

## *Gospels Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Eight: Road to the Cross – Matthew 21-23, John 11-12*

#### Read John 11.

- 1) What indications do you find in John 11 and Luke 10:38-42 that Jesus had a close relationship with the three siblings, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (include verse numbers)? *Mary poured perfume on Jesus feet (John 11:2); Jesus loved Lazarus (11:3); Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (11:5); Jesus was deeply moved by Mary's tears (11:33); Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb (11:35); the Jews believed Jesus loved Lazarus (11:36); Jesus was deeply moved at Lazarus' tomb (11:38); and Martha had opened her home to Jesus (Luke 10:38).*
- 2) Explain...
  - a) the circumstances that precipitated Jesus' trip to Judea (11:6-7, 11, 14-15) *Lazarus' death and Jesus' intention of raising him from the dead (11:11)*
  - b) why Jesus delayed in leaving for Judea (11:6) *Probably to ensure Lazarus was dead*
  - c) the possible reasons Jesus wept (11:35) *Sorrow over the death of a close friend; sorrow over the reality of death, in a general sense*
  - d) how the Sanhedrin's decision in verses 53 and 57 relates to the raising of Lazarus (11:47-48) *Jesus had done many miracles. However, on this occasion, many in the area of Jerusalem witnessed Lazarus' resurrection. The Sanhedrin plotted to kill Jesus, fearing He would lead a rebellion against Rome that the Sanhedrin could not control. If that happened, they believed the Romans would clamp down on Jerusalem and the Sanhedrin would lose their authority.*
  - e) the significance of Caiaphas' words (11:49-52) *According to 11:51, he unknowingly prophesied Jesus' sacrificial, substitutionary death.*
  - f) the significance of John 11 in light of Jesus' own impending death (11:25) *In 11:25, Jesus states that He is the resurrection and the life. Lazarus' death and resurrection foreshadowed Jesus' own death and resurrection. Lazarus' resurrection gave the religious leaders the final impetus to have Jesus arrested and crucified.*
- 3) Contemplate and pray over the meaning of Jesus' words in John 11:9-10.
  - a) How did Jesus answer His disciples' question and concern (verse 8) about the danger of returning to Judea? *Jesus was saying that when one walks according to God's will (the light), there is no true danger. Moving outside God's will (walking in darkness) is where true danger lies. Jesus knew He would die. He considered His death part of God's good plan, the only path to His glorification, and therefore, not an ultimate danger. He trusted that as long as He obeyed God's will in each step He took, the Father would not allow His death to occur at any other time than when it was determined to occur (Passover).*
  - b) Relate this truth to the circumstances of your own life this week. *Daily conformity to the will of God in every detail of our lives prevents us from landing outside God's will in some tragic way. Personal sharing*

#### Read Matthew 21:1-22:14 and John 12:12-19.

- 4) What information about the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem does John give that Matthew does not? *John tells of the impact that was made on Jesus' Triumphal Entry by witnesses to Lazarus' resurrection (their testimony caused many people to go out to see Jesus, John 12:17-18). Also, John mentions the disciples' inability (at that time) to understand the meaning of the Triumphal Entry (it was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, 12:16).*

- 5) At Jesus' Triumphal Entry, the crowds honored Him as the "Son of David" (Matthew 21:9). When Jesus entered the Temple courts, the children shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:15). What is the implication of the term "Son of David" (recall Matthew 1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, and look ahead at Matthew 22:41-42)? **This was a term with clear Messianic implications. Even the Jewish religious leaders said "the Christ" (Messiah) was the Son of David (22:42).**
- 6) Jesus refused to directly answer the religious leaders' question concerning His authority (Matthew 21:23, 27).
- Find ways in which the three parables in Matthew 21:28-22:14 answered their question. **The parables serve as an indictment of those who refused to believe that Jesus and John received their authority from God (heaven [21:25]). The parable of the two sons (21:28-32) concludes with Jesus' explanation that tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the Kingdom of God ahead of Israel's religious leaders. Jesus applied the parable to their refusal to believe John's teaching of "the way of righteousness" (21:32). The obvious implication was that John's authority came from God, and since John approved of Jesus, Jesus' authority must also be of heaven. Second, Jesus told the Parable of the Tenants and applied an Old Testament Messianic prophecy to Himself (Matthew 21:42). The Jews had rejected Him, just as predicted. Again, His claim to be Messiah meant that His authority must be from God. Third, the parable of the wedding banquet taught that God would reject the religious leaders of Israel because they had rejected His Son, but He would invite others into the kingdom in their place. Jesus' language concerning "the king" and "his son" once again implies that His authority did indeed come from God (He had often called God His Father and had claimed to be God's Son).**
  - Which area of your life needs to come more fully under Jesus' authority today? **Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 22:15-46.

- 7) Following Jesus' indictments against the Jewish religious leaders in His parables, how did various groups seek to trap Jesus (22:15) and what was the end result (include verse numbers)? **The Pharisees and Herodians sent their disciples to question Jesus' submission to Caesar's authority. It was a political and religious trap (22:15-22). The Sadducees questioned Jesus about the resurrection by posing a ridiculous hypothetical story that shows their cynicism about the resurrection of the body (22:23-33). Finally, the Pharisees brought a lawyer to test Jesus regarding the Law (22:34-40). The questioners were "amazed" by Jesus' responses (verse 22), the crowds were "astonished" (verse 33), and "no one dared to ask him any more questions" (verse 46).**
- 8) Think carefully about Matthew 22:42-46 (especially verse 45). Can you suggest the reason why Psalm 110:1 (quoted in Matthew 22:44) would have challenged the Jews' thinking about the Christ (the Messiah)? **The Jews thought of Messiah as merely a human descendant of David. Jesus challenged their thinking by quoting from their own Scriptures (Psalm 110). In Hebrew, the verse says "Yahweh" was speaking to "Adonai" about sitting at His right hand. Both of these terms are names for God. Jesus pointed out that David called this second Lord (the Messiah) "my Lord" (22:44). Since David used the word "Adonai" for the Messiah, the Messiah had to be more than simply a human son of David. In other words, while writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David (whether he realized it or not) ascribed deity to the Messiah.**

- 9) The greatest and second greatest commands of the Law are indicated by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40.
- Jesus said that all of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands (Matthew 22:40). Reread the two commands and explain how any other commands of God flow from these? **These two are the starting point for obedience that is pleasing to God. They address the issue of our hearts (our motivation for obedience to every command). As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, God looks for more than fulfillment of the letter of the Law. He looks at the condition of our hearts: our thoughts and attitudes. Love for Him and love for our fellow human beings is a prerequisite to keeping all of God's commands in the way He intends them to be kept.**
  - Keeping in mind the previous lesson on discipleship, which requirement for following Christ would be less taxing for you if you first determined to obey the two greatest commands (it may be helpful to look back at your answers to Lesson 7)? **Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 23.

- For which practices did Jesus condemn the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in Matthew 23 (include verse numbers)? **Not practicing what they preached (verse 3), burdening people with rules and showing no compassion (verse 4), concern with outward appearances (verse 5), hypocrisy (verses 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29), preventing people from finding the true way to heaven (verse 13), mincing words to serve their purposes (verses 16-22), insistence on compliance to the details of the Law while missing altogether the main thrust of the Law (verses 23-24), observing religious ritual and neglecting right attitudes (verses 25-26), being more concerned with externals than internals (verses 27-28), claiming moral superiority over their forefathers while acting just like them (verses 30-31)**
- What does Jesus predict in Matthew 23:33-39? **The Jews' continued rejection of Him and persecution of His followers, culminating in the "righteous blood [of the martyrs] coming on them" (verse 35). This judgment probably refers to the burning of the Temple and destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in AD 70. Jesus also predicted God's abandonment of the Jewish "house" until they (at some future unknown time) recognize Jesus as Messiah.**
- Reread Matthew 23:23. Which essential quality in those whose religion is pure (not hypocritical) do you struggle the most to live out? Justice, mercy, or faithfulness? In which relationship(s) will you begin to practice this approach more consistently? **Personal sharing**

Read John 12:1-11.

- According to verses 7-8, for what purpose did Mary anoint Jesus' feet with perfume (whether or not she fully understood the significance)? **By God's sovereign determination, Mary (who may or may not have understood the full implications of what she was doing) saved the expensive perfume as an anointment for Jesus. Jesus declared that she was anointing Him for His burial (a common practice, normally performed on a corpse before burial).**
- Compare Mary and Judas in John 12:1-11. **Mary was humble and generous (just as Jesus taught His disciples to be). Judas was deceitful and selfish (the opposite of Mary). Like the Jewish religious leaders, Judas made a pretense of piety, but his heart was corrupt. He said the perfume could be sold and given to the poor, but his real motive was greed (to sell the perfume and keep the money for himself).**
- With what kind of a fragrance are your recent attitudes and actions filling your home or workplace (see John 12:3b)? **Personal sharing**