


SWAMP LUTHERAN
CHURCH
REINHOLDS, PA

Following Jesus: An Online Lenten Pilgrimage



O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Session One:

The Pilgrimage Begins-*Plot and Prediction of the Passion*

Goals:

- ▶ To see that the events unfolding in the story of Jesus' life will lead inevitably to the crucifixion.
- ▶ To see ourselves on a pilgrimage to the cross.

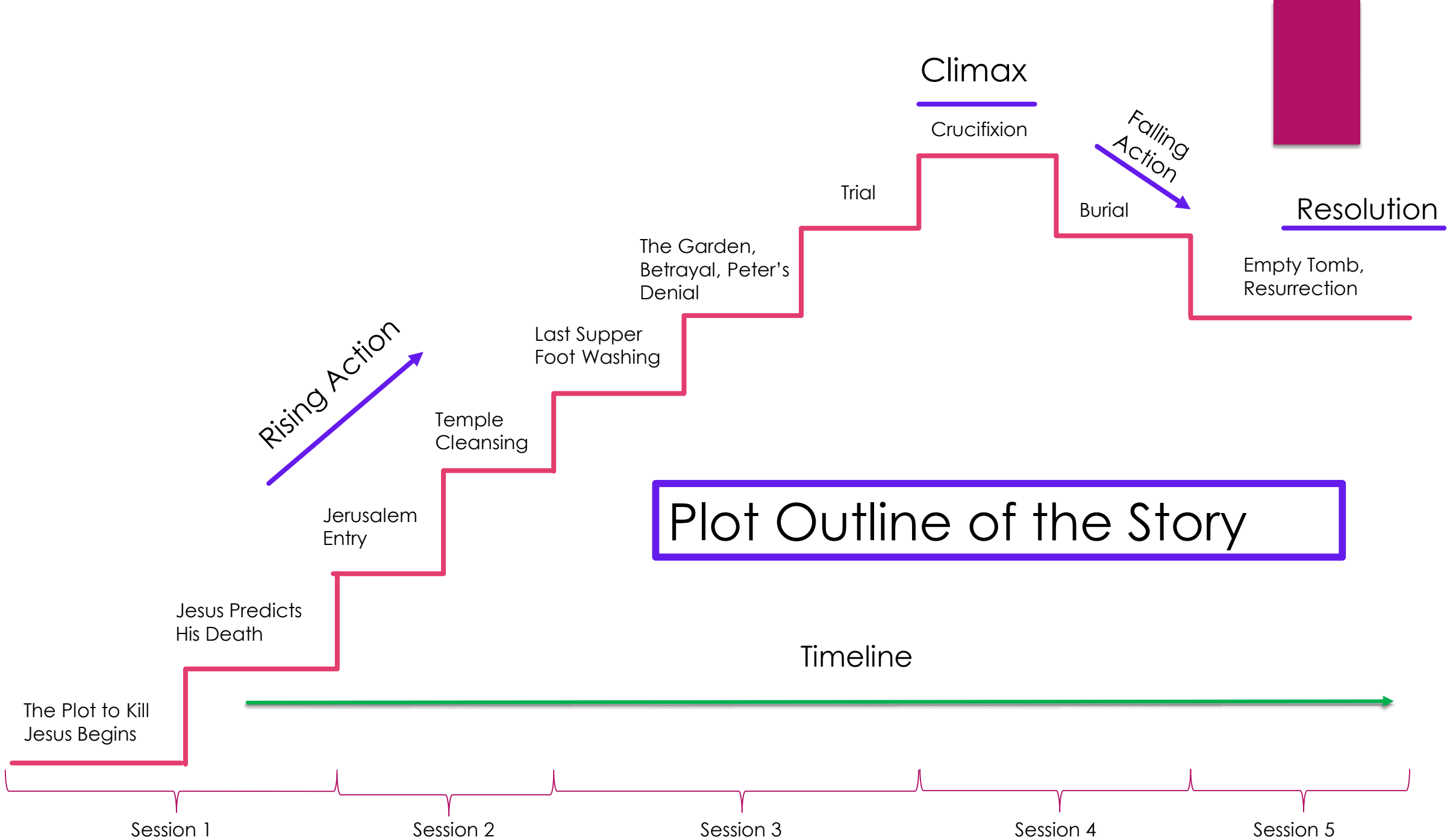
Pilgrimage

- ▶ What does the word mean to you?
- ▶ Is a pilgrimage different than a journey?



Pilgrimage: A Definition

- ▶ A pilgrimage is a journey, often into an unknown place, where a person goes in search of new or expanded meaning about their self, others, or a higher good. It can lead to personal transformation, after which the pilgrim returns to normal life. Pilgrimage can include:
 - ▶ An expectation to grow in faith
 - ▶ A desire to shed old ways and search for wholeness and healing
 - ▶ A discovery of sacred space
 - ▶ Involving rituals of leaving offerings of oneself



Passion

- ▶ What are some of the ways we define “passion”?

The Passion of Jesus Christ

- ▶ “Passion” from the Latin *patior, passum sum*; “to suffer, endure, bear,” from which other words are derived such as “patience”, and “patient”.
- ▶ In Christian usage it is the short final period of the life of Jesus. Includes:
 - ▶ Entry into Jerusalem
 - ▶ Cleansing of the Temple
 - ▶ Last Supper and Foot Washing
 - ▶ Agony in the Garden
 - ▶ Betrayal
 - ▶ Trial by Sanhedrin and Pilate
 - ▶ Crucifixion
 - ▶ Burial
 - ▶ Resurrection

The Plot to Kill Jesus

- ▶ The plot emerges early in Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ The following passages come from the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Mark's Gospel.

First Conflicts

- ▶ **Mark 2:1-12** ¹When (Jesus) returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. ³Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷*Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?* ⁸At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the paralytic — ¹¹I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home. ¹²And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Accusation of Blasphemy

- ▶ The scribes (*religious lawyers*) accuse Jesus of blasphemy.
- ▶ *What is blasphemy?*

The Conflict Expands

- ▶ **Mark 2:13-17** ¹³Jesus went out again beside the sea; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. ¹⁴As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.
¹⁵And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples — for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Tax Collectors and Sinners, Oh My!

- ▶ The Pharisees (*laymen who insist everyone strictly adheres to religious traditions*) take offense at Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners.
- ▶ *What's so bad about eating with tax collectors and sinners?*

From Conflict to Plot

- ▶ **Mark 3:1-6** ¹Again (Jesus) entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ²They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." ⁴Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Healing on the Sabbath

- ▶ The Pharisees conspire with the Herodians (religious governing authorities) to kill Jesus because he healed a man on the Sabbath.
- ▶ *Why does healing on the Sabbath deserve death?*

Jesus Predicts His Death

- ▶ Mark 8:31-33 Occurs about the half-way point of Jesus' ministry.
- ▶ ³¹Then (Jesus) began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."



▶ At what point in Jesus' life did he know he was going to suffer and die?

When he was born?

***Nativity and Adoration of the
Shepherds***

Domenico Ghirlandaio
Italy
1485 A.D.



As a young boy in the Temple?

Christ Among the Teachers

Matthew Stomer

Netherlands

1630 AD




When he was baptized in
the Jordan River?

Baptism of Christ

Andrea del Verrecchio and
Leonardo da Vinci
Italy
1475 A.D.



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- ▶ Jesus began his pilgrimage trusting his Father.
 - ▶ Did he know how the journey was going to end?
 - ▶ Does it matter he might not have known when he started?

- ▶ We begin our pilgrimage trusting in God.
- ▶ Do we know how the journey is going to end?
- ▶ Does it matter?

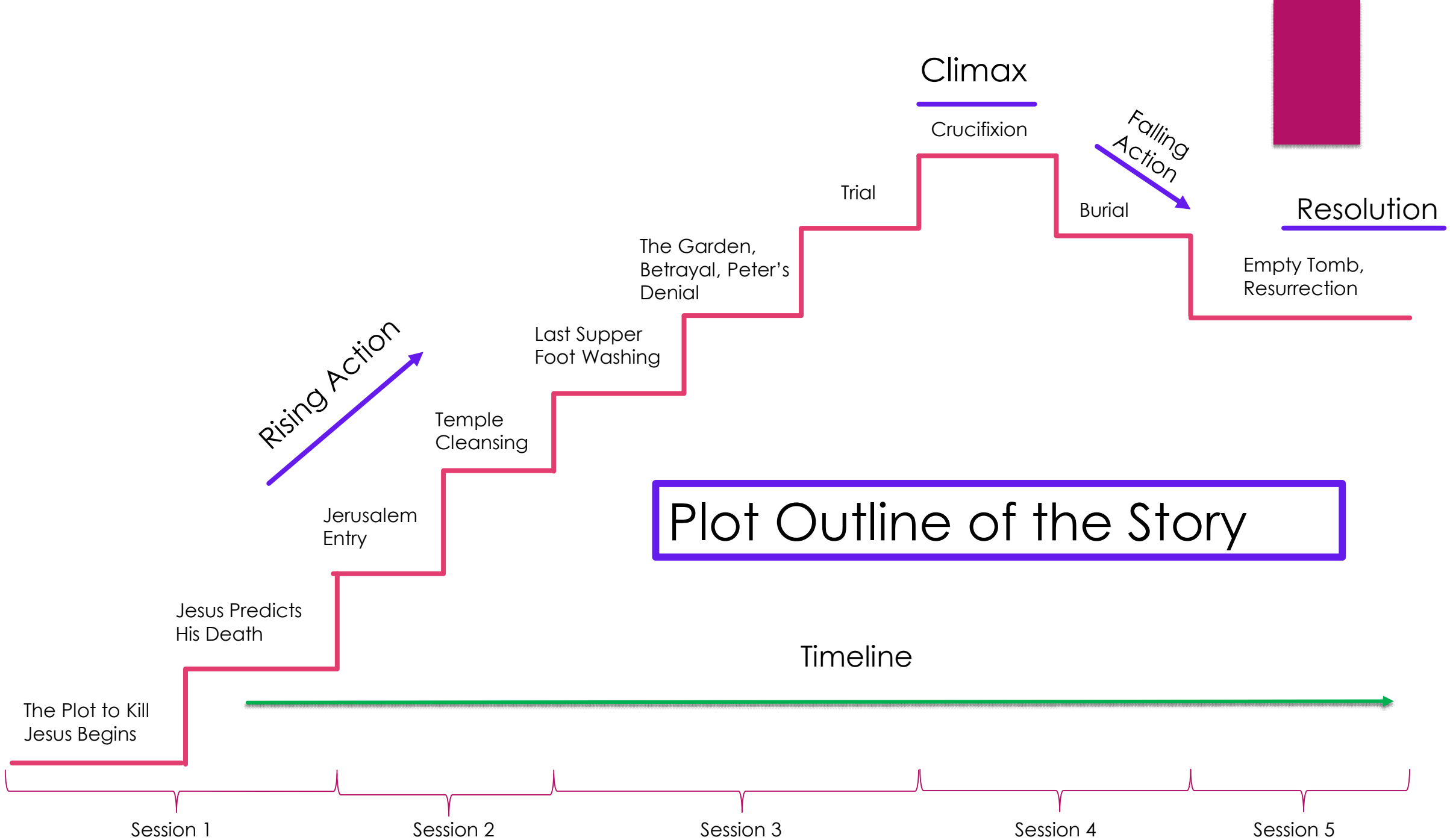
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Following Jesus: An Online Lenten Pilgrimage

Session Two:
The Final
Showdown
Begins-*Entry*
into Jerusalem
and Temple
Cleansing

Goals for this session:

- ▶ To see how the Biblical writers locate these stories in their narrative.
- ▶ To appreciate some of the symbolism of these actions.
- ▶ To view and listen to art inspired by these stories.
- ▶ To imagine ourselves in the middle of these stories.



Plot Outline of the Story

Timeline

Climax

Crucifixion

Falling Action

Resolution

Empty Tomb, Resurrection

Trial

Burial

The Garden, Betrayal, Peter's Denial

Last Supper
Foot Washing

Temple Cleansing

Jerusalem Entry

Jesus Predicts His Death

The Plot to Kill Jesus Begins

Session 1

Session 2

Session 3

Session 4

Session 5

The Entry Into Jerusalem

Matthew 21:1-9 (parallels: Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:28-40, John 12:12-19)

¹When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"



Entry Into Jerusalem

Pietro Lorenzetti

Basilica San Francesco

Assisi, Italy

14th century

The Timeline, Biblical, and Symbolic References

- ▶ The Gospel of John fixes the entry into Jerusalem a week before the Passover. “Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany...” 12:1
- ▶ The Synoptic Gospels fix the entry one week before Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- ▶ Matthew quotes the prophet Zechariah 9:9 “Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey.”
- ▶ A king riding on a donkey is a symbol of Peace. A king riding on a horse is a symbol of War.
- ▶ In the ancient Near East it was customary to cover the road with garments for someone of high honor. Jehu, the anointed king of Israel, was treated in this way (2 Kings 9:13)
- ▶ The celebration of Jewish liberation recorded in Maccabees 13:51-“And (they) entered into it ... with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs.”[¶]
- ▶ In the Roman era the palm branch was a symbol of victory, as the triumphant Roman emperor returned home in a procession, now wearing the toga as a sign of peace.

Why Do We Call It “Palm Sunday”?



John 12:13-“So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him,”

Mark 11:8-“and others spread leafy branches,” Matthew 21:8- “and others cut branches from the trees,” Luke is silent concerning the palms/branches

In northern climates people used whatever branches were available that were green or blooming in the spring. In England they cut branches from box trees or yew trees and so this day was sometimes called “Yew Sunday” or simply “Branch Sunday.” In Russia people wave pussy willow branches because these are the first to fully bloom in the spring.

Modern transportation methods now allow the shipping of palm branches everywhere.

Artistic Depictions of the Entry into Jerusalem



One of the oldest depictions comes from an early 4th century A.D. marble sarcophagus. Jesus rides on a donkey holding his right hand in blessing. Garments are spread on the ground and a man is in a tree cutting down branches. These elements will continue to appear throughout the centuries. Note that Jesus is depicted as a clean-shaven Roman man. The bearded Jesus appears centuries later.



Entry into Jerusalem

Giotto

1305

Note the men in the background climbing the trees and cutting down branches.

Several people on the right are taking off their clothes and starting to spread them on the ground.

Jesus holds up his right hand in blessing.



For Reflection

- ▶ What are some traditions you like to maintain to help you celebrate the events surrounding Palm Sunday?
- ▶ Some commentators call the events of Palm Sunday the “Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.” Do you think that’s a good title? Why or why not?
- ▶ When we remember how quickly the events go from triumph to tragedy we are reminded of the fragility of life. What resources do we draw upon when life becomes fragile?

The Final Straw: Cleansing of the Temple

Mark 11:15-18 (*parallels Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-17*)

¹⁵Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?

But you have made it a den of robbers."

¹⁸And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

Cleansing of the Temple

- Occurs close to Passover
- Thousands of pilgrims from many lands are in Jerusalem for the festival
- Passover was the time to pay the Temple Tax, a tax paid by all Jews towards the upkeep of the Temple. The priests required the tax to be paid in Jewish shekels or Tyrian coins. Pilgrims needed to convert their native money to acceptable coins, thus the need for money changers.
- Animals to be offered as sacrifice were sold in the courtyard.
- The chief priests and scribes all received a cut from these sales.



The Temple Mount Complex, *reconstructed model*

The Significance of the Cleansing

- ▶ John's Gospel records the cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This sets the stage for Jesus saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (2:19) John also uses the cleansing event for the disciples to remember (after his resurrection) the prophetic words, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (2:17)
- ▶ Jesus' violent act depicts a righteous anger towards those who would exploit the poor. Later, Jesus will point to a poor widow who puts her last two coins into the temple treasury.
- ▶ Scholars see Jesus cleansing the temple as a prophetic demonstration that God is about to sweep away the old system of sacrificial worship centered on the temple and replace it with the self-giving sacrifice of his own life.
- ▶ Sets up the "final showdown" between Jesus and the religious authorities who conspire to destroy him, as Mark records: *¹⁸And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.*

Depictions of the Temple Cleansing in Art



Giotto, 1306
Early Renaissance



El Greco, 1568
Late Renaissance



Bernardino Mei, 1678
Baroque



Andrei Mirinov, 2012
Contemporary



© 1973 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

Jesus Christ Superstar

Jesus Christ Superstar, *The Temple*, 1973

For Reflection

- ▶ Does depicting Jesus as angry challenge your picture of Jesus?
- ▶ Some commentators emphasize the cleansing of the temple as an act of justice for the sake of the exploited poor. Some commentators emphasize the cleansing as a fore-shadowing of Jesus' own death and resurrection. Which one appeals to you more?
- ▶ Crowds followed Jesus, acclaimed him with shouts of joy, listened to him, and watched him upset the temple. Where do you see yourself in these stories?