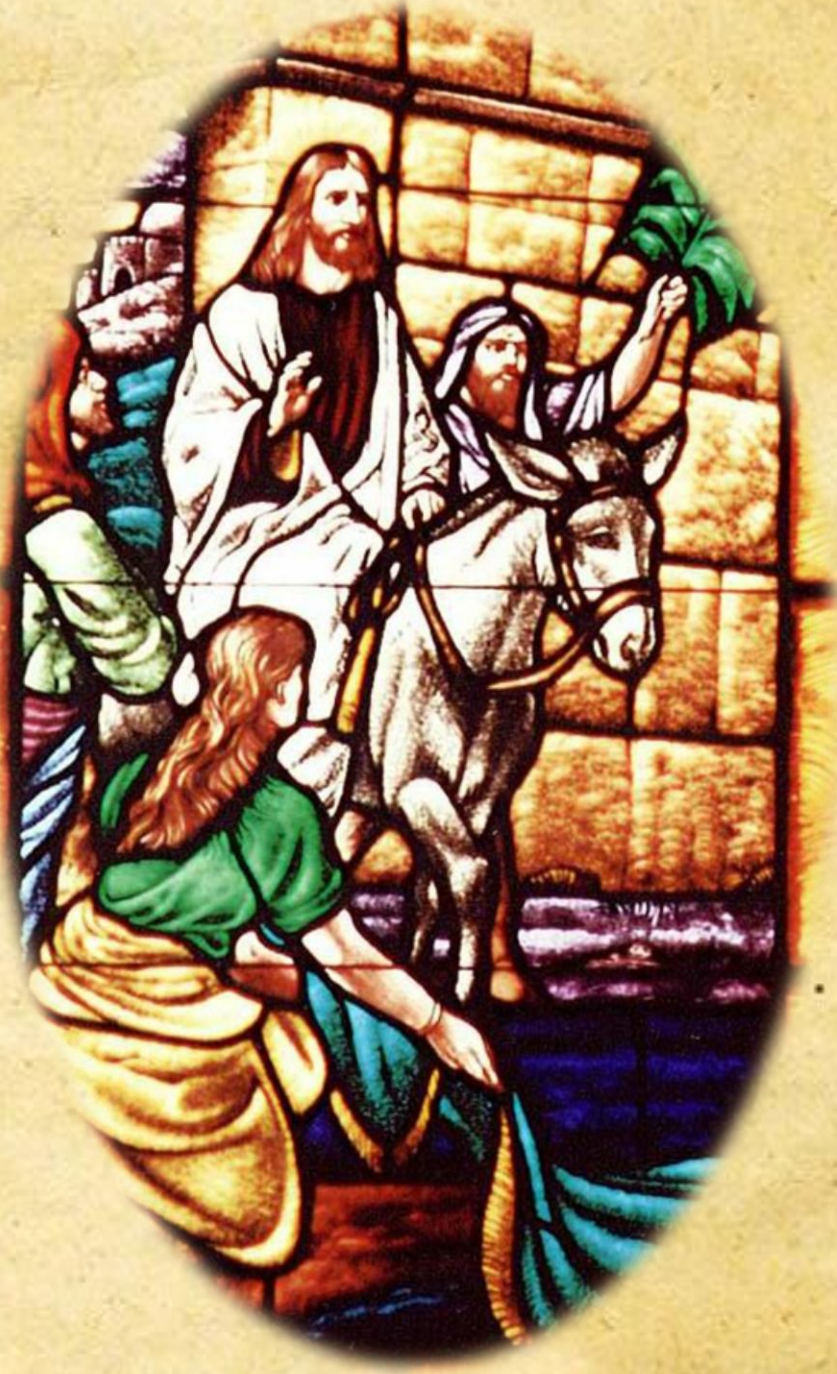


Chapter 1

FINAL WEEK



"TRIUMPHAL ENTRY" Compliments of Austin Avenue United Methodist Church, Waco, TX.

INTRODUCTION

Hasn't it been a marvelous blessing to follow the footsteps of Jesus and watch his whole life and ministry unfold before your eyes? Throughout your journey in this collection, have you found yourself pausing frequently allowing the sweetness of his love, mercy, and compassion to saturate your hungry soul? Has it given you pause to look into the eyes of your Jewish Messiah and witness the array of emotions displayed as he healed the sick, felt anger toward the arrogant, experienced rage for those suppressing the downtrodden, and sadness for even the individuals that rejected his message of the kingdom? Oh, what breathtaking beauty we have noted in those eyes! Since Jesus was God who came to dwell among us, did it register in your mind that you were seeing the eyes of the Heavenly Father; that as a mere human, you were invited to peer through the window of the Master's soul and witness his true character?

Certainly, if you were to search the eyes of the Lord at this juncture in his ministry, they would be vividly reflecting even a different emotion; that of an unfaltering determination due to the fact that this was to be his final week on earth. **Luke 9: 51-55** supports this stance by vividly stating, **"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."** (NIV)

Even though he, above all, was most aware of the dangers and difficulties awaiting him at every turn, he had a date with destiny that drew him like a giant magnet. By claiming the position of Messiah, he knowingly had gone against the Jewish religious establishment, not out of vengeance and hatred, but motivated by love for his creation. Being God of very God, he knew in advance that he would be facing his final destiny alone. Fear would rear its ugly head in even the hearts of his closest disciples causing them to cower and run for their lives.

Also, in spite of the fact that God is in pursuit of his children all their lives, desiring desperately for not one of them to be lost from him, Scripture has made it abundantly clear that he will never force the issue. The words from **John 3: 16 (NIV) ---¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"**, say it all. As a result, our Lord had traveled the highways and byways for three years delivering the message of the kingdom with relentless determination by using every possible method to get the good news across to his people. There was just something about God's One and Only Son that brought those in his presence to full attention. Being simply dressed as a common man from Nazareth, it was obvious that the magnetism those around him felt was coming from the very heart of the Father; a pure and shining radiance from within.

Until now, Jesus had avoided publicity and openly requested individuals he healed to keep the news a secret. Do you recall how he slipped away into the crowd unnoticed when the people wanted to crown him king? Also, as his popularity grew, he had always been on the move to outsmart those wanting to corner him with the motive of causing him harm.

However, this was the dawn of a new day; a time when he encouraged his disciples to let it be known that he would be coming to Jerusalem. The Jewish people would have the final say; that of accepting or rejecting him. The Scribes and Pharisees had predicted that his mission would be to head straight

for the Temple to announce his claim that he, indeed, was the long awaited Messiah his people had anticipated.

Therefore, having received the news in advance that Jesus would be entering the city gates on this special day, the air was explosive as uncertainty and expectancy reined. Since all men were required by Law to attend the three great feasts of Passover, the city of Jerusalem was swollen six times its size; an increase estimated by some scholars to be a growth of 150,000 people. Does this give you a feel as to the activity and noise level when Jesus would make his final entrance into the holy city? Certainly, we can be assured this would offer no surprise to him due to Scripture describing his visits at this event from birth to age twelve and beyond. Our Lord who was the child of two devout Jewish parents not only was taught to adhere to the Law, but also had grown up honoring and loving the Temple where God resided with every fiber of his being. One could surmise that, due to his love for the Father, it was the place that took total precedent in his heart.

Thus, even when he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, an event that was prophesied 500 years earlier and recorded in **Zechariah 9:9**, many people were still not convinced of his Messianism. **“Rejoice greatly, Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** (NIV) No matter! Jesus not only knew Scripture, but was himself the Word; thus enacted it perfectly.

Yet, given the fact that donkeys have always been viewed as lowly by society, it is certainly understandable that disappointment was the emotion experienced by those observing the one claiming to be the long awaited Messiah entering the gates of the city riding on this simple creature's back. In their eyes, Jesus should be arriving with great pomp and circumstance.

When researching the view society has toward the means of transportation Jesus chose for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, one can understand the attitudes displayed among the crowd. It is often stated that unlike horses, sheep, dogs, or cats, donkeys seem to have great difficulty being offered a warm reception within the human heart. Still yet, donkey lore is filled with the love these animals and children have for one another; indicating the ability of this simple creature to see all the way to the core of the heart. In the book “Saving Simon”, written by Jon Katz, he indicates that in the Kabbalah, an old rabbi explains that God made donkeys the guardians of children, because children are pure and filled with love and emotion, not yet tainted and corrupted and made angry as their parents often are. The rabbi says that donkeys are sacred messengers of God, and that children and donkeys talk to one another.

Thus, as we have witnessed throughout our journey with Jesus, it should not have been a surprise when he straddled the back of this animal. As humans were dealing with their feelings of status regarding this issue, possessing great knowledge of Scripture, Jesus was adhering totally to God's plan. Therefore, being very familiar with the prophesy stated in Zechariah 9:9 regarding the future Messiah riding into Jerusalem on a donkey's back, he fulfilled it to the letter by giving the following directions to his disciples:

Mark 11: 1-7

“When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.”’ ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.”



("Gérôme - L'entrée du Christ à Jérusalem - cadre" by Jean-Léon Gérôme)

Thus, even though our Lord did not look like a king; lacking the regal sense of David, or displaying the boldness and size of Saul, this simple man riding on an awkward donkey still captured the attention of those present that day. There was simply something about this humble, compassionate man that, in the minds of those watching, struck a chord; a mysterious aura that caused him to exude the appearance of a king. How could this be? His exterior trappings did not fit their definition of how a king would present himself! Yet, Scripture states their reaction to the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem as follows: “Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

**‘Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ (Mark 11: 8-10) NIV**

At this point, let us imagine the emotions exhibited in the eyes of our Lord as he saw the faces of many *compatriots* whose lives he had touched in various ways through his gracious deeds during the three years of his ministry. Then picture what expression he wore as he identified *allies* among the throng; people who did not desire to get involved, but at the same time wished him well. Perhaps their thinking was that the character of this man, as described by others, would bring about a positive change in some way.

As he traveled slowly through the mass of people, the eyes of Christ must have penetrated those of individuals desiring only to take advantage of the situation for selfish reasons only. They were *users* whose goal was to receive, not give. Remembering how Jesus felt about anyone that was neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm, describe to yourself the emotion seen on his face when making eye contact with these individuals.

Then, there were *tourists* in the crowd; people who had arrived from various places all over Palestine and the Diaspora to take part in Passover that must have been absolutely shocked, puzzled, and intrigued by the happenings unfolding around them. How might they be reacting? How do you think Jesus saw them?

Last, let us not forget how familiar the faces of the *objectors* were to Jesus. Recalling the numerous times when their only motive was to trick the Lord into making a mistake and breaking the Law, and now hearing the loud praises coming from the voices of the crowd, do you think their blood had reached the boiling point? Are you able to visualize their eyes?

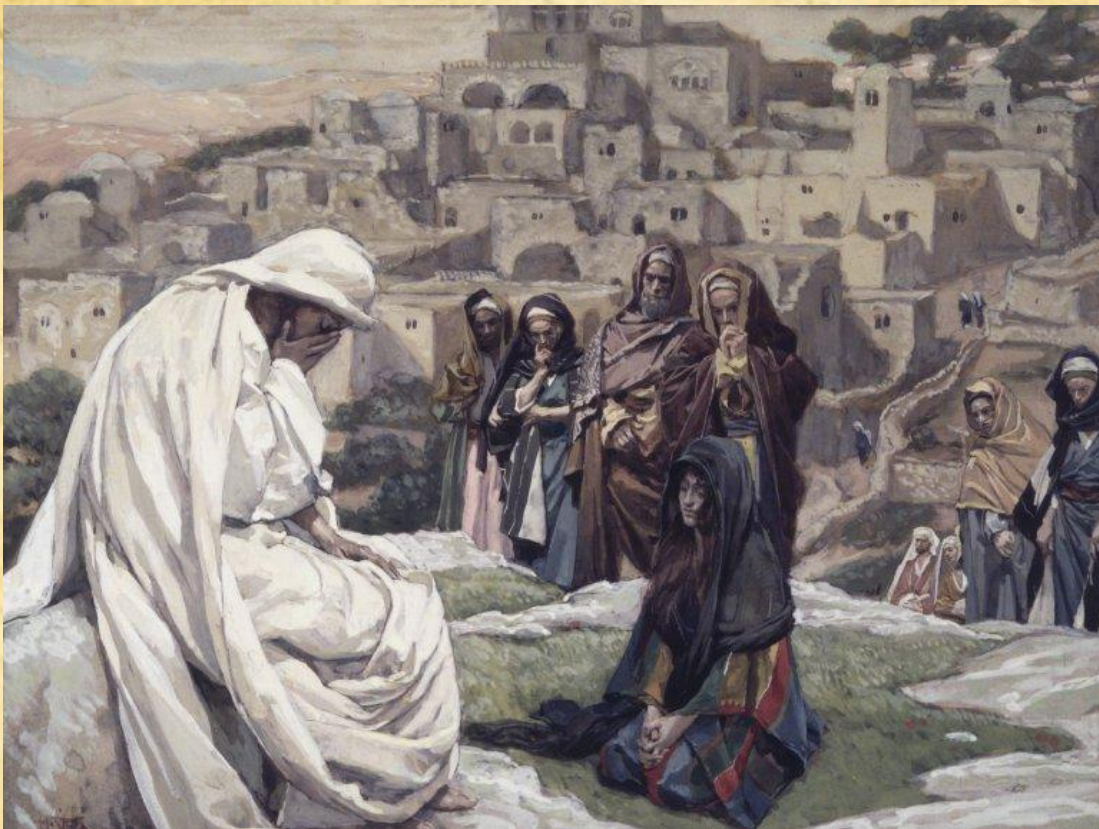
Given this analysis of the crowd and the Divinity Jesus possessed, how do you think he felt about this strange conglomeration in the holy city that day? As mere humans, motivated by the desire to please others, most of us might have been tempted to change our course! Not our Lord! Scripture clearly spelled out his reaction.

Without doubt, our Lord knew those waving palm branches and shouting hosanna to the king, would be the same voices yelling to crucify him; yet, the cross now being in his view, he proceeded forward toward the Temple he loved. After all, thinking back on the events of his life, the Temple was the center of his very core; the place where he went for study, debates, sacraments, and worship. However, since, due to the large crowds having gathered in Jerusalem for Passover and darkness approaching, he soon departed for a location outside the city where he would spend the night; thus bringing day one of his final week to an end. Although there is no evidence describing his choice of sleeping quarters that night, do you have any thoughts? Did you guess either at the home of his friend Lazarus or on the slopes of Olivet in the company of his disciples? Do you suppose prayer was involved?

Although scholars disagree on when the events took place during the final week of Jesus' earthly life, Scripture does tell us he arose early and headed once again toward the Temple. In route, as he turned the corner, he was able to look down upon the city of Jerusalem with the beloved Temple in full view.

The words found in **Luke 19: 37-40** offer an indication as to the joy and adoration the people felt about the Lord, the miracles they had seen, and the beloved city below. Unable to keep silent, they shouted, **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”** Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, **“Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”** However, Jesus replied, **“I tell you, if you keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”** NIV

At this point, we will need to picture the depth of sadness the disciples witnessed in the Lord’s eyes as the full impact that his own people had totally rejected his teachings as the Messiah penetrated his heart like a sword. The disciples whose hearts were so full of joy must have been astounded when they saw the tears flowing from their Master’s eyes. Jesus, being divine as well as human, already was aware that the destruction of the Temple would occur and the dire consequences his people would face in the very near future. Although the magnificent Temple that stood in its usual place of importance within the city he loved shone with its usual radiance, the adoration he usually felt when viewing the landscape caused his eyes to fill with tears and prompted him to proclaim **“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace---but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”**NIV (Think back to the new Exodus Pitre wrote about in his book as described in an earlier chapter. This refers to the coming of the long-awaited Messiah; but their eyes were blinded to it.) Note the disciples’ reaction.



Jesus weeps over Jerusalem by James Tissot

Consequently, just as Jesus predicted, turmoil began exactly 40 years after he said these words. Thus, in A.D. 70, the Romans laid siege and entered the weakened city and burned it, killing 600,000 Jews. The end result was total destruction of the Temple; an event that changed their lives forever. This holy city he loved whose foundation rested upon the Salem of Melchizedek that was built on Abraham's Mount Moriah and David's Mount Zion was destroyed because of the close mindedness of the people.



Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem (David Roberts, 1850)

Although Scripture lets us know that on this particular day Jesus is definitely on a mission to visit the Temple, before describing the scene that followed, it will be extremely valuable to review various aspects of its construction and religious requirements. In order to understand how sacred the Temple was to the Jewish people, one only needs to refer back to the book of Exodus where numerous verses appear describing the manner in which God is to be worshiped; a detailed account of the design of the Temple and religious ceremony itself. This was never more apparent than when God was leading the Hebrews out of Egypt. The people were organized into 12 tribes throughout the entire journey. Then, when the tabernacle was constructed, each tribe had a set responsibility that was delivered in great detail.

Model of the tabernacle in Timna Valley Park, Israel

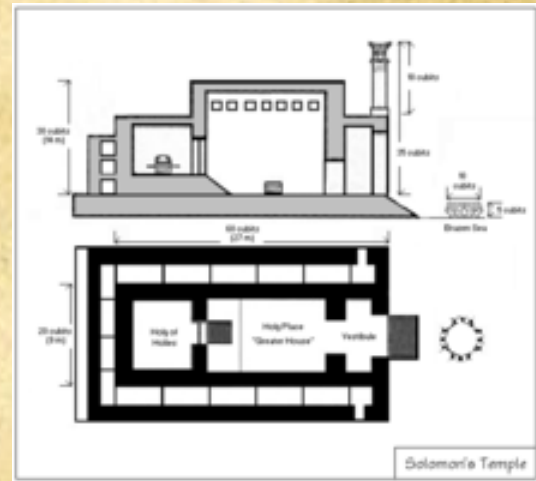
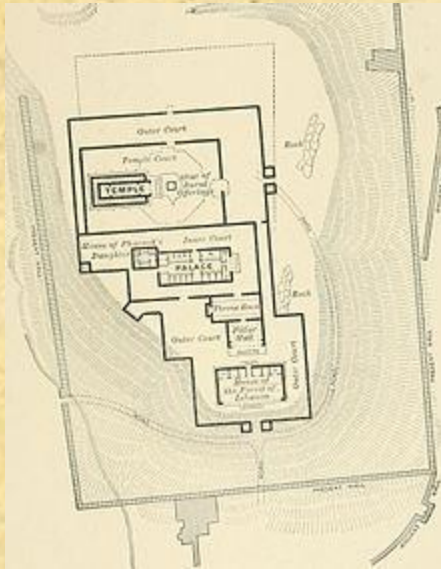


The picture below of the Holy of Holies shows how critical the religious guidelines were to the Jewish people; rules that were passed on from generation to generation. **Exodus 6: 7: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians,"** was serious business, indeed. In order for this to happen, the people had to follow the commandments of YHWH.



Description Holman The Holy of Holies.jpg commons.wikimedia.org

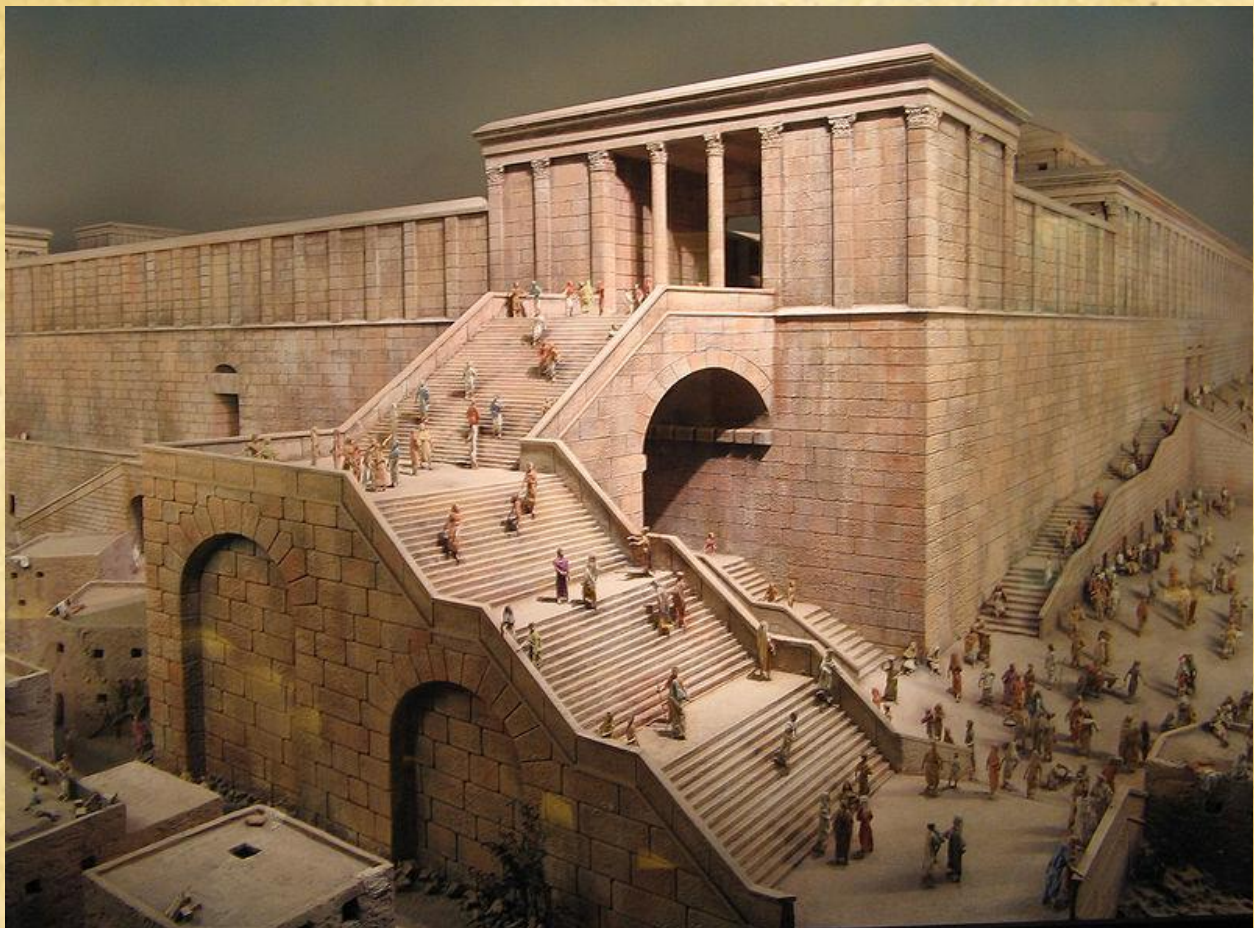
After the children of Israel arrived to their permanent land, Temples were built but destroyed due to constant turmoil and invasions. Thus, under Herod's rule, the 2nd Temple was completed; the place where Jesus would have frequented often. Herod's Temple was one of the larger construction projects of the 1st century BCE. Josephus records that Herod was so interested in perpetuating his name through building projects, that his construction programs were extensive and paid for by heavy taxes, but that his masterpiece was the Temple of Jerusalem. As described by scholars, Herod's Temple was twice the size of the one built by King Solomon. (Called the First Temple)



Plan of Solomon's Temple with measurements

Plan of Solomon's Temple, published 1905

Since the Temple held such an important place in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people, it is also critical to picture the emotions these thousands of tourists felt when climbing the hill up to the city of Jerusalem and fixing their eyes on its glorious beauty.



By Водник at ru.wikipedia, CC BY-SA 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7560698>

Robinson's Arch (*photograph above*) in the Second Temple Period will allow you to view the drama of approaching Jerusalem through the eyes of those gathering from great distances around for Passover. Given the fact that all men were required to attend Passover at this time of the year, are you imagining the variety of emotions they felt as they approached the Temple? Even those that had attended previous Passover Celebrations still must have felt a surge of pride when climbing these steps.

Then, upon reaching their destination, the climax of their journey had to be when they entered the sacred Temple of God; a place that held such high distinction and was the center of their teachings as Jewish people. View the re-creation of Herod's Temple below and note the extravagance of the design and the ornate building materials used.

Description Second Temple.jpg wikipedia



Before going inside Herod's Temple, it is important to establish what was expected of those attending Passover; requirements of the Law that created hardship on the already oppressed to the point of finding daily existence to be all but impossible. Since it was a stipulation that all males be in

attendance, as soon as the great Temple doors swung open, the attendees literally flooded the forecourt called the Court of the Gentiles. In the book, "In the Footsteps of Jesus" by Jean-Pierre Isbouts, it was indicated that those entering the Court of the Gentiles passed the *soreg*, the boundary beyond which no Gentile was allowed to enter, and immediately climbed a multitude of 15 unevenly raised stairs in order to gain entrance into the Court of Women. (The uneven stairs were purposely constructed to promote those entering to ascend slowly and with great reverence) All around the Court of the Women (Jewish women could not go beyond this court) stood 13 horn-shaped depositories (*shoparoth*) earmarked; each for a specified purpose. When you view the particular uses of these containers, it will soon be obvious why Passover for most of the people, in spite of being devout Jews, became a hardship and makes one wonder if some of the beauty of the Temple was diminished in their eyes.

Depositories:

(Two were set aside for the half-shekel Temple Tax required to be paid by everyone)

(The remaining chests were for collecting donations of wood and incense to be burned in the Temple, for pigeon offerings, or for voluntary gifts.)

In order to understand how Jesus felt about this forced giving, it is important to read **Luke 21: 1-4** that states, "1As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3"Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (NIV)

(Painting by James Tissot called, "Watching Holy Week Unfold")



At this point, are you grasping the other side of the story; a graphic visual image of the suffering endured both then and now by the downtrodden in society? As our Lord sat and watched this time of giving, the difference between the lavish gifts presented by the rich and those of the poor broke his heart.

Ladies and gentlemen, given the fact the pious Jewish community members throughout the Roman Empire made contributions in this manner, the Temple Treasury was so enormous that it was described as a type of central bank. Additionally, since the high priest dispensed the surplus as he saw fit, are you able to surmise the fact that the downtrodden were never even a passing thought in the process?

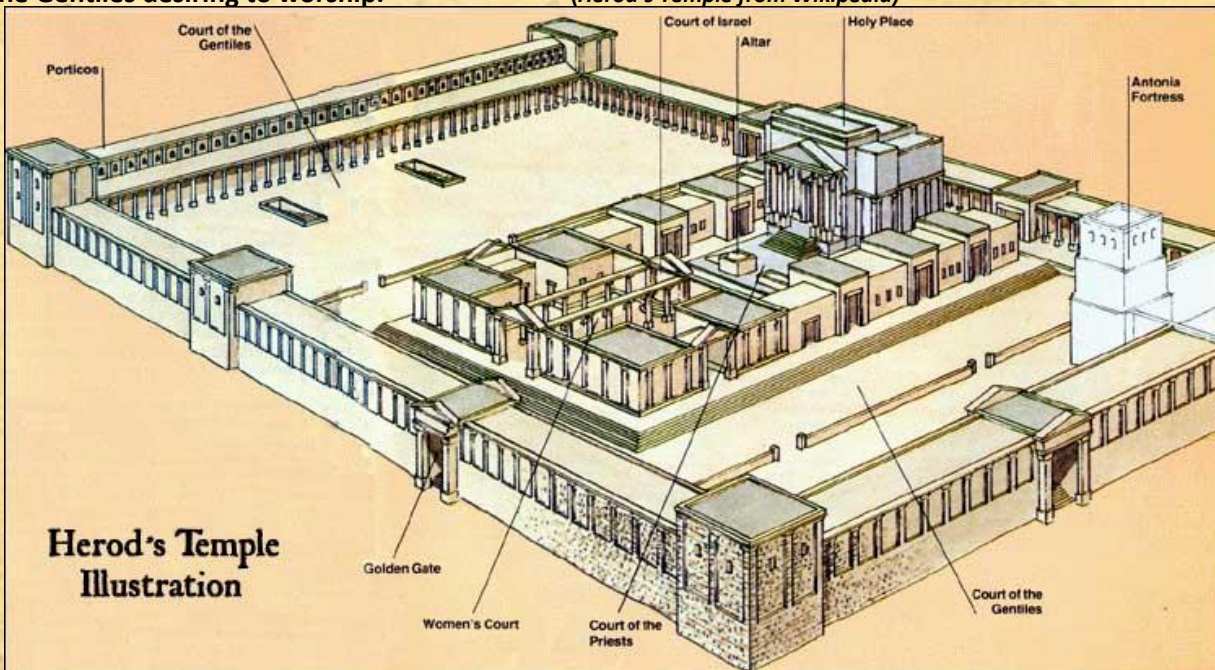
Furthermore, to add insult to injury, the Temple even had only one type of currency permitted; a coin they designed for just this purpose. Thus, people had to go to a moneychanger located on premises in order to obtain the proper form of tithe.



(A coin issued by the Jewish rebels in 68 CE. Obverse: "Shekel, Israel. Year 3". Reverse: "Jerusalem the Holy", in the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet Wikipedia)

Moneychangers and merchants that had booths set up in the Temple Court of the Gentiles did big business on Passover due to so many Jewish people attending from foreign countries. Taking advantage of the situation, they were known to gouge those being in this predicament. At the same time, since those attending were required to offer a perfect sacrifice, the stalls and cages that cluttered the same area were being sold to people at exorbitant prices; making the merchants wealthy beyond belief. Extortion had become accepted and expected by the rulers of that day. Not only were they capitalizing on the poor who were already in dire straits, but taking up the space for the Gentiles desiring to worship.

(Herod's Temple from Wikipedia)



**Herod's Temple
Illustration**

Consequently, are you able to picture the eyes of Jesus that were fuming with righteous indignation upon entering the Temple scene on this particular day? When our Lord witnesses his creation being persecuted and prevented from coming to him, truly there are no words that can be chosen to describe his feelings; a warning to everyone even today!

At this point, we will let Scripture from **Mark 11: 15-19** from the Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the subheading, Jesus Cleanses The Temple, tell the rest of the story: **“¹⁵ Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶ and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written,**

**‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?
But you have made it a den of robbers.”**

¹⁸ And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples^[a] went out of the city.”

John 2: 15 (NIV) gets even more graphic with this event by stating: “So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.”

Did it surprise you when Jesus stepped right into the middle of all the activity that was occurring in the Temple even though the practice was condoned by the religious leaders as acceptable in God’s house? Certainly, our Lord’s reaction should not have been a surprise to those that frequented the Temple because of making his past objection to this practice well known. Was his level of anger a shock because of your preconceived notion of having been told by him to turn the other cheek? Perhaps at this point, we should focus on the fact that he had repeatedly told them with words how reverent God’s creation should be toward the Father. Then when words had obviously failed, he turned it into one powerful demonstration, didn’t he? It is thought by many that his reaction was proportionate to the results he desired.

At this point, given the Temple scene as described above, how do you think Jesus felt about the actions of the two people below that occurred much later in history?

1) In 1906, Sinclair a writer acquired particular fame for his classic muckraking novel, *The Jungle*, which exposed conditions in the U.S. meat packing industry, causing a public uproar that contributed in part to the passage a few months later of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.^[1]

2) Bonhoeffer was known for his staunch resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, including vocal opposition to Hitler's euthanasia program and genocidal persecution of the Jews.^[2] He was arrested in April 1943 by the Gestapo and imprisoned at Tegel prison for one and a half years. Later he was transferred to a Nazi concentration camp. After being associated with the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, he was quickly tried, along with other accused plotters, including former members of the Abwehr (the German Military Intelligence Office), and then executed by hanging on 9 April 1945 as the Nazi regime was collapsing.
Wikipedia



Christ driving the Traders from the Temple by Spanish Artist El Greco (1541-1614)

As this scene ends, it is important to point out that anger did not establish itself as a permanent guest in the heart of Jesus. He had reacted appropriately and then regained control; demonstrating for everyone how the emotion of anger should be handled. Otherwise, allowing it take up a dominant position in his heart would have rooted out the real purpose for which he was sent to earth; a lesson for all mankind.

Therefore, as Jesus continued what was to be his final week on earth, he did not lose sight of his goal; that of concluding his three year ministry according to his Father's plan. Although there is much debate as to when the remaining events occurred, there is total agreement that they, indeed, took place. Given the positive responses of the masses, the religious leaders relentlessly hounded him, peppering him with trick questions at every turn. Surprisingly, the three religious groups, consisting of the Herodians known for following Herod, the Pharisees considered to be strong Jewish patriots, and the priestly aristocratic Sadducees actually joined hands as a united body in an effort to discredit the

Lord in the face of the crowd by entrapping him.. Jesus spent an inordinate amount of time patiently answering them while possessing full knowledge of their true motives. Even though he fully recognized and dreaded the horrible death on the cross that shortly awaited him, he still had the gumption, patience, and courage to heal people of infirmities and quietly teach his disciples. **2 Timothy 4: 6-8** that clearly teaches all of us about following in Christ's steps while on earth that reads, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; **8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing," was being modeled for us by our Jewish Messiah on, this, his final week. Since death by crucifixion was no stranger to our Lord, even though he was fully aware of his fate, through his behavior, he was making these last moments his finest week ever. What courage and strength the people must have witnessed as they looked into the eyes of Jesus during these precious moments remaining of his earthly life. Are you picturing the eyes of our sweet Savior at this moment?

As we bring the events covered in this portion of Jesus' last week on earth to a close, you will now need to turn the page and gather with him in the upper room for his last supper with the disciples; a time that was so powerful and magnificent that it deserves a chapter of its own. Come! Let us join hands and hearts while taking communion with our Lord!

TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION

During our time of contemplation, we will use a parable from **Luke 20:9-19** Jesus told during his final week on earth with the goal of not only interpreting it, but also applying to ourselves as Christians.



Luke 20:9-19 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

⁹ And he began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant^[a] to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹ And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. ¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ ¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ ¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶ He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” ¹⁷ But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written:” “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?”^[b] ¹⁸ Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

Lesson: 1) the landowner—God, 2) the vineyard—Israel, 3) the tenants/farmers—the Jewish religious leadership, 4) the landowner’s servants—the prophets who remained obedient and preached God’s word to the people of Israel, 5) the son—Jesus, and 6) the other tenants—the Gentiles.

It is important to recall that Jesus was speaking to the Jewish religious leaders; not the entire Jewish people. (Remember, the first church was started by Jewish people.) It is also important to note that being given the vineyard as Gentiles does not free us from judgment. Jesus lets us know clearly that we are to bear fruit as his disciples. Thus, we are expected to strap on our sandals and follow the footsteps of our Lord; ministering to all and delivering the good news of the kingdom to everyone; thus being inclusive, not exclusive. All God’s children are equal in his eyes; the poor, rich, those poorly dressed, individuals of every race and walk of life. Woe to those that stand in the way of anyone desiring to come to the Lord. The faces of the congregation should be a patch work quilt of people gathering from all nations, worldwide! Go Ye!

SOURCES

“Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist by Brant Pitre

“In the Footsteps of Jesus” by Jean-Pierre Isbouts

“New International Version Bible”

“Saving Simon” by Jon Katz

Wikipedia



GROWING IN THE WORD



- 1) Suggested hymn before starting class: “VICTORY IN JESUS” by Brad Jent from www.devotionalembbers.com. (or hymn of your choice)
- 2) Review the section in this chapter where Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on the back of the donkey. Then pull out the groups of people Jesus made eye contact with that were along the sides of the street. Compare your own reactions to those described. Can you identify being in their position either spiritually or when dealing with contemporary issues? Go deeper by discussing ways in dealing with these types of individuals when you cross paths on common issues. What are the challenges? How might you cope as a Christian?
- 3) Given the fact that Jesus was both human and divine, how did this figure into his thoughts as he observed the mass of people in Jerusalem that day?
- 4) Review the section of this chapter when Jesus looked down over Jerusalem weeping bitter tears over not only being rejected as their Messiah, but also because of the destruction he knew would occur just a short time later. Read aloud that section and study the faces of his disciples. Placing yourself in their shoes with all that was unfolding, what were their thoughts? Did it help that they were actually there in person, or were they suffering from too much information overload? Considering the different personalities of the disciples as discussed in an earlier chapter, choose one and try to imagine his response. Which one would have been the first to speak?
- 5) Now go to the Temple with Jesus and study the painting by Tissot of Jesus observing the activity as the people paid the set tithe, what might he be thinking? Would he have been making comments to his disciples? When viewing the painting by Tissot, discuss the sights and sounds that would have been a part of the scene and make it come to life.
- 6) Jesus had tried at other times to teach that God’s Temple was to be a house of prayer, but discovered during his final week that he had spoken to deaf ears. Thus, anger surged through his entire being! Read this section and make that scene come to life with sights and sounds. Have you ever felt that kind of anger? How did you deal with it? Was the anger you felt because a child of God was being mistreated? Are there entire races of people that have been abused that caused righteous indignation to surface in your heart? Were you able to control it in a positive manner? Sometimes, we cannot solve an issue, but make only a contribution to the solution. Discuss.
- 7) Throughout this chapter, you have been asked questions. Were there questions that stood out in your mind that you wish to discuss?
- 8) Pause for a moment and evaluate your church as God’s Vineyard. Are you producing fruit and wearing the sandals of Jesus? Are you welcoming everyone and making sure all who worship are being treated with equal importance? (Perhaps a chart could be used listing the headings as STRENGTHS AND NEEDS. Remember: The Lord is evaluating us, just as he did the Jewish leaders.
- 9) Then, be really brave by asking yourself the same questions. This will be a private time unless you desire to share with the group.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord,

As we walked beside you on, this your last week, our emotions have felt like they were on a roller coaster. Although we fully realize you have arisen and are sitting on the right hand of the Father Almighty, it is still painful for us to relive this time and keep our thoughts together. Many times our emotions get so out of control that we lose perspective. We take the situation so personally that it becomes all about us, causing pride to rear its ugly head. Help us to never lose sight of the fact that we are here at your pleasure and for your purpose. When “SELF” threatens our walk with you, remind us of the important things in life. Help us focus on the fact that our journey on earth is but a moment in time; just a blink of the eye, and what really counts is that we remain your disciples and follow in your footsteps.

All these things we pray in your precious name. Amen!

