

6. Jesus Cleansed the Temple in Jerusalem

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the signs in the book of John were important to help the disciples come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We also saw that the signs in John caused those who rejected Jesus to begin to plan the death of Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see another reason why the religious leaders later wanted to destroy Jesus.

Jesus only spent a few days at Capernaum after the wedding at Cana. That was due to the fact that it was almost time for the Passover. John 2:13-17 says, “Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’” Many of the Jews living in Galilee went to Jerusalem each year for the Passover.

Jesus went to Passover from at least the time He was twelve. As a result, Jesus had been to the Passover many times. However, He did some very different things this time because He had begun His public ministry. We see that this time Jesus cleansed the temple at Jerusalem. The chief priests controlled what happened in the temple and the temple court. They had allowed the temple court to become a place to buy and sell because they received a part of the profits. This is shown by what Jesus said when He cleansed the temple a second time three years later. Matthew 21:13 says, “And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves.”’” The Jews who came from long distances would buy their animals after they got to Jerusalem instead of trying to bring the animals with them. Travelers also had to change their money to pay the temple tax with Jewish coins.

Jesus came into the temple court and saw the people selling animals and the people who were money changers doing business in the temple court. Jesus made a whip with small cords or ropes made from rushes. Jesus drove the people and their animals out of the temple court. He also overturned the tables of the money changers so that their money was scattered on the ground in the temple court. Then, Jesus spoke and said, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” Here, we see that Jesus gave His first public statement in Jerusalem about the fact that He is the Son of God. We see that this brought immediate opposition from the religious leaders.

We see that it also caused the disciples to remember Psalm 69:9 which says, “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.” Here, we see that Jesus was showing His disciples by example that the temple was to be a place to worship God and not a place to do business. Psalm 69 is one of the Psalms that had several things written in it fulfilled on the day that Jesus was crucified so it is called a Messianic Psalm.

The action of Jesus in cleaning the temple caused immediate opposition from the Jews and some of the Jewish leaders immediately demanded a sign to show that Jesus had a right to do such things. These leaders were getting rich from the business that was being carried on in the temple and they did not want their business hindered or stopped. Jesus chose to give the Jews a very interesting answer because He chose to use His future resurrection as the sign. However, the leaders lacked spiritual understanding and had no idea what Jesus meant when He spoke about His future resurrection. John 2:18-22 says, “So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then, the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”

Here, we see that the religious leaders lacked spiritual understanding that day. They wanted a sign and Jesus gave them a sign when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The religious leaders immediately thought about the building that was located in the temple court. Herod the Great had started a building project 46 years earlier to beautify that temple. They told Jesus how long this process had already taken. Many years of work and much money were involved in this project to beautify the temple and it was still not complete. As a result, they had absolutely no understanding when Jesus said He would raise it up in three days. Their answer shows that they only thought about the building so the truth was concealed from them.

In contrast, we see that the disciples later did understand exactly what Jesus meant. They remembered what Jesus said but only after He rose from the dead. Then, they believed the Scripture. They also believed the words which Jesus had spoken. Here, we see that Jesus did the same thing that He did when He taught in parables. Luke 8:9-10 says, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”” Jesus revealed truth to His followers but hid truth from those who rejected.

Today, Jesus still gives spiritual understanding to His followers but the natural man cannot receive the things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” It is important for us to understand that those who are not Christians cannot understand spiritual truth because they do not have the Holy Spirit to give them such understanding.

The disciples were given spiritual truth but they were not able to understand what Jesus had said until after the resurrection. Although, we do not know how soon it was after the resurrection that the disciples thought of this statement, we see that when they did, they believed the Scripture. They also believed the words that Jesus had spoken. The night of His resurrection Luke 24:45 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Jesus had

also said to the disciples the night before He was crucified in John 14:26, ““But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”” Either when Jesus personally explained the Scriptures after the resurrection or after the Holy Spirit came, the disciples came to a full understanding.

John 2:23-25 says, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” In these verses, we see a very key point that we want to help our children understand. We see that many people believed in the name of Jesus when they saw the signs which He did. In contrast, 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” Many people believe when they see a miracle but that does not necessarily mean that they have come to true faith.

Christ said in Matthew 7:21-23, ““Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!””” In these verses, we see that people can even do miracles in the name of Jesus without believing. That is why it is so important to help each person learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Many people can deceive themselves when they start depending on things they can see instead of coming to a true faith in Christ and then learning to walk in faith.

Jesus was able to do something that we cannot do. We see that Jesus knew all the people and that was why He did not commit Himself to them. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” Jesus knew the heart of each person because He is able to look at the heart instead of depending on the outward appearance.

Jesus did not need anyone to tell Him what is in the hearts of people because He was able to look at their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jesus knew those who had true belief. He also knew those whose hearts were controlled by the wickedness of their hearts. Here, we see that we are told that Jesus knew what was in man. In this case, Jesus knew that people believed because they saw miracles but that was not true belief in the heart that changes an evil heart to a new heart. Just a few days later, Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”” Here, we see why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between believing a miracle and having true faith in their hearts. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand true faith.