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6 Following the Messiah Episode 8 (8:55-26:07) The Last Week: At The Temple

Opening:

1. You have viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 8 at www.appianmedia.org and have worked through the study guide Lesson Six available by request at wtg2@hughes.net.
2. In this lesson we review some of the events that occurred in the Last Week of Jesus' life. We will read about His cleansing of the temple (Mk. 11:15-19). We will see how His authority was challenged (Mk. 11:27-33). We will review the parable of the tenants (Mk. 12:1-12) and the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). And as time allows, read Matthew 24 and Jesus' prediction of coming events associated with the eventual destruction of Jerusalem.
3. I want to encourage you to view the video associated with this lesson. It is a little different than the ones before, especially the second half assigned in this lesson. The narrators visit the Dome of the Rock on the temple mount and participate in a recreation of a typical Passover meal of the first century. In this recreation the symbolism of the Passover meal is explained. I think you will find it enlightening.

Into the Text:

1. During this final week Jesus is going in and out of Jerusalem. He returns to Bethany in the evening, evidently to spend the night in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus and then returns to Jerusalem and teaches during the day.
2. Reading of Mk. 11:15-19. Three years earlier Jesus had acted similarly (Jn. 2:11-12). Often these accounts are cited as examples of Jesus' anger and He is portrayed as opposing those money-changers and salesman for abusive profiteering in His Father's house. While all that may be true this may not be the main point to be gained here. Note that Mark quotes Jesus as saying, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." It is a statement from Isa. 56:7. These merchandisers are set up in the Court of the Gentiles. You may recall that the temple represented God's presence among the people. The inner most room, known as the Most Holy Place, represented the very presence of God. The outer room, known as the Holy Place represented a little more distance from God. Outside this was the court of Jewish men, the court of Jewish women and outside of it the court of the Gentiles. On the wall separating the Gentiles apart were signs posted saying in effect, "Trespassers will be executed." The idea was clear. Gentiles were farthest away from God. Cf. Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:17.

Already we have seen that Jesus associated with sinners, tax-collectors, Samaritans, and even Gentiles. He healed their sick, ate with them and said he saw them

reclining at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Pharisees and scribes did not see them this way and questioned Jesus' inclusion of these uncircumcised Gentiles. Their setting up of their sales booths in the Court of the Gentiles had the effect of taking over any position that the Gentiles might have had with God. Now note the passage that Jesus quotes and Mark is careful to record. "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (Isa. 56:7).

Jesus was about to open up the way with His death for all men, Gentiles included, to come into the presence of God. At His death the veil in the temple was torn in two, symbolizing that the way to the presence of God was made available by His death. The inclusion of eunuchs, Samaritans, and later Gentiles (ex. Cornelius) is evidence of God's inclusion of all nations.

In light of all the tensions between races, countries and peoples, Christ opened the way for unity in one body by His death on the cross (Eph. 2:14-22; Gal. 3:26-29).

3. The chief priests and scribes and the elders challenged what Jesus did. Read Mk. 11:27-33. "By what authority are you doing these things?" They recognized two sources, heaven and man, or God and man. Jesus recognized the same. The people recognized the same. It was reasonable if one believed John's authority came from heaven to believe what John said. If Jesus was doing what He did with God's authority they should have accepted Him. He taught with God's authority (Matt. 7:29). He healed blind men with God's authority (Jn. 9:33). He cast out demons with God's authority (Matt. 12:28). He invited all nations into the kingdom by God's authority (Isa. 56:7) and thus drove out those buying and selling with God's authority.

They step aside from answering the question about John's baptism because they found themselves in a dilemma.

It is good for us to ask ourselves whether we are following the authority of God or the authority of men. Sometimes we would like to side step the issue and say, "I don't know." Claiming ignorance doesn't excuse us from the dilemma.

4. Read Mk. 12:1-12. The parable of the vine-growers or the tenants reflects how God had sent various messengers to those who were supposed to be tending His people. In this case these vine-growers were the chief priests and scribes and elders (11:27) who had questioned Jesus' authority. The messengers sent represented various prophets, like John. And now the owner, God, has sent His beloved son. Their intention is to kill him. Jesus quotes Psa. 118:23 referring to the stone rejected by the builders that would become the chief corner stone. The text says, "This came about from the Lord." Did you catch it? By whose authority is Jesus doing these things?? They understood, but were seeking to seize Him anyway.

5. Read Matt. 25:14-30. Fear is a paralyzing force. The one talent man said that he was afraid and so hid what he had been given. Although the slaves were given

different amounts (a talent was a weight of gold or silver) on the basis of their respective abilities each one was expected to act faithfully with what he was given. As a result of acting faithfully each one was blessed with more. Jesus said, "to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance." The Lord blesses faithful action. Unfaithfulness meets with having blessings taken away and with being cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and grinding of teeth.

We are responsible to the Lord. Are you using what the Lord has given you faithfully? Yes, some have been given more than others, but the evaluation is less about the amount produced and more about the faithful response. An underlying message here seems to be that the Lord graciously multiplies blessings for faithfulness and takes away from those who act unfaithfully.

Rest assured that the master will return and he will settle the accounts with his slaves. Interesting that this parable is set in a context of three parables focusing attention on the Lord going away and then returning (cf. Matt. 25:1-13, 31-46). Get ready! The Lord is returning. Will he find you a faithful, expectant laborer?

6. Reading of Matt. 24:42-51. This summary reflects on the need to be alert in light of the coming of the Lord. Preparations need to be made. Faithful labor is necessary. I emphasize the need for faithful labor, because some seem to regard our time here on this earth as merely waiting and engaging in activities that are self-focused. It is everything but. It is a time of labor for the Master! The day of accounting is nearer now than ever before. Are you ready?

Applications:

1. What do you do that shows that you are aligned with God's intent to include "all nations" in the kingdom?
2. Have you ever found yourself hesitating to accept God's authority on a matter? What happened? Submission is often hard for us. God does not always agree with our thinking. Entrance into His kingdom involves submission to His authority even when it contradicts what we think.
3. Jerusalem was ultimately destroyed because they did not accept the authority of God. They had rejected the prophets and now were rejecting God's own son. How does this illustrate that things were taken away from those who acted unfaithfully?
4. When you think about the faithful work that we are called on to do for the Lord and the day of reasoning coming when the Lord returns do you see it as a time of blessing or a time of condemnation? Explain.