# Course Study Guide

# NT221 Luke-John: Jesus in JudeaOpposition & Rejection

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# Lesson 1 Study Guide

# NT221 Luke-John: Jesus in JudeaOpposition & Rejection

Digging Deeper into Luke & John

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# Objectives

This lesson focuses on what Luke and John contribute to our understanding of Jesus' Galilean ministry. In survey fashion you will study those chapters (Luke 9-17; John 5-11) that describe Jesus' Galilean ministry.

When you complete this lesson, "Digging Deeper into Luke and John," you should be able to

- Describe how Luke and John present Jesus' ministry in Galilee.
- Explain how and why Jesus used parables in His ministry and describe the process used to understand the parables.
- Explain why John's approach to presenting Jesus' ministry is different from the Synoptic Gospels.
- Form principles for godly living from Luke's and John's gospels.

# Scripture Reading

Read Luke 9-17 and John 5-11.

## Transcript

Course Title: Luke—John: Jesus in Judea—Opposition and Rejection

Lesson One: Digging Deeper into Luke and John

I. Introduction to Additional Material Related to Jesus' Galilean Ministry

In our last lesson we looked back across the period of time spanned by Jesus' Galilean ministry (which we had surveyed before that following the gospel of Mark) to see what additional material, particularly teaching material, was found in Matthew's sweep of Jesus' time in Galilee. In this lesson, we want to do the same with the gospels of Luke and John. There is far too much material here for a brief survey such as this to comment on each individual passage, but we will try to make some general observations and then point out some interpretive highlights of the text covered.

### II. Additional Teaching in Luke

A. Jesus' Travels From Galilee to the Cross

Only Luke has a central section of his gospel, beginning in 9:51 and going through approximately 18:34 and following, in which Jesus is apparently on the road, traveling from Galilee—having left it for this last and climactic time to make the trip up to Jerusalem for the fate that He knew awaited Him there. Yet when one looks at the geographical references that are found in this part of Luke they are few and far between, and what do appear rule out any kind of straight-line journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. In 9:51-56 Jesus sets out by way of Samaria, is rejected there, and goes to a different place, suggesting to many scholars that He traveled across the Jordan to the province on the eastern side of the river known as Perea. Therefore some scholars refer to this central section in Luke's gospel as Jesus' Perean ministry, although the word itself never appears in the Gospels so we cannot be sure about this geographical equation.

In 10:38-42 Jesus is with Mary and Martha whom we learn from the gospel of John resided in Bethany just outside of Jerusalem. It seems his journey is just about complete, and yet in Luke 17:11 we find Him back again journeying between the boundary of Galilee and Samaria. Probably, therefore, Luke is not trying to describe a single sequential chronological or straightline journey from Galilee to Jerusalem but rather grouping together what turns out to be almost exclusively teaching material of Jesus from one decisive climactic stage in His ministry, as He leaves Galilee for the last time and travels across various regions in the vicinity. In many cases we do not know exactly where He is at a particular time, but always under the shadow of the cross.

B. Another Look at Jesus' Parables

It is interesting that Luke's distinctive concern to present Jesus as a teacher of parables

comes particularly to the fore in this central part of his gospel. We have made some brief comments already about parables in connection with Mark 4, but we may expand on them here. If one looks at the structures of the plots of the various stories Jesus tells to illustrate the truths of the kingdom of God, we discover that seldom, if ever, are there more than three main characters or groups of characters and that in a significant majority of cases those three characters are grouped in a triangular fashion. That is to say one particular character seems to stand for God—a master or a father or king figure. Other characters or groups of characters take on subordinate roles, often contrasting with each other—an exemplary model to be followed and a wicked or nonexemplary model to be eschewed. In many cases the heroes, the people whose models we are to follow, turn out to be surprise heroes; they are the reverse of who we might expect.

We can illustrate this very clearly with the parable of the Prodigal Son, the longest of all Jesus' parables, in which a father clearly stands for God in His lavish love, the Prodigal Son for the wayward person in this life who seems to be as far from God as possible and yet who returns and is welcomed, even lavishly, and the hardhearted elder brother who is likened to some of the Pharisees and scribes by Jesus in Luke 15:1 and following who are grumbling at His acceptance of tax collectors and "sinners." We see it in the parable of the Good Samaritan, although here the central character is not someone in a position of power but rather one in a position of powerlessness. Yet he is able to do one thing; he is able to recognize who offers him help—neither the priest nor Levite, symbols of the Jewish clergy and those whom one would have expected to be the helper, but rather the hated Samaritan. Not all parables fall into this model; some have three characters but each is a subordinate of the previous one, as in Luke's parable of the unjust steward or Matthew's parable of the king who forgives a servant of a large debt. Several shorter parables may make only one or two main points based upon their main characters, but these relatively few structures that recur again and again are good to keep in mind when interpreting Jesus' parables.

There is always a central theme that is illustrated by means of a finite and relatively small number of subpoints according to the main characters. And we must beware of reading in details of allegorizing or symbolic meaning to all of the supporting elements of the passage, as unfortunately has often been done in the history of the church. With these brief overview comments we may turn now to some selected remarks on teachings and events which are narrated in Luke 9:51-18:34, again focusing just on some highlights.

### C. Urgency of Christ's Call

In 9:59-62, Jesus issues two of His famous commands about letting the dead bury their own dead and not even stopping to greet people or say farewell to those at home, both of which sound enormously harsh and presuppose rather elaborate burial and even elaborate greeting and farewell procedures of the ancient world, so that they are not quite as harsh as they perhaps sound in various modern contexts. Nevertheless, both illustrate dramatically the urgency of Christ's call. As one commentator has put it, following Jesus is not a task which is added to others like working a second job—it is everything. It is a solemn commitment, which forces the disciples to be, to reorder all of their duties.

In 10:1-24, we have the famous sending of the seventy or, as some manuscripts have it, the seventy-two disciples), parallel to sending out of the Twelve that occurred earlier in Jesus' ministry, but now perhaps more overtly involving or at least foreshadowing a mission to the Gentiles. The number seventy, even the very textual variant seventy or seventy-two, harkens back to the Mosaic law in which seventy or seventy-two was said to be the total number of nations, including the Gentiles, in the world. It is in this context that we also read in 10:18-20 of how the disciples' ministry, particularly of exorcism, fulfills Jesus' words that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Although Satan remains active throughout the entire church age, His defeat has been ensured by the first coming of Jesus. The second coming will simply be a mopping up action. Or the famous illustration from World War II that has often been used— D-day occurred with Christ's first coming; V-Day, or victory day, will occur with Christ's return. We can be assured that complete victory has already been made certain.

### D. Violation of Cultural Principles

Luke 10:25-37 then points us back to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Again, we must remember our historical background of the hated enmity between Samaritans and Jews. Whatever else this passage teaches—a good model for compassion, the fact that the religious professional must show as much love as someone else—clearly the punch line, the most dramatic countercultural effect of the passage, was to have one who was a hated enemy, from a Jewish perspective, be the hero of the story. Unless we recontextualize the passage today to make the hero someone who is one of our hated enemies, perhaps in the context of racism or tribalism, we will have lost much of the force of Jesus' initial teaching.

Chapter 10:38-42 is the famous story of Jesus and Mary and Martha, to which brief allusion has been made in our introduction to Luke. Again, it is worth reiterating that Jesus violates the cultural principles that women's roles were to be primarily domestic, and praises instead Mary for counterculturally acting as though she were qualified to be a learner, a disciple at the feet of Rabbi Jesus.

### E. Exegetical Controversy

Luke 11:29-32 involves another interesting exegetical controversy, as Jesus refuses to work a sign on demand for His skeptics, a consistent practice throughout the Synoptic Gospels. He then predicts that just as Jonah (Mt 12:38-40, parallel passage) was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the Son of Man must be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. Some people, counting very literally, have assumed therefore that since Easter took place on a Sunday, the Resurrection, the only way to get three full days and nights prior to that is to have Jesus crucified on a Wednesday. There are chronological reasons for rejecting this, as we will see when we come to the passion narrative, but the language here can be explained as a Semitic idiom: in the Jewish language and culture, a day and a night, strange as it might sound to modern ears, could be used to refer to any portion of a 24-hour period of time—that is, any portion of Friday evening and Sunday morning combined with all day Saturday would have qualified as three days and three nights in the ancient Semitic mindset.

### F. Riches

Luke 12:13-21 (like its twin parable, Luke 16:19-31), the parables of the rich fool and the rich man and Lazarus are again very pointed about the potentially damning effects of riches to make it possible, as in the case of the rich fool, for someone to take no thought for God, or as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus, never to have repented. But it is interesting to see how one determines those who have taken no thought for God or never repented. It is those who are aware of the acutely physically needy in their midst, at their doorstep, able to help with lavish material possessions, and yet who lift not one finger to help. When one sees some of the statistics of the paucity of contemporary Christian giving (the percentage even in local churches of people who give not a cent as far as any records are kept) to the Lord's work, one wonders how many closet non-disciples masquerade as Christians in our age.

### G. End Times

Luke 12:35-48 includes several parables of Jesus that bear on His views of the end times. Luke apparently intentionally groups three of these together to form a very interesting combination. In the parable of the watchful servants in verses 35-38, the master comes later than is expected. In the parable of the householder and the thief in 39-40, He comes entirely by surprise. In the parable of the faithful and unfaithful steward in verse 41 and following, He comes sooner than is expected. Put together, these three give us all possible options for the timing of Christ's return: later than expected, sooner than expected, or completely unexpected. How dare any of us continue, as unfortunately Christians from time to time do, to claim to know the time of Christ's return.

### H. Kingdom Reversals

Luke 13:10-14:24 give a series of kingdom reversals. All of the passages in this section deal with mistaken expectations about the nature and participants of the kingdom. It again is a sobering reminder to think of how frequently Jesus declared the religious leaders of His day those who everyone would have believed that if anybody was right with God surely these people were—as the people who were outside of the kingdom; or as those who were ostracized and outcast from the community were declared inside. I wonder how often we fall victim to the same mistake in our thinking today.

### I. Discipleship Is Costly

Luke 14:25-35 is a collection of short passages that talk about counting the costs and remind us that following Jesus in discipleship is a costly activity. Luke 14:26 is perhaps the most stringent of these, calling upon us to hate our fathers and mothers—if we do not we cannot even be a disciple. The parallel in Matthew 10:37 helps explain a Semitic idiom here: Jesus is really saying our love for God must be far greater than that for any human friends or family. But it is a sobering reminder again, when we pair this teaching with Jesus' earlier teaching that those who are His spiritual followers are His true family, rather than His biological siblings or mother, and to ask ourselves, "Have we often reversed this and put our families above our Christian brothers and sisters in our thinking and in our priorities today?"

### J. More Parables

Luke 15 introduces us to the famous triad of parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and, we might say, lost sons—although the passage is better known as the Prodigal Son. We have already alluded to some comments about it. The parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16:1-13 does not praise the steward's injustice but praises his shrewdness and recognizes that Christians, unfortunately, are often much more naive than shrewd in a healthy and positive way.

### K. Arrival of the Kingdom

Luke 17 includes important teaching again about the arrival of the kingdom, balancing the fact that it is "in our midst" (Luke 17:21)—a better translation than "within us." Jesus' point is that, with His ministry, the kingdom is in the midst of the Jewish leaders He is speaking to, not that somehow it is inside of them since they are His opponents. Also, Luke 17:22-25 goes on to point out the future aspects of the kingdom yet to be fulfilled.

### III. Additional Teaching in John

After this rapid-paced survey of some highlights of Luke's central section, we may turn in the second part of this lesson to what we have omitted thus far in the gospel of John, John, particularly in chapters 5-11, has very little material that duplicates what we read in any of the Synoptic Gospels, even though he is describing the same period that Mark, Matthew, and Luke do, that we have labeled the Galilean ministry. The parallels that do appear come with the miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water in John 6. But apart from these two stories, the substantial majority of all that John narrates involves all those occasions in which He went up to Jerusalem. If we had only the Synoptic Gospels we would perhaps never guess that Christ's ministry lasted more than a few months, certainly no reason to imagine it more than a year. But John punctuates his gospel with references to Passovers in chapter 2, 5, and again in chapter 6, suggesting to us that a three-year ministry or perhaps even slightly more comprised the time of Jesus' public appearance in Israel.

John, for whatever reason, has no desire to repeat information that is already told well in the Synoptic Gospels for this phase of Christ's life, but instead highlights that aspect of the story that Matthew, Mark, and Luke have not told: Jesus traveling up to Jerusalem as a faithful Jewish man was expected to do at the time of the various seasonal and annual festivals. In each case, He embroils Himself or finds Himself embroiled in controversy with the Jewish leaders. In each case, He makes what seem to them presumptuous, if not even blasphemous, claims about His identity. In each case, John—consistent with his pattern throughout the first half of his gospel—continues to intersperse long sermons with various signs or miracles that Jesus works. And in these chapters also appear a number of Jesus' famous "I am" sayings: I am the bread of life, the living water, and so forth—pointers to His identity that have seemed to many readers much clearer than the more veiled allusions to His self-understanding in the Synoptic Gospels.

### A. Healing on the Sabbath

The first of these distinct episodes in John 5-11 appears in chapter 5: Jesus heals a paralyzed

man. There are parallels in this story to the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2 (and parallels), but the important controversy that this healing generates is not Jesus' claim to forgive sins, as in the Synoptic account, but the fact that He heals on the Sabbath. He apparently is violating the law from the perspective of the Jewish leaders. Jesus, therefore, defends His right to heal on the Sabbath by saying that His Father is working even on the Sabbath, and therefore He is working—in the Jewish minds, identifying Himself too closely with God the Father (see especially John 5:17-18). But the bulk of the sermon that ensues, verses 19-47, focuses instead on the Son's dependence on the Father—that He does absolutely nothing other than what He sees the Father doing and what is the Father's will. Both that humanity and dependence, as well as the divinity of Christ, must be stressed in any balanced understanding of Jesus. Recall our comments in introducing the gospel of John about its probable origin as a response to Gnosticism which, among other things, believed that Jesus was fully God, but had greater troubles with his humanity because they believed the material world was inherently evil.

### B. Living Water

The next distinctive portion of John 5-11 then comes at the Feast of Tabernacles in chapters 7-8. Here Jesus announces Himself as the living water in the context of the dialogue of 7:1-52, and this fits very nicely the ceremonies that took place as part of the Festival of the Tabernacles. There was the water drawing ceremony on the final day of the festival, in which priests processed from the Pool of Siloam to the temple with the golden pitcher of water proclaiming, with trumpet blasts, the text of Isaiah 12:3—"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." What a poignant opportunity for Jesus to stand up in the midst of this ceremony and say, "I am the living water."

In most of our modern-language translations, the story of the woman caught in adultery occupies John 7:53-8:11. We had commented in an earlier lesson on the textual criticism of the New Testament that this text almost certainly was not in the original autograph of what John first penned, although the story rings true and may well be something that Jesus actually did. For a survey of the original text of John, therefore, we should pass over this text in silence and in doing so we see a connection that is not otherwise clear, namely that 8:12 follows flawlessly on from the end of 7:52 as a continuation of the Festival of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem and the claims that Jesus made there.

### C. Light of the World

From living water we turn to the light of the world, which is also appropriate if this is still the ceremony or Festival of the Tabernacles, because on the final day, the eighth day following the seven days of the standard ritual of the Festival of the Tabernacles, the candelabra in the temple is deliberately not lit. It was a service of darkness, if you like. Into this context Jesus stands up and declares that He is the light of the world. That claim forms the transition into chapter 9, where He will state again in the context of the healing of a man born blind that He is the light of the world, a natural contrast from literal blindness to the discussion of spiritual blindness.

But before He gets there, the remainder of chapter 8 includes perhaps the most pointed and detailed controversy between Jesus and various Jewish members of His audience to date. At the climax of this controversy Jesus also makes His greatest, His most outrageous, His most exalted claim for divinity thus far, when quoting—now explicitly even as He had alluded to it implicitly in the context of the walking on the water—the very divine name of Exodus 3:14, "I am"—ego eimi in the Greek—"Before Abraham was," our modern translations of John 8:58 states, "I am." That is not bad grammar; that is an allusion to the divine name. And the outrage of the Jews shows that they understood it as such.

### D. Healing Miracles

Proceeding then to chapter 9, this chapter is entirely occupied with the miracle story—the healing of the man born blind—but its focus eventually and most prominently centers on the debate about Jesus' identity that this miracle generates. The man himself comes to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and to say as much to the Jewish leaders. But they are unprepared, because of Jesus' unorthodox style and His healing on a Sabbath, to accept this testimony. On Jesus as a judge, one commentator has written: His presence and activity in the world themselves constituted judgment, as they compel men and women to declare themselves for or against Him.

It is also interesting to note in passing the similarities and differences between the two miracles of healing on a Sabbath of John 5 and John 9. In the one case, the case of the paralyzed man in John chapter 5, Jesus tells the individual after he has been healed to stop sinning, lest something worse befall him. Here, apparently, this man's physical malady was at least in part the result of some spiritual sin. Pity the poor disciples, who in John 9, think they have learned this lesson but do not know how to apply it to a man born blind, and ask the natural question, "Who sinned, this man (presumably in-utero) or his parents?" And Jesus' reply is, "Neither, but rather that you might see the glory of God." There are times when no one's sin at all is directly responsible for sickness or suffering.

### E. The Good Shepherd, True Liberator, and Resurrection of Lazarus

John 10-11 then rounds out this supplementary material from John: by portraying Jesus as the Good Shepherd over against the false hirelings, the Jewish leaders of His day (John 10:1-21); the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah (10:22-42), in which Jesus portrays Himself as the true liberator—someone who is one with God—in a way that is outrageous enough that the Jewish leaders take up stones to try to stone Him, (10:30 and following); and finally the marvelous miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:1-57), not the first resurrection that Jesus has performed but the first one of someone who has been dead for several days already. As John likes to do, he then balances this miracle with a statement, a sermon, and a claim by Jesus. The miracle points out Jesus' identity as the one who is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). How ironic that the chapter concludes with Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, plotting to kill Lazarus and ultimately to kill Jesus because they are too dangerous. Do they think that the power of death will somehow keep Jesus down when He has shown the ability to raise others? Obviously they do not yet understand.

# **Discussion Questions**

Read Luke 9:57-62, Luke 14:25-35, and Matthew 10:32-39. What does Jesus say about the cost of discipleship? If we take Jesus' call to discipleship seriously, how will it affect the way we live and think?
What does Jesus say about wealth in the parables of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) and the rich man
and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)? How can you apply this teaching to your life?
Describe, in your own words, ways in which John's gospel is different from the Synoptic Gospels. Why are these differences important? How would our view of the Christ's life and work be different without the gospel of John?

# Further Study

### Suggested reading for this lesson:

Stedman, Ray C. Adventuring Through the Bible: A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible. Discovery House Publishers: 1997.

Read Chapters 51 and 52: "The Perfect Man" (Luke) and "The God-Man" (John)

### **Philip Yancey Devotional** The Vital Link - John 15:1-16:4

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

The sense of urgency grew inside the stuffy, crowded room. Jesus had just a few more hours to prepare His disciples for the tumult that lay ahead. More, they were His closest friends in all the world, and He was about to leave them.

In this passage, Jesus envisions what will happen to the little band after His departure. He foresees fierce opposition, and hatred, and beatings, and executions. The disciples would face all these trials on His behalf, and without His physical presence to protect them.

As He had done so often, Jesus searched for an allegory, a parable from nature to drive home His point. Just outside Jerusalem, rows of vineyards covered the hills—probably, He and His disciples had walked through them on their way to the city—and Jesus summoned up two images from those vinevards.

First, the image of lush, juicy grapes. Not long before, the disciples had drunk the product of those grapes as they listened to Jesus' deeply symbolic words about the blood of the covenant. In order to bear fruit, Jesus said, one thing was essential: They must remain in intimate connection with the vine. Jesus also reminded the Twelve that He had hand-picked them for a specific mission: "to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."

Then Jesus mentioned one more image: a pile of dead sticks at the edge of the vineyard. Somehow, these branches had lost their connection with the vine, the source of nourishment. A farmer had snapped them off and thrown them in a heap for burning. They no longer had a useful function.

Most likely, Jesus' disciples did not fully understand His meaning that night. But the symbol, with its abrupt contrast between juicy grapes and withered branches, would stay with them. The spectacular history of the early church gives certain proof that they eventually heeded His heartfelt words about "remaining" in Him.

Life Question: In what ways do you work at "remaining" in Jesus?

## Glossary

**Parable** — (Greek *parabole*) - A "placing beside;" a comparison; equivalent to the Hebrew mashal, a similitude. A metaphor or simile often extended to a short narrative. In biblical contexts, parables are almost always formulated to reveal and illustrate the kingdom of God.

**Samaritans** — The name given to the new and mixed inhabitants whom the king of Assyria brought from Babylon and other places and settled in the cities of Samaria. They claim descendancy from the northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh following the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.

**Exegesis** — This is the process by which a text, as a concrete expression of a "sender" to a "receiver," is systematically explained.

## Ouiz

- The "end times" parables found in Luke 12 indicate Jesus' return may be:
  - Later than expected
  - Sooner than expected B.
  - C. Completely unexpected
  - All of the above D.
- The book of John presents almost all of the material found in:
  - A. Matthew
  - Mark В.
  - C. Luke
  - None of the above D.
- The province of Perea was located:
  - East of the Jordan River A.
  - В. West of the Iordan River
  - C. North of the Jordan River
  - South of the Jordan River D.
- The three parables about "lostness" are found in Luke chapter:
  - A.
  - В. 12
  - C. 15
  - 20 D.
- The town of Bethany was where:
  - Peter and his family lived A.
  - The Samaritan "woman by the well" lived B.
  - C. Pilate resided most of the year
  - Mary and Martha lived D.
- What did Jesus mean when Luke quotes Him as saying, "Let the dead bury their own dead"?
  - A. Following Jesus is not like working a second job—it is everything.
  - In God's kingdom, earthly family ties are not important. В.
  - Once a person is dead, proper burial is a waste of time. C.
  - Rituals surrounding death are not important; rather, it is the things of life that D. matter.
- What does Jesus teach about the arrival of the kingdom in Luke 17?
  - A person called the "antichrist" will come to deceive people. A.
  - The kingdom of God is in our midst now, but some aspects are yet to be fulfilled. B.
  - C. Satan will act like a dragon and try to destroy Christians.
  - Before Jesus returns, believers will see signs to alert them of the day He is coming.

- What literary features do the parables of Jesus often contain?
  - A complex character and a simple character
  - В. A simple moral and a more complex one
  - A meaning that only the Jewish people of Jesus' day could understand C.
  - A God-figure and a wicked figure D.
- Which of the following did Jesus **not** intend to teach through the parable of the Good Samaritan?
  - A. It is usually the common people rather than the wealthy, or those with great resources, who help the needy.
  - We must not get so focused on ministry that we cannot stop to help someone in В. need.
  - C. We must be prepared to be unexpectedly generous when we see need.
  - Even our enemies are our neighbors. D.
- 10. Which story about Jesus is **not** found in the gospel of John?
  - Healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath A.
  - В. Calming the storm
  - C. Raising of Lazarus
  - Healing on the Sabbath of the man born blind D.

Answers: 1. D 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. D 6. A 7. B 8. D 9. A 10. B

# Lesson 2 Study Guide

# NT221 Luke-John: Jesus in JudeaOpposition & Rejection

Jesus in Judea and His Final Week of Ministry

Updated 2014



# Objectives

This lesson surveys the final phase of Jesus' ministry, the Judean phase and Passion Week. You will study important teachings that led up to Passion week and then walk through Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem.

When you complete this lesson, "Jesus in Judea and His Final Week of Ministry," you should be able to:

- Explain how Jesus' controversial teachings in Judea solidified the Jewish leaders' opposition to Him.
- Describe the events of Sunday through Tuesday of Passion Week.
- Explain how the gospel writers organized their material to focus on their purpose for writing.
- Interact with some of Jesus' essential teachings and crucial lessons for living as a Christfollower.

# Scripture Reading

Read Mark 10-13, Matthew 19-25, and Luke 18-21.

## Transcript

Course Title: Luke—John: Jesus in Judea—Opposition and Rejection

Lesson Two: Jesus in Judea and His Final Week of Ministry

#### I. Introduction

In this lesson we begin to near the climax and the end of Jesus' life on earth—the final geographical phase of His adult ministry is what is usually referred to as the Judean ministry. We do not know the length of time that He was actually on the road after He left Galilee for the last time, heading for that final fateful visit to Jerusalem. We have referred to that period of His ministry as the period of rejection, the period in which He traveled under the shadow of the cross. But in Mark 10 (and its parallels in Matthew 19 and Luke 18), at some point—perhaps several weeks before the Passover that would bring about His final demise—Jesus finds Himself in Judea, the southernmost territory of Israel, teaching along the road to the crowds who gather and answering questions of various inquirers.

### II. Final Days of Jesus' Ministry

### A. Question of Divorce

The first episode that the Synoptic Gospels relate during this phase in Mark 10 (and parallels) is a question designed to trap Him, by some of the Jewish leaders, on the theme of divorce. This was a hotly debated issue among the two Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel, both interpreting the Deuteronomic legislation of Deuteronomy 24 in different ways, Hillel very liberal in situations in which divorce might be permitted and Shammai very strict. Jesus seems to side with Shammai, as He replies that only in the case of adultery or marital unfaithfulness is divorce permitted; but in one sense He is even stricter than Shammai by pointing out that it is merely permitted rather than actually mandated, as that branch of Pharisaism would have taught. But the main thrust of this opening passage of Mark 10 is Jesus' words that point back to God's initial intentions for couples from creation onward. He alludes to the teaching of Genesis 2 that a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, the ordinary and expected faithfulness of the marriage ordinance is one that is to be lifelong. Only under exceptional circumstances does God even countenance separation.

This teaching matches the teaching of Jesus in the third antithesis of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and it is supplemented in 1 Corinthians 7, as Paul admits a second exceptional situation—namely, when an unbelieving partner wishes to leave. The question that comes to many people's minds today is whether or not there are any other such situations in which God could countenance divorce, perhaps as the lesser of two evils. And it may be significant to notice what the two exceptions of the New Testament have in common. Both rupture one half of the marriage covenant as outlined in Genesis. In the one case the sexual fidelity, becoming

one flesh, has been broken; and in the other case the leaving and cleaving, the physical proximity and allegiance to one's spouse above all other human individuals, has been broken.

Perhaps the way to ask the question if there are any other exceptional circumstances not foreseen in the cultures of Judaism or Corinth is to ask the question: Are there any other situations in which a marriage, already de facto, is ruptured? We need to be very careful lest we ever begin to make a list of such situations and suggest to people that it is always acceptable. It may be much more biblical and much more sensitive to simply proceed on a case-by-case basis. But we dare not lose sight of the main thrust of Jesus' teaching here, and that was to call a culture that had grown very liberal in its toleration of divorce back to a much higher and much more stringent ethic, much like we saw in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

#### B. Self-denial

The next encounter in Jesus' Judean ministry, as He is heading up to Judea to Jerusalem along the road, is a brief story about self-denial, in which He blesses little children who are brought to Him and uses that as an occasion to teach about how one must enter the kingdom like a little child. Here we must be careful what part of childlike we take Jesus to be referring to; certainly He is not calling on believers to be childish, but rather to be childlike in recognizing their dependence on someone other than themselves—in this case, God in Christ.

### C. Christian Stewardship

The third encounter that Mark 10 and parallels narrate is that with the rich young ruler—a much more detailed account in which Jesus astonishes His disciples by commanding this wealthy young inquirer to sell all His possessions, give to the poor, and come and follow Him. We must recognize that this is not a command that Jesus gives to every would-be disciple. In fact. Luke seems to make this point particularly clear by immediately juxtaposing the stories of the conversion of Zacchaeus—in Luke 19 after His parallel to the rich young ruler in Luke 18, and then the parable of the pounds (minas) also in Luke chapter 19, beginning in verse 11.

Put together, these three stories illustrate three very different models of Christian stewardship. In one case the command is to sell all, in the second case Zacchaeus who voluntarily gives up only half and promises to restore fourfold what he has cheated anyone from, and then the parable of the pounds, which commends those servants who invest their master's money. They do not give any of it away; in fact they earn even more. But lest we suddenly become content with an unbridled capitalism, we are reminded that all of the money ultimately returns to the master. Whichever model we follow, whatever God calls us to do in our particular situation, what is important is that 100 percent of that belongs to Him. And whatever percentage we may specifically give away for the needs of the poor (and Luke certainly makes it clear elsewhere, as we have seen in earlier lessons, that we are to be generous—we who have surplus wealth), for the very needy people—particularly Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world whatever percentage we may give we must consider all that we have to be on loan from God, and be good stewards of it.

### D. Third Passion Prediction

At the end of Mark 10, Jesus then turns to that teaching about His upcoming suffering and death, the third and final passion prediction of Mark 8, 9, and 10. In this context, He rebukes His followers who are squabbling over who is going to be greatest in the coming kingdom by pointing out that whoever wants to be greatest must be servant of all. And in this context appears Mark's famous chapter 10 verse 45, which we have alluded to earlier, that highlights one of Mark's key perspectives on Jesus: Jesus the suffering servant—He who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life, a ransom for many.

### III. On the Verge of the Final Week

### A. On the Way to Jerusalem

At this point we have arrived on the verge of the last week of Jesus' life. The healing of blind Bartimaeus at the end of Mark 10 occurs in the context of Jesus being in the vicinity of Jericho down near the Jordan River, just a day's climb up the road leading to Jerusalem, leading to the capital city. John's gospel, in chapter 12, narrates a story that immediately precedes Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and therefore, chronologically, must be the event that is dated next. John says this took place six days before the Passover, which would mean that we are speaking of the Saturday prior to Jesus' death on the day we call Good Friday.

### B. Jesus in Bethany

This was the story of Jesus in Bethany—what today we might call a suburb of Jerusalem—a small village on the far slopes of the Mount of Olives, at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, whom He had recently raised from the dead. Here Mary anoints Jesus with an expensive, almost a year's worth in wages, bottle of perfume, anointing Jesus as it were for His upcoming death and burial. John draws the contrast between Mary's response and Judas' response very poignantly. Some have speculated that perhaps these were the first two to really comprehend and believe that Jesus was going through with this ignominious plan to allow Himself to be arrested and crucified. But each reacts in diametrically opposite ways: Mary out of faith, and Judas out of cynicism and skepticism, perhaps upset that Jesus was not going to be the military ruler to overthrow the Romans, putting the final nail in Judas' coffin, so to speak his plan to betray Him.

At any rate, Judas in this passage protests that this money that Mary in essence wasted could have been given to the poor: another reminder that Jesus was not a uniform ascetic—there are times for lavish expense and outpouring of worship for Christ. But it is that Jesus' response, "The poor you have with you always," is often misinterpreted by modern well-to-do believers. It is in fact an excerpt from a quotation from Deuteronomy that continues by saying that you can help them any time you want, as Mark's parallel points out. Therefore, Deuteronomy goes on to say, "I command you to be openhanded and generous toward the needy in your land." Mary's exceptionally lavish outpouring of love is for an exceptional situation; the norm for Christian living should be compassion for the poor. Mark and Matthew place this story in a different context in Mark 14 and Matthew 26, as if it took place on the night of Jesus' arrest,

although the careful reader will note that there are no specific chronological connectors to require us to place this event there. Presumably Mark and Matthew have moved it forward thematically, as they group material together thematically in many other places in their gospels, precisely because of the significance of Mary's anointing to prepare Jesus' body for His burial.

### IV. Palm Sunday

We may resume, then, the sequence of the Synoptic Gospels beginning with Mark 11 (and parallels) as we turn, on an almost day-by-day basis, to the events that eventually brought about Jesus' death. On Sunday, that Sunday that we today call Palm Sunday, Jesus is traveling up the road from Jericho toward Jerusalem and is celebrated with strewn palm branches and cries of "Hosanna!" meaning, "God save us!" in ways that suggest He has a great following.

But although He is performing a Messianic act, riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, the significance of the animal is lost on the crowd. This is no Roman general riding triumphantly into Jerusalem on a white horse; this is a very powerless individual coming on a simple beast of burden. The Messiah was to come to Jerusalem in humility, but this fact was largely lost on the crowds. Little wonder then, their disappointment and their dramatic change of behavior only five days later when presumably at least some of the same individuals in the streets of Jerusalem were calling out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

### V. Monday

### A. Bad News for a Figless Fig Tree

On Monday, after lodging in Bethany with Mary and Martha again, Jesus then reenters Jerusalem. En route He curses a fig tree, which is close by the road, that bears no fruit. This is the only miracle of destruction in the Gospels after the story of the demons that were cast into the swine in Mark 5; again it is not about destruction of human life but only, in this case, of a plant. But there is more symbolism here, it would seem, than simply Jesus' petulance at a tree that should have been bearing fruit and failed to relieve His hunger.

Fig trees in the Old Testament frequently symbolized Israel or the blessings of Israel in the Messianic age, when every Israelite would sit and enjoy the abundance of the land under his own fig tree. As Jesus curses the fig tree and the disciples marvel about it, His reply is, "Truly I say to you, that if you have enough faith you will be able even to say to this mountain 'Be cast into the sea,' and it will be done." This mountain probably refers to Mount Zion, the mount on which the temple sat—the mountain that the disciples and Jesus would have been looking at as they traversed the slopes of the Mount of Olives coming down into the Kidron Valley, just to the east of the city of Jerusalem.

Rather than being a carte blanche that we can do anything, however supernatural, if we simply have enough faith, this was probably a very specific teaching that fits in with the symbolism of the destruction of the fig tree, that fits in with the little parable of Luke 13:6-9 that talks about a fig tree representing the people of Israel that is soon to be destroyed if she does not repent all combining to threaten the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem, of the temple, and of the

entire sacrificial system for which the temple stood. In short, Jesus' teaching here is symbolic prophetic action of the coming new age that He was inaugurating. This same symbolism appears, and therefore our interpretation of this passage seems to be confirmed, by the other thing Jesus does this Monday of Passion Week, namely what has usually been called "cleansing the temple."

### B. Temple Tantrum

Again, that is somewhat of a misnomer. Just as the triumphal entry is perhaps better called a-triumphal, the temple cleansing is more a temple clearing. It is not that Jesus believed that at this late date He really could reform the practices in the temple; it is more of a prophetic gesture to symbolize that the days of the entire temple system are numbered. One scholar has cleverly called this Jesus' "temple tantrum"; and that perhaps is, however tongue-in-cheek, a better name than the temple cleansing. Soon there will be no temple and there will be no need for a temple, as those who worship God come to Him through Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice for sin, in whatever part of the world they may live.

### VI. Tuesday

### A. Controversial Teachings

Jesus then, on Tuesday, takes up a series of teachings of controversies with various groups of people milling about the temple precincts. Here it makes sense to have surveyed, early on, a little bit about the various groups of Jewish leaders, because all of the questions they ask and Jesus' answers then make good sense. The chief priests asked by what authority Jesus had upset things in His earlier temple tantrum. They are the ones in charge, and therefore the question of authority is a natural one. Jesus does not answer directly but tells a short story, which in essence points out that His authority comes from the same place John the Baptist's did. And because John was popular among the crowds the authorities will not admit that he did not come from God, but neither will they say it directly; so, therefore, stalemate is reached.

The Pharisees and the Herodians, not normally companions except perhaps against a common enemy, then ask Jesus about taxes. The Herodians, supporters of Herod and the status quo, would have supported the paying of taxes while the Pharisees would not have. How can Jesus answer and not alienate one of the two groups? Well, He does so with His famous reply that in a sense acknowledges the legitimacy of both domains, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," but in so doing recognizes God as the higher authority. Caesar is not absolute as he would have claimed.

The Sadducees then come and inquire about Jesus' teaching about the resurrection, mocking His belief in an afterlife. But He finds a way to quote even from the Torah, the five books of Moses, a passage to prove the existence of the resurrection. A lawyer (naturally) comes and asks about the greatest commandment. Jesus replies in fashion that several Jewish leaders would have agreed with, "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." Then with all of these questioners or would-be tricks having been foiled, Jesus turns the tables and asks them about a passage in Psalm 110:1 in which David says, "The

Lord (Yahweh, God the Father) says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." In essence, the question He asks is, Who is this other Lord who is greater than David, if not the Messiah? The crowds have no reply.

From this point on, Jesus then embarks on sharp rebukes told in most detail in Matthew 23—of the scribes' and Pharisees' hypocrisy, and closes His time of teaching in the temple by commending the sacrificial and generous giving, even though the net worth of it was very small, of a widow who places into the temple treasury two small copper coins. Jesus leaves the temple, perhaps reminiscent in a way of Ezekiel's description of the glory of God departing from the temple because of the wickedness of the nation back in the times of the exile in the Old Testament.

### B. Olivet Discourse

He takes His disciples and He goes up to the Mount of Olives, and He gives to them what has been called the Olivet or the eschatological discourse, a sermon that occupies Mark 13, Luke 21 and, in greatest detail, Matthew 24 and 25. Having just been in the temple and left it, the disciples comment on the beauty and grandeur of what in the ancient world was considered one of the great wonders, architecturally and aesthetically, of the ancient world. Jesus' reply undoubtedly stuns them when He says, "Truly there will not be one stone left upon another." And that triggers a two-part question from the disciples: When will the temple be destroyed, and when will the end of the age come?

No doubt in the disciples' minds these two events were the same. They probably could not imagine God's plans for His people Israel continuing without a temple. Surely its destruction would bring about the end of the age. But as Jesus replies to the question He seems to separate His answer to the question into two parts. Now here, if ever, is a passage which both lay people and scholars have interpreted in very different ways, and we do not have the time to rehearse all of the different approaches to an interpretation of this message. Let me simply give one approach that reflects a broad consensus or cross section of evangelical biblical scholarship, even though it is perhaps not always as well known in certain parts as various other interpretations.

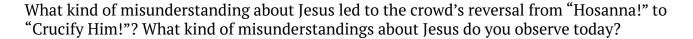
Jesus begins at the beginning of Mark 13:5-23 by responding to the first question: When will the temple be destroyed? The first part of His answer is to refer to certain signs which must be fulfilled, but which do not in and of themselves demonstrate that the end or the destruction of the temple will happen immediately. These include the rising of false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes and famines, persecution, and the Gospel being preached to all nations. There is no question about most of these events having been fulfilled, perhaps several times already in the first generation of Christianity. The Gospel being preached to all nations, at first glance, seems to be in a quite different category. We today speak of the Great Commission having yet to be fulfilled. Yet Paul can say, at least in some provisional sense, in Romans 10:18, that the Word of the Lord has gone forth to the entire earth—perhaps by that meaning representative sections of all major parts of the Roman Empire. And we need to recall that the term for the whole world that is used in several places in the New Testament could also be interpreted, and was in many other texts, as simply referring to the known world, i.e., the Roman Empire.

In verses 14-23, Jesus then proceeds to events immediately surrounding the temple's destruction, although from other texts in the New Testament, particularly the book of Revelation, we sense that similar events may be repeated even on a grander scale at the very end of human history. Here it's significant to compare Matthew and Mark's accounts with Luke's. Here is where Matthew and Mark speak very cryptically of "the abomination that causes desolation," whereas Luke speaks of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies—precisely what happened in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Then a period in which the Gentiles overrun the city ensues until that time is fulfilled.

All of the gospel writers speak of this as a time of great tribulation. And while we are used to thinking of the Tribulation in the book of Revelation as the period immediately preceding the end of human history, it would appear that in this context Jesus is speaking of the entire church age—the entire period at least from the destruction of Jerusalem to His Second Coming—as a time of great tribulation for His people in a variety of ways. This explains the way Matthew can then say in verses 24 and following of Matthew 24 that immediately following these events of the Tribulation, the return of the risen Christ will occur.

We cannot predict the time or the date of this. Mark 13:32 makes that very clear. Not even Jesus, in the limitations of His incarnate human form, knew the day or hour of His return. But the sermon continues for an entire chapter in Matthew, summarized much more briefly in Mark, with a collection of parables that all teach the main point of this sermon of Jesus: to be watchful, to be alert, to be about the business of Christ regardless of how long or how short it is until His return. That sermon then climaxes and closes with the discussion of the parable of the sheep and the goats—reminding people that all nations, all people, will be called to account one day, at a judgment day before God.

# **Discussion Questions**



In this lesson, Dr. Blomberg discusses Jesus' blessing of the little children and how He uses the occasion as an opportunity to teach about how one must enter the kingdom like a little child. What kinds of "childlike" characteristics is Jesus referring to? Why does Jesus value these qualities? Do you know anyone who demonstrates such characteristics? Explain.

Explain, in your own words, Mary's view versus Judas' view of her anointing of Jesus with the expensive perfume. Think of an example from your own life where you have acted or thought similarly to Mary or Judas (you can choose either one). Describe the scenario.

# Further Study

### Suggested reading for this lesson:

Stedman, Ray C. Adventuring Through the Bible: A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible. Discovery House Publishers: 1997.

Read Chapter 49 and 50: "Behold Your King!" (Matthew) and "He Came to Serve" (Mark)

### **Philip Yancey Devotional** One Final Meal Together - John 14

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)

The apostle John devoted one-third of his gospel to the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life. John stretched The Passover meal out over five chapters (13-17), and nothing like these chapters exists elsewhere in the Bible. Their slow-motion, realistic detail provides an intimate memoir of Jesus' most anguished evening on earth.

Leonardo da Vinci immortalized the setting of The Last Supper in his famous painting, arranging the participants on one side of the table as if they were posing for the artist. John avoids physical details and presents instead the maelstrom of human emotions. He holds a light to the disciples' faces, and you can almost see the awareness flickering in their eyes. All that Jesus had told them over the past three years was settling in.

Never before had Jesus been so direct with them. It was His last chance to communicate to them the significance of His life and His death. He refrained from parables and painstakingly answered the disciples' redundant questions. The world was about to undergo a convulsive trauma, and the eleven fearful men with him were His hope for that world.

"I am going away, and I am coming back to you," Jesus kept repeating, until at last the disciples showed signs of comprehension. God's Son had entered the world to reside in one body. He was now leaving earth to return to the Father. But someone else—the Spirit of truth. the Counselor—would come to take up residence in many bodies, in their bodies.

Jesus was planning to die, yes. He was leaving them. But in some mysterious way, He was not leaving. He would not stay dead. That night, Jesus gave them an intimacy with the Father such as they had never known; yet He promised an even greater intimacy to come. He seemed aware that much of what they nodded their heads at now would not sink in until later.

Life Question: This chapter contains many promises. Which have been fulfilled in your life?

# Glossary

Fig — Fig trees usually grow to about 15 feet in height, but can attain a maximum height of 25 feet. The fig tree of Palestine (*Ficus carica*) produces two and sometimes three crops in a year: (1) the early-ripe fig, which is ripe about the end of June; (2) the summer fig then begins to be formed and is ripe about August; and (3) the winter fig, which ripens in sheltered spots in spring.

**Hillel** — (Hebrew "he greatly praised") - Hillel "the Elder" (c. 60 B.C.-A.D. 20) was an eminent Jewish scholar and rabbinic leader in Jerusalem in the early Herodian period. It seems he was a native of Babylonia, but came to Jerusalem to study biblical exegesis. Shemaiah and Abtalion, two of the great "expositors," became his teachers. Hillel became leader of the rabbinic council after giving three arguments for the priority of the paschal sacrifice over the Sabbath.

**Jericho** — The city was located about five miles west of the Jordan River. It was an important city as the fortress that guarded the entrance to all the land of Canaan.

**Kidron Valley** — A valley east of Jerusalem, separating it from the Mount of Olives. The valley results from the confluence of several valleys northeast of Jerusalem, probably the most important of which is Wadi ej-Joz, with which it is sometimes identified. It ends, strictly speaking, where it joins the Hinnom Valley. The Kidron is a seasonal watercourse.

**Olives, Mount of** — This ridge is a spur of the central mountain range about two miles in length, which is divided from the principal range by Wadi ej-Joz, the Kidron Valley, and Wadi en-Nar.

**Shammai** — The most conservative of the two Pharisaic schools. Hillel was very liberal in situations in which divorce might be permitted and Shammai very strict. Jesus seems to side with Shammai in Mark 10, as He replies that only in the case of adultery or marital unfaithfulness is divorce permitted; but in one sense He is even stricter than Shammai.

**Tribulation** — External circumstances that cause an individual a great deal of internal stress. The "Great Tribulation," taken by some to be a specific period of suffering at the end of earthly history, is hinted at in the Old Testament (Dt 4:30), developed by Jesus (Mt 24:15-31), and prophesied in the book of Revelation (Rev 7:14).

**Zacchaeus** — A wealthy "chief tax collector" at whose house in Jericho Jesus stayed (Lk 19:1-10).

## Quiz

- According to Dr. Blomberg, a better name for Jesus' cleansing of the temple might be "temple ...":
  - "scrubbing" A.
  - "clearing" В.
  - C. "tantrum"
  - D. Both B and C
- A time of "great tribulation":
  - Was never discussed by Jesus
  - В. Was hinted at in the Old Testament
  - C. Is not relevant to the book of Revelation
  - Took place before the beginning of human history
- Hillel "the Elder" was:
  - A. An eminent Jewish scholar
  - B. A rabbinic leader in Jerusalem
  - Probably a native of Babylonia C.
  - All of the above D.
- How does the Olivet Discourse come to a close?
  - With the Great Commission A.
  - With a description of the destruction of the temple В.
  - With a prediction of the timing for Christ's return C.
  - With a reminder that all nations and all people will be judged before God one day D.
- Which prophet's prophecy is fulfilled when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey?
  - Zechariah's Α.
  - Ezekiel's В.
  - Obadiah's C.,
  - D. Micah's
- Jesus probably cursed the fig tree because:
  - It was symbolic of the people of Israel, and therefore of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple system of animal sacrifice.
  - He was upset at not having an anticipated snack. В.
  - This particular fig tree did not have figs on it when it should have. C.
  - He wanted to demonstrate His power over nature one last time before the cross.
- 7. The Kidron Valley is not:
  - Near the Mount of Olives Α.
  - В. Located at the confluence of several valleys
  - C. On the west side of Jerusalem
  - A seasonal watercourse D.

- The story of the anointing of Jesus at Bethany teaches us that:
  - It may be acceptable to offer a present of great expense in an act of devotion to Iesus.
  - В. When it comes to spending money, it is always better to spend more on worshiping Jesus than on caring for the poor.
  - The poor will always be with us; therefore, we should not think we can ever make C. much of a difference.
  - D. People who take your money to care for the poor always have ulterior motives.
- 9. What do the examples of Zacchaeus, the rich young ruler, and the parable of the minas teach us about Christian stewardship?
  - If we have too much money, we will not want to enter the kingdom of God.
  - В. If at some point in our lives we don't give all our possessions to the poor, we are not true followers of Christ.
  - C. We are to view all we have as a gift from God, and to be generous with it.
  - Having wealth will cause us to be alienated from God. D.
- 10. What is a main theme of Jesus' eschatological discourse?
  - When we see false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, and famines, we can know the end of the age is near.
  - В. We should not be concerned about the end of the age.
  - False messiahs will be obvious to all, and we must reject them. C.
  - We must be alert for Christ's possible return at any time. D.

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. D 4. D 5. A 6. A 7. C 8. A 9. C 10. D