

Cleansing the Temple

Matthew 21:10—17

We have entered into Jesus' last week before His death on a cross. He has spent most of His time in Galilee and has been traveling with His Disciples from Galilee into Jerusalem for perhaps several months. Before leaving Galilee Jesus clearly told His Disciples that He would be going to Jerusalem to die but that He would come back to life again (Matthew 16:21: 17:9—13; 22—23). Even though they were told this a number of times it was only after Jesus had actually risen from the dead that they really understood what He had told them. According to Luke 9:45 it was the Father who revealed the truths about the Son and that they didn't understand because it was withheld from them. This same principle is emphasized in Luke 8:10 when Jesus tells the Disciples that it has been granted for them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. On the surface it appears that God is revealing these things to only a select group of people—those who are chosen, but He is actually revealing these things to those who reach out to Him by faith. In this case He is revealing these things to members of the Little Flock—the righteous remnant of Israel (Luke 10:21). Ephesians 4:18 clarifies the reason why some men reject the light. God isn't hiding the truth from them, they are unreceptive because of the hardness of their heart.

Not only did the Disciples fail to understand that Jesus would die and be resurrected, they didn't understand the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt (John 12:12—16). It was only after Jesus Christ had risen from the dead that the Disciple's minds were opened to be able to understand what He had taught them for the past three years (Luke 24:45).

Cleaning out the temple

Jesus' last few days were spent clearly identifying Himself as Israel's Messiah. Although His identification as Messiah had been confirmed many times from His birth, the evidence was now compounding exponentially. All the events surrounding His birth conformed to prophecy in the Old Testament. Two times a voice came out from Heaven to announcing Him to be the Son of God (At His baptism and at the Transfiguration). He performed hundreds if not thousands of healings along with many miracles. Matthew McGee lists 29 specific prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus, 22 of which concerned His death (<http://www.matthewmcgee.org/evidence.html>). Everything He did pointed to Him as their Messiah.

Before coming into the temple He had raised Lazarus from the dead and rode into Jerusalem on a colt. He drove out those who had turned the temple into a marketplace by setting up a place for people coming into Jerusalem to buy their sacrifice. Since they are called thieves, we know they were cheating the people in the process. It's obvious that the Pharisees were receiving kickbacks from these transactions or they would have never allowed them into "their" temple. Jesus was showing them that the temple belonged to God, not the Pharisees.

The verse Jesus quotes is from Isaiah 56:7 and says God's house is to be a house of prayer for all nations. This is in reference to the Millennial Kingdom when He will be ruling on the throne in Jerusalem from the temple. This temple is described in Ezekiel 40—44 and I believe it is here where the Disciples will rule. When Jesus quotes this verse He is taking ownership of the temple and telling them of a time when all people, not just the Jews, will use the temple. All believers will have direct access to Lord. However, unbelievers will still need to access Christ through the nation of Israel (Zechariah 8:23).

The children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David" also pointed to Jesus as Messiah. Jesus directs them to Psalm 8:2 to show them the praise of children has the power to silence the adversary. Psalm 8 is about creation and when Jesus identifies Himself with this Psalm He is telling them He is the creator of Heaven and earth.

One last thing we notice is that He is healing the blind and lame in the temple. Healing is a big part of the Gospel of the Kingdom because Israel was promised healing as they go into the Kingdom. Isaiah 35:5—6 speak of the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame leaping and the mute shouting. As Jesus performs these acts of healing the leaders should be able to connect these things to Scripture and connect Jesus to their Messiah. It was because of the hardness of their hearts that caused them to be repelled instead of drawn to Him.

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