

## **Bible Reading Challenge 40: MESSIAH – THE LAST WEEK**

### **Ages 4-8**

**Key Verse: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24)**

The last week before Jesus died is called “Passion Week.” The word “passion” is a way of describing really great sorrow and suffering. But of course, it begins on a pretty happy note. Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, with crowds of people singing His praises. They’ve heard how powerful He is, and one miracle He did stands out in their minds: He brought Lazarus back to life. Imagine a leader who had power over life and death!

But Jesus has been arguing for months now with the Pharisees and Scribes, and they’ve had enough. Put yourself in their places—Jesus tells everyone that you’re wrong. He makes fools of you when you try to argue with him (He always knows the right answer!), and he even tells people that they shouldn’t listen to you. That you are not God’s children, but Satan’s! And now he’s come to your town where you have some control, and people are calling Him king. If He becomes king, what will happen to you? You’ll be a nobody, with no power and no money and no way to take care of your family. Sure those Romans are annoying, but at least they stay out of your business. No, it’s time that Jesus learn to keep His mouth shut. And the best way to do that? Why, let the Romans crucify Him of course!

Jesus knows exactly what will happen, and why it has to happen. He will soon become the cornerstone—the most important person not just of Judea, or the Roman Empire but all human history: “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone it will crush him” (Luke 20:18). From now on, everyone who has ever lived will either stand on Jesus as the rock, or be judged by him. He is ready to be the grain of wheat that dies, and “bears much fruit.”

**Reading for this Week:** John 11:14-36; Luke 19:20-38, Mark 14:1-25, John 17.

**Further References:** Genesis 49:10-11, Zechariah 9:9-10, Exodus 12:1-20

### **Questions:**

This week we read two anointing stories (remember that Christ, or Messiah means “anointed one”). What similarities and differences do you see?

1. What reasons do the Pharisees and priests give for getting rid of Jesus in John 11? From various incidents in the reading this week, can you think of any others? What does John 11:51-53 say about Caiphas? What does 12:9-11 say about all of them?
2. How many moods does Jesus show in Luke 19?
3. Compare Luke 19:37-38 with Luke 2:10-14. Who is crying out “Glory to God in the highest” and why?
4. How does Jesus outsmart the Pharisees and Sadducees in Luke 20:1-8 and 19:26?
5. What was Passover all about? (See Exodus 12:1-20) What does it mean that this is Jesus’s last meal?
6. List all the petitions of Jesus’s prayer in John 17. Who is he praying for in each case?

### **Activities:**

- **Timeline:** Make a timeline of the events from the Garden to Christ’s Passion Week, leaving room for the coming Resurrection.
- **Math Minute:** Draw the life-cycle of wheat. Then research how many heads of grain are on

one wheat plant. (You can use legos or pennies to show the numbers if you'd like.) If each of these seeds grew into plants, how many heads of grain would that produce? And if they fell into the soil and reproduced, how many heads of grain would that be? Then take a minute and talk about Jesus's life and how it has born fruit in the lives of the disciples, and their followers, and their followers, and their followers...all the way to your own lives.

- **Burial Customs:** Start by guessing what you think burial customs would have been like in Jesus's time. Come up with a few questions, like these: Would Lazarus have been covered in wraps? Would he have been mummified like the Egyptians? Would he be in a tomb or a cave? Then research ancient burial customs of the Middle East and find out the answers to your questions. If you really want to cement what you've learned, have an ancient Middle Eastern funeral for one of your stuffed animals.