

Reading Together
Year Long New Testament Bible Reading
January 18 - 25

January 18 – Mark 11: 12 – 12: 12

People would travel from all over to come to the Temple in Jerusalem to make sacrifices to God. Because many had to travel from a long way off, they were unable to bring the animals required for the sacrifice with them, so they had to buy them when they got to Jerusalem. Merchants set up tables in the outer court of the Temple, which was known as the court of the Gentiles. There were three things about this that upset Jesus. First, they had turned the Temple into a place of business. Second, they were making such a commotion that the Gentiles (the outsiders) could not pray, and thirdly they were overcharging and cheating people.

In Mark 11: 20 – 21 Peter remarks that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed the day before for not having any fruit has withered and died, and Jesus uses this to point out the power of prayer. In 11: 23 -24 Jesus promises that God will answer all of our prayers that are in accord with His will. Please be sure to note these are not selfish prayers for ourselves but prayers for the kingdom to come and God's will to be done. Jesus also uses verse 25 to remind us of the importance of forgiveness.

In Mark 12: 1 – 12 Jesus tells a parable that recounts the history of how the Jews had killed the prophets that God had sent to them and were about to kill God's son as well.

January 19 – Mark 12: 13 – 44

In Mark 12: 13 – 34 there are three attempts to trip Jesus up and make him say something that the authorities can use against him. The first question came from the Pharisees (the religious teachers), and the Herodians (the ruling political party) to try to get Jesus to say something treasonous against Caesar, so they can kill him. Jesus sees their trap and gives a wise answer that means the coin belongs to Caesar so it is his, but your life belongs to God. Then a second group, the Sadducees (part of the priests), try to trip Jesus up with a question about marriage after the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Jewish law required

that when a married man died and had no children the man's brother had to marry the widow. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, were trying to get Jesus in the middle of a controversy over the resurrection. Jesus' answer makes it clear that there will be no marriage in the resurrection, but there is indeed a resurrection because God is not the God of the dead but of the living. The third question is found in 12: 28 -34 and it is in regard to what the most important commandment is. Jesus again answers this question by quoting Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18).

Finally, after all of these questions Jesus asks one of his own by quoting from Psalm 110:1. The point Jesus was making was that the Messiah who would come from David's family line would be greater than David was, because David would call him Lord. Jesus is that Messiah. Jesus then gives his disciples a warning about the religious leaders who had questioned him. He pointed out their hypocrisy, and then in verses 41 – 44 he shows the humble and genuine heart that God is looking for when a poor widow puts two small coins in the offering box.

January 20 – Mark 13: 1 – 37

In this passage Jesus tells his disciples some of the things that will happen to show that the end times were coming. There is a lot of debate about whether Jesus was talking about things that were going to happen in AD 70 when the Romans came into Jerusalem and destroyed everything in it including the Temple (see verse 2). Other scholars believe that many of these events have yet to happen and will not happen until Jesus comes again (see verses 7 and 8). Verse 10 clearly has not been fulfilled yet, as there are many who have yet to hear the Gospel. I think the best argument is that Jesus is talking about both times. In verse 14 when Jesus talks about the abomination that causes desolation he is talking about the temple being profaned. Daniel 11:31 also talks about this. Some scholars think that this was fulfilled first in 168 BC when Greek conquerors sacrificed a pig in the temple, and then further fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple.

As you read this passage don't worry so much about when Jesus is coming (Jesus says in 32 -37 that not even he knows the day or the hour), or what

events have happened or haven't happened, just heed Jesus' warning and be prepared! That is really the main point!

January 21 – Mark 14: 1 -31

As chapter 14 opens Jesus is anointed with perfume by a woman. This perfume was very valuable, and in fact may have represented all of her savings. We can see the extravagance by the way the disciples react to what the woman does. It is never a waste to offer Jesus everything you have no matter what it is, and this unselfish act of love was prompted by the Holy Spirit to prepare Jesus' body for burial. It is interesting because it seems like this event pushed Judas over the edge and on his way to betraying Jesus. As the time draws near for Jesus to die he serves his disciples a Passover meal and institutes what we refer to as The Lord's Supper. Finally, Jesus predicts that all his disciples (not just Peter) will desert him.

January 22 – Mark 14: 32 – 72

After the Last Supper, Jesus takes his disciples out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus encourages them to pray to be ready for the temptations that lay ahead of them. Instead they fell asleep while Jesus prayed. It is interesting that Jesus overcame his temptation to walk away from the cross, and the disciples didn't overcome their temptation to walk away from Jesus. Then Judas leads a crowd to where Jesus is and Jesus is arrested. Jesus is then taken before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Court) to be put on trial. They try to have false witnesses testify against him, but they can't agree on what the charges against Jesus should be. Finally, Jesus is pronounced guilty of blasphemy because he tells them that he is the Christ (the Messiah). Does it amaze you that Jesus (God's Son) allowed people to hit him, spit on him and abuse him? Finally, the chapter closes with Peter's denial of knowing Jesus in any way.

January 23 – Mark 15: 1 – 41

The Jews had to have the permission of the Romans in order to have someone put to death, so Jesus is taken before Pilate, the Roman magistrate. Pilate tries to have Jesus released, but the stirred up mob demand Jesus be executed. Jesus is turned over to Roman soldiers who

beat him and mock him and then crucify him. As Jesus dies the curtain of the Temple is torn in two. The curtain is what separated the dwelling place of God from the people. It was torn from top to bottom by what could only have been the hand of God to show that Christ's sacrifice for us has made a way for us to come to God and live in His presence.

January 24 – Mark 15: 42 – 16: 20

Mark 15: 42 – 47 records how Jesus was taken from the cross and placed in a tomb that was provided by Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy member of the Pharisees, and it was the Pharisees who conspired to have Jesus put to death, so this was a bold move on his part to go and ask Pilate for Jesus' body. Contrast his boldness with the timidity of the disciples as they ran and hid. Mark tells us that Pilate was surprised that Jesus had died so quickly (about 6 hours), because normally it took several days for one who had been crucified to die, but remember all that Jesus had been through, being beaten and whipped, prior to his crucifixion, also remember that while Jesus was on the cross a soldier pierced his side with a spear (John 19:34), which hastened his death.

Because it was the night before the Sabbath there was no time to properly prepare Jesus' body for burial, so all they did was wrap him in strips of cloth. On Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, some of the women came to finish preparing Jesus' body and an angel gave them the good news that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Verses 9 - 20 were not included in many of the very earliest New Testament manuscripts that have been found, so many scholars think these verses were added at a later date.