

Chapter 21: Woe, Unto You, Hypocrites

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- Matthew 21-23
(Parallel accounts: Mark 11-12; Luke 11:37-54; 13:34-35; 19:28-48; 20; 21:1-4; John 12:12-18.)
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1. Jesus' Final Mortal Week

The last week of Jesus' life is of great importance as we continue to enhance our understanding of His life and ministry. The purpose of Jesus' earth life will commence as He kneels in the Garden of Gethsemane, and takes upon Himself the sins of all mankind. It will culminate in His crucifixion, death and resurrection. Never before has one who has the power of life over death been willing to suffer and then voluntarily offer up their own sinless life for the sins committed by others. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, every individual who has ever lived, after death, will yet live again.

We will confine the focus of this chapter on the events that occurred and the messages Jesus taught during the first three days of His final week, Sunday, April 2, to Tuesday, April 4, A.D. 30. These three days will mark the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry, for after Tuesday, April 4, He will confine His remarks to the twelve.

2. Sunday, April 2, A.D. 30

2.1. Disciples Obtain a Colt

On Sunday morning, April 2nd, Jesus left Bethany where He had spent the night and travels with His disciples toward the city of Jerusalem, a distance of approximately two miles.

E. Keith Howick states,

“...the Lord dispatched two disciples (generally thought to have been Peter and John), to procure a colt for him to ride upon as he entered Jerusalem. They were instructed to go into the village ‘over against you’ (presumably Bethphage) to find the colt. If they are questioned by the colt's owner as to why they were taking [the animal], they were to say, ‘the Lord hath need of him’ (Luke 19:34), and all would be well. The two Apostles did as they were instructed and soon returned leading the unbroken colt by the bridle.”¹

2.2. Triumphal Entry in Fulfillment of Prophecy

The recent miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead was yet on the minds of many present who had gathered in Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover. Due to the opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus, there was some question if Jesus would attend the Passover Feast. Word was received that Jesus was entering the city riding on the colt of a donkey. This event had previously been prophesied centuries before by the Prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah 9:9

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

This familiar Messianic utterance was being fulfilled this very day.

JST, Matthew 21:6-7

6 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees and strewed in the way.

7 And the multitudes that went before, and also that followed after, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

E. Keith Howick states,

“[Jesus] entered the Holy City as the King of kings--not as Israel's political king but as the universal Prince of Peace... [their] salutation did not mean that all in the multitude knew that Jesus was the Messiah—their cries were partly based upon chants that the multitudes always recited on solemn festival days (Psalms 118:25-28). Further, this was the traditional greeting used by the resident of

Jerusalem to welcome festive pilgrims. But on this day the acclamations were accepted by Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy because they honored him as their King and their Messiah."²

The response of the Pharisees to Jesus' entry into the city was as expected.

Luke 19:39-40

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

While it is true that the multitude were made up of a mixture of onlookers, believers and critics, this was a special day for Jesus as He accepted their acclamations. Today, many honored Him as the Messiah in fulfillment of prophecy.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"It was as though Jesus had said: 'Many times I have told you in plain words and by necessary implication that I am the Messiah. My disciples also bear the same witness. Now I come unto you as the King of Israel in the very way that the prophet of old said I would; and your participation in this event is itself a witness that I am he should come to redeem my people.'"³

2.3. Jesus Wept for the City of Jerusalem

Luke 19:41

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.

In vision, Jesus foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the temple.

Luke 19:44

44...and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another...

In approximately forty years (A.D. 70), the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem would be slaughtered and their city destroyed!

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual states,

"...after a six months siege, the Roman arms led by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian...the city was utterly destroyed, and the site upon which the Temple had stood was plowed up by the Romans in their search for treasure. Thus, literally were the words of Christ fulfilled."⁴

2.4. Goes to the Temple and Blesses Disciples

Mark 11:11	JST, Mark 11:13
11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany, with the twelve.	13 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple. And when he had looked round about upon all things, <u>and blessed the disciples</u>, the eventide was come; and he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

We can only imagine the words of Jesus to His disciples, but He must have shared with them the prophecy foretold by the Prophet Zechariah regarding His entry into the city that day and its fulfillment. He may have shared yet other prophecies that had been made relating to His being the promised Messiah. Also, He may have given them warnings regarding the future of Jerusalem and its destruction by the Romans and how important it was that they be spiritually prepared for the persecution that would occur. He would have also promised those who were obedient that if they would heed the words of the Apostles that, even if they became a martyr to the cause, they would receive a crown in heaven. These instructions and promised blessings would be similar to the words we have received from His prophets today regarding the challenges that yet await the members of the Church in our day, as well as the blessings the Lord has reserved for the faithful.

3. Monday, April 3, A.D. 30

3.1. Curses Barren Fig Tree

Matthew 21:18-19

18 Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

James A. Talmage states,

“Looking ahead He saw a fig tree that differed from the rest of the many fig trees of the region in that it was in full leaf though the season of fruit had not yet come. It is well known that the fruit-buds of a fig tree appear earlier than do the leaves, and that by the time the tree is in full foliage the figs are well advanced toward maturity...It would be reasonable, therefore, for one to expect to find edible figs even in early April on a tree that was already covered with leaves.”⁵

As a teenager, I found this experience difficult to comprehend. How could Jesus, who is full of love and patience, take such drastic action as to curse a tree? As the years have passed, I have come to understand that by His action, He was also teaching me important lessons that had not been obvious at first examination as McConkie now elaborates.

Bruce R. McConkie offers us five possible reasons for the cursing of the fig tree,

1. "By exercising his power over nature, Jesus was testifying in language written in the earth itself that he was Lord of all;...
2. Though Jesus had come to bless and save, yet he had the power to smite, destroy, and curse...It is fitting that Jesus should leave a manifestation of his power to curse, and the fact that he chose, not a person, but a tree, is an evident act of mercy;
3. Withering and dying at Jesus' command, the fruitless fig tree stands as a type and a shadow of what shall befall hypocrites;
4. The leafy, fruitless tree was a symbol of Judaism, which loudly proclaimed itself as the only true religion of the age, [yet it]...had degenerated into an artificial religionism, which in pretentious show and empty profession outclassed the abominations of heathendom; and lastly,
5. The most obvious lessons to be drawn from this unusual display of divine power are that by faith all things are possible, and that faith is a principle of power which operates in the temporal as well as the spiritual realm."⁶

3.2. Cleanses the Temple for the Second Time

For the second time in His earthly ministry, Jesus cleanses the Temple.

Matthew 21:12

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seat of them that sold doves.

As polluted as Herod's Temple had become, Jesus continued to recognize it as the Jewish center of worship, A house built unto His Father. The apostate Jewish leaders, who should have acted to keep the temple free from commerce and dishonest dealings, were often the benefactors of the pollution that was occurring.

Matthew 21:13

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Congruent with His testimony of His oneness with God the Father, Jesus refers to the temple as "My house."

James E. Talmage adds,

"On the former occasion, before He had declared or even confessed His Messiahship, He had designated the temple as 'My Father's house'; now that He had openly avowed Himself to be the Christ, He called it 'My house.'"⁷

Matthew 21:14

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

Jesus continues to be about His Father's work of teaching and healing both the spiritually and physically ill who come to Him in faith.

James E. Talmage continues,

“His wrath of indignation was followed by the calmness of gentle ministry; there in the cleared courts of His house, blind, and lame folk came limping and groping about Him, and He healed them. The anger of the chief priests and scribes was raging against Him; but it was impotent. They had decreed His death, and had made repeated efforts to take Him, and there He sat within the very area over which they claimed supreme jurisdiction, and they were afraid to touch Him because of the common people, whom they professed to despise yet heartily feared...”⁸

Jesus again returns to Bethany to avoid the plots of those who thirsted for His blood. During the night, the religious leaders will consult amongst themselves as to how they might ensnare Jesus and challenge His authority to act, including His cleansing of the Temple. (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. 587). They will be ready if He comes to the Temple on the morrow.

4. Tuesday, April 4, A.D. 30

4.1. Jesus' Authority Challenged by the Jewish Leaders

Jesus will return the next day to the Temple, where He will continue to teach and heal the people of faith. He is confronted by the religious leaders.

Matthew 21:23

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

F.W. Farrar states,

“They demand of Him His warrant for thus publicly assuming the functions of Rabbi and Prophet, for riding into Jerusalem amid the hosannas of attending crowds, for purging the Temple of the traffickers, at whose present they connived.”⁹

On numerous occasions over the past three years, Jesus has answered their questions and had testified to them, in both word and deed, His authority come from His Father...The God in Heaven whose Son He is. They did not accept His response then. There is no reason to believe they would accept His witness anew. Jesus responds to them.

Matthew 21:24-27

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Jesus’ response to them was, if John was a prophet, Why did you not believe him...If John was a prophet, I am the Messiah, for he testified of me.”¹⁰

4.2 Three Parables Given to the Jewish Religious Leaders

On this His final day, Jesus now teaches the Jewish leaders three parables. These parables are identified as (1) The Parable of the Two Sons; (2) The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen; and (3) The Parable of the Marriage of the King's son or sometimes called the Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast.

4.2.1. The Parable of the Two Sons

Matthew 21:28-31

28 A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first...

In the parable, the son who initially refused to obey his father, but then repented was identified by the leaders as the son who did the will of the father. Jesus now offers them the meaning of the parable.

Matthew 21:31-32

31 ...Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Those whom the religious leaders despised and identified as “sinners” ...the publicans (tax-collectors) and harlots (lower class people) were going to go into the kingdom of God before them.

When John taught the principles of the gospel including faith, repentance, and baptism, they embraced his words. Whereas those who were the religious leaders of Israel, had ignored his message and instead had done nothing to prevent the vineyard (Covenants God had made with Israel) from deteriorating into a fruitless wilderness.

4.2.2. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

Matthew 21:33-41

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:
34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruit of it.
35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.
36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.
37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.
38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said, among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.
39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.
40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?
41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"God himself is the householder; his vineyard is the earth and its inhabitants; and the husbandmen appointed to work in the vineyard are the spiritual overseers of the people. Those who are stoned, beaten, persecuted, and killed are the prophets and seers sent to minister among men; and the Son and Heir, slain and cast out of the vineyard at the instigation of the wicked husbandmen, is of course Jesus."¹¹

Jesus having given the parable now asks them an important question.

Matthew 21:42-44

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?
43 Therefore say, I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.
44 And whosoever shall fall on the stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder.

Jesus, of course, is “the stone which the builders rejected.” For their having rejected His teachings and having put Him to death, the gospel will be taken from the Jews and given to another.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“For rejecting the Stone of Israel [Jesus], the Church and kingdom was to be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. Those Jews who rejected and slew the Heir were to be destroyed, as was also later to be the case with the Gentiles in the day of their apostasy and rejection of the ‘head of the corner.’ Finally, ‘in the last days,’ the vineyard was to be let out to other husbandmen preparatory to the return of the Lord to ‘reign in the vineyard.’”¹²

The chief cornerstone (Jesus Christ) will be rejected by the builders (the Jewish leaders). However, according to Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, clarifies that the Church of Jesus Christ is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (Eph.2:20)

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual adds further insight,

We read, ‘the cornerstone anciently was the massive stone laid at the corner to bind fast the two separate walls into one massive whole. In Christ, both Jew and gentile are bound together inseparable, not to form two separate walls, but to create one unified people forming a temple of the Lord.

Jacob used a similar figure in the Book of Mormon when he prophesied that the Jews in Jesus’s day would reject ‘the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation.’ “...the one sure foundation upon which the Jews can build.” (B/M, Jacob 4:15,16; see also Helaman 5:10-12).¹³

Matthew 21:45-46

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

It is important to understand that despite Jesus teaching them in parables, they were sufficiently knowledgeable of the scriptures and His teachings that they understood the meaning of His message. Nevertheless, they continued in their effort to put Him to death. In this endeavor, not only were they not innocent, but instead were fully cognizant of the effect of their action. They could have chosen either light or darkness, and they chose darkness.

4.2.3. The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son or the Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

- 1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,**
- 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.**
- 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.**
- 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.**
- 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:**
- 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.**
- 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he set forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.**
- 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.**
- 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.**
- 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.**
- 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:**
- 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.**
- 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**
- 14 For many are called, but few are chosen.**

While this parable is similar to the parable of the Great Supper in both content and meaning, as previously discussed in Chapter 18, it is important to understand that the specific audience is the religious leaders of the Jews. Aspects of the parable, including its content, meaning and implications, are now designed specifically for them.

James E. Talmage states,

"The king in the parable is God; the son whose marriage was the occasion of the feast is Jesus the Son of God; the guests who were bidden early, yet who refused to come when the feast was ready, are the covenant people who rejected their Lord, the Christ; the later guests, who were brought in from the streets and the roads, are the Gentile nations, to whom the gospel has been carried since its rejection by the Jews; the marriage feast is symbolical of the glorious consummation of the Messiah's mission."¹⁴

It is important to note that the servants who were killed surely has reference to the prophets who had been sent to call Israel to repentance, but their message was ignored or they were put to death.

Bruce R. McConkie offers further insight,

"The [one who] had not on a wedding garment [symbolizes those who] had accepted the invitation (the gospel; joined with the true worshippers (come into the true Church); but had not put on the robes of righteousness (that is, had not worked out [their] salvation after baptism)."¹⁵

This may also refer to Israel who were once numbered upon the Lord's covenant people, but through her disobedience and unrighteousness lost the blessings they once had. Many in Israel continue to believe they are yet among the righteous, despite their departure from the covenants and continued disobedience.

4.3. Render Unto God and Caesar

Bruce R. McConkie prefaces the confrontation between Jesus and the combination of Pharisees and the Herodians,

"If ever a plot was conceived in hell, born in hate, and acted out with satanic cunning, it was the jointly concocted stratagem of the Pharisees and Herodians on the matter of paying tribute to Caesar."¹⁶

James E. Talmages adds,

"...the Herodians, [were] a political faction whose chief characteristic was the purpose of maintaining in power the family of the Herods, which policy of necessity entailed upholding the Roman power, upon which the Herods depended for their delegated authority...Pharisees and Herodians [now] joined forces against Him; the one [Pharisees] watchful for the smallest technical infringement of the Mosaic law; [the Herodians] alert to seize upon the slightest excuse for charging Him with disloyalty to the secular powers. Their plans were conceived in treachery, and put into operation as the living embodiment of a lie."¹⁷

Matthew 22:15-22

- 15 ...the Pharisees...took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.**
16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.
17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?
18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?
19 Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.
20 And he saith unto them, Whose is the image and superscription?
21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.
22 When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

The plan of the Pharisees and the Herodians was to gain sufficient evidence that they could have Jesus arrested. If He states it is lawful to give tribute to Caesar, the tide of public opinion will be

against Him as they will classify Him as one who favors Rome and the continued domination of their nation. If He states it was unlawful to give tribute to Rome, He could then be arrested for inciting action against the state. As McConkie notes, this is a plan designed in the regions of hell. His divine reply acknowledges that while we are subject to the governments where we live, we also remain subjects of Our Father in Heaven whom we should also honor and obey.

James E. Talmage states,

“Every human soul is stamped with the image and superscription of God, however blurred and indistinct the lines may have become through the corrosion or attrition of sin; and as unto Caesar should be rendered the coins upon which his effigy appeared, so unto God should be given the souls that bear his image. Render unto the world the stamped pieces that are made legally current by the insignia of worldly powers, and give unto God and his service, yourselves--the divine mintage of his eternal realm.”¹⁸

4.4. The Law of Eternal Marriage

After having satisfactorily answered the provocative question of the Pharisees and Herodians, certain of the Sadducees approach Him. Their question infers that like the other Jewish leaders before them, they come seeking no insight or truth.

Bruce R. McConkie states the goal of the Sadducees,

“...is to goad, provoke, and belittle the Son of God, all with the hope that he will be rejected by the common people and condemned to death by the Roman Procurator.”¹⁹

Their question involves the marriage relationship after death. Contrary to others, the Sadducees do not believe in life after death or the resurrection and, therefore, their question is in direct opposition to their own belief. For the Pharisees and others who generally believe in the resurrection, this question has already been debated by the Rabbinical schools and a prevailing view accepted. Nevertheless, the question is offered to Jesus by the Sadducees as if they were sincere in their search for truth.

Matthew 22:23-28

- 23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,**
24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.
25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:
26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.
27 And last of all the woman died also.
28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"They are using this commonly accepted concept to ridicule and belittle the fact of the resurrection itself. They are saying: 'How absurd to believe in a resurrection (and therefore in the fact that there is marriage in heaven) when everybody knows that a woman who has had seven husbands could not have them all at once in the life to come.'"²⁰

Matthew 22:29-30

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"From our vantage point, we say she would be the wife of the one to whom she was married for time and all eternity. Any other marriage, being only until death parted, ... would end when the mortal life of one or the other of them ceased... [Eternal marriage is] only for those who believe the gospel; only those who hold the Holy Priesthood; only those who believe in Christ and keep his commandments... There neither is nor can be a continuation of the family unit in eternity for any others."²¹

Matthew 22:31-32

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

The following verses from the gospel of Mark, contrasted with the insight provided by the Joseph Smith Translation, serve to expand our understanding of the words that Jesus spoke to the Sadducees.

Mark 12:26-27	JST, Mark 12:30-32
<p>26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.</p> <p>27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.</p>	<p>30 And as touching the dead, that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush, God spake unto him, saying,</p> <p>31 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?</p> <p>32 He is not therefore the God of the dead, but the God of the living; <u>for he raiseth them up out of their graves.</u> Ye therefore do greatly err.</p>

James E. Talmage states,

“This was a direct assault upon the Sadducean doctrine of negation concerning the literal resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were distinctively the zealous upholders of the law, wherein Jehovah affirms Himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; yet they denied the possible resurrection of the Patriarchs, and made the exalted title, under which the Lord had revealed Himself to Moses, valid only during the brief mortal existence of the progenitors of the Israelitish nation. The declaration that Jehovah is not the God of the dead, but of the living was an unanswerable denunciation of the Sadducean perversion of scripture; and with solemn finality the Lord added: ‘Ye therefore do greatly err.’”²²

4.5. The Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:35

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"... [one of the scribes] ...designated as a lawyer, one who was an expert on their law, and who was held out as an expounder of the law and a teacher of the people--one held in high esteem among them--[inquires of Jesus]." ²³

Matthew 22:36

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“His question (Matt. 22:36), "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? [or Mark 12:28: the first commandment of all?] In the Mosaic Code, there were 248 affirmative precepts...and 365 negative precepts...the total number of commandments being 613...But which? and what was the greatest commandment of all?"²⁴

Like each of the questions that had preceded, this question was designed to create alienation and antagonism among the people. The result would be a public disturbance. Jesus would then be arrested. Rome had no patience for one who disturbed the peace. An uprising among the people, especially during the Passover when so many were present, would quickly and forcefully be put down.

Matthew 22:37-40

37 Jesus said unto him [and to all present], Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

We turn to the gospel of Mark to find the scribes response.

Mark 12:32-34

**32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:
33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any questions.**

With the additional insight provided by Mark's gospel, we can only hope, after having his heart pricked by the spirit, he sought further direction from amongst Jesus' disciples. As he learned of the further truths leading to eternal life, the initial spark would continue to grow within him.

4.6. Jesus asks, "What Think Ye of Christ?"

Matthew 22:41-46

**41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They said unto him, The Son of David.
43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord saying,
44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?
46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"[Jesus references] David's Messianic utterance [Psalm 101] [that] speaks of one Lord saying to another—of one God saying to another, of Elohim saying to Jehovah, of the Eternal Father saying to his beloved Son—sit on my right hand... 'How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?' he asked. If 'David...himself calleth him Lord,' he continued, 'whence is he that his son?' How could he be David's son—as he was—if David also called him Lord? 'How then could the Messiah be David's son? ... There could be but one answer—because that Son would be divine, not human—David's son by human birth [Genealogy], but David's Lord by divine substance...they could not find this simple explanation...because Jesus was their Messiah, and they had rejected Him. They chose to ignore the fact that He was, in the flesh, the son of David: ... [and by divine substance] ... their Messiah."²⁵

The answer to Jesus' question is in truth, "Jesus Christ is the Messiah." That is His witness to those gathered that day and to each of us. His main purpose in coming to earth is that through His death and

resurrection, He will overcome physical death and bring about the resurrection all mankind. He will also overcome the penalty of spiritual death and open the door for individual exaltation.

4.7. The Great Denunciation

Joseph Fielding McConkie summarizes the eight woes Jesus uttered, who "say and do not." (Matthew 23:3),

“1. Those who ‘shut up the kingdom of heaven.’ (Matthew 23:13). They do not qualify themselves and yet hinder any that would desire to do so. Such are those who rejected Jesus as the Christ and the plan of salvation...

“2. Those who hide their greed and meanness under the cloak of piety. Such, he said, ‘devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer;’ (Matthew 23:14).

“3. He denounced missionaries of false faiths who travel over ‘land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he is made, [they] make him twofold more the child of hell than [themselves].’ (Matthew 23:15). There is no salvation in false religion, notwithstanding the enthusiasm of its converts.

“4. He directed condemnation at those who perfect the art of breaking their bond while appearing sanctimonious. The word or oath of such is nothing more than bait in game of trickery. They are indeed morally blind. (see Matthew 23:16-22).

“5. He denounced the ‘blind guides’ (see Matthew 23:23-24), who subverted eternal truths in their excessive zeal for trifles. Exactness in the performance of outward ordinances supplanted for them even an interest in the inward or spiritual meanings intended behind their ritual. They jealously tended to the rituals that testified and taught of Christ at the same time they rejected and killed him. (Matt. 23:23-24) Their modern counterparts can be found praising the Bible while rejecting the spirit of revelation from which it sprang, and using it as the justification to reject the testimony of the living prophets.

“6 & 7. In each of these woes, Christ denounced that which is ceremonially clean, while being filthy within. He aptly used the figures [a cup and platter and] of whitened sepulchers filled with decaying bodies to make his point. (see Matthew 23:25-29).

James E. Talmage states,

"It was an awful figure, that of likening them to whitewashed tombs, full of dead bones and rotting flesh...But even as no amount of care or degree of diligence in keeping bright the outside of a tomb could stay the putrescence going on within, so no externals of pretended righteousness could mitigate the revolting corruption of a heart reeking with iniquity."²⁶

“8. The final woe, ...is the crown to all the others, in that they reject the living prophets while they "garnish the sepulchers of the righteous." (See Matthew 23:29). Indeed, to reject the prophets of any age is to reject those of all ages, for all teach the same truths and bear the same witness."²⁷

In each of these denunciations, Jesus is warning the religious leaders of His day, as well as ours. Those who pervert His gospel and substitute for truth the philosophy of man mingled with scripture, will suffer severe judgment. (See Matthew 23:33). In this regard they may be likened unto the blind who lead the blind and both shall fall into the ditch. (See Matthew 15:14).

4.8. Widow's Mite

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“We pass now from the thunderous woes that consigned the scribes and Pharisees to hell, and from tears of sorrow that wet divine cheeks as Jesus withdrew his approval from the temple and the city, and turn...to a sweet and hallowed scene...He seats himself "over against the treasury," apparently upon the steps that gave him a view of the Court of Women... [Here] are thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes into which various religious and charitable contributions may be placed.”²⁸

As Jesus watches and observes He sees those who come by and give their contributions. There are the rich and affluent as well as the poor. Some come desiring to be seen and noticed and go to great lengths to let others know of their contributions. Others come and go quietly, not wanting to be noticed or seen. Their contribution is a private matter, between only God and themselves.

The particulars of this incident are addressed in Chapter 8, under the topic heading of “Two extremes: The Rich Young Man and the Poor Widow.” It will therefore not be repeated. It is recorded in both the gospel of Mark (12:41-44) and Luke (21:1-4).

The Joseph Smith Translation of Mark 12:44 offers us yet further insight regarding the widow’s sacrifice.

Mark 12:43-44	JST, Mark 12:49-50
<p>43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.</p>	<p>49 And Jesus called his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they who have cast into the treasury. 50 For all the rich did cast in of their abundance; but she, <u>notwithstanding her want</u>, did cast in all that she had; yea, even all her living.</p>

Unlike others who had cast into the temple treasury that day their excess, this poor widow “notwithstanding her want, did cast in all that she had.” (JST, Mark 12:50). It is an act of generosity when we are willing to share our abundance with others, but this woman gave all that she monetarily had. While the amount others gave was greater, this woman by sacrificing her all for the Lord gave more than anyone else!

Some of us are also willing to give, but there is a difference between our giving and truly sacrificing. When we share with others, for example, the items in our closet that we no longer wear or because they do not fit, we are giving; when we take off the shirt or coat, we are wearing, because someone else is in need, then we are sacrificing. When we give in order to gain the praises of others, we have our reward. When we give anonymously then we become even more like the poor widow with her two mites.

5. Conclusions

We have just reviewed some of the events that occurred during the first three days of the last week of Jesus mortal ministry. Each day Jesus spent in teaching and testifying to those who would listen to His message. He had testified anew that He is the Son of God, the Prince of Peace; mourned for His beloved Jerusalem; taught in parables the consequences that would occur if the religious leaders did not repent; He spoke directly to the hypocrites whose actions were in opposition to the intent of their hearts; and He taught His disciples that two mites can be greater than a bag of gold if it is all the giver has. These three days mark the close of His public ministry.

His remaining days would now be spent preparing His disciples and chosen apostles to carry forth the work He had established. Eventually, the gospel message must be taken to the Gentiles. In a few short days, He would voluntarily give up His life and they must be prepared. Time was quickly passing and He still had so much to teach them.

What about our days? How do we spend our time? Are we actively engaged in furthering the work of the Lord? Or do we waste our time in activities with little benefit to ourselves or others? We too have our work to do and soon the time will pass and we will be called home. Will we be prepared to give an accounting of our time on earth? It is not yet too late to make changes and to give our full attention to the things that matter most in an eternal perspective.

Footnotes

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- ¹ *The Mission of Jesus the Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990, 87.
- ² *The Mission of Jesus the Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990, 86, 88.
- ³ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 577-578.
- ⁴ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition Revised, 1979], 141.
- ⁵ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 524.
- ⁶ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 582-583. Format altered for emphasis.
- ⁷ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 528.
- ⁸ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 528-529.
- ⁹ *The Life of Christ*. London, England: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1874; published Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994, 514.
- ¹⁰ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 588.
- ¹¹ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 588.
- ¹² *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 594.
- ¹³ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition Revised, 1979], 351.
- ¹⁴ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 537-538.
- ¹⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 598.
- ¹⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 369-370.
- ¹⁷ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 544.
- ¹⁸ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 546-547.
- ¹⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 374.
- ²⁰ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 605.
- ²¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 376-377.
- ²² *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 549.
- ²³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 382.
- ²⁴ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 382-383.
- ²⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 386-387.
- ²⁶ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Printing, 1961], 558.
- ²⁷ "Triumphal Entry and a Day of Debate" in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 5. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986, 387-388. added numbers 1-8.
- ²⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980, 409-410.