

The Passion Week of Christ
Lesson 3
Monday – Cleansing the Temple and Cursing the Fig Tree

1. On Palm Sunday, what was the last place Jesus went to in Jerusalem before retiring for the night to Bethany (Mark 11:11)? What did He do before He left the temple? What do you think Jesus saw when He “looked all around” (Mark 11:15-17)? Therefore, do you think the cleansing of the temple was a spur of the moment rage on his part, or was it a planned deliberate action done for an effective purpose?

2. Before Jesus even entered Jerusalem to go into the temple on that Monday, what did He do (Math 21:18-19)? What parable had He taught about a year before in Luke 13:6-9? Clearly, in both the parable of the fig tree and the miracle of cursing the fig tree, the fig tree represented Israel. What problem did the fig tree have (Luke 13:6, Math 21:19)? Jerusalem had a lot of religious service, showy sacrifices, rituals, etc., but what did she lack (Math 23:27-28)?

3. When the leaves begin to appear on a fig tree in March, there also appears a crop of knobs which will soon become ripe figs. It was common to eat these precursors of the figs as well. If the leaves appear without the knobs, it is a sign that the tree will not be productive, but instead worthless. According to the parable in Luke 13:9, what is the fate of a worthless tree? What did Jesus predict for the immediate fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43-44; Math 24:1-2)? Historically, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD and dispersed the Jews. Contrast the “appearance” of the fig tree from a distance with the “appearance” of Jerusalem at the time of the Passover (Luke 21:5). Contrast the “appearance” of Jerusalem at the time of the Passover celebration and the “appearance” of Christ’s triumphal entry on Palm Sunday.

4. This miracle of destroying the fig tree by His word was the only miracle of destruction recorded in the Gospels. It was done just before the climax of Jesus’ ministry on the cross, and symbolized the rejection by and therefore judgment upon the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus had always been gracious and loving toward known, admitted sinners, but who did He always have harsh words for (Math 5:20, 6:2,5, 9:10-13, 15:1-9, 23:25-28)? What is the eternal destination of such men in Math 23:33? Is it possible to be altruistic, religious, and a doer of good deeds and still not please God (Rev 2:2-4; Math 5:20; Heb 11:6; Rom 8:1-8)? What is absolutely necessary in order to please God (Jn 15:4-5, Heb 11:6)? Therefore, is it absolutely necessary to have a relationship with the one true God? Who has made this relationship possible (Jn 14:6)?

5. What was Passover (Exodus 12:3-5, 14, 24)? The Law of Moses required Jews to come to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover every year. People came from all the regions of the Mediterranean world. For Passover they had certain obligations, such as the animal sacrifice and the temple tax. What type of lamb must they bring, according to Ex 12:5? The temple had inspectors for these animals, and odds were any brought in would be blemished. However, they had plenty of unblemished lambs and doves for sale there in the temple. It was not allowed to pay for the animals or to pay the temple tax with gentile money, so you had to convert your money to

- “temple money” for a fee. These pilgrims had journeyed for days to worship God at the temple, but before they were taken into God’s presence, they were “taken to the cleaners.” God had intended the temple as a place of worship, sacrifice, and prayer. How were the leaders using the temple (Math 21:13)?
6. How did Jesus react to this abuse of the temple (Math 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46)? Jesus is usually depicted as loving and kind, but what emotion did He exhibit at this time? Is righteous anger a valid attribute for the Son of God (Ex 22:24; Numbers 32:10-13; Josh 23:16; Rom 1:18; Eph 4:26)? What prophets did Jesus quote (Math 21:13; Mark 11:17) concerning this?
 7. What had the religious leaders already determined to do to Jesus (Jn 11:53)? At this time, Jesus was upsetting their “license to steal,” so why didn’t they stop Him or arrest Him right then (Luke 19:47-48; Jn 12:19)? At this time on Monday, who was hanging on Christ’s words? Who had the priests been fleecing? Who were the leaders afraid of? Therefore, why did they need someone to betray Him, and why in the middle of the night?
 8. Do you think the fig tree with no fruit reminded Jesus of Jerusalem and the temple? Was the cursing of the fig tree, cleaning of the temple, and prediction of its destruction all a related message (Luke 19:44)?
 9. What question did the priests ask Jesus in Math 21:23? Who alone has authority over God’s temple? Who alone has authority over nature to wither a tree simply by His word (Mark 11:21)? Who alone has the authority to forgive sin (Mark 2:5, 7-12)? Who was Jesus (Col 2:9-10; Heb 1:3)? Therefore, who did the religious leaders reject?
 10. Jesus answered their question with a parable in Math 21:28-32. Who do the two different sons represent (Math 21:31)? Contrast the “known sinners” response with that of the religious leaders in Math 21:32. Every church is filled with people who are religious and profess to be Christians because it is traditional and American. What do 2 Cor 5:17 and Rom 6:4 say is the result of being truly in Christ?