

Handout 1: Lenten Study Lesson 2

The Countdown to the Passion

- Day #1: Saturday, the 9th of Nisan ~ *Six days before the Passover* Jesus attends a dinner in Bethany at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus and is anointed by Mary of Bethany (Jn 12:1-8).
- Day #2: Sunday, the 10th of Nisan ~ *The next day* Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-40; Jn 12:12-15). He cleansed the Temple a second time and healed the blind and the lame (Mt 21:10-17; Lk 19:45-46).
- Day #3: Monday, the 11th of Nisan ~ Jesus cursed the fig tree (Mt 21:18-19; Mk 11:12-14), cleansed the Temple a third time (Mk 11:15-19) and taught in the Temple (Mt 21:23).
- Day #4: Tuesday, the 12th of Nisan ~ The disciples comment on the withered fig tree (Mk 11:20) and Jesus teaches at the Temple (Mk 11:27; 12:1).
- Day #5: Wednesday, the 13th of Nisan ~ Jesus' last day teaching at the Temple (Mk 13:1) in which He declares the "hour" of His glory has come (Jn 12:22). Wednesday is two days before the Passover on Thursday (counting as the ancients counted = Wednesday is day #1 and Thursday is day #2), and the religious authorities plan Jesus' death (Mt 26:1-5). Jesus has dinner in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper where He is anointed a third time (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:1, 3-9). Judas betrays Jesus (Mt 26:14-16; Mk 14:10-11; Lk 22:3-6).
- Day #6: Thursday, the 14th of Nisan ~ It is the day of the Passover sacrifice that will take place at the Temple at noon. Jesus sends Peter and John into the city to make sure that the preparations for the sacred meal at sundown (the beginning of the 15th of Nisan) are made (Mt 26:17-19; Mk 14:12-16; Lk 22:7-13).

There is controversy among Bible scholars over how many times Jesus was anointed the last week of His life. The Gospels record three anointings of Christ during His three year ministry, which may have symbolized the three holy offices He fulfilled as God's supreme Prophet, High Priest, and Davidic King (CCC 436):

- Anointing #1: Early in Jesus' ministry an unnamed sinful woman at the home of the Simon, a wealthy Pharisee (who was disrespectful to Jesus), anointed His feet with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair (Lk 7:36-50).
- Anointing #2: Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair on Saturday, Nisan the 9th at a dinner in her home (Jn 12:1-7). The next day on the 10th of Nisan, the day the sacrificial lambs or kids were to be chosen (Exodus 12:3), Jesus rode into Jerusalem—the sacrificial Lamb of God, there for all to see and judge His perfection (Jn 12:12-15).
- Anointing #3: An unnamed woman anointed Jesus' head at the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany two days before the Passover. As the ancients counted this is Wednesday, Nisan the 13th (Matthew 26:1-16; Mark 14:1-11).

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Matthew 22:15-45 has 3 controversies concerning the correct interpretation of Scripture:

1. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead (Mt 22:23-33)
2. The greatest commandment of the Law (Mt 22:34-40)
3. The meaning of Psalms 110:1 concerning David's lord (Mt 22:41-45)

In Jesus' day the Roman denarius bore the image of the emperor Tiberius (ruled 14-37 AD) and the Latin inscription "Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest" (Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, page 310).

- The Sadducees did not believe in a physical resurrection of the dead like the Pharisees (Lk 20:27; Acts 23:8; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:16).
- The Sadducees only observed the precepts of the written Law in the Torah/Pentateuch (five books of Moses), unlike the Pharisees who accepted other books as Sacred Scripture and also followed the oral Law (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.5.9; 13.10.6; 18:16).
- The Sadducees counted among their supporters the wealthy and the aristocracy (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.6).

Jesus sums up the entire law upon which He says the Torah and the books of the Prophets are based (Mt 22:40):

- *Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength* (Dt 6:5).
- *Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD* (Lev 19:18).

When the people and their leaders fail to heed God's patient call to repentance issued through His holy prophet, the prophet, as God's prosecuting attorney, announced covenant judgments through the formal declaration of a covenant lawsuit, called a *riv* in Hebrew: *For this will be Yahweh's day of vengeance, the year of retribution in Zion's lawsuit [riv]* (Is 34:8). Some examples in Scripture are found in Ps 50:4-7; Is 1:2-25; 3:1-26; 5:8-30; Jer 11:1-17; 25:31-32; Hos 2:4/2; 4:1-11; Mic 6:2. Jesus' lawsuit is divided into three parts:

1. Denouncement of the practices of the leaders of the people
2. The seven woe/judgments against the leadership
3. Prophecy of the coming judgment

In Scripture the word "woe" (*ouai* in Greek and *howy* or *owy* in Hebrew) is used three different ways:

1. As an expression of grief as in mourning the dead or as an expression of grief over some disaster. Sometimes it is translated as "alas" in this context (for example see 1 Kng 13:30 or Jer 22:18).
2. As an exclamation signaling an important announcement by God or His prophet that is sometimes translated as Ah! (for example see Is 17:12 and Jer 47:6).
3. As an expression of impending judgment by God, especially in the context of a covenant lawsuit by announcing that the curses of the covenant were about to be put into effect (for example see Is 5:8-22; Amos 5:1-14; Hab 2:6-19).