desecrating it.

We need to take great care when it comes to our use of the House of God, so that our thoughts and actions when we gather for public worship do not desecrate the purpose of the building.

- Q1. What building does Jesus enter when he arrives in Jerusalem?
- Q2. What does Jesus find?
- Q3. What does Jesus do, and why does he do it?