

## **A GROWING THREAT**

Jesus had been traveling throughout Israel for almost three years, healing people and teaching about God's kingdom.

Some of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders were angered by his actions. The Pharisees believed that Jesus was breaking God's laws and misleading people. Other Jewish leaders feared that Jesus was stirring a revolt that would cause the Romans to remove them from their positions of power. Because of this, a group of Jewish leaders gathered to try and stop Jesus.

## **DINNER WITH THE PHARISEES**

Despite the rising tension, Jesus continued to meet with the Pharisees and even dined in their homes. At one of these meals, Jesus reclined at the table without performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom before a meal.

The Pharisee hosting the dinner was shocked to see Jesus do this. So Jesus said to those around the table, *"You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but the inside is still filthy. Your lives are just like that—so clean when people are watching, but inside you're full of hate, greed, and pride. You love to sit in seats of honor and power. If you want to be clean, stop ignoring justice and the love of God. Give to the poor."*

The Pharisees and religious leaders were extremely offended by Jesus' words. But Jesus continued, *"You're worse than your ancestors in Israel; you have great knowledge about the things of God, but you don't live in the ways of God's kingdom. In fact, you keep other people from living in them!"*

After he said this, Jesus got up to leave. As he walked out, the Pharisees and leaders became hostile, questioning Jesus and trying to get him to say something they could use against him.

## **TRIUMPHAL ENTRY**

When it came time for the annual Passover festival, Jesus and his disciples, and Jews from all over the land, traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate.

As they journeyed, Jesus told two of his disciples, *"Go into the village ahead. As you enter, you'll find a young donkey tied up that no one's ever ridden. Bring it to me."*

The two disciples found the donkey just as Jesus said and brought it back to him. They spread their clothes over the donkey's back for Jesus to ride on.

As Jesus got closer to Jerusalem, crowds lined the streets to see him. People spread their coats on the ground in front of Jesus to honor him. They waved palm branches as a symbol of victory—many hoped that Jesus was their new king, who'd overthrow the Roman Empire and reestablish Israel's kingdom.

But Jesus was riding on a donkey—a symbol of humility and peace. This was much different from the way Roman generals and kings entered Jerusalem. They rode in on mighty horses in a military procession.

When Jesus' followers began to sing and shout, *"Glory and blessings to God's new king!"* some of the Pharisees in the crowd demanded that Jesus tell them to stop singing and praising him.

Jesus answered, *"If the people are quiet, then the stones along the road will start cheering!"*

When Jesus saw the city of Jerusalem up ahead, he started to weep. As he looked toward to city, Jesus said, *"If only you had recognized the way to true peace. But now it's too late. Peace is hidden from you. Before long, your enemies will crush you . . . all because you didn't see God's messenger right in front of you."*

### **JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE**

In Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple courts and saw merchants selling animals for sacrifice and dealers exchanging foreign money.

So, Jesus made a whip with some rope and chased the merchants and their animals out of the Temple. Then, he flipped over the moneychangers' tables, scattering their coins all over the ground!

*"Get these things out of here!"* Jesus said. *"Stop turning God's house into a marketplace!"* Seeing this, his disciples remembered how passionate Jesus was about the Temple being a place where people were consumed with a love of God, not just keeping rituals.

But some Jewish leaders who were watching demanded, *"What right do you have to do this? Prove that God has given you authority by showing us a miracle!"*

*"All right,"* Jesus said to them. *"Tear down this Temple. Then, I will raise it back up again in three days."*

*"What?"* the leaders yelled. *"It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?"* It was only later that disciples of Jesus realized that he wasn't talking about the Temple building, but about himself.

While in Jerusalem, Jesus taught outside the Temple each day. This made some of the religious leaders very upset, so they began to plan ways to stop him. But the crowds continued to be captivated by Jesus' teaching.