



This is the third lesson from the period of Jesus' ministry that spans from the 3rd Passover to the beginning of the last Passover week. During this period Jesus will spend much time in and around Jerusalem teaching and dealing with the Jewish religious leaders. In the end, they will reject and threaten Him and He will once again retreat to the northern territory before He makes His final entry to Jerusalem to suffer and die and then resurrect.

95. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

John 10:22-42

The Feast of Dedication/Lights/Hanukkah was a feast lasting eight days commemorating the time when the temple was rededicated after being desecrated by a foreign king.

Antiochus IV, a Greek ruler, forbade Jewish worship and tried to bring Greek influence into Jewish life.

- He brought unclean things and animals into the temple (IE - sacrificed a pig on the altar).
- The Jews revolted (Maccabean Revolt 200 BC) and regained their freedom and set about to reinstate public worship and rededicate the temple.

- It was during this time of religious renewal that the party of the Pharisees (separated ones) rose up to champion the purity of Jewish life and Scripture in rejecting foreign influences (Greek).
- The Pharisees were heroes among the people at first.

When the temple was rededicated, the lamp (oil lamp) in the temple was relit, but there was only enough oil for one night. According to Jewish writings (Talmud), not Scripture, the lamp burned for eight days with only one day's worth of oil. This event was commemorated with the Feast of Lights.

The modern celebration uses a Menorah that has seven lights.

- The middle or top light is called the "Shamash" or "Sentry." It is lit first to provide a useful light in order to see.
- The other six lights are not to be lit for utilitarian purposes.
- Their purpose is for a witness and remembrance of the festival.

In the same way, Christians don't eat unleavened bread as food – we use it as an emblem of Christ's body when we take communion. The Jews light one of the six lights each night during the festival.

It is during this occasion that Jesus declares His Oneness with God and the Jews try to kill him for the 3rd time.

He appeals to them to believe based on His works alone,

- They refuse and try to seize Him.
- He escapes to Peraea near the Jordan River where He had worked with John and those who were there believed in Him.

96. Journey to Bethany to minister to Lazarus

Luke 13:22; John 11:1-16

During His preaching Jesus receives word that His friend, Lazarus, is deathly ill and that He is needed.

- Jesus purposely remains where He is for several more days before returning to Bethany to care for Lazarus.
- The Apostles are afraid and confused. Jesus refers to Lazarus as "asleep" so they question why they should go to Bethany in the first place.
- Jesus has to tell them in plain words that he is dead.
- At this point the Apostles don't understand why Jesus still wants to go.

They are also afraid to go near Jerusalem (Bethany where Lazarus lived was only 2-3 miles from Jerusalem). Jesus has narrowly escaped death so they don't want to go back.

Thomas breaks the deadlock by declaring that he's ready to die following the Lord so they are encouraged and agree to follow Jesus back to Bethany.

97. Another threat from Herod

Luke 13:31-35

While this was going on, Jesus receives other news that would normally prevent Him from going into crowded or public places where He was known.

The Pharisees approach Him with the message that Herod is out to kill Him.

- Jesus responds that although cunning, Herod cannot hurt Him before His time and ministry are over.

It is at this point that Jesus laments over Jerusalem, knowing that the people were going to reject Him.

There would be more miracles and teaching, but Jesus knew and declared at this point the final outcome of the

- Jewish reaction concerning Him: rejection and death;
- and God's reaction concerning them: rejection and judgment.

98. Cure of the man with dropsy

Luke 14:1-6

Between the time of the news about Lazarus and His eventual arrival at Bethany, Jesus spends several days continuing to minister and heal.

It seems that Jesus is having a meal with Pharisees and others when a man with dropsy comes to Him or is put there by the Pharisees to test him.

- (Dropsy is not a disease but a symptom of heart, kidney or liver disease, usually a swelling of the body due to water retention.)
- The Pharisees were waiting to see if Jesus would heal this man on the Sabbath.

- They knew He could heal him, they just wanted to see if He'd do it in such a way as to accuse Him of something.
- Jesus asks them if they would save one of their animals on the Sabbath and if so why condemn Him for saving a human being.
- After this He went ahead and cured this person. They had no reply.

99. Parable of the great supper

Luke 14:7-24

After the healing Jesus gives them a parable concerning the guests that were at the meal and teaches them several lessons with it:

- Don't take the best seat until invited so you won't be embarrassed. The principle of the kingdom is that those who raise themselves up will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be honored.
- Don't do good to get a reward or a favor returned. Do good to help those in need regardless of what they can do for you. Your reward for good is always from God, no matter what the world does or does not do.
- Those who refuse God's invitation to be with Him will be left out and others will take their place at the heavenly banquet.

This parable was meant for these Pharisees who refused God's invitation to the heavenly banquet through Christ, thinking they would get there without Him.

Once again Jesus warns them that one way or another God will be glorified, if the Jews didn't do it, He would receive glory by honoring the Gentiles.

100. The cost of discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

After leaving the banquet Jesus continues to teach the crowds that follow Him. He teaches them more deeply on the meaning of discipleship. He shows them that it is more than just following Him around to witness miracles and listen to His teachings. Discipleship requires several things:

- An absolute devotion to the Lord beyond that of family, even one's own life. Anyone or thing that becomes an obstacle to following the Lord needs to be overcome. It doesn't necessarily have to be a sin. If it comes between you and Jesus, it needs to go.

- A willingness to suffer for the Lord and one's faith is a necessary component to being a disciple.
- An understanding that discipleship will require these things and a readiness to go ahead anyways.
- A desire to live life in such a way (IE-salt) as to make a difference in this world and not be conformed to this world.

Jesus regularly pruned His disciples with these teachings to cut away those who were just curious, who didn't really believe or who loved sin more than they loved God.

In many ways He still does this today by forcing us to choose Christian living over sinful living; the Bible way over man's way; church life over worldly life; quality over quantity; purity over popularity; devoted over dynamic.

101. Parables of lost people and things

Luke 15:1-32

Once the banquet is over Jesus moves about the general populace and is crowded by publicans and sinners who also wanted to hear Him teach and preach.

- The Pharisees and Scribes grumbled about this accusing Jesus of associating and eating with undesirables.
- His response to their criticism was to tell the crowd several parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

The point of all of these was twofold:

1. God searches for those that are lost, even if it's only one;
2. God rejoices when the lost are found, no matter how lost they were.

The Pharisees and Jews in general forgot that God used the Jewish nation but loved all mankind.

- They thought God simply chose them as His people and didn't care about the rest.
- Jesus reminded the sinners that there was hope for them and rebuked the Jews for having neglected their original mission – to be a light to the Gentiles and prepare the way for the coming of the Savior of the entire world.

102. Parables of the unjust steward and rich man and Lazarus

Luke 16:1-31

The parables spoken to the crowds were followed by two parables shared only with His disciples. This was probably done as they travelled along on their way to Bethany and Lazarus who awaited.

A. Unjust Steward

This parable focuses on a disciple's need to serve only God and do so sincerely. Jesus makes several points including the ideas that if one is faithful in little, he will be faithful in a lot, and the idea that you cannot use worldly attitudes and methods in the kingdom.

B. Rich man and Lazarus

This parable warns that the proper use of one's wealth and blessings is to serve the needs of others, especially those who suffer.

It also shows the finality of judgment once it is pronounced.

Jesus warns that His word will be the standard by which we are judged.

- We need to believe it.
- Those who saw signs as well as those who didn't will both be judged based on their obedience to Jesus' word.

103. More instructions to the disciples

Luke 17:1-10

Again Luke describes further teaching and training that Jesus gives His disciples as they travel towards Bethany. Jesus gives a serious warning to those who would make others stumble, especially children.

- Other subjects include teaching on being generous in forgiveness,
- The power of faith (mustard seed),
- And the duty of disciples to serve the Lord.

- Jesus says that these things are the natural duties of those who would be His disciples.

Much of the disciples' and Apostles' training took place during these trips.

104. Jesus raises Lazarus

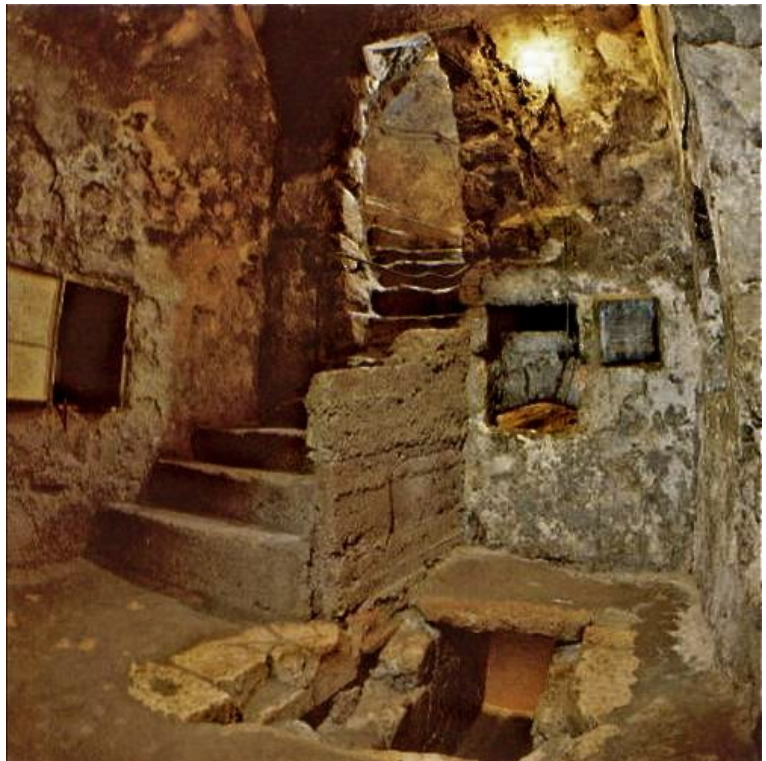
John 11:17-46

Bethany was two and a half miles from Jerusalem and it has taken Jesus at least four days to get there, probably more since he is already in the tomb.

- Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, and Jesus stayed at their home when He was in the area.
- Martha meets Him before He gets to the village.
- She is upset because He didn't get there on time but wants reassurance her brother is saved and will resurrect in the future.
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- Mary also met Him and is more bold in saying that He could have saved him from death had He come. She is overcome with grief.

Jesus is overwhelmed by human emotion at the death of His friend and the sorrow it has caused. With only a few words He calls Lazarus to come out of the tomb and Lazarus does so.

In Jesus' prayer we learn that the reason for the delay was to be able to perform this great miracle and glorify God through Lazarus' death. It was also done this way to provide yet another sign of His identity as Messiah.



105. The high priest decides to put Jesus to death

John 11:47-53

Some who saw the miracle were amazed and believed, others brought the news to the Jewish religious leaders.

- They acknowledge the great power of Jesus,
- Their reaction is fear that their authority and position would be challenged.
- They then decide to kill Him.

The king, the religious fanatics, the lawyers and now the high priest were in league to take Jesus' life. His circle of enemies was now complete.

106. Jesus retreats to the north

John 11:54

Once again Jesus avoids a situation where He could be taken before the time is right. He heads north near the border of Samaria, not quite into the region of Galilee, in a place called Ephraim.

Here He will stay and minister until the final Passover week when He will return to Jerusalem for the climax of His ministry.

Lessons

1. Jesus was focused

Note that in all this activity, traveling, threats and confrontation Jesus remained focused on one thing and one thing only: His ministry to the people. He spent little time defending Himself against His detractors or hiding out from those who wished to kill Him. Also, He did not use up time feeling sorry for Himself or being depressed. He remained "on task" every day: teaching and training the disciples, preaching to the crowds, dealing with the scribes and ministering to the people.

There will always be distractions and obstacles in our Christian lives. Despite this reality, we need to maintain our focus and stay on task in serving Jesus and

the church. That is how we will cope with all of these things and find peace and satisfaction.

2. Jesus will arrive

Mary and Martha fretted over Jesus' delay. The people mourned and gave up hope. When He finally arrived, their fear and sorrow were for nothing: He raised Lazarus.

We fret and get all worked up waiting for Jesus to answer, waiting for Him to supply, waiting for Him to save us somehow, but we always worry for nothing. Whether in a little while or in the end, Jesus will always arrive and when He does He brings comfort, healing and salvation.

Let's not worry. If it's Jesus we are waiting for, He will always arrive and when He comes He will address our concerns.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 10

107. Luke 17:11-19
108. Luke 17:20-37
109. Luke 18:1-14
110. Matthew 19:1-15; Mark 10:1-16; Luke 18:15-17
111. Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30
112. Matthew 20:1-16
113. Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34
114. Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45
115. Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-19:1
116. Luke 19:2-10
117. Luke 19:11-28
118. Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 11:55-12:11

Discussion Questions

1. Summarize the following actions by Jesus:

- Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-42)
- Journey to Bethany to minister to Lazarus (Luke 13:22; John 11:1-16)
- Another threat from Herod (Luke 13:31-35)

- Cure of the man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6)
 - Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:7-24)
 - The cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-35)
 - Parables of lost people and things (Luke 15:1-32)
 - Parables of the unjust steward and rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:1-31)
 - More instructions to the disciples (Luke 17:1-10)
 - Jesus raises Lazarus (John 11:17-46)
 - Jesus retreats to the north (John 11:54)
2. Recall times you've lost focus or become discouraged in your journey of faithfulness. What caused you to lose focus and what helped to regain your focus?
 3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?