

# *The Gathering Storm*

By George O. Wood

*The chief priests and the teachers of the Law heard this and began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city (Mark 11:18; 19, NIV).*

Jesus' cleansing of the temple lit the fuse of the opposition. Already, Mark has noted 10 different occasions of the gathering storm against Jesus (**2:6,7; 2:16; 2:24; 3:6; 3:22; 7:1,2; 8:11; 10:2; 10:35**).

Until now the opposition of the chief priests—who were Sadducees—had not been in the equation except by Jesus' own reference that they would participate in killing Him. The opposition heretofore had been led by the religious right—the Pharisees and teachers of the Law.

In cleansing the temple, Jesus alienates the religious left—the temple establishment run by the Sadducees. His opposition is now complete on the left and right.

Nothing much has changed even today. On the left in “Christian” circles, we have the Sadducee-like churches that have abandoned core biblical doctrine and morality. I recently visited several churches in New England that were the fountain-head of the Great awakening and the modern missionary movement. Those churches now encourage in their bulletins and publications participation in gay pride marches. They are far from the faith of their Puritan fathers and mothers.

On the opposite end are the “Christians” whose spirit is as imbibed with legalism and self-righteousness as any Pharisee or teacher of the Law in Jesus' day.

It's now Tuesday evening and Jesus Leaves the temple precincts for the hour-long walk back to Bethany. Mark does not tell us specifically that Jesus was staying in Bethany, making reference instead to Jesus coming on Palm Sunday to Bethpage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives (**11:1**). Matthew notes He spent the night at Bethany while Luke simply notes He was on the Mount of Olives.

Bethany is on the Eastern slope near the top of the Mount of Olives. It is John's Gospel that colors in the details by telling us that the evening before the Triumphal Entry, Jesus came to Bethany and was served at a dinner by Martha and Lazarus, with Mary anointing Him. (**12:1-11**).

I've walked the route Jesus took. The temple mount is on a plateau in which you could fit 15 football fields. Jesus would have descended through the southern steps, walked down to the bottom of the Kidron Valley, and then started His ascent up the Mount of Olives at Gethsemane and over the crest to Bethany. He spent five nights there, from Saturday through Wednesday.

How fitting that Jesus would spend the evenings with people he loved—Mary, Martha, Lazarus and His disciples. The only glimpse we have of what they discussed during those evenings is the anointing of Jesus by Mary, which came the night before the Triumphal Entry.

Little did the disciples realize the impending crisis awaiting them. I wonder if they could have slept had they truly understood these were their last evenings with Jesus before the cross. Even after the Resurrection, we do not read of Jesus spending an entire night with them. Perhaps He did and it's simply not recorded. The Gospel writers, moved upon by the Holy Spirit, saw fit not to tell us. Perhaps one of the delights of Heaven will be our opportunity to have all the blanks filled in.

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