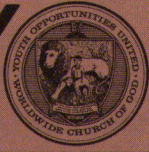


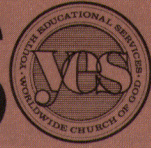
YOUTH



LEVEL 8

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 8



The Final Weeks of Christ's Ministry

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# THE FINAL WEEKS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

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This lesson covers important events that took place during the final weeks of Christ's ministry, in the spring of A.D. 31. We will study Christ's final preaching to the public and the many important principles He continued to teach His disciples. We'll also cover a number of confrontations Jesus had with the religious leaders of His day—events which would lead to His arrest, illegal trial and crucifixion.

## THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

A spectacular miracle was performed by Christ in the village of Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem. The account of this miracle is found in John 11:1-44.

A close friend of Jesus named Lazarus lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary is the one who later anointed Jesus' feet with a precious ointment (John 11:2), shortly before His trial and crucifixion.

Lazarus became very ill and was close to death. His two sisters sent a message to Christ, telling Him of their brother's sickness. At this time, Jesus was about two days journey from Bethany. He was in Perea, the area just east of the Jordan River.

Rather than immediately come to visit Lazarus, Christ decided to remain where He was for several more days. He said, "This \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ unto \_\_\_\_\_, but for \_\_\_\_\_"

## ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

The village of Bethany near Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Photo by P. Termes

the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, that the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ [Christ] might be \_\_\_\_\_ thereby" (John 11:4).

After two days had passed, Jesus made known His intentions to go to Bethany. His disciples were horrified. They were fearful of what might happen to Jesus if He went, saying, "Master, the \_\_\_\_\_ of late sought to \_\_\_\_\_ thee; and goest thou thither again?" (John 11:8.)

The disciples knew that the religious leaders were intent on killing Christ. You may remember from the last lesson that He had rebuked and publicly embarrassed the scribes and Pharisees many times for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

Jesus let His disciples know, however, that there was no need to fear. He then told them that Lazarus was "sleeping." The disciples were pleased to hear this news. They thought He meant Lazarus was recovering from his illness and was actually asleep. Then Jesus told them plainly that Lazarus was dead!

In many places in the New Testament, reference is made to the dead as being asleep, awaiting a resurrection. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning the dead in Christ: "But I would not have you to be \_\_\_\_\_, brethren, concerning \_\_\_\_\_ which are \_\_\_\_\_, that ye \_\_\_\_\_ not, even as others which have no \_\_\_\_\_. For if we \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ and rose again, even so them also which \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus will God bring with him" (I Thessalonians 4:13-14).

When Christ and His disciples arrived in Bethany, they found that Lazarus had been dead four days. In the village were many Jews who had come to offer their condolences to Mary and Martha.

Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went outside the house to meet Him. She sorrowfully told Jesus that if He had arrived sooner, her brother would not have died, meaning that she knew Jesus would have healed him. Christ then told her a very important truth: “I am the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_: he that believeth in me, though he were \_\_\_\_\_, yet shall he live: And whosoever \_\_\_\_\_ and believeth in me shall never \_\_\_\_\_” (John 11:25-26).

Christ was showing that He can resurrect, or restore life to, the dead. Therefore, those who believe in and obey Him, even though they die, will one day be resurrected to eternal life.

Martha acknowledged that she believed this and then returned to the house. She told her sister Mary that Christ wanted to see her.



Photo by P. Termes

Traditional site of Lazarus' tomb from which he was resurrected.

Mary quickly left the group of mourners. When she saw Jesus, she wept and also told Him that if He had come sooner, her brother would not have died.

As Christ looked around at Mary and the mourners who had followed her, He began to weep, not out of sorrow for Lazarus, but because of their sorrow.

Christ ordered that the stone be rolled away from the entrance to the tomb where Lazarus was laid, despite Martha's protest that his body had already begun to decay. After a short prayer of thanks to His Father in heaven, Christ shouted for Lazarus to come forth out of the tomb.

The onlookers were astonished to see Lazarus, still wrapped in his grave clothes, walk out of the tomb! This miraculous event, witnessed by many people, enraged the religious leaders when they heard of it. They hurriedly called a meeting to decide what to do about Christ.

These men were worried that the people would acclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the expected deliverer. They feared He would lead the people into rebellion against the Roman government, which would result in a severe crackdown by the Roman authorities upon the nation and the loss of their positions.

To prevent this from happening, Caiaphas, the High Priest, suggested a course of action. He said, “It is expedient for us, that one man [Christ] should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (verse 50).

Caiaphas did not realize that he was actually prophesying the sacrifice of Christ, not only for the nation, but for the sins of all mankind. After Caiaphas had spoken, the other religious leaders decided to act. “Then from that day forth they took \_\_\_\_\_ together for to \_\_\_\_\_ him to \_\_\_\_\_” (verse 53).

### Do You Remember?

1. Lazarus lived in the town of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Lazarus' two sisters were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Why did Christ delay in going to Bethany?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does the Bible often mean when it refers to people as being asleep? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. What did Christ mean when He said “I am the resurrection, and the life . . .”? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. How was Caiaphas’ statement about the need for Christ’s death more meaningful than he realized? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### CHRIST ENTERS JERUSALEM

Because of the plot to put Him to death, Christ did not travel openly in Judea. He left Bethany and went to Ephraim, a town located on the edge of the desert. There He stayed with His disciples.

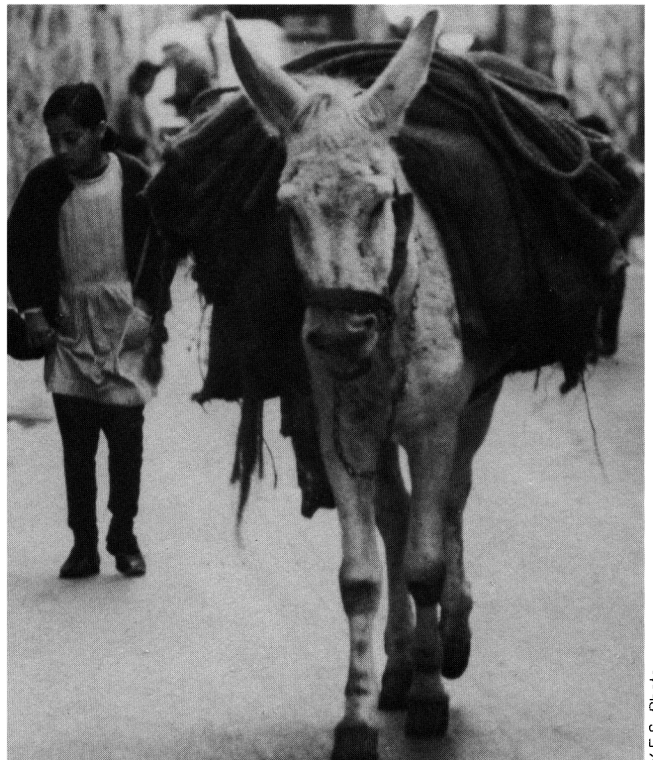
At this time, Jews from throughout Judea and the surrounding areas were gathering in Jerusalem to observe the Passover. They wondered among themselves whether Christ would risk His life and come to Jerusalem for the Passover (John 11:55-57).

Six days before the Passover, Jesus returned to Bethany and had dinner with Lazarus and his two sisters (John 12:2). The following day, Christ started out toward Jerusalem. He told two of His disciples to go on ahead of Him to a nearby village and return with a young donkey they would find there. It was upon this donkey that Christ would make His entry into Jerusalem.

As Jesus drew near and saw the city, He wept. He knew that the time was coming when Jerusalem would be torn down stone by stone, and its inhabitants killed (Luke 19:41-44).

Thousands of the people in Jerusalem had heard of Jesus and His miracles—especially the resurrection of Lazarus. Upon learning that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, they ran to greet Him, spreading palm branches and garments in His path. Many hailed Him as the Messiah, shouting, “Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 21:9).

Christ rode into Jerusalem, not as a conquering hero on a white horse, as many of the Jews expected the Messiah would arrive, but in total humility. He came to Jerusalem knowing that He would soon lay down His life for mankind. Notice in Zechariah 9:9 an Old Testament prophecy of Christ’s entry into the city: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of \_\_\_\_\_: behold, thy \_\_\_\_\_ cometh unto thee: he is \_\_\_\_\_, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an \_\_\_\_\_, and upon a \_\_\_\_\_ the foal of an \_\_\_\_\_.”



It was on a young donkey, such as the one pictured above, that Christ rode into Jerusalem.

Y.E.S. Photo

The scribes and Pharisees were filled with hatred toward Christ because of the honor bestowed upon Him by the people. "And when the chief \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the \_\_\_\_\_, and saying, \_\_\_\_\_ to the son of \_\_\_\_\_; they were sore \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 21:15).

### THE BARREN FIG TREE

During these last few days of His life, Christ lodged in the town of Bethany, probably with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. In the mornings He would journey into Jerusalem and in the evenings return to Bethany.

As Christ was on His way to Jerusalem one morning, He was very hungry. Noticing a fig tree by the roadside, He went over to it to pick some fruit. But all He found were leaves. Because it bore no fruit, Christ cursed the tree, saying, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever" (Matthew 21:19).

The next day as Jesus and the disciples walked past the tree, they saw that it had completely withered and died. The disciples were amazed at the miracle. In response to their amazement, Christ said, "If ye have \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, ye shall not only do this which is done to the \_\_\_\_\_, but also if ye shall say unto this \_\_\_\_\_, Be thou removed, and be thou \_\_\_\_\_ into the \_\_\_\_\_; it shall be done. And \_\_\_\_\_, whatsoever ye shall \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, ye shall \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 21:21-22).

Christ was showing His disciples that God will answer the prayers of those who have faith in Him. He will perform tremendous miracles—even moving mountains, if necessary—for those who ask Him in faith.

But what is faith and what must we be doing to have it? Faith is believing that God exists and that He will do what He has promised in

the Bible. However, before God will give us what we ask, what must we be doing? Let's notice I John 3:22: "And whatsoever we \_\_\_\_\_, we \_\_\_\_\_ of him, because we \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ those things that are \_\_\_\_\_ in his sight."

Even if we have the faith, God will not necessarily give us all that we ask for. We must be sure that what we ask Him to do is within His will, as shown in Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ what the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord is."

If we are striving to the best of our ability to obey God and study His Word to determine what His will is, we can pray with confidence, asking God in complete faith to supply our needs and even some of our desires.

### MONEYCHANGERS CAST OUT OF THE TEMPLE

During the Passover season, many thousands of people came to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple. In the courtyard of the Temple, merchants sold doves and other animals to many of these people, who would offer them as sacrifices to God. Can you imagine the noise and stench coming from this menagerie? People would go from one dealer to another—haggling to obtain the best prices.

Others crowded around the tables of the moneychangers. These men exchanged coins from any part of the Roman Empire for the special Temple coinage acceptable for offerings. Knowing that people had to change their money in order to give their offerings, the moneychangers would take advantage of them by charging unfair rates of exchange to gain a large profit for themselves.

As Christ entered the courtyard of the Temple, He was angry at what He saw. Furious at the mockery being made of His Father's House by these dishonest men, He cast them out of the Temple. He overturned their tables and chairs and drove out the

animals! Christ was not going to allow these men to continue dishonoring God by misusing His House (Matthew 21:12-13).

There is an important lesson we can learn from this incident. When we attend Sabbath services, we should be careful of our conduct in the meeting hall. We should be quiet and respectful toward God and others during the service, remembering that we are coming into God's presence to worship Him, and to hear His words taught from the Bible by His ministers.

Christ returned to the Temple each day and taught the many people who thronged around Him. With each passing day, the scribes and Pharisees grew more resentful of His presence and became more determined to kill Him (Luke 19:47-48).

### Do You Remember?

1. Why did Christ ride a young donkey into Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Why were so many people in Jerusalem at this time of year? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. What lesson did Jesus teach His disciples about faith? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. What were the moneychangers and animal merchants doing in the Temple, and why did Christ cast them out? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### CHRIST SPEAKS ABOUT HIS DEATH

Christ knew His life on earth as a human would end very soon. Referring to His soon-coming death and resurrection, He told those gathered around Him that the time had come that the "Son of man should be glorified." Then, to explain the necessity for

His death, Christ said that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will remain alone. But if it dies, it will produce much grain (John 12:23-24).

Jesus used this simple analogy to show that through His death, and subsequent resurrection, that all who have ever lived will have an opportunity to receive eternal life.

Christ then told His disciples: "He that \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ it; and he that \_\_\_\_\_ his life in \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ it unto \_\_\_\_\_" (John 12:25). He was showing that anyone whose sole purpose is to preserve his life while disobeying God will lose it. But if a person gives his life in obedience and service to God (verse 26), practicing the truly happy and joyful way of *give* instead of the way of *get*, then God will ultimately give him the gift of eternal life. Christ showed that anyone wanting to be His servant must be willing to make this total commitment to God.

### A WITNESS TO THE CROWD

Jesus told His disciples that He was troubled by the nearness of His death. For a fleeting moment He wished God would spare Him from what would be a humiliating and painful death. But Christ knew that this was one of the reasons He had come to earth, and so He reaffirmed His desire to do God's will (John 12:27; also notice what Christ later said in Matthew 26:39).

At this moment a voice thundered from heaven, saying, "I have both \_\_\_\_\_ it [the Father's name], and will \_\_\_\_\_ it again" (John 12:28).

The people standing nearby who heard the voice were amazed. They debated as to whether they heard thunder or the voice of an angel. Christ then told them that the voice did not come for His benefit, but rather for their sakes. It was a witness to the fact that He was sent by God the Father.

Even though Christ told the people on many

occasions to heed His message and believe in Him, most did not. They thought the Messiah would come as a conquering hero to deliver them from the Romans. The people simply did not believe Christ, just as the prophet Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier (Isaiah 53:3).

In Isaiah's prophecies, we find the reason why the people did not believe Christ and therefore rejected Him. Notice what Isaiah wrote in chapter 6, verse 10, speaking of Christ: "Make the heart of this \_\_\_\_\_ fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their \_\_\_\_\_; lest they \_\_\_\_\_ with their eyes, and \_\_\_\_\_ with their ears, and \_\_\_\_\_ with their heart, and \_\_\_\_\_, and be healed."

Jesus knew the people did not understand who He was and that He was sent to earth by God the Father. It was because the Father had *closed their eyes to this truth!* (John 12:40.) Many followed Him just to see what great thing He would do next.

Many of the Jewish rulers, however, did understand who Christ was and believed on Him. "But because of the \_\_\_\_\_ they did not \_\_\_\_\_ him [admit it to anyone], lest they should be \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ [lose their positions of responsibility]: For they \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ more than the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_" (John 12:42-43).

To the many people who thronged around Him, Christ then said: "If anyone really believes in me, he doesn't just believe in me, but believes in God who sent me!" God the Father had sent Christ to the earth, and it was through His authority that Christ spoke (John 12:44-50). He said only what His Father told Him to say.

Many were willing to follow Christ around and tell others that the miracles He performed were real. But most did not want to follow the example He set and heed the message from God that He proclaimed!

## Do You Remember?

1. What did Christ mean when He spoke of the grain of wheat that dies? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did the crowds hear, which was a witness to the fact that Christ was sent by God the Father? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why were the Jewish leaders who believed on Christ afraid to admit it? \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTEMPTS TO DISCREDIT CHRIST

Recall that the religious leaders had determined to kill Christ. And so during the closing days of His ministry, they continually questioned Him in an attempt to discredit Him in the eyes of the people. If they could turn the crowds against Him, they would be able to arrest Him without opposition. One such encounter is recorded in Matthew 21, beginning with verse 23.

While Christ was preaching in the Temple, the chief priests and elders came up to Him, demanding to know who gave Him the authority to teach and perform miracles. Christ said He would answer their question if they would first answer a question from Him. He then asked whether they believed John the Baptist received his authority to baptize from men or from heaven (meaning from God).

The chief priests and elders reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet" (Matthew 21:25-26; Luke 20:5-6). Thus, their only choice was to refuse to answer Christ's question. He then turned to them and said that He would not answer their question either.

Jesus then gave two parables to illustrate the difference between those who had believed John the Baptist, and the religious leaders who had rejected him.

The first parable is found in Matthew



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This vineyard reminds one of Jesus' parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen.

21:28-32. Christ told of two sons who were asked by their father to work in his vineyard. The first son said he would not, but later repented and did as his father asked. The other son said he would go, giving the impression that he was a faithful son. But he did not go.

Christ was showing that those who believed John the Baptist and repented of their sins would enter the Kingdom of God before or ahead of the religious leaders, who had not believed John nor repented of their sins at that time. They made a show of being righteous, but in reality did not obey God.

In the second parable, Christ described a certain man who owned a vineyard which he entrusted to certain husbandmen, or caretakers, to tend. The owner then went away into a far country. When harvest time approached, he sent servants to the husbandmen to receive the produce from the vineyard. But they mistreated the servants. They beat one, killed another and stoned yet another. Again the owner sent servants, but they were treated the

same way. Finally, believing the husbandmen would respect his son, the owner decided to send him. But they killed him also (Matthew 21:33-39).

Christ then asked the question: "What will the owner of the vineyard do with the wicked husbandmen?"

"He will kill the wicked husbandmen and let other husbandmen tend the vineyard." The religious leaders did not realize it, but they had just condemned themselves!

Jesus used this parable to show that the religious leaders of Israel had, time after time, rejected the prophets sent by God. Finally, God sent His own Son to preach to them. But they would kill Him also. Christ told them that because of their wickedness, God would now give the opportunity of entering the Kingdom of God to those who would repent and bring forth the fruit of obedience to God.

The religious leaders were furious when they realized that Christ had spoken these parables against them. They would have seized Him at that moment had they not feared what the people might do to them.

### **MORE TRICKS AND QUESTIONS**

Christ then told another parable, comparing the Kingdom of God to a wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14). In this parable, there was a king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. The invited guests refused to come to the wedding. Some of them even killed the servants who brought them their invitations. So the king had his servants find others to attend the wedding.

In a similar manner, the scribes and Pharisees had rejected Christ and His message about the Kingdom of God and would eventually kill Him. So in their place God would call ordinary people to become members of His Church. These people would then have the chance to take part in the wedding of the Church to Christ at His Second Coming, provided they wore the proper "wedding garments."



In Revelation 19:7-9 is described the very wedding Jesus spoke of in His parable. It is the marriage of God's Church to the glorified Christ! But only those who are properly "clothed"—those who have prepared themselves by growing in grace, knowledge and obedience to God—will be allowed to marry Christ.

Notice in Revelation 19:8 that this proper clothing is symbolic of righteousness: "And to \_\_\_\_\_ [the Church] was granted that she should be arrayed in fine \_\_\_\_\_, clean and \_\_\_\_\_: for the fine \_\_\_\_\_ is the \_\_\_\_\_ of saints."

The Pharisees were now desperate. They held a private meeting to devise a plan which they hoped would entangle Christ in His words. They wanted to find an excuse to have Him arrested. So they decided to send a group of men to ask Jesus a clever question.

"Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" they asked (Matthew 22:17). If He were to reply "Yes" to their question, Christ would have been held in disfavor among many of the Jews. But if He were to say "No," He would have been arrested by government officials for rebellion against the Roman government.

Jesus, immediately perceiving their evil intentions, asked them to give Him a tribute coin. "Whose image is on this coin?" He asked.

"It is Caesar's," they replied. Christ then told them to give Caesar those things that belong to him, and to give God the things that are rightfully His. The men went away speechless, defeated again by another wise answer.

A short while later the Sadducees, a religious group who did not believe in the resurrection, confronted Christ. They hoped to make Christ look foolish by asking Him a question they felt He could not answer. In so doing, they hoped to prove their belief that there is no resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees said to Christ: "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. In the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?" (Matthew 22:24-28.)

Notice Christ's reply in verses 29-30; "Ye do \_\_\_\_\_, not knowing the \_\_\_\_\_, nor the power of God. For in the \_\_\_\_\_ they \_\_\_\_\_, nor are given in \_\_\_\_\_, but are as the \_\_\_\_\_ of God in heaven."

Christ then revealed the ignorance of the



Roman coins found in the area of Mt. Carmel, Israel, dating from the time of Christ.

Sadducees regarding the resurrection. Referring to Exodus 3:6, Christ said, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of \_\_\_\_\_, and the God of \_\_\_\_\_, and the God of \_\_\_\_\_? God is not the God of the \_\_\_\_\_, but of the \_\_\_\_\_" (verses 31-32).

What Jesus clearly meant was that for God to be the God of the *living*, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will have to be *alive* once again—at the *resurrection* of the dead!

The Sadducees were silenced, unable to dispute Jesus' reasoning.

The Pharisees soon heard how the Sadducees had been shamed by Christ. They now hoped to succeed where the Sadducees failed.

"Which of the Ten Commandments is most important?" one of them asked Christ. Jesus' reply helps us to better understand the purpose for God's commandments.

Jesus answered the Pharisee by summarizing God's law as follows: "Thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord thy \_\_\_\_\_ with all thy \_\_\_\_\_, and with all thy \_\_\_\_\_, and with all thy \_\_\_\_\_. This is the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ commandment. And the second is \_\_\_\_\_ unto it, Thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_ thy \_\_\_\_\_ as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 22:37-40; also notice Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18).

Once again, Christ gave the appropriate answer which greatly upset His critics. He then asked the Pharisees a question they could not answer. (Read Matthew 22:41-46 and ask your parents to explain the answer to you.) After this, no one dared to confront Christ with any more questions.

### **CHRIST SEVERELY REBUKES THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES**

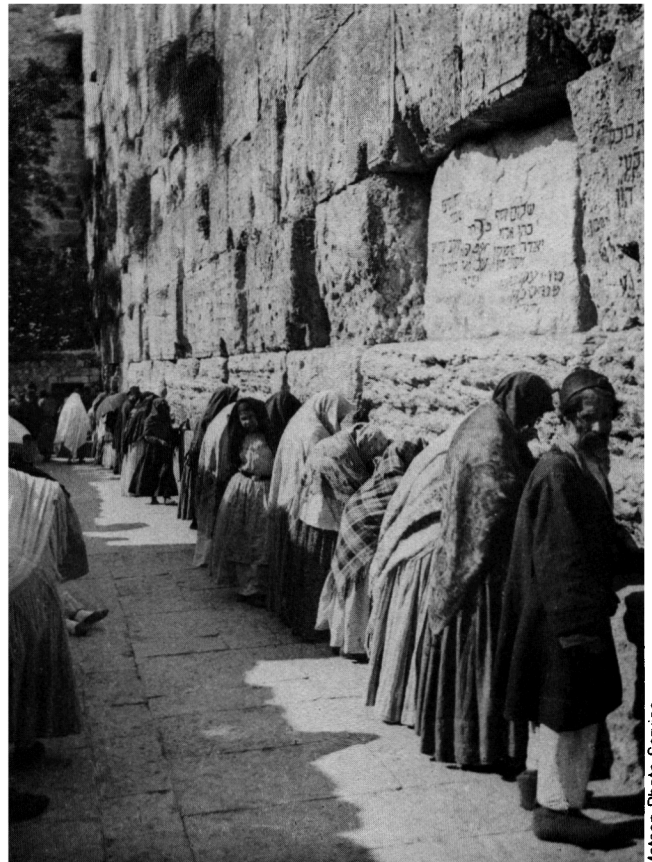
The scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day were leaders in their community. They were

respected and admired because they gave the appearance of being extremely righteous.

These men kept a rigid schedule of religious activities. They fasted twice a week, prayed in public for all to see, tithed even on the seeds from garden plants, and had their own strict rules on how to keep the Sabbath. They also gave large offerings to the Temple treasury.

In all their show of righteousness, however, Christ recognized a major character flaw. The Pharisees' great sin was *hypocrisy*. What did Christ call this sin in Luke 12:1? "Beware ye of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_, which is \_\_\_\_\_."

Because of their hypocrisy, Jesus leveled a stinging indictment at the Pharisees in Matthew 23. Be sure to read this chapter and then discuss with your parents the many ways in which the Pharisees were hypocrites.



Devout Jews praying in public at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Let's take a close look at some of the "leaven" of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were very proud of their roles as religious leaders in the community. They wanted everyone to look up to them. They wore large scripture passages on their garments to impress everyone with their great "righteousness." They made sure they spoke "godly" words and that their appearance was "godly" in every way. They traveled long distances on land and sea to bring converts into their religion.

One might assume that someone with all these works would be commended by Christ. But He did just the opposite. He recognized the authority of the scribes and Pharisees, saying they "sit in Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). That is, they occupied an important position that was instituted in the days of Moses. But He warned the people not to follow their personal example. Though they taught part of God's truth, they themselves did *not really obey it!*

The religious leaders wanted only to impress people rather than to humble themselves before God. Notice Christ's stinging indictment against them in Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_! for ye pay \_\_\_\_\_ of mint and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and have \_\_\_\_\_ the weightier matters of the law, \_\_\_\_\_, mercy, and \_\_\_\_\_ . . ."

The scribes and Pharisees were very careful to keep the letter of the law, even to the minutest detail. But they neglected, or omitted, the spirit or intent of the law—its *spiritual application* in their lives. They did not humbly desire to sincerely and truly obey God. They were proud and self-righteous.

Christ severely rebuked the Pharisees, even more than those who sin ignorantly, because He knew they did so knowingly. He knew that while they were putting on an outward show of righteousness, they were plotting His murder. "Even so ye also \_\_\_\_\_ appear

\_\_\_\_\_ unto men, but within ye are full of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 23:28).

Christ knew that He would soon be put to death, so He spared no words in identifying the conspiring religious leaders for what they were.

Following His rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees, we find Jesus filled with sadness and concern over the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Notice His words in Matthew 23:37-39: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that \_\_\_\_\_ the prophets, and \_\_\_\_\_ them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have \_\_\_\_\_ thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye \_\_\_\_\_! Behold, your house is left unto you \_\_\_\_\_. For I say unto you, Ye shall not \_\_\_\_\_ me henceforth, till ye shall say, \_\_\_\_\_ is he that \_\_\_\_\_ in the name of the \_\_\_\_\_."

The religious leaders no longer came to criticize Christ. Their sole aim now was to find a way to kill Him. They felt they had to rid themselves of His threat to their authority.

Christ was now through addressing the public. He would use the final few days before His arrest, illegal trial and crucifixion to give important instructions to His disciples. In the next lesson we will study these vital teachings.

### Do You Remember?

1. Which religious group in Christ's day did not believe in the resurrection?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is the first great commandment Jesus spoke of? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What is the second great commandment?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. What was the "leaven" of the Pharisees?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**BIBLE MEMORY**

Matthew 21:22	John 11:25-26
Matthew 22:37-40	John 12:25-26
	John 12:44-45
	John 12:49-50

# HIDDEN MESSAGE

In the "WORDS" column on the right, write the word or phrase that completes each statement in the left-hand column. Then transfer the numbered letters to the matching numbers in the "HIDDEN MESSAGE" blanks below. The message contains one of the important lessons taught by Christ.

**STATEMENTS**

**WORDS**

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. Many of the Jews traveled to Jerusalem to keep the _____.   | — 8 11 — 22 — 5 13     |
| 2. The _____ were one of the groups of religionists that taunted Christ.                                   | — — 20 38 — 28 — 17 39 |
| 3. _____ anointed Christ's feet with precious ointment.  | 21 30 41 —             |
| 4. Lazarus lived in the town of _____, located near the city of Jerusalem.                                 | 1 — 6 4 43 — 35        |
| 5. Christ entered Jerusalem riding on a _____.   | — 26 44 — — —          |
| 6. The _____ _____ withered because Christ cursed it for not bearing _____.                                | — — 12,24 9 — — —      |
|  | — — 2 — 3              |
| 7. Christ chased the _____ out of the Temple.  | — 36 — 34 25 —         |
|  | — 29 — — — — 18        |
| 8. The voice which spoke from heaven sounded like _____ to the people who heard it.                        | 16 7 27 — — — —        |
| 9. Christ urged the people to _____ in God.  | 33 — 31 — — 42 —       |
| 10. The religious leaders publicly _____ Christ, in an attempt to discredit Him in the eyes of the people. | — 37 — — 19,45 — — — — |
| 11. In the Bible, fine _____ can refer to righteousness.   | 32 10 — 40 23          |
| 12. The Pharisees sought the _____ of men rather than God.   | — — 15 — — 14          |

**HIDDEN MESSAGE**

“ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27  
 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 ” (Matthew 23:11).