

65. Jesus Cleansed the Temple

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children clearly understand that the disciples were recognizing Jesus as the Messiah when Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. Many of the crowd who were with the disciples were looking for Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom immediately. In our topic today, we will see two of the things that Jesus did as He came into the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus knew that He would be crucified in just a few days. However, Jesus had a very great love for Jerusalem and the people of the city. As Jesus came close to the city of Jerusalem, we see that Jesus wept over the city. We saw in our last topic that some of the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. We also saw that there were many people in that multitude who were looking for Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom immediately. Here, we see that Jesus knew the condition of the hearts of the Pharisees and many of the others in the multitude. As a result, we see that Jesus began to weep as He saw the city.

Jeremiah had said several hundred years earlier that the temple in the city would be made desolate. Jeremiah 22:5 says, “‘But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself,’ says the Lord, ‘that this house shall become a desolation.’” Jesus had quoted from this verse when He said, in Luke 13:34-35, “‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen *gathers* her brood under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”” Now, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem He could see the temple as He came. He knew what would happen to the temple, the city and the people in the city only forty years later. As a result, He wept as He thought of that judgment that would soon come.

The desire of Jesus was that the people of Jerusalem would experience His peace. He knew that desire could not be fulfilled at the present time because the people would reject Him and crucify Him. As a result, all He could do was weep as He thought about the judgment that would come on Jerusalem instead. The things that would bring that peace were hidden from the eyes of the people of Jerusalem. Zechariah 12:10 says, “‘And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’” Then, Zechariah 13:1 adds, “‘In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.’” There will be a future cleansing when the people of Jerusalem will experience that peace but Jesus knew that would be at His second coming and not at His first coming.

Jesus then spoke about the coming judgment that would soon come on the city of Jerusalem. Luke 19:43-44 says, “‘For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground: and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus went on to speak about the

judgment that would come on Jerusalem beginning just at the end of the Passover forty years later.

On April 9, A.D. 70, the Roman emperor came and surrounded the city of Jerusalem. This came at a time when many thousands of Jews, in addition to the regular population, were still in Jerusalem for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This verse says that the enemies of the Jews would build an embankment around the city and close the city in on every side. That is exactly what Titus and the Roman army did. They built a barrier entirely around the city. This meant that no food or other supplies could get into the people that were in the city. It also meant that people that were inside the city could not escape. Throughout the summer, as the people were getting weaker from lack of food, the Romans began to destroy one section of the city at a time. The destruction of the last section of the city happened in early September.

In the process, the Roman army fulfilled each of the statements that are mentioned in verse 44. They killed all of the people including the children. They completely leveled the buildings to the ground. They did not leave one stone upon another so that the destruction was complete. The temple and all the homes in the city were completely destroyed. Jesus then said that this happened because the Jews did not know the day of their visitation. The day of their visitation was the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. Instead of recognizing Him as the Messiah, we will see that the Jewish religious leaders rejected Him, condemned Him to death and then turned Him over to Pilate to put Him to death. As a result, this destruction of the city of Jerusalem was the judgment for their rejection of Jesus.

When Jesus came into the city, the first place that He went was to the temple. Luke 19:45-48 says, “Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, ‘It is written, “My house is a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves.”’ And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.” Jesus actually cleansed the temple twice. This is the second time.

The first time Jesus cleansed the temple was at the beginning of His public ministry three years earlier, at the time of the Passover. That cleansing is recorded for us in John 2:13-16, which 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 moneychangers 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!’” The Jewish religious leaders were using the temple courtyard to make money for themselves. Some were selling animals to the people to offer as sacrifices. Others were changing the money of the Jews from other countries so that they could buy their sacrifices. All of them were cheating the people to make money for themselves. At that time, Jesus told them that they were making His Father's house a house of merchandise.

Now, three years later, we see that these same people were back in the temple doing the same thing. Jesus began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple. As He drove

them out, Jesus quoted from two Old Testament passages. Isaiah 56:7 says, ““Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *will be* accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”” Then, Jeremiah 7:11 says, ““Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,” says the Lord.” The purpose of the temple was to be a place of prayer for the people of all nations. Instead, the Jewish religious leaders had turned that place of prayer into a place where they were stealing from those who came to the temple. Needless to say, the Jewish religious leaders were not happy to have their corruption publicly exposed by Jesus cleansing the temple.

We also see what Jesus did each day for the next several days. We see that He was teaching daily in the temple. During the time before the Feast of the Passover, Jews came to Jerusalem from many different countries. Many times as many as a half million people would come to Jerusalem for the Passover or one of the other main Jewish feasts. During the day, many of these people would gather in the courtyard that surrounded the temple. Jesus went to the temple each day and taught the people that gathered around. We see that there were two attitudes among the people that came to the courtyard of the temple.

First, we see the attitude of the chief priests, the scribes and the leaders of the people. The chief priests were responsible for the offering of the sacrifices and the oversight of the temple. Most of the high priests were Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in miracles or the resurrection. In contrast, most of the scribes were Pharisees. Because the scribes spent much of their lives making copies of Old Testament books, they were considered experts in the Old Testament law and that is why they were often called lawyers. The rulers of the people were some of the most influential Jews and had a great influence regarding the things that happened in the temple. These three groups together controlled much of what happened in the temple. All three groups wanted power and control and so they all wanted to kill Jesus because they saw Him as a threat.

In contrast, we see that all of the common people were very attentive to Jesus. They wanted to hear every word that Jesus taught. Many times, we see these same attitudes today. The people with power are eager to maintain their control over the rest of the people. However, the common people are often very interested to learn more about Jesus and the things that He taught. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand this difference. We are called to share the good news about the death and resurrection of Jesus with all people. Because of their desire for power, the people who are considered leaders are often not ready to hear the Word of God. In contrast, the common people are often open and want to learn more, so we want to help our children learn to continue to share with those who are seeking truth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God with the attentive.