

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God approaches us with grace and love, not with vindictive judgment (Zech. 9:9).
2. We often experience God's plan for us in unanticipated and unexpected ways (Matt. 21:1-3).
3. Fulfilled prophecy helps us see God's presence in history as well as in our lives (vss. 4-5).
4. No task done to glorify Christ is ever small or unimportant (vss. 6-7).
5. Serving Christ is not difficult in good times; we truly show our love for Him when we do His will even in hard times (vss. 8-9).
6. When we consistently serve Christ, it enables others to recognize Him as Saviour and Lord (vss. 10-11).  
—Anne Adams

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Did Christ make prior arrangements for the donkey He rode? If not, how did He know it would be available?
2. What would it have meant if Jesus had walked into Jerusalem? Have you ever felt that God intervened in any of your plans? What happened? What did you learn?
3. Do you think many in the Jerusalem crowd genuinely believed in Christ as He rode by? Which do you think is more effective for a gospel presentation—preaching to a crowd or personal witnessing?
4. Jesus was a celebrity as He entered the city. Does being famous today help a Christian serve God better? Why or why not? Discuss.  
—Anne Adams

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9).**

At the time, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem must have seemed like the high point of His ministry on earth. He was enthusiastically welcomed like a king by multitudes of people who were there to celebrate Passover.

Traditionally, Psalms 113 to 118, known as the Hallel, were sung at Passover. So the cries of "Hosanna" and "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," which come from Psalm 118:25-26, normally would not have been unusual.

The crowd addressed Jesus by a messianic title, "the son of David," and combined this with their quotation of Psalm 118:26: "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The people spread garments and palm branches before Him, thus honoring Him as the King they believed Him to be.

There is no doubt the people were declaring Jesus as the Messiah. Just a few days later, however, the crowds in Jerusalem were no longer crying "Hosanna" but rather "crucify him" (John 19:15).

It seems that many who cried "Hosanna," or "Save now," were looking only for salvation from political oppression. But political freedom would mean nothing without spiritual freedom, and spiritual salvation could come only through the death of the rejected Messiah.

—Jarr K. Waggoner

## LESSON 6

APRIL 6, 2014

### Scripture Lesson Text

**ISA. 56:6** 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 a house of prayer for all people.

**JER. 7:9** Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Ba'al, 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 rob-

bers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

**MARK 11:15** And they come to Je-ru'sa-lem: and Je'sus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, 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.

**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.

### NOTES

# The Cleansing of the Temple

Lesson: Isaiah 56:6-7; Jeremiah 7:9-11;  
Mark 11:15-19

Read: Isaiah 56:6-8; Jeremiah 7:8-15; Mark 11:15-19

TIMES: between 701 and 681 B.C.;  
probably 609 B.C.; A.D. 30

PLACES: Jerusalem; Jerusalem;  
Jerusalem

**GOLDEN TEXT** — "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" (Jeremiah 7:11).

## Lesson Exposition

### THE HOUSE OF PRAYER PROVIDED — Isa. 56:6-7

**The nature of the worshippers** (Isa. 56:6). This passage is part of a nine-chapter division of Isaiah (chaps. 49—57) that stresses the ministry of the Messiah, seen as the Suffering Servant. In the immediate context (chaps. 54—57), He is seen bringing salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. Chapter 56 focuses on the extension of His spiritual blessings to those previously excluded from Israel's covenant community. To some extent, this is being fulfilled today, though Isaiah's vision carries him forward to the millennium.

At the outset, the Lord announced that His salvation is "near to come" (Isa. 56:1) and that it will be available to those previously left out, eunuchs (vss. 3-5) and foreign proselytes (vss. 6-8). According to the law, eunuchs and certain foreigners were forbidden to worship in the assembly of Israel (Deut. 23:1-8). That will be changed so that all peoples have equal access to the Lord.

Our immediate text deals with "the sons of the stranger" (Isa. 56:6). These are people who have joined themselves to the Lord "to serve him." This expression is used of the service of priests and Levites, and here it signifies that these foreigners will minister to Him as fully as the regularly appointed servants. They also "love the name of the Lord," having taken Him as their own personal God (cf. 2:2-3).

**The fullness of their worship** (Isa. 56:7). The Lord takes the initiative and promises, "Them will I bring to my holy mountain." "Them" refers to the non-Israelite worshippers of verse 6. These will be in addition to the "outcasts of Israel" (vs. 8), whom He will regather. To some extent, this is being fulfilled now (cf. Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 2:13-18); but by referring to "my holy mountain" (Isa. 56:7), Isaiah also foresaw worship in the millennial temple in Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 2:2; 11:9; 65:25; Jer. 3:17).

But Christ's death has demolished national barriers, and all believers worship God on an equal footing (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). So too, in the future

kingdom the worship of all true believers will be equally acceptable. All will have equal access to God.

### THE HOUSE OF PRAYER POLLUTED — Jer. 7:9-11

**The hypocrisy of the worshippers** (Jer. 7:9-10). Our second text comes from a section of Jeremiah (chaps. 7—10) commonly called his "temple address." God commanded him to stand before the temple and proclaim coming judgment because of Judah's false religion (7:1-2).

Jeremiah especially denounced the delusion that the presence of the temple would keep Judah from harm (Jer. 7:4). False prophets were using the temple as a kind of talisman, or object of faith, saying that because of its very presence in Jerusalem, Judah could repel any attack. Jeremiah told the people frankly that godly deeds, not ceremonial observances in a sanctuary, would please God and preserve them (vss. 3-7).

As it was, the people's conduct fell far short of their profession. Their personal behavior included stealing, murder, adultery, and falsehood—all violations of the Decalogue (Jer. 7:9). In addition, said Jeremiah, they burned incense to Baal and followed other gods, ones they had never known. They may have kept up the appearance of worshipping Yahweh, but their hearts were with the false deities they had imported.

What compounded their guilt was the fact that they practiced all these sins while practicing outward worship at the temple (Jer. 7:10). The temple was their "lucky charm." They could go there and claim immunity from attack, claiming, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." Their sacrifices were unrelated to the lives they lived.

**The defilement of the temple** (Jer. 7:11). Israel's temple was no ordinary building. The Lord could say it was "called by my name" (7:10, 14, 30;

32:34). This was Solomon's intent when he built it (cf. 1 Kings 8:12-21).

But the temple had been prostituted to unspeakable corruption. Its misuse by Athaliah's sons had necessitated extensive repairs by Joash (II Chron. 24:7). Ahaz later replaced the altar of sacrifice with one of Assyrian design (II Kings 16:10-14) and had the temple doors closed (II Chron. 28:24). After Hezekiah reopened them and restored proper worship (29:17-19), Manasseh desecrated the house with altars to false deities (33:4-5). Josiah once again cleansed it (34:3-4), but now it was polluted again (Jer. 7:30).

It had become to them like "a den of robbers" (Jer. 7:11). Robbers sought temporary refuge in mountain caves until they had planned their next raid. So too these hypocrites treated this holy place as an asylum from God's judgment before they headed back into their sinful lives.

### THE HOUSE OF PRAYER PURGED — Mark 11:15-19

**Jesus' action** (Mark 11:15-16). The cleansing of the temple was Jesus' first act after He entered Jerusalem in ap-parent triumph.

Jesus "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" (Mark 11:15). In the large outer Court of the Gentiles, the high priest had authorized a market to sell items needed for temple sacrifices. It was easier for pilgrims coming to festivals from a distance to buy their sacrificial animals there.

The money changers were present because the annual temple tax had to be paid in Tyrian currency. Other transactions could be handled more conveniently in this coinage as well. So pilgrims arriving with Greek or normal Roman money had to exchange it. Exchange rates were often charged for this service, and the prices for sacrifi-

cial items were often inflated as well.

Though these economic activities were essential to worship in the temple, they did not have to be conducted within the temple itself. It was primarily to this practice that Jesus objected. He put a stop to these transactions, overturning the tables and seats of money changers and vendors and ordering them all out of the temple.

**Jesus' teaching (Mark 11:17).** Jesus did not hide the reason for His actions. He applied two Old Testament texts we have already considered to the situation before Him. The first was Isaiah 56:7: "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Isaiah had foreseen that non-Jews would be allowed to worship in the temple, and by Jesus' day some were doing so (cf. John 12:20).

But although Gentiles were permitted to worship in the outer court of the temple, it had now been appropriated for commercial use. And even if some space for worship yet remained, the atmosphere was anything but conducive to it. The sounds of haggling and of bleating animals, accompanied by the smells of a livestock market, deterred any attempt at worship. The Jewish religious leaders were effectively barring Gentiles from the worship that Scripture had promised them.

Jesus' second quotation, "But ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:17), is taken from Jeremiah 7:11. As already noted, in its original context, this meant that people were treating the temple as robbers used their hideout—as a refuge between raids. Here the connotation is somewhat different and probably twofold. First, the vendors and money changers were engaging in fraud and dishonesty in their transactions. Second, they were robbing Gentiles of the opportunity to worship the true God.

**The reaction (Mark 11:18-19).** In purging the temple, Jesus was asserting His messianic authority (cf. Mal. 3:1-3)

and overruling the authority of the priesthood. They would eventually challenge Him on this (Mark 11:27-28), but for now they kept silent and instead "sought how they might destroy him" (vs. 18). Their murderous plotting was born of fear; if He led a popular uprising, their power would be broken permanently.

But they knew they could not arrest Him publicly; that would merely inflame the crowds, who were "astonished at his doctrine" (Mark 11:18).

Jesus' zeal for His Father's house of prayer led Him to purify it for true worshippers. How tragic that those who were religious leaders in Israel did not learn the lesson He intended!

—Robert E. Wengert

## QUESTIONS

1. What previously excluded persons did Isaiah foresee participating in temple worship?
2. How did the death of Christ affect the Gentiles' access to God?
3. Why did Jeremiah's countrymen think they could suffer no harm?
4. Did Jeremiah's contemporaries' temple worship affect their behavior? Explain.
5. In what ways had Solomon's temple been defiled?
6. Why had a market been set up in the temple in Jesus' day?
7. What did Jesus do to end this market? Why?
8. How were Gentiles hindered from temple worship in Jesus' day?
9. In what sense had the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time made the temple a "den of thieves" (Mark 11:17)?
10. How did the leaders react to Jesus' purification of the temple?

—Robert E. Wengert

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God freely and fully accepts everyone who trusts in Him (Isa. 56:6-7).
2. Only the arrogant expect God to overlook their unconfessed sins (Jer. 7:9-11).
3. We should never hesitate to firmly assert our faith (Mark 11:15-16).
4. Focusing on God through worshipping Him helps us realize and appreciate all He does for us (vs. 17).
5. Those who oppose Christ's truth do not accept Him as their Lord (vs. 18).
6. When we serve God, it requires constant attention—even when we think we are not observed (vs. 19).

—Anne Adams

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why does God accept non-Jews—"the sons of the stranger" (Isa. 56:6)—when previously He was mostly concerned with the Jews? Do strangers often visit your church? If so, how do you help them feel welcome?
2. Is it right for a church or a ministry to profit as it serves God? Is it greedy or is it permissible to profit? Discuss.
3. Which do you think Jesus found more objectionable—the temple merchants' excessive profits or the chaotic commercial atmosphere they brought to the temple?
4. Why was Jesus so forceful with the temple merchants? Is such an aggressive response ever appropriate today? If so, when? If you know of a current example, discuss it and what it accomplishes.

—Anne Adams

# Golden Text Illuminated

"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" (Jeremiah 7:11).

Jeremiah had a most unenviable task. He was called to prophesy to a sinful and belligerent nation. In fact, even as the Lord called Jeremiah to his ministry, He gave His prophet no hope that his message would be accepted. The people Jeremiah confronted had turned from the Lord. Many followed false gods of the nations.

Jeremiah boldly condemned the attitude of the people, who committed every kind of despicable act and yet came to the temple—as if the mere act of acknowledging God was all that was required of them (Jer. 7:9-10).

Jeremiah's message from the Lord first reminded the people that "this house," the temple, was "called" by the Lord's name. It was uniquely identified with their God.

The hypocrisy of the people was intolerable. The gravity of their sin was highlighted by the fact that they had taken the place that bore the name of the Holy One and turned it into a "den of robbers."

Jeremiah assured these people that the Lord saw it all. He was not blind to their evil, and the temple would not protect them from His wrath. Indeed, it did not.

Jesus quoted this verse when He found the same attitudes present among the people of His day (Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). Sadly, we find the very same attitudes among many professing Christians today.

—Jeri K. Waggoner