

John's Gospel

Lesson 4: What is God Like? (Part 2)

John 2:12-25

1. From last week's reading,
 - a. Wiersbe states that Jesus lived on a "heavenly _____ - _____" (p. 25).
 - b. Also, according to Wiersbe, this miracle (turning water into wine) did two things for His disciples. What were they?
 - c. Wiersbe states that the miracles recorded for us in this gospel were "signs!" What did he mean by this?
2. Read verses 12-17.
 - a. According to Warren Wiersbe, "Each Jewish male was required to attend three annual feasts at the Holy City: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16)." In this passage, it states that Jesus went to Jerusalem to attend Passover. Read Exodus 12. Why were Jews still celebrating Passover some 3500 years after the exodus (Exodus 12:14-17)?
 - b. Read Isaiah 53, John 1:29 and Romans 3:25. What does Passover symbolize?
 - c. Based on the above passages, who is Jesus?
 - d. What did Jesus discover men doing in the temple courts and why do you think it was so disturbing to Him?

The Feast of Passover commemorated Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt—when the Lord killed, by His death angel, the firstborn of the Egyptians but passed over the houses of the Israelites (Exodus 12:23-27). It was celebrated annually on the fourteenth day of Nisan (March/April). On that day, between 3:00 and 6:00 P.M., lambs were slaughtered and the Passover meal eaten. In obedience to Exodus 23:14-17, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to observe both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

which immediately followed (cf. Ezekiel 45:21; Luke 22:1; Acts 12:3-4). This is the first of three Passovers mentioned in John's gospel (cf. 6:4; 11:55).

Upon His arrival, Jesus would have found Jerusalem teeming with Jewish pilgrims from all around the Roman world, there to celebrate this foremost of Jewish feasts. Because of the multitudes who came, Passover meant big business for Jerusalem-based merchants. In the temple complex, where they had set up shop (probably in the court of the Gentiles), vendors were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Since it was impractical for those traveling from distant lands to bring their own animals, the merchants sold them the animals required for the sacrifices—at greatly inflated prices. The money changers also provided a necessary service. Every Jewish male twenty years of age or older had to pay the annual temple tax (Exodus 30:13-14; Matthew 17:24-27). But it could be paid only using Jewish or Tyrian coins (because of the purity of their silver content), so foreigners had to exchange their money for acceptable coinage. Because they had a monopoly on the market, the money changers charged an exorbitant fee for their services.

What had begun as a service to the worshipers had, under the corrupt rule of the chief priests, degenerated into exploitation and usury. Religion had become external, crass, and materialistic; the temple of God had become a “robbers’ den” (Matthew 21:3).

As He surveyed the sacred temple grounds now turned into a bazaar, Jesus was appalled and outraged. The worshipful atmosphere that befitted the temple, as the symbol of God's presence, was completely absent. What should have been a place of sacred reverence and adoration had become a place of abusive commerce and excessive overpricing. The sound of heartfelt praise and fervent prayers had been drowned out by the bawling of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, and the loud haggling of vendor and their customers.¹

- e. What did Jesus do in response?
- f. How does Jesus response reveal a particular attribute concerning the wrath of God? (Hint: Is God's wrath controlled or volatile?)
- g. Read Romans 1:18; 2:5; 5:9 and Revelation 19:15-16. Define the wrath of God and explain how God's wrath is “being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men?”

¹ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary John 1-11*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). 89-90.

- h. Read Psalm 69:9. David wrote this Messianic psalm. What did David prophesy concerning the attitude the Messiah would have for the temple of God?

3. Read verses 18-22.

- a. What did the Jews (religious leaders) demand from Jesus?
- b. What was Jesus' response?
- c. What did Jesus mean by the "temple"(1 Corinthians 6:19)?
- d. Obviously, the Jews, who were thoroughly familiar with Scripture, did not understand to what he was referring. Why? Read the following for your answer: John 8:42-47; 1 Corinthians 2:14; and 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- e. Did the disciples understand at first?
- f. When did they come to understand (Luke 24:5-8; John 12:16)?
- g. How did the disciples later come to understand (John 14:26)?

Read verses 23-25. Jesus must have performed many miracles while in Jerusalem attending Passover. John records that "many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name."

These three verses serve as a bridge between the account of the cleansing of the temple and the story of Nicodemus, which immediately follows. Though brief, this section has profound implications concerning the nature of saving faith.²

² Ibid. 94-95.

- h. Do you think this was genuine, saving faith (verse 23)?
- i. If not, why not?
- j. The Greek word for believe is *pisteuo*. The words **believe** in verse 23 and entrust (**“commit”** in the KJV) in verse 24 both come from this Greek word, *pisteuo*. Knowing this, how do you define the word believe (use verse 24)?
- k. Read James 2:19. What do demons believe and how does their belief compare to the belief of these people in Jerusalem?

Although many claimed to believe, Jesus knew that mere intellectual assent proves nothing; even the demons have such faith (James 2:19). Like the seed that falls on rocky and thorny ground, those who possess such faith hear the Word, and initially receive it with joy (Matthew 13:20). But because their hearts are never truly changed, they fall away when affliction comes (v. 21), or when worldly riches beckon (v. 22).

Without question, the difference between spurious faith and saving faith is crucial. It is the difference between living faith and dead faith (James 2:17); between the wicked, who “go away into eternal punishment” and “the righteous [who enter] into eternal life” (Matthew 24:46); between those who will hear, “Well done, good and faithful slave....Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:21) and those who will hear, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 7:23).³

- l. Why would Jesus not entrust himself to these people?
- m. According to verse 25, what divine attribute of Jesus is revealed?
- n. Read 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chronicles 28:9; and, Luke 16:15. What does God know about each one of us?

³ Ibid. 95.

- o. When God looks deep into your heart does He see real, genuine, saving faith?
(Remember, you cannot fool God!)

Genuine saving faith...demands wholehearted commitment to Jesus as the Lord of one's life (Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 10:9).⁴

- 5. Read in *Be Alive* pages 28-33.

⁴ Ibid. 95.

