

JESUS CLEANSED THE TEMPLE

Matthew 21:12-23; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48; John 12:12-50

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Jesus

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Conflicts between Jesus and religious leaders: the cleansing of the temple (Mat 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48); chief priest and teachers of the law looked for a way to kill Jesus; Jewish leaders believed in Jesus but kept their belief a secret because they feared the Pharisees (Jn 12:42-43).
- Jesus' actions to cleanse the temple: Jesus drove out those who were buying and selling (Mat 21:12); he turned over tables of money changers (Mat 21:12); he turned over benches of those selling doves (Mat 21:12); he wouldn't allow any to carry merchandise through the temple courts (Mk 11:16); he taught the people the Scripture (Mat 21:23).
- Contrasts: wheat grain dies X it sprouts and produces (Jn 12:24); person who loves his life will lose it X the person who hates his life will keep it (Jn 12:25).

Key-attitudes:

- Jesus' anger when he purified the temple.
- Greeks' desire to see Jesus.
- People's disbelief in Jesus.
- Religious leaders' panic fear of Jesus.
- Religious leaders, who believed in Jesus, feared that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue.

Initial-situation:

During the second half of the third year of Jesus' public ministry, he made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious feasts. The first trip was for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Jesus' second trip to Jerusalem was for the Feast of Dedication. Jesus was in the temple area, and claimed that God was his father. The Jews picked up stones to kill him.

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan River. Jesus left that place to return to Bethany where he resurrected Lazarus from the grave. The Sanhedrin began to plot to kill Jesus. Therefore, Jesus withdrew to a secluded village.

Jesus made his third trip to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. On Sunday, Jesus experienced his Triumphal Entry into the city. *Passover Week is also referred to as Passion Week by many Christians.*

Initial-problem:

On Monday morning Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem. Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling.

Final-situation:

Jesus had performed many miracles but the people would not believe in him. Many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus but they kept their belief a secret because they feared the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

On Monday morning Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem. Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling. He turned over the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. He wouldn't allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. He taught the people saying, "God's word found in the Scripture says, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.' But you've made it a hangout for robbers" (Mat 21:12-13; Mk 11:12-17).

Blind and lame people came to Jesus at the temple, and he healed them. Children shouted in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

The chief priest and the teachers of the Law saw the wonderful things Jesus did. They heard the children shouting and they became indignant. They asked Jesus, "Do you hear these children?"

Jesus answered, "Haven't you read, 'From the lips of children and infants you ordained praise'?" (Mat 21:14-16).

The chief priests and the teachers of the Law began looking for a way to kill Jesus. They panicked, because the crowd was amazed at his teaching (Mk 11:18; Lk 19:47-48).

Some Greeks Meet with Jesus

Some Greeks traveled up to Jerusalem to worship during the Passover Feast. They approached the disciple Philip with a request. "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went together and told Jesus.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But, if it is buried and dies, it sprouts and produces many grains. The person who loves his life will lose it, while the person who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me; my servant will be with me where I am. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (Jn 12:20-26).

People Refuse to Believe in Jesus

Jesus had performed many miracles in the presence of the people, but they still would not believe in him (Jn 12:37-41).

However, many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus. But they feared that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue, so they kept their belief a secret. Human approval was more important to them than God's approval (Jn 12:42-43).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were the religious leaders looking for a way to kill Jesus?
2. What about the temple upset Jesus so much that he became violent?
3. What did Jesus say when the non-Jewish Greeks wanted to see him?
4. In the parable of the wheat grain, who is the grain of wheat?
5. When Jesus was speaking to the Greeks, what demands did he give his disciples?
6. Is there an area of your life where Jesus is calling on you to die so that you may really live?
7. What hindered the people from believing in Jesus?
8. What hindered the religious leaders who believed in Jesus from professing their belief?
9. What helps or hinders your belief in Jesus?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus is angered by certain kinds of religion.** The purification of the temple reveals that Jesus was irritated with the Jewish religion (1st time: Jn 2:13-22 and 2nd time: Mat 21:12-17; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48). Jesus is angered by religion:
 - **When it is secularized.** Followers of the true religion behaved like those who did not believe in God. Temple leaders exploited the people, just like non-believers did in the market place.
 - **When it is marketed.** Religious people sought financial advantages with the true religion.
 - **When it is without reverence.** The noise of the animals and merchants made it impossible to have reverence in the temple.
 - **When it is creating barriers for those who want to know God.** The trade was conducted in the part of the temple reserved for non-Jews.
2. **Useful practices in the past may become barriers.** The practice of selling animals for sacrifices and exchanging money began as a service to help travelers who had come from a long distance. What began as a service to help travelers

became a means to exploit travelers. What began as a legitimate service, lent itself to abuse.

3. **People with handicaps are welcomed by God.** Jesus healed the blind and lame in the temple complex (Mat 21:14). First century Jews had extended the demands of Leviticus 21:16-20 to exclude people with physical handicaps from entering the temple. Jesus identified himself as Messiah by healing the blind and lame (Isa 35:5-6). Jesus demonstrated that people with physical handicaps are welcomed by God by healing the blind and lame in the temple complex.
4. **Jesus' death produced the transformation of many lives.** The seed that reproduces a thousand seeds must first be planted, germinated and grown. The seed that dies in order to grow into a seed-producing plant is like Christ who died, was buried and resurrected to transform lives (Jn 12:23-24).
5. **Jesus' followers should help other people have an encounter with him.** Philip and Andrew helped the Greeks, who wished to see Jesus, have an encounter with him (Jn 12:20-22).
6. **Miracles fascinate people, but they do not provoke belief in Jesus.** Even after Jesus had performed all his miraculous signs, the people still would not believe in him (Jn 12:37).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Invite two people to pretend they are a priest and his nephew.

The priest permits his nephew to sell sheep in the temple courts. The priest also inspects the sheep, but refuses to accept any sheep for an offering that was not bought from temple salesmen. The nephew sells the sheep at a price five times the price of the market place. The priest expects a percentage of the daily sales since he granted his nephew the privilege of selling sheep in the temple courts.

On the afternoon after Jesus cleansed the temple, the priest goes to his nephew to get his money. However, the nephew must explain why he did not make any money because of Jesus' actions.