

Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C Sunday School

Lesson 2 March 10, 2024

JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

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JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

- ▶ Bible Basis: Isaiah 56:6-7; Jeremiah 7:9-11; Mark 11:15-19
- ▶ Bible Truth: The Church should be holy ground.
- ▶ Memory Verse: “Is this house, which called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 7:11, KJV)
- ▶ Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will EXPLAIN why so many gathered to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and King; EXPRESS a willingness to always honor Jesus through our everyday actions; and REPENT of the times when we have not given Jesus the honor due to Him.
- ▶ Background Scriptures: Isaiah 56, Jeremiah 7, and Mark 11– Read and incorporate the insights gained from these Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

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Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 56:6-7, KJV

6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.



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Lesson Scripture: Jeremiah 7:9-11, KJV

9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.



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Lesson Scripture: Mark 11:15-19, KJV

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

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Lesson Scripture: Mark 11:15-19, KJV

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed the original Temple in Jerusalem that had been built by King Solomon. Following years of exile, a contingent of about 42,360 Jews was given permission by King Cyrus to return and rebuild the Temple, which lay in ruins (**Ezra 2:64**). Renovation of the Temple was begun under the direction of the governor Zerubbabel. These renovation attempts were slow, and they focused on the rebuilding of the altar. Not surprisingly, this second Temple was not as splendid as the original.

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Teaching the Bible Lesson

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: We will recognize the importance of God's
house in the worship.



INTRODUCTION

Wholly Holy

Isaiah had prophesied to King Hezekiah that some of his heirs would one day serve as eunuchs in the palace of Babylon (**2 Kings 20:18**). While the Bible does not say that this is what happened to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, most biblical scholars recognize that this is what happened to foreign men serving in the royal palace of Babylon. Such conditions would have meant that these men would have been prohibited from Temple service when they returned to Jerusalem. Moreover, the eunuchs would be unable to father children and ensure the continuity of their family name. However, we read that this law would be overruled if the eunuch kept the Sabbath holy and obeyed God to the best of his ability (**Isaiah 56:4–5**).

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: We will treat God's house as it should be treated – as a house of prayer.

I. GOD'S PROMISES FOR ALL

Isaiah Reminds the People that the Temple is a Symbol of Hope

Isaiah 56:6-7

The purpose of the Temple as a “house of prayer” is further clarified here. This crucial aspect of Temple usage was apparent from the beginning. When Solomon, the builder of the first Temple, prayed at its dedication, he asked God to “hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive” (**1 Kings 8:30, NIV**). This means that the Temple would be the appointed place where God’s people would talk with Him.

I. GOD'S PROMISES FOR ALL

Isaiah Reminds the People that the Temple is a Symbol of Hope

Isaiah 56:6-7

Geoffrey Grogan describes this passage as “a beautiful description of true godliness”. Obedient service is stressed as being inclusive of foreigners, which is God’s early introduction to His people of the then-future Gospel’s concept of inclusivity of Gentiles, which is made explicit in **verse 7** with an emphasis on God’s house being open to “all people” (cf. **Is. 66:23; Mal. 1:11**). The trajectory of this inclusive pattern became even more specific in the New Testament (**Gal. 3:28**).

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LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Prophet Jeremiah

Although he lived in the 6th and 7th centuries B.C., the political and moral climate of the prophet Jeremiah's time was surprisingly similar to our own. The nation of Judah was under constant threat by Egypt and Babylon. Their sister nation, Israel, had already fallen victim to Assyria. The cities belonging to the ten tribes that comprised Israel had been ransacked and the people taken into captivity. God commissioned Jeremiah to minister in the face of Judah's imminent demise and captivity. Over the course of forty years (626 to 586 B.C.), and the reigns of five kings, Jeremiah was tasked with preaching an unpopular truth.



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II. THE LORD'S HOUSE

Jeremiah Warns Against Temple Abuse

Jeremiah 7:9-11

Jeremiah was instructed to “stand in the gate of the LORD’s house” (**Jeremiah 7:2**) and speak to His people. This is a powerful reminder for present- day Christians that during every age, judgment has always begun at God’s house. This is because God’s people then, as now, struggle under the false assumption that God will not judge and punish the “religious.” The people of Judah wrongly believed that because God had selected the Temple as His dwelling, He would not allow it to be destroyed.



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II. THE LORD'S HOUSE

Jeremiah Warns Against Temple Abuse

Jeremiah 7:9-11

Jeremiah continually warned the people of Judah, “Do not trust in deceptive words” (from **verse 4, NIV**). Jeremiah was calling for national revival, urging the people of God to return to His Word and obey His commandments. Jeremiah warned them that they were wrong. In **verse 11**, we see the ultimate perversion of what God intended—the use of His house as a “den of robbers.”

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II. THE LORD'S HOUSE

Jeremiah Warns Against Temple Abuse

Jeremiah 7:9-11

Jeremiah listed a total of six of the original Ten Commandments in his indictment of God's people—who, despite the extent of their unrighteousness, went to the Temple and acted as if its “magical powers” would make them right before God so they could then resume their sinful life-styles. He said His message was for them to live “in moral uprightness, faithfulness, and obedience to their God,” and not to have blind trust and faith in the Temple as if it were some kind of good-luck charm—a type of “Temple talisman,” as it were.



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II. THE LORD'S HOUSE

Jeremiah Warns Against Temple Abuse

Jeremiah 7:9-11

Exactly like their predecessors clinging in blind faith to the Ark of the Covenant, these people also forgot that God required obedience to bless and protect them (**Deut. 7:12–15; Eze. 18:5–9**). In this matter, the religion that pleased God never changed and has not changed to the present (**Micah 6:6–8; James 1:26–27**). The Mosaic Covenant had been “if/then” conditional—IF they obeyed, THEN God would keep all His promises (**Exodus 19:5**). In essence, the people wanted God’s promises without His conditions (cf. **2 Peter 1:2–11**). Robbers go out to commit their crimes and then return to the safety of their den. Similarly, God’s people lived their unrighteous lives and then returned to the Temple “den” . . . like thieves retreating to their hideouts.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Righteous Anger

Jesus was so outraged that He “cast out them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves” (from **Mark 11:15**). His action should prompt present- day Christians to question themselves and their personal response to wrongdoing. How outraged are professed Christians when we witness the house of the Lord being desecrated by worldliness, expediency, and self-indulgence?

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III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage

Mark 12:32-33

During Passover, adult males from all over the world came to worship at the Temple. Every Jew over the age of twenty was obligated to make an offering of half a shekel. Additionally, Jewish law called for the sacrifices of large numbers of goats, sheep, and oxen. As the nation had transitioned from tribes of desert wanderers to living in a large and heavily populated city such as Jerusalem, it was no longer practical to select an animal from a flock or herd close by.



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Mark 12:32-33

Stalls and pens were erected in a large area located near the sacrificial altar. The Court of the Gentiles, or its adjoining porch, seemed the most likely location. This area was used for worship by Jewish women and Gentiles, and it was spacious and located farthest from the most holy place.

Also present in this area were the moneychangers. These men acted as currency bankers and brokers. Granted, their services were needed because foreign money was not accepted in the Temple, so these moneychangers would sell the acceptable Temple coinage. The problem was the rate was often extraordinarily high, and these moneychangers also charged for their services.

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III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage

Mark 12:32-33

Historically, these moneychangers were set up in areas outside of the Temple. However, during the special festivals when the Jews and faithful believers from other lands began arriving in Jerusalem, these merchants were allowed to set up their tables within the Temple area. The high priests and other religious officials were no doubt aware of these ungodly practices. This is a powerful reminder to present-day Christians that abuse in the Church can always be traced to looking the other way amid the protests of few and the silence of the majority.



III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage

Mark 12:32-33

Understood in the context of the fig tree incident before and after (**verses 12–14, 20–23**), this is a story within a story. The fig tree was a symbol of Israel, much like the Star of David today. Essentially, both the tree and Israel seemed to be thriving, that is, they were “leafy,” but there was no fruit—and Jesus condemned both. The Temple cleansing was “largely symbolic,” notes Garland (Mark, 434); in other words, Jesus made a scene but did not do anything worthy of calling the Roman police. His immediate point was that the sacred space was for sincere prayer and genuine worship, not commerce, but He made other points in the process.

III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage
Mark 12:32-33

Here Jesus quoted from our other passages (**Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11**), the latter of which, in Williamson's words, "attacks the use of religious observances to cover up sinful practices" (Mark, 207). When Jesus condemned the fig tree, it "withered from the roots up" (**Mark 11:20, NLT**), just as the Temple was being destroyed from the roots up; that is, core corruption. Here, the fruitlessness of the tree illustrated the need for Temple cleansing.

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III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage

Mark 12:32-33

The leaders, who were the “roots” of the Temple, understood what Jesus was saying, but rather than allowing the truth to humble them, they hardened their hearts. The people, on the other hand, were shocked that Jesus talked this way about their beloved Temple. They were astonished (Gk. *ekplesson*, **ek-PLAS-SO**), which meant to be struck with amazement. R. E. Clements captures the essence of the message of the Old Testament prophets, which Christ vividly brought to life centuries later: “What is at stake is the fundamental principle that God is necessarily greater than any symbol set on earth as a manifestation of his presence” (Jeremiah, 46).

III. OVERRUN WITH FILTH

Jesus Expresses Outrage

Mark 12:32-33

Such a stern lesson should end on a positive note, which Williamson provides: “The power of God that withered a fig tree and moves mountains can also bring new life to a church and its leaders, though they be dry from their roots up” (210). The people of God had come to see the Temple as their perennial good-luck charm against all the evils of life, but God’s justice held that a barren tree had a limited lifespan, just like a barren Temple. Ultimately, in an even bigger picture, salvation would no longer be secured by sacrifices in the Temple but rather through Jesus’ sacrifice outside the Temple—for all the people.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Interpreting Together

The passage in Isaiah focuses on the Mosaic Covenant's emphasis on the Sabbath. Isaiah stressed that a life of holiness is not only free of hypocrisy but also embraces people from all nations. The portion of Jeremiah's "Temple sermon" (**Jeremiah 7:1–15**) was delivered during a time of great upheaval, when people were desperately in need of returning—not to religion, but to a right relationship with God.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Interpreting Together

F. B. Huey writes, “In such turbulent times the people grasped at any symbol of security, which for them was the temple”. The passage in Mark, cleansing the Temple, is sandwiched between the story of Jesus not finding fruit on the fig tree and withering it and the teaching on that event. David Garland writes, “Interpreting either, in isolation from the other, leads one in the wrong direction” (Mark, 433).

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: We will learn the link between our worship and care
and compassion for others.

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BIBLE APPLICATION

Jesus lashed out against a spirit of depravity that had pervaded the Temple in the form of monetary greed. This sin is still present today. The Bible teaches that the love of money is “the root of all evil” (from **1 Timothy 6:10**). Yet these teachings appear to go unheeded. God is calling on His people—the Church—to set an example of the opposite of all this through our Christian generosity and self-sacrifice. Attending church is not enough! Our worship and our service to God must be exemplified through our continued and continual care and compassion for others.



STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: We will strive to cleanse our hands and hearts before God.

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STUDENT RESPONSES

A true believer does more than follow rituals and traditions. Being children of God means that we must not only acknowledge Him, we must make every effort to live according to His Word. When we fail to live committed lives, instead continuing to live according to our own desires, we will eventually begin to cling to fallacies and fall into a life of self- deception and practices that are contrary to the will of God. Pray and ask God to give you a clean heart and hands, so your words of praise to Him will not be empty and void.



Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Lord, give us clean hands and pure hearts, that we may not lift our souls to another.

Humble us before Your majesty and power.

In Jesus' name we pray.

AMEN

Dig a Little Deeper

The day after his “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem, Mark records that Jesus cursed a fig tree. Then he goes to the temple and “cleanses.” On the next day as Jesus and his disciples passed by it, they saw that it was withered away to its roots. Why would Jesus curse a seemingly innocent tree?

Mark frames the incident in the temple with the cursing of the fig tree because the cursing is symbolic of what happens in the temple. Note what the text says: *He was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (vv. 12b-14a).*

Dig a Little Deeper

The key to unlocking the mystery is to recognize that normally figs and their leaves appear at the same time. In other words, when one sees leaves on a fig tree, it is expected to also have fruit. But this tree was sending out false signals. It was advertising that he would have fruit, but it did not; in a sense, the tree was lying. This is symbolic of what was happening in the temple. Jesus approached it with the expectation that it would be bearing the fruit of righteousness that was expected of God's people. However, none of that was there. Instead, he found a "den of robbers." The people were going through the motions, but honoring God was not present.

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Next Sunday
March 17, 2024
Lesson 3
Triumphant and Victorious

