

TUTORIAL

1.51

Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

Jesus & His disciples celebrated the Passover

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 11:1-10, 14:1-26, Zechariah 9:9, 11:12,13, Psalm 41:9.**

Last time

Jesus told a parable about a prosperous farmer who thought he'd be happy and content after he'd built bigger barns to store his latest harvest. But God called him a fool because He knew the man was going to die that night and all he'd worked for would be worthless to him.

Jesus also told a story about a rich man and a beggar called Lazarus. When both died, the huge difference in their material possessions proved to be irrelevant. Lazarus, a believer, will enjoy eternity with God. The rich man, who ignored God in life, will spend eternity in a torment of regret.

Jesus is given a royal welcome as He rides into Jerusalem

We now continue with Mark's account of events that are building towards the climax of Jesus' life here on earth. Everything that happens is going to be according to God's plan and with Jesus' full knowledge of where this is all heading. One day, not long before the celebration of the Passover, He and His disciples approach Jerusalem. On the slopes of the Mount of Olives He sends two of them to get a donkey He says they'll find tied up in a village just ahead. So when Jesus enters the city this time, He's riding on a donkey. He's recognised. Some people gather, then more. They crowd around and line the road. Suddenly He's in the middle of a shouting, singing, dancing procession. People are taking off their outer cloaks and spreading them on the road in front of Him, others laying down branches. The rumours fly. "It's Jesus of Nazareth. Haven't you heard the stories? The Pharisees and Sadducees hate Him. But He's a great healer and teacher. Could He be the Promised One from God? Maybe He's going to throw the Romans out? Come on, let's follow, see what happens."

Remarkably all of this fulfills something the prophet Zechariah wrote centuries before (Zechariah 9:9), when he encourages the people of Jerusalem to shout in triumph because their king is coming to them, humbly riding on a young donkey. The procession sweeps Jesus into the city where He heads to the temple. But the excitement is short-lived. The crowd fades away. (Mark 11:1-11) They're hoping for a king, even for the Messiah, but Jesus has come to meet a much greater need than their short-sighted desires and ambitions.

One of the disciples, Judas, agrees to betray Jesus to the authorities

The Jewish religious leaders are disturbed by all of this. Then, over the next few days, Jesus says and does some things, which infuriate them even more. He's here in Jerusalem on their turf, so they're determined to take the opportunity to arrest Him and kill Him, in secret if necessary. But they're really concerned about doing it while everyone is gathered in the holy city for the Passover celebrations...they know that Jesus has a lot of populist support and they're worried about a riot. It could go badly for them and who knows how the Romans will respond. (Mark 14:1-11)

They need some way to get to Him when there's no crowd around. But how? Although they've never been able to catch Jesus out in a sin or even a technicality of the law, they rationalise their evil intent...they even self-righteously tell themselves that they're doing it for God and for His nation. Of course it's not difficult to see the hand of Satan in all of this, as he spurs them on, using their pride, resentment and desire to hold on to power.

Likewise, God's Enemy has been at work in the heart of one of Jesus' disciples. Judas originally followed Jesus for what he thought he might get out of it...a position and perhaps some material gain. He's always loved money. Through his own cunning - so he thinks - he's been able to snag the job of looking after the communal funds. He's taken the opportunity to dip into the kitty for personal use every now and then... "Who's going to know? They're all so naïve and trusting." But recently he's become disillusioned and resentful. This disciple thing isn't leading him to the position and wealth he'd dreamt of. By now he should be treasurer of the kingdom, but Jesus just isn't ambitious enough. And sometimes, when Jesus looks at him, Judas wonders if sees through him...if maybe He really does know what's going on in his heart. So when he gets the chance, he slips away and finds some of the top priests. He offers to betray Jesus...to tell them when they can get Him without the crowds around, and to give a sign so they'll definitely get the right man. They agree to pay him - an amount that Matthew tells us is 30 silver coins. We can only assume that Judas doesn't realize he's fulfilling King David's prophetic words about the Messiah - that a trusted friend with whom He's shared food

will betray him. (Psalm 41:9) Or the prophet Zechariah's prescient mention of someone's wages that come to 30 pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12,13)

Jesus celebrates the Passover Feast with His disciples

As visitors in Jerusalem, the disciples know they need to find somewhere to celebrate the Passover...a lamb has to be sacrificed and then the ritual meal eaten together. (Mark 14:12-26)

When they ask Jesus, He sends two of them off with detailed instructions. They find a man, just where Jesus says he'll be. They follow Him to a house where the owner has already prepared a large room on the second floor...prepared for them! "But how? We've been with the Master the whole time. How did he arrange this? How did He know? Oh, but of course, we keep forgetting..."

It's evening now, and they're together in the room...around the table eating. Suddenly, Jesus looks around at them, rather sadly some notice...and then He drops a bomb-shell. "This might be hard to believe, but it's true. One of you guys eating this meal here with me is going to betray me." They're stunned. They can't believe what they're hearing. Surely not! How can that be? Maybe someone will go insane and do it without even knowing. "Master, it's not me is it?" "Please say it's not me either." "I couldn't, could I?"

"Well, I'm sad to say, it's definitely one of you twelve who've been dipping bread into this bowl of sauce with me. The Scriptures spelled out long ago that as God's Son who's also a man, I'd have to die, but that's no consolation for the traitor. In fact, he'd be better off if he'd never been born." It's unthinkable. They've heard from childhood that it's one thing to have open enemies. But to share a meal with someone as though they're your friend and then stab them in the back - that's disgusting, it's Gentile treachery!

Jesus is, of course, fully aware of what has been building in Judas' heart... knows that he's gone to the leading priests and arranged to betray Him. He loves Judas and he's deeply hurt at the treachery of his close companion for the last few years. But why does He make it clear He knows about it, but without naming Judas? We can only conclude that He was giving him a final opportunity to draw back from the brink...to recognise the terrible thing he was doing and the evil heart that it came from...to repent and throw himself on God's mercy. Jesus was making the same genuine, gracious offer to Judas that He made to Adam and Eve, Cain, the people in the time of Abraham, the Egyptian Pharaoh...and to everyone else who has opportunity to know about Him. Only the true Author can give people the opportunity to make genuine choices about the role they'll play, while retaining absolute control of how His Story will turn out.

Despite the pain of Judas' betrayal, Jesus is committed to a path that will lead to His death.

He now does something which on the surface is unremarkable, but the circumstances and Jesus' words fill it with meaning...although that meaning won't become clear to the disciples until much later. Picking up some bread that was there as part of the Passover meal, Jesus prays to the Father and then breaks it into pieces and passes it around to the disciples.

In the bread being broken, He says, they are to see His body being broken. Later it will be a very vivid reminder as they remember...indeed as they intentionally remind themselves by regularly re-enacting this simple ceremony together.

His enemies are about to cause severe injuries to His body which, being a normal human body is vulnerable and susceptible to pain. Once they've eaten the bread, Jesus picks up a cup of wine from the table, gives thanks to God, then passes it around for them to drink from.

He says that in the pouring out of this wine as they drink it, they are to picture His blood being poured out. He adds something astounding that, again, will only fully strike home later...He says that His blood will seal a covenant between God and man. Also that it will be a sacrifice for many. But what does this mean? Isn't there already a Covenant in place? The one God made with their ancestors, through Moses. It has its laws, its priests, the temple, and the whole system of sacrifices. So what will this new Covenant be? And what does Jesus' death that He keeps mentioning have to do with it? How will His body being broken and His blood being poured out bring about this new Covenant? The questions swirl in their heads as they sing a song of worship to God. But there's no time to ask Him more. They're on the move. Through the streets, between the houses - they can hear murmuring voices, and see candles flickering in windows where others are celebrating Passover - then beyond the houses, along a path between the trees on the slopes of the Mount of Olives.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover

1. Why do you think Jesus entered Jerusalem as He did this time - in a way that seemed to encourage the crowd to cheer Him as a possible King, even as the Messiah - and then afterwards obviously rejected that kind of populist support? Do you think He toyed with the idea of pursuing that path and then decided against it, or did He have another purpose in mind all along? If so, what was it?

2. How do you think it was possible for Judas - who'd interacted closely with Jesus, seen His life and heard His teaching - to end up doing what he did? How do you picture him? As: (a) some kind of psychopath (b) probably demon possessed (c) just a fairly normal person who'd continually turned away from the truth (d) some other description.
3. Imagine yourself in the place of one of the disciples...say John. As a Jew, you know quite a bit from the Old Testament, and you've just spent three years with Jesus. What do you make of His statements about dying as a sacrifice for many and validating a new Covenant with His blood? What questions would you like to ask Him?



ACTIVITIES

Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover

1. In about half a page, write a description in your own words of what takes place at Passover in an orthodox Jewish household. (Try to find out if it is basically the same today as it would have been in the time of Christ.)