



SERMON BASED STUDY GUIDE

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From Religion to Relationship: Embracing True Worship

OPENING & PRAYER:

In today's message, we explored the profound difference between religion and a genuine relationship with God, as exemplified by Jesus' actions in the temple. Jesus' cleansing of the temple was not merely an act of anger but a powerful statement against the religious scams of His time. The temple, which was meant to be a place of worship and connection with God, had become a marketplace of exploitation, where religious leaders profited from the people's sincere attempts to worship. Jesus' actions were a declaration that He came to dismantle the barriers of religion and establish a direct relationship between God and humanity.

"Father, as we study temptations and what Jesus went through, show us where we may fall short so we may grow in those areas. We know you fill that gap and we thank you for it. But expose those that work against us and speak to us as we begin to identify and fight with Your Word.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."

SCRIPTURE:

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." John 2:13-17

And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 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.'" Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant Matthew 21:10-14

and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?'" Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. Matthew 21: 16-17

This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty gerahs). The half-shekel shall be an offering to the Lord. Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the Lord. Ex 30:13-16

The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves. And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves." Ex 30:15-16

- *The Fig Tree Cursed – Mark 11:12-14 "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."*
- *The Cleansing of The Temple - Mark 11:15-21*
- *The Fig Tree Is Dead*
"Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." Mark 11:20-21

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:19

Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he (Melchizedek) receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Hebrews 7:7

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19

GO DEEPER:

Religion, as we discussed, often becomes a system of rules and rituals that can obscure the true heart of worship. It can become a means of control and manipulation, as seen in the temple's money-changing and sacrificial practices. Jesus, however, came to offer something radically different—a relationship based on grace, love, and direct access to God. He is our high priest, our perfect sacrifice, and the one who invites us into a personal relationship with Him.

The story of Jesus overturning the tables in the temple is a reminder that God desires authenticity in our worship. He is not interested in empty rituals or religious performances but in hearts that seek Him genuinely. Jesus' actions challenge us to examine our own lives and ensure that our faith is not just a series of religious activities but a vibrant, living relationship with God.

As we prepare our hearts for Easter, let us remember that Jesus' sacrifice was not just to fulfill religious obligations but to open the way for us to know God personally. He defeated the religious systems that separated us from God and invites us into a life of freedom and intimacy with Him. May we embrace this relationship and live out our faith with authenticity and love.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple: Jesus' actions in the temple were a direct challenge to the religious systems that exploited and manipulated worshipers. He demonstrated that true worship is about a relationship with God, not religious transactions. [05:31]

Religion vs. Relationship: Religion often focuses on human efforts to reach God, while Jesus emphasizes God's initiative to reach us. He came to establish a relationship, not a religion, offering grace and direct access to God. [12:41]

The High Priest and Sacrifice: Jesus is our perfect high priest and sacrifice, offering Himself once for all. Unlike the corrupt priesthood of His time, Jesus provides a way to God that is free from manipulation and exploitation. [21:41]

Giving and Worship: True giving is an act of worship to God, not a religious obligation. When we give, we honor God, and He blesses us in return. Our giving should be motivated by love and gratitude, not compulsion. [31:17]

The Temple of God: Under the new covenant, we are the temple of God, and His Spirit dwells within us. We no longer need to go to a physical location to encounter God; He is with us always, inviting us into a personal relationship. [34:45]

LEARNING AND GROWING:

1. What was the reaction of the religious leaders to Jesus' cleansing of the temple, and how did it contrast with the response of the children present? [17:04]
2. According to the sermon, what was the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and how does this relate to His mission? [12:41]
3. How does the story of Jesus cleansing the temple illustrate the difference between religion and a genuine relationship with God? [21:41]
4. Consider the ways in which you might have allowed religious systems or traditions to obscure your personal relationship with God. What steps can you take to ensure that your faith remains vibrant and authentic? [25:43]
5. Identify one area in your life where you feel disconnected from God. What practical steps can you take this week to invite Him into that area and strengthen your relationship with Him? [12:41]

CLOSING PRAYER:

"Father, we thank you for Your Word and guidance. We know our identity is wrapped in You, but the devil is a liar. Shine light on the darkness that tries to tempt us away from you. As we continue to study Your Word throughout this week, let us be the light to those around us and they too will come to grow closer to you as they fight their battles.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."