

Lesson 1

Palm Sunday and the Last Week of the Life of Jesus Christ

Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:2-8

Begin today's lesson asking the Holy Spirit to illumine your mind and to teach you His precepts.

Read Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:2-8 out loud every day this week.

1. As you read the above verses, what initially strikes you?

As we approach the last week of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ it is important to understand the dynamics between different groups of people in Jerusalem at that time.

- ❖ The *throng of people*, which may have numbered two million people at Passover, were fickle. They were attracted to the sensational. They were easily swayed. As Jews, they largely resented the ironclad rule Rome held over their land.
- ❖ The *Roman Government*, known for its military power ruled through puppet governors whose mandate was to keep peace. The Roman governors came down hard at any sign of insurrection or unrest.
- ❖ The *Jewish leaders*, sometimes called the chief priests and Pharisees, sat on a council called the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a council or assembly that was the highest court of justice for the Jewish people in Jesus' day. There were 71 members of the Sanhedrin and it was headed by the high priest. Rome gave it limited authority over religious and certain criminal matters. In most cases, it did not have the power of capital punishment. The Sanhedrin included members from the Pharisees (elders), Sadducees (chief priests), and Scribes. It had its own police force (the Temple police) which may have been the group which arrested Jesus in Gethsemane.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

Luke 4:18-19

Each of these three groups of people played a pivotal role in the events leading to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

2. Toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry something happened which brought everything to a climax. Scan John 11:1-44 and explain what Jesus did that prompted this.
3. From John 11:45-54, what was the response of the regular people and of the Sanhedrin to this miracle by Jesus?
4. Read Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 10:32-34 and Luke 18:31-34. Did the events of the cross take Jesus by surprise? Should the events have taken the disciples by surprise? Discuss.
5. Just before the Passover, the sense of suspense in Jerusalem was rising. Read John 11:55-57 and John 12:1,9-11. Discuss the attitude of the crowd and that of the Chief Priests and Pharisees.
6. Read Matthew 21:1-6, Mark 11:1-6 and Luke 19:29-34. What instructions did the Lord give and what happened? Also see Zechariah 9:9 to read a prophecy that was fulfilled that day.
7. What spontaneously happened as Jesus came into Jerusalem? See Matthew 21:7-9, Mark 11:7-10 and Luke 19:35-38. Also see Psalm 118:26 which the crowd quoted. Why did they do this? Discuss.
8. There were Pharisees in the crowd who did not think it appropriate for Jesus to receive praise worthy of the Messiah. They asked Jesus to correct His followers. Discuss Jesus' reply in Luke 19:39-40.
9. From John 12:17-18, what else do you learn about the dynamics behind Palm Sunday?

10. The crowd was clearly attracted to Jesus because He had power to work miracles. Do you think they received Him as the Messiah in a political context (i.e., as the one who would overthrow Rome) or in a personal context as the Lord of their lives? Discuss.

11. From John 12:16, what were the disciples thinking at about this time?

12. What was the “whole city” thinking? See Matthew 21:10-11.

13. Because it may not have been safe to stay in Jerusalem, where did Jesus and His disciples stay each night? See Mark 11:11, Matthew 21:17 and Luke 21:37.

14. Each morning of the last week of the earthly life of Jesus Christ, He went into the temple of Jerusalem and openly teach. Read and discuss the following verses:
 - ❖ Mark 11:18

 - ❖ Luke 19:47-48

 - ❖ Luke 21:38

 - ❖ Matthew 26:55

15. Jesus knew that His hour had come and He was beginning to feel the sorrow of His departure. Read John 12:27-35 and discuss what you think “hour” refers to.

16. From John 12:42, discuss the response of some of the Jewish leaders to Jesus' continued teaching in the Temple.

17. Jesus spent His last days giving parables and teachings and prophecies. Talk about the response of the chief priests and Pharisees from Matthew 21:45, Mark 12:12, and Luke 20:19.

18. Why were the chief priests and Pharisees even listening to Jesus? See Matthew 22:15, Mark 12:13 and Luke 20:20.

19. Were the chief priests and Pharisees successful in trapping Jesus? See Matthew 22:22-23,46, Mark 12:17,34 and Luke 20:26,39-40. Discuss.

20. Discuss the response of the large crowd to Jesus in Mark 12:37.

21. Jesus went on the offensive in Matthew 23:1-39, Mark 12:37-40 and Luke 20:45-47. Scan these verses. What do you learn from them about Jesus' willingness to confront?

22. Do you think Jesus understood the timing of His demise? See Matthew 26:1-2.

23. Do you think the elders (the Sanhedrin) were in control of the timing of Christ's crucifixion? See Matthew 26:3-5, Mark 14:1-2 and Luke 22:1-2.

24. Read about Mary's extravagant worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:2-8. This probably happened just a day or so before His crucifixion. How did Jesus view her deed and what did He say she had done? Discuss.
25. As we look over the events of the last week of the earthly life of Christ, summarize the position of the following people toward the Lord Jesus Christ:
- ❖ the general public
 - ❖ the Jewish leaders
 - ❖ the disciples
 - ❖ Mary
 - ❖ With whom do you most identify? Why?
26. Based on your study this week, what do you think God is teaching you or inviting you to do or be?

Lecture Notes: