

Matthew, chapters 20-23 A Brief Timeline of Jesus' Final Week

PROGRAM NOTE: if you are keeping up with our chapter-by-chapter summary of Matthew by the Lesson Notes numbers sequence, there are a few chapters missing between Lesson 12 [L12] and this Lesson 13 [L13]...due to some events that transpired in my life that prevented me from having the time to compose the Lesson Notes. I delivered the lessons, but without the printed notes...

Our Sunday School lesson text this morning is Matthew 23. As we follow Matthew's text narrative, we are also trying to keep ourselves connected with the rapidly-escalating events that have transpired, especially from the beginning of this historic, momentous week. So, what I want to do here is give just a brief itinerary of the major events that have transpired from the first day of this final week of Jesus' life and Kingdom ministry ... catching us up to chapter 23. [NOTE: we still have chapters 23-24, the Olivet Discourse [next lesson], to go on the very busy Tuesday agenda...]

I make no attempt here to be thorough—including every detail. All I want to do is provide a sketchy timeline of the progression of the events as they happened ... since all the events are connected by the thread of common themes; and all the events either precipitated or were precipitated by other events. ALSO, these notes were hurriedly composed and written out, so please excuse and correct any minor mistakes I have surely made in the writing of them.

A WEEK OR SO ... BEFORE 'PALM SUNDAY'

1 / Jesus begins the final 'leg' of His 'death visit' to Jerusalem

- ***Matthew 20.29: And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.***
- Jericho is approximately 15 miles NE from Jerusalem—but located in a rift valley—all uphill
- Probably 6-6 ½ hours walking trip
- By now, they are joined by 'a great crowd' of fellow travelers—festal caravan en-route to the Passover festivities

2 / Jesus arrives for the Passover Feast, but doesn't go immediately to Jerusalem. Instead, He 'checks in' with His friends in Bethany—Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

- ***John 11.55—12.1, 9-11: ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. ... ch. 12 ¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead... ⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.***

SUNDAY [PALM SUNDAY (from John 12.13)]

1 / Jesus and their fellow travelers approach Jerusalem...from the north via Mount of Olives...to the outskirts of the village of Bethphage

- ***Matthew 21.1-9: Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me..."***
- Bethphage is approximately 1½ miles NE from Jerusalem

- Jesus directs His disciples to go into the village and fetch Him the donkey and colt—to fulfill **Zechariah 9.9**
- **Matthew 21.8: Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road...** [these are the fellow travelers who have joined them along the way]
- This is how this pilgrim caravan begins their approach to the gates of Jerusalem...

2 / *Hit pause* -- We must read **Luke 19.41-44:**

- **And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,** ⁴² **saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”**
- Before He even enters the city—He foresees their impending and soon-coming doom to destruction because of their rejection of Him...

3 / Jesus and His disciples—along with the accompanying pilgrim caravan of fellow worshipers—enter Jerusalem in procession formation...with shouts of **“Hosanna to the Son of David...”**

- **Matthew 21.9-11: And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”**
- ¹⁰ **And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”**

4 / Matthew doesn't include this detail of the timeline—but Mark does: Jesus enters the temple this first time—on Sunday evening—only to ‘look around’ at all the worship-less activities that were going on in His Father’s House of Prayer. His grief, sorrow, and even anger...all were stirred up by what He saw...

- **Mark 11.11: And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.**
- Bethany is two miles from Jerusalem [John 11.18]. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived in Bethany—it was Jesus’ ‘bed and breakfast / home away from home’ when He in Jerusalem

MONDAY

1 / Having come to Jerusalem the day before—then the ‘triumphal procession into Jerusalem’—then stayed overnight in Bethany ... Jesus and His disciples walk back to Jerusalem...

- **Mark 11.11-12: ¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. ¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry.**

2 / **Mark 11.12-14** ... Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree—a ‘picture prophecy’ of His rejection of Israel as the covenant bearer [*see Matthew 21.43*].

3 / **Matthew 21.12-16** ...Then Jesus enters the temple again and cleanses it from all the corrupt abuses that were being practiced there

4 / After ‘cleansing the temple,’ Jesus continues to teach the crowds who were gathering to see and hear Him—much to the chagrin and burning, murderous hatred of the ‘authorities’ and rulers of the religious caste.

- **Luke 19.47-48: ⁴⁷ And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, ⁴⁸ but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.**
- **Mark 11.18: And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.**

5 / After another busy and stressful day, Jesus retires again to Bethany to rest for the night

- **Matthew 21.17:** *And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.*
- **Mark 11.19:** *And when evening came, they went out of the city.*
- **Luke 21.37:** *And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet.*

TUESDAY

1 / As they are coming into Jerusalem on Tuesday morning, they passed by the fig tree Jesus had cursed yesterday morning ... the disciples are amazed that it has withered...

- **Mark 11.20-21:** *As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ And Peter remembered and said to him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.”*
- **Matthew 21.19-20** – note that Matthew ‘compresses’ both yesterday’s cursing of the fig tree and this morning’s discovery that it has withered. It fits the theme Matthew is presenting—the cursing of the nation and their city because of their covenant-breaking faithlessness and fruitlessness...

2 / Jesus continues teaching in the temple compound / courtyards to all who come to Him and gather around Him ... THIS sets up this hostile confrontation and challenge by the chief priests, scribes, and elders over the question of ‘authority’—remember: THEY thought of themselves as the ‘authority’ of the temple and what was taught there...

- **Matthew 21.23:** *And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?”*
- **Mark 11.27-28:** *And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?”*
- **Luke 20.1-2:** *One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up ² and said to him, “Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority.”*

3 / **Matthew 21.23-27** ... Jesus doesn’t give them a direct answer [He is not subject or accountable to them]; rather He gives them a question/riddle about John’s authority to baptize—did it come from God or from man? They cannot answer without ‘incriminating’ themselves...

4 / HOWEVER...in the succeeding teaching responses Jesus ‘schools them’ with, He does answer the question concerning His authority. But He answers indirectly [but very directly], and obliquely [glancingly—but they get it ... see *ch 21.45-46*].

5 / Jesus asserts His authority TO the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and elders ... BUT also in the hearing of anyone and everyone who has gathered around ‘to see what the fuss is all about.’

- **Matthew 21.28-31:** Parable of the two sons
- **Matthew 21.33-44:** Parable of the faithless, untrustworthy, murderous tenants
- **Matthew 22.1-14:** Parable of the King’s wedding feast [who will inherit and inhabit the Kingdom...]
- **Matthew 22.15-22:** *The Pharisees had ‘checked out’ for an ‘emergency planning session in cahoots with other sects who also were Jesus’ antagonists: “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle Him in His words...”* Question of whether to pay taxes to Caesar [*see v 15*—a continuing series of plots and ‘gotcha’ questions and situations—hoping to entrap Jesus into ‘incriminating’ Himself either with their ‘laws’ or with the Roman government]
- **Matthew 22.23-33:** Sadducees’ ridiculous hypothetical question re: the resurrection [which they didn’t believe in]
- **Matthew 22.34-40:** Pharisees again seek to entrap Jesus to prioritize among the laws

- **Matthew 22.41-46:** Jesus turns the tables on them—He asks them a question ... which, if they answer it correctly, it will establish unquestioningly His ‘authority’ [since the question of ‘authority’ is where this all started in *ch 21.23-27*].

6 / **We now come to Matthew 23—still on that same Tuesday.** Jesus turns from addressing the ‘religious authorities’ directly: **“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples...”** to warn them about the dangers of listening and falling under the influence of these ‘enemies of the Kingdom of Heaven’...

- **Matthew 23.1-12:** Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees of their hypocrisy, ‘calls them out’ publicly in the hearing of His disciples and the gathering crowds. Their religious leaders and ‘authorities’ claim to speak for God, interpreting the words of God ... but then do not practice them in their own conduct. **“For they preach, but do not practice ... They do all their deeds to be seen by others”** [*vv 3, 5*]. They insisted on everyone recognizing and calling them by names and titles that invested supreme and final authority in them: **‘rabbi’ ‘father’ ‘instructor’**
- **Matthew 23.13-31:** *Now Jesus turns and addresses these ‘religious authorities’ directly with a series of seven scathing indictments and judgments... [I am calling chapter 23 “Jesus’s Scathing Indictments and Judgments Against the Enemies of the Kingdom”]*
 - *v 13: But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...*
 - *v 15: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...*
 - *v 16: Woe to you, blind guides... [17] you blind fools!... [19] You blind men!...*
 - *v 23: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... [24] You blind guides!...*
 - *v 25: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... [26] You blind Pharisee!...*
 - *v 27: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...*
 - *v 29: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...*
- **Matthew 23.32-36:** There is a note of warning here that calls them one last, final time—to repent of their past murderous violence—past, present, and future—against God’s true prophets, including most of all, Himself! If they do not repent—and they won’t—they are going to **“Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers!** This *measure* is the measure of God’s wrath that is going to be filled up to the brim and running over—leading to the destruction of their city and nation! **Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation!** This is the historic turning point of their history—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.
- **Matthew 23.37-39:** Once again, Jesus grieves and laments over their soon-impending destruction. These verses will serve as an ‘inclusion’ or ‘book ends’ to the same lament He made over them in **Luke 19.41-44** which He cried over them as He surveyed their royal city before He made His ‘triumphal entry’... Here is what He now laments:
 - **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”**

7 / **It matters—eternally—whose voice of authority we listen to, believe, and follow!**