

The Gospel of Mark Jerusalem Controversies

Lesson #9 for August 31, 2024

Scriptures: Mark 11; 12:1-34; 1 Kings 1:38-48; Zechariah 9:9-10; Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11.

1. As you already know if you are a student of the Gospels, whenever Jesus went to Jerusalem, He was almost certain to enter into controversy with the religious leaders. In our third lesson discussing Mark 2 & 3, we discussed five controversies between Jesus and the religious leaders in the early days of His ministry. Now in lesson 9, we will discuss six controversies between Jesus and the religious leaders in His last days in the temple before His crucifixion. In the book of Mark, these two sets of controversies provide bookends for His ministry.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] **The religious leaders come to confront, confound, and defeat Jesus, but they never succeed.** Part of this ... lesson will include analyzing just what it is that brings people into opposition to God and considering what Christians can do to break through prejudice and speak to the hearts of those resisting the Spirit's call.

In Mark 11, Jesus' ministry will be in Jerusalem for Passover (March to April). Mark 11–16 covers little more than one week; the narrative time has slowed down markedly. The first 10 chapters cover approximately three and a half years. This slowdown points to the importance of these closing scenes.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, August 24.^{†‡}

2. As we saw in our last lesson, the people who escorted Jesus up from Jericho to Jerusalem were sure that they were taking Him to Jerusalem to be crowned king. The disciples had decidedly mixed feelings because they wanted Jesus to be king. However, they realized that the religious leaders in Jerusalem were very opposed to the ministry of Jesus.
3. Jesus, knowing full well what was going to happen, wanted as many people as possible to be aware of the events leading up to His crucifixion.
4. **Read Mark 11:1-10.** This describes Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was a Jewish tradition that a new king would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. That was the way Solomon was announced as king following David (1 Kings 1:32-48) and was the way prophesied in Zechariah 9:9-10 that the Messiah would arrive.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King to Israel. This prophecy is now to be fulfilled. He who has so long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David's throne.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 569.2.[‡]

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5. Ancient Jerusalem is not a large city. It covers only about 250 acres (½ mile by ½ mile). The temple mount itself covers about 37 acres.

[BSG:] [On Sunday] Jesus entered from the east, descending the Mount of Olives and likely entering through the Golden Gate onto the Temple Mount (a gate now bricked shut). The entire city was stirred by His entry, everyone recognizing the significance of His symbolic action. The crowd that

accompanied Jesus shouted “hosanna,” a term originally meaning “save now” but eventually coming to mean “praise to God.”

The time for secrecy, which Jesus had insisted throughout most of Mark, has passed. Now Jesus openly enters Jerusalem using a well-known royal symbolic action. He enters the temple, but because it is late in the day, He simply looks around and then retires with the twelve disciples to Bethany. **What could have turned into a riot or revolt instead ends with Him quietly retiring. But the next day will be different.**

The idea of riding on the donkey invokes the idea of humility. Why is that such an important trait, especially for Christians? What have we, in light of the Cross, to be proud about?—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, August 25.^{†‡}

6. After entering Jerusalem with His disciples and many people who thought He would be king:

Mark 11:11: ¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem, went into the Temple, and **looked round at everything.** But **since it was already late in the day, he went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 11:11). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

7. The next day (Monday), Jesus went back to the temple and drove out the merchants.

Mark 11:15-18: ¹⁵ When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the Temple and began to **drive out all those who were buying and selling.** He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the stools of those who sold pigeons, ¹⁶and he would not let anyone carry anything through the temple courtyards. ¹⁷He then taught the people: “It is written in the Scriptures that God said, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations.’ But you have turned it into a hideout for thieves!”

¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the Law heard of this, so **they began looking for some way to kill Jesus.** They were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.—*Good News Bible.*^{*†}

8. Why did Jesus clear the temple of all the commotion and commerce in the courtyard?

[BSG:] What happens next likely occurs in the Court of the Gentiles, where selling of sacrifices took place (recently begun by Caiaphas). **Jesus clears away the sellers from the courts so that quiet worship may return. His action is a direct affront to those in charge of the temple system.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 26.^{†‡}

9. In order to understand more clearly the implications of this cleansing of the temple, we must look back to the **early days of Jesus’s ministry** when He cleansed the temple the first time.

[EGW:] The dealers [in the temple] demanded exorbitant prices for the animals sold, and they shared their profits with the priests and rulers, who thus enriched themselves at the expense of the people. **The worshipers had been taught to believe that if they did not offer sacrifice, the blessing of God would not rest on their children or their lands.** Thus a high price for the animals could be secured; for after coming so far, the people would not return to their homes without performing the act of devotion for which they had come.—Ellen

G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 155.2.††

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10. Abuses abounded, but the Jewish leaders did nothing to correct them.

[EGW:] The priests and rulers were called to be the representatives of God to the nation; **they should have corrected the abuses of the temple court.** They should have given to the people an example of integrity and compassion. Instead of studying their own profit, they should have considered the situation and needs of the worshipers, and should have been ready to assist those who were not able to buy the required sacrifices. But this they did not do. Avarice had hardened their hearts.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 156.1.††

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[EGW:] As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who **thought** that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins. He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 157.2.†† [\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.693&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.693&index=0)†

11. Jesus took decisive action at the first cleansing of the temple.

[EGW:] Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested, He **overthrows the tables of the money-changers.** The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. None presume to question His authority. **None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hand that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword. Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence.**

A panic sweeps over the multitude, who feel the overshadowing of His divinity. **Cries of terror escape from hundreds of blanched lips. Even the disciples tremble.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 158.2-3.††

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[EGW:] **And why did the priests flee from the temple?** Why did they not stand their ground? He who commanded them to go was a carpenter's son, a poor Galilean, without earthly rank or power. Why did they not resist Him? Why did they leave the gain so ill acquired, and flee at the command of One whose outward appearance was so humble?

Christ spoke with the authority of a king, and in His appearance, and in the tones of His voice, there was that which they had no power to resist. At the word of command **they realized, as they had never realized before, their true position as hypocrites and robbers.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 162.2-3.†† [\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.710&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.710&index=0)†

[EGW:] ... The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy

traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. **In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 161.1†† [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.705&index=0>]‡

[EGW:] Jesus had shown them a sign. In flashing light into their hearts, and in doing before them the works which the Messiah was to do, He had given convincing evidence of His character. Now when they asked for a sign, He answered them by a parable, showing that He read their malice, and saw to what lengths it would lead them. “Destroy this temple,” He said, “and in three days I will raise it up.”

In these words, His meaning was twofold. He referred not only to the destruction of the Jewish temple and worship, but to His own death,—the destruction of the temple of His body. This the Jews were already plotting. As the priests and rulers returned to the temple, they had proposed to kill Jesus, and thus rid themselves of the troubler. Yet when He set before them their purpose, they did not understand Him. They took His words as applying only to the temple at Jerusalem, and with indignation exclaimed, “Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?” Now they felt that Jesus had justified their unbelief, and they were confirmed in their rejection of Him.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 164.2-3.†† [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.723&index=0>]‡

12. Already at the time of Jesus's first cleansing of the temple in A.D. 28, the priests vowed never to let Him again interrupt their commerce in the temple. They were plotting to kill Him.
13. Seeing the commerce and commotion in the temple again, Jesus felt that something needed to be done. He chose to cleanse the temple once again. He had cleansed the temple earlier in His ministry, and this would be the second time.
14. Now, notice the story about the **second cleansing** of the temple in Jesus's last week.

[EGW:] Again the piercing look of Jesus swept over the desecrated court of the temple. All eyes were turned toward Him. Priest and ruler, Pharisee and Gentile, looked with astonishment and awe upon Him who stood before them with the majesty of heaven's King. **Divinity flashed through humanity, investing Christ with a dignity and glory He had never manifested before.** Those standing nearest Him drew as far away as the crowd would permit. Except for a few of His disciples, the Saviour stood alone. Every sound was hushed. The deep silence seemed unbearable. Christ spoke with a power that swayed the people like a mighty tempest: **“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”** His voice sounded like a trumpet through the temple. The displeasure of His countenance seemed like consuming fire. With authority He commanded, “Take these things hence.” John 2:16.

Three years before, the rulers of the temple had been ashamed of their flight before the command of Jesus. They had since wondered at their own fears, and their unquestioning obedience to a single humble Man.

They had felt that it was impossible for their undignified surrender to be repeated. Yet they were now more terrified than before, and in greater haste to obey His command. There were none who dared question His authority. Priests and traders fled from His presence, driving their cattle before them.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 590.4-591.1.†‡

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15. The Jewish religious leaders were experts in the law. They had memorized large portions of it. Often, when Jesus approached them, He approached them quoting Scripture. In this case, He quoted Isaiah 56:7 as noted in Mark 11:17, and referred to Jeremiah 7:11.

Isaiah 56:7: “I will bring you to Zion, my sacred hill, give you joy in my house of prayer, and accept the sacrifices you offer on my altar. My Temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Jeremiah 7:11: “Do you think that my Temple is a hiding place for robbers? I have seen what you are doing.”—*Good News Bible*.*

16. As we have noted earlier, every time Jesus went to the temple and caused problems there, the chief priests and the teachers of the law looked for some way to kill Him.

Mark 11:18: The chief priests and the teachers of the Law heard of this, **so they began looking for some way to kill Jesus**. They were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.—*Good News Bible*.*†

17. On that Monday evening, we see these final events after the merchants fled.

[EGW:] On the way from the temple they [those who were fleeing from the temple] were met by a throng who came with their sick inquiring for the Great Healer. The report given by the fleeing people caused some of these to turn back. They feared to meet One so powerful, whose very look had driven the priests and rulers from His presence. But a large number pressed through the hurrying crowd, eager to reach Him who was their only hope. When the multitude fled from the temple, many had remained behind. These were now joined by the newcomers. **Again the temple court was filled by the sick and the dying, and once more Jesus ministered to them.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 592.1.†‡

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18. Most of the conversations and discussions that occurred during this week were directly related to the status of the Jewish people in the eyes of God. We now go back in time a few hours to before the temple cleansing. As Jesus and His disciples were approaching Jerusalem the morning after the triumphal entry and before the cleansing of the temple, Jesus saw a **fig tree** covered with leaves. It turned out to be an unproductive tree; Jesus cursed it.

19. It should be noted that Jesus was not trying to steal fruit. According to Jewish law, it was permissible for one to help himself to fruit or grain which was along the pathway as long as s/he did not carry any home.

Deuteronomy 23:25: “When you walk along a path in someone else’s cornfield, you may eat all the corn you can pull off with your hands, but you must not cut any corn with a sickle.”—*Good News Bible*.* [See also Leviticus 19:9 and 23:22.]‡

20. On the way out of the city, they saw the fig tree, already dead all the way to its roots.

[EGW:] In the sentence pronounced on the fig tree Christ demonstrates how hateful in His eyes is this vain pretense. He declares that the open sinner is less guilty than is he who professes to serve God, but who bears no fruit to His glory.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 584.1.‡

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21. As we have noted in the past, the Sadducees believed they were the ones who controlled the temple and what happened in it. So, when Jesus arrived back at the temple on Tuesday morning, they immediately challenged His right to be there and to preach.

Mark 11:27-33: ²⁷ They arrived once again in Jerusalem. As Jesus was walking in the Temple, the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders came to him ²⁸and asked him, **“What right have you to do these things? Who gave you this right?”**

²⁹ Jesus answered them, “I will ask you just one question, and if you give me an answer, I will tell you what right I have to do these things. ³⁰Tell me, where did John’s right to baptize come from: was it from God or from human beings?”

³¹ They started to argue among themselves: “What shall we say? If we answer, ‘From God,’ he will say, ‘Why, then, did you not believe John?’ ³²But if we say, ‘From human beings ...’ ” (They were afraid of the people, because everyone was convinced that John had been a prophet.) ³³So their answer to Jesus was, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you, then, by what right I do these things.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

22. Jesus often illustrated His most important points by using a parable. Parables are somewhat of a challenge. A person hears the story, but s/he needs to draw his/her own conclusions.
23. **Read Mark 12:1-12**, the parable of the **tenants in the vineyard**. Then note the conclusion.

Mark 12:12: The Jewish leaders tried to arrest Jesus, because they knew that he had told this parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd, so they left him and went away.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] In this story, Jesus is giving the religious leaders a solemn warning as to where their steps are heading. **Seen in this light, His parable is a loving forewarning.** It is not too late for them to change and avoid certain judgment. Some will repent, change, and accept Jesus. Others will not.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 27.†‡

24. Jesus told the parable of the vineyard. Did that parable represent God’s interaction with Israel as He nurtured Israel?

[BSG:] In the parable of the vineyard (*Mark 12:1–11*), Jesus unmasks with precision the nefarious plots of the religious leaders to take His life in the near future. Christ confirms their perfidy in the parable with these words: “They took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard” (*Mark 12:8, NASB*). However, given our discussion about the temple, what is most significant are Jesus’ words in verse 9. In this verse, Jesus explains what will happen according to God’s salvific plan: “He will come and put the vine-growers to death, and give the vineyard to others” (*Mark 12:9, NASB*). **With Jesus’ death, the entire tabernacle system reached its end. All its emblems pointed to**

Jesus. Additionally, the faithful remnant of Israel would carry on the mission.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 122.†§

25. William L. Lane explained literal Israel's dire fate in the following words:

[William L. Lane quoted in BSG:] "Within the scope of the parable the inevitable consequence of the rejection of the son was decisive, catastrophic judgment.... Without declaring [H]is own transcendent sonship, Jesus clearly implies that the Sanhedrin has rejected God's final messenger and that disaster will ensue. The sacred trust of the chosen people will be transferred to the new Israel of God."—Lane, "The Gospel of Mark," in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 419.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 122].‡Ω§

26. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were absolutely determined to catch Jesus in some kind of trap. The Pharisees took their turn, first.

Mark 12:13-17: ¹³ Some Pharisees and some members of Herod's party were sent to Jesus to trap him with questions. ¹⁴They came to him and said, "**Teacher, we know that you tell the truth, without worrying about what people think. You pay no attention to anyone's status, but teach the truth about God's will for people. Tell us, is it against our Law to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor? Should we pay them or not?**"

¹⁵ But **Jesus saw through their trick** and answered, "Why are you trying to trap me? Bring a silver coin, and let me see it."

¹⁶ They brought him one, and he asked, "Whose face and name are these?" "The Emperor's," they answered.

¹⁷ So Jesus said, "Well, then, pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God." And they were amazed at Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.*††

[EGW:] Christ's reply was no evasion, but a candid answer to the question. Holding in His hand the Roman coin, upon which were stamped the name and image of Caesar, He declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as this did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to the laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God.—Ellen. G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 602.4.‡

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27. Having routed the Pharisees, Jesus was then approached by the Sadducees with what was likely a hypothetical situation in which seven brothers ended up marrying the same woman.

Mark 12:18-27: ¹⁸ Then some Sadducees, who say that people will not rise from death, came to Jesus and said, ¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote this law for us: 'If a man dies and leaves a wife but no children, that man's brother must marry the widow so that they can have children who will be considered the dead man's children.' ²⁰Once there were seven brothers; the eldest got married and died without having children. ²¹Then the second one married the woman, and he also died without having children. The same thing happened to the third

brother, ²²and then to the rest: all seven brothers married the woman and died without having children. Last of all, the woman died. ²³Now, **when all the dead rise to life on the day of resurrection, whose wife will she be? All seven of them had married her.**”

²⁴ Jesus answered them, **“How wrong you are! And do you know why? It is because you don’t know the Scriptures or God’s power.** ²⁵For when the dead rise to life, they will be like the angels in heaven and will not marry. ²⁶Now, as for the dead being raised: haven’t you ever read in the Book of Moses the passage about the burning bush? There it is written that **God said to Moses, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’** ²⁷**He is the God of the living, not of the dead. You are completely wrong!”**—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

28. According to Jewish law, if a man died without children, his brother was supposed to marry his widow and raise up children for the dead brother. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) As we have noted, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. So, they tried to make fun of the idea of resurrection with this story of the seven husbands.

[BSG:] Seeking to discredit the doctrine of the resurrection, the Sadducees point to a moral dilemma of whose wife the woman would be in the resurrection. **Jesus counters their argument in two steps, referring to the Scriptures and to the power of God. First, He describes the power of God in the resurrection and indicates that there will not be marriage in heaven. Then He defends the doctrine of the resurrection by appealing to Exodus 3:1-22, where God indicates that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus implies that this means that they will be raised; they cannot remain dead if God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are, for now, dead.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, August 28.†‡

29. Once again, Jesus completely routed their arguments by quoting from Scripture in Exodus 3:1-22. In the story of God calling Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt:

Exodus 3:16: [God said to Moses:] ¹⁶ “Go and gather the leaders of Israel together and **tell them** that I, the LORD, the God of their ancestors, **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appeared to you.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

30. Since the Pharisees had been defeated and the Sadducees also had been defeated, they sought a teacher of the law to see if he could confound Jesus.

Mark 12:28-34: ²⁸ A teacher of the Law was there who heard the discussion. He saw that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer, so he came to him with a question: **“Which commandment is the most important of all?”**

²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important one is this: ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbour [*sic*-Br] as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment more important than these two.”

³² The teacher of the Law said to Jesus, **“Well done, Teacher! It is true, as you say, that only the Lord is God and that there is no other god but he....**

³⁴ Jesus noticed how wise his answer was, and so he told him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

31. This teacher of the law was different from most of the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

[BSG:] Up to this point in the Gospel of Mark, most of the religious leaders, with few exceptions, are antagonistic to Jesus. This is particularly true in Jerusalem, where Jesus has confronted the leadership over temple worship—that which stands at the heart of Judaism. Thus, for a scribe to listen to the disputes and appreciate Jesus' responses displays both honesty and courage in face of the prevailing animosity toward Jesus. It would be easier to just stand back and watch, even if one were in sympathy with Jesus. But this man does not do that.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, August 29.‡

32. Look at the passages in the Old Testament supporting Jesus's point in the discussion.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5: ⁴ “Israel, remember this! The LORD — and the LORD alone — is our God. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Leviticus 19:18: “Do not take revenge on anyone or continue to hate him, but **love your neighbour** [*sic-Br*] **as you love yourself**. I am the LORD.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

33. Is it possible for God to command love? Or, is that impossible? What God was talking about was not some sentimental relationship, but rather, true love as demonstrated in true loyalty. Do we show that in our lives?

34. Today, many attacks against the Bible are coming from multiple directions, trying to suggest that the Bible has lost its relevance to our lives. This is the direct work of the Devil. We must be so firmly grounded in the Bible that we would reject any such idea.

35. As we have noticed in Mark, almost the entire second half of the book is dedicated to the final week of Jesus's ministry on this earth. That is true of the other Gospels as well. Jesus had told His disciples on at least three occasions that He was going up to Jerusalem and what was going to happen there. They could not comprehend such a thing happening. They were sure that Jesus would become the Messiah of their dreams. Jesus, of course, was fully aware of what was going to happen in Jerusalem. He tried to explain it to the disciples, but they had missed it. Two prior times are described in these verses.

Mark 8:31: Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Mark 9:30-32: ³⁰ Jesus and his disciples left that place and went on through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where he was, ³¹because he was teaching his disciples: “The Son of Man will be handed over to those who will kill him. Three days later, however, he will rise to life.”

³² **But they did not understand what this teaching meant, and they were afraid to ask him.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

36. Try to imagine what it was like for Jesus to be surrounded by multitudes of people wishing to be near Him and to be healed by Him while at the same time, virtually no human being understood His mission! Even after His death and reported resurrection, we read:

Luke 24:21: [Jesus's followers on the walk to Emmaus said:] “And we had hoped that

he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

37. Try to imagine Jesus’s emotions and thoughts as He went to and from the temple in Jerusalem, realizing what its purpose was to be and how much it had been corrupted! It was obviously supposed to be the center of religious ceremonies for the entire Israelite world.

[EGW:] As they departed from God, the Jews in a great degree lost sight of the teaching of the ritual service. That service had been instituted by Christ Himself. In every part it was a symbol of Him; and it had been full of vitality and spiritual beauty. But the Jews lost the spiritual life from their ceremonies, and clung to the dead forms. They trusted to the sacrifices and ordinances themselves, instead of resting upon Him to whom they pointed. In order to supply the place of that which they had lost, the priests and rabbis multiplied requirements of their own; and the more rigid they grew, the less of the love of God was manifested. They measured their holiness by the multitude of their ceremonies, while their hearts were filled with pride and hypocrisy.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 29.2.‡

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38. **Instead of listening to Jesus’s message, the religious leaders wanted the Messenger to disappear.** From the writings of Ellen G. White:

[EGW:] **The people whom God had called to be the pillar and ground of the truth had become representatives of Satan.** They were doing the work that he desired them to do, taking a course to misrepresent the character of God, and cause the world to look upon Him as a tyrant. The very priests who ministered in the temple had lost sight of the significance of the service they performed. They had ceased to look beyond the symbol to the thing signified. In presenting the sacrificial offerings they were as actors in a play. The ordinances which God Himself had appointed were made the means of blinding the mind and hardening the heart. God could do no more for man through these channels. The whole system must be swept away.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 36.2.†‡

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39. It is interesting to notice that later, many of those religious leaders did accept Jesus!

Acts 6:7: And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger, and **a great number of priests [Sadducees] accepted the faith.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

Acts 15:5: But **some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees** stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and told to obey the Law of Moses.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

40. How would we have responded to the events in this lesson?

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Email: Info@theox.org