

Missing the Messiah

Helpful Resources

The Passion Week: The Last Seven Days of Christ's Ministry

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Jesus finally arrived in Jerusalem, which was the start of the last week of His earthly ministry, what we call Passion Week. His entire life and ministry culminated in the events of this week, fulfilling His purpose for coming to earth — “to give His life as a ransom for many” (*Mk. 10:45*). However, despite such an important mission, the people of that day seemed oblivious to the significance of the moment; and no one expected the week to end the way it did, despite all the predictions and warnings that Jesus issued before His arrival. What happened? The single greatest moment in human history was either missed or misunderstood. The One who came to redeem mankind from the curse of sin was either despised or dismissed. In this review, we will consider the people who did and did not miss the Messiah's mission.

- Missing the Moment

1. **Judas** (*Jn. 12:4-6*): When Mary anointed Jesus with an expensive bottle of perfume, he chided her for wasting it when it could've been used for the poor. He was really hoping to use the opportunity to enrich himself. He cared more about money than the Messiah.
2. **Religious Leaders**: No one was colder and more callous to the Messiah than the religious leaders. For example, the chief priests not only wanted to kill Him, but they also wanted to kill Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead (*Jn. 12:11*). Several leading groups (Herodians, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes) attempted to trap Jesus by asking Him loaded questions (*Mk. 11:27-33; 12:13-37*). Jesus exposed their treachery with parables (*Mk. 12:1-12; Matt. 22:1-14*) and warned them of their judgment (*Matt. 23:1-36*).
3. **People of Jerusalem** (*Mk. 11:1-11; Matt. 21:1-11; 23:37-39; Lk. 19:28-40*): When Jesus came to Jerusalem, some welcomed Him as the prophet from Galilee, while others hailed Him as the Messiah. However, they believed that He was coming as the promised King who would reestablish the kingdom of David and free them from Roman oppression. They had the right person but the wrong purpose. Though the people cheered His arrival, Jesus wept for the city of Jerusalem and its future destruction (*Lk. 19:41-44*).
4. **Israel or Judea** (*Jn. 12:37-40; Mk. 11:12-14, 20-25; Matt. 21:18-22*): Despite all that Jesus had done, few people believed in Him. As a nation, they were hard-hearted and resistant to the Gospel. As a symbol of their fruitlessness, Jesus cursed a barren fig tree.
5. **Temple Troublemakers** (*Mk. 11:15-19; Matt. 21:12-17; Lk. 19:45-48*): When Jesus visited the Temple, He found businessmen taking advantage of the Passover worshipers and the sacrificial system to make money. They missed the point of the Temple, as a house of prayer, and brought dishonor to the name of the Lord. Jesus was not pleased.

6. **Unwilling, Unproductive, and Unprepared** (*Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-30*): In Jesus' parable of the wedding feast, there were those who were unwilling to accept the King's invitation. They missed their chance. In the parable of the bridesmaids, there were five ladies without oil for their lamp. They were unprepared and missed the Groom's arrival and consequently the wedding. Finally, in the parable of the servants, the unproductive servant did not invest his talent and make a profit. When the Master returned, his talent was taken from him and given to another.

- Making the Most of the Time

1. **Fans of Jesus** (*Jn. 12:20-36*): Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to attend Passover paid a visit to Philip (also Greek) and asked him to introduce them to Jesus. They had heard about His miracles and didn't want to come to Jerusalem without seeing Him. They were not disappointed, as they heard the voice of God speak to Him.
2. **Friends of Jesus** (*Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 12:1-8*): Before going to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped in Bethany to visit some friends. Simon, who had been healed of leprosy, held a dinner in His honor. Lazarus, Simon, and the disciples sat at the table with Jesus, and Martha prepared and served dinner. Mary, too, did not want to waste the moment but wanted to worship the Lord. She poured perfume over Jesus' head and feet and wiped His feet with her hair. Though the others complained of the smell and the apparent "waste" of money, Jesus appreciated what she had done, preparing His body for burial.
3. **Followers of Jesus** (*Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-30*): Jesus shared three parables that highlighted those who were faithful followers. First, Jesus shared a story about a great feast with guests from everywhere. They had accepted the invitation from the King when others had not. The second parable was about five bridesmaids who eagerly waited for the Groom's arrival. The third was about two servants who were faithful to invest their talents and bring a profit while they waited for their master to return.

- Prophetic Passages

Jesus shared some of the most descriptive prophecies of the end times, explaining what we should expect to happen before His return (*Mk. 13:1-37; Matt. 24:1-51; Lk. 21:5-38*).

The Bottom Line

Instead of missing the Messiah, we should make much of Him with the time and talents we have.

Questions to Consider

1. With which of the six people who missed the Messiah do you most associate — Judas (apathy, idolatry), the religious leaders (angry, discontent), the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea (cold, callous, misinformed), the Temple troublemakers (playing the religious game), or those from the parables (unwilling, unproductive, unprepared)? Explain why.
2. Why do you think most people miss the Messiah (Jesus) today?
3. What are you doing to make much of Jesus as Mary did, worshipping, sacrificing, and honoring Him with your words and actions?
4. What about the end times prophecies did you find most encouraging or alarming?
5. What are Christ's followers to be doing until He returns? Are you?