

The Final Countdown

Week 15: April 9-15 – Mt. 23-26; Mk. 12-14; Lk. 20-22; Jn. 13

BiAY.org | NT Reviews
30% Complete – 260 Days to Go

Helpful Resources

The Passion Week: The Last Seven Days of Christ's Ministry, Order of End Times Events

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Jesus is in Jerusalem for His final week. The countdown to the cross has begun. So many events are packed into His last days that it will take us nearly a month to cover them all. However, in our reading this week, Jesus had His final showdown with the Pharisees. He gave His final prophecies about the end times, and He also met with His disciples for their final meal together. Meanwhile, Judas made a deal to betray the Lord, which set in motion the final act of Jesus' life — dying on the cross "as a ransom for many" (*Mark 10:45*). In this review, let's take a closer look at this final countdown.

- The Final Countdown

1. **Final Words to the Pharisees** (*Mk. 12:35-40; Matt. 22:41-46; Lk. 20:41-47*): Jesus saved His harshest remarks for the religious leaders who are pictures of legalist hypocrites. "They say things but do not do them..." He also condemned these men (especially the Pharisees) to hell for their misleading the Jewish people.
2. **The Last Days** (*Mk. 12:41-44; Matt. 23:37-24:51; Lk. 21:5-36*): After the disciples commented on the beauty of the Temple, Jesus predicted its destruction (by the Romans in 70 AD), as well as some of the events in the end times. In His Olivet Discourse, Jesus gave the disciples warning signs and challenged His followers to be alert for His return.
3. **Working While We Wait** (*Matt. 25:1-30*): Jesus told the parables of the bridesmaids and talents. Some of the bridesmaids were not ready for the Groom to return, and one of the servants did not invest his talent to make a profit. To be a faithful servant means to be busy about the work of the Master until He returns.
4. **Final Judgment of the Nations** (*Matt. 25:31-46*): Upon His return, Jesus forewarned of a separation of the world into sheep and goats, those who accepted Him and those who rejected Him. This judgment will be one of the final events before the Lord's earthly reign.
5. **Making a Deal with the Devil** (*Matt. 26:1-5, 14-16; Lk. 21:37-22:6*): The event that kickstarted the trial and crucifixion of Jesus was Judas' betrayal. The Bible says that Satan entered Him, and He made a deal with the chief priests to deliver Jesus to them. The enemy had been seeking an opportunity like this, and he finally got it.
6. **Final Act of Ministry** (*Mk. 14:12-21; Lk. 22:7-14, 21-23; Jn. 13:1-30*): During the last supper with His disciples, Jesus took up a towel and washed their feet. The final act of His earthly ministry was one of humble servanthood. For one to be great in the eyes of God, he must first become a servant. Jesus even washed the feet of His betrayer, Judas.

- Last, But Not Least

1. **The Poor Widow** (*Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4*): After scolding and condemning the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, Jesus pointed out a poor widow who gave everything she had as an offering to God. Her sacrifice did not go unnoticed.
2. **The Least of These** (*Matt. 25:31-46*): When Jesus spoke of the judgment of the nations, He said that He pays attention to how we treat the poor, hungry, thirsty, and imprisoned. While works of service in their care are not to earn salvation or favor with God, they are evidence that we are His followers. We care for them because He cares for them.

- Prophetic Passages

The major prophecies of the week were, of course, regarding the end times. Let's look again at what Jesus said will occur (*Matthew 23:37-24:51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36*). The chart entitled, "Order of End Times Events" may be helpful here.

1. **False Prophets and Imposters** (*Mark 13:6, 21, 22*): Pretenders will arise, saying they are the Messiah, even performing miracles, but Jesus' return won't be missed by anyone.
2. **Wars and Rumors of Wars** (*Mark 13:7, 8*): Nation will compete against nation, as the Devil attempts to rule all people and build his one-world government.
3. **Earthquakes and Famines** (*Mark 13:8*): While the world has experienced these many times before, imagine if they increased and intensified.
4. **Great Persecution** (*Mark 13:9-13*): The more control over nations that Satan gains, the more that God's people will be targeted, marginalized, and eliminated.
5. **Gospel to the Nations** (*Mark 13:10*): Persecution always increases the spread of the gospel. True faith demonstrated in the face of danger is inspirational and contagious.
6. **Abomination of Desolation** (*Mark 13:14; Dan. 9:27; 11:31*): The Anti-Christ is a ruler who will broker a deal with Israel and then break it, demanding that they and the rest of the world worship his image. His image will be displayed in the rebuilt Temple.
7. **Great Tribulation** (*Mark 13:19, 26*): The Lord's wrath and judgment will be unleashed on the earth and its people in a way never seen before.

While some of these signs have occurred and will continue to occur, Jesus said that they will increase in intensity, like a mother experiencing birth pangs before delivery (*Matt. 24:8*).

The Bottom Line

The final days were (and will be) set in motion by prophesied events.

Questions to Consider

1. Which story, parable, or event encouraged or challenged you most this week? Why?
2. What is it about Jesus washing the disciples' feet that is so convicting to us today?
3. Works are to be important in the life of a believer. Why? What works should we endeavor?
4. What has been your experience with giving to the Lord? Why is giving so difficult?
5. Why are the end times so fascinating? What cautions should we heed regarding them?