

## Lesson 7 – 12 December 2010.

### The Cost of Rejecting the King.

**Lesson Scope:** [Matthew 21](#) and [22:1-14](#)

#### Lesson Focus

This lesson immediately follows Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Prior to this, Jesus had deliberately sought to avoid publicity, even cautioning people not to tell who He was. Now He took specific steps to enter Jerusalem as a King in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.

Jesus' triumphal entry followed several other great events. He had healed two blind men at Jericho, one of whom was Bartimaeus. Several days prior to this, Jesus had raised Lazarus to life. Multitudes thronged Jesus on this last leg of His journey, likely as a result of the previous events. Between two and three million people packed into Jerusalem at Passover time.

The Jewish rulers observed these things with ill-concealed alarm and malice. Jesus' triumphal entry forced the issue in their minds. Either they must acknowledge Jesus for who He was, or they must reject and eliminate Him to maintain their own authority. They chose the latter.

Jesus' words and actions in chapters 21 and 22 revealed the heart of the King. As the Messiah, Jesus also revealed what He is looking for in the hearts of men.

God requires sincere worship and holy fruit. To fail in these is to reject Christ, which in turn is to be rejected by Him.

This lesson is both sweet and bitter. It is a joy to see the response of the blind, the lame, and the children at the temple and to know Jesus had a place in their hearts. But it is sad to see the rejection of the Messiah Himself by those who should have been heralding His coming. It is also instructive to understand that Jesus' warning is valid yet today.

For your own inspiration, compare some of the events surrounding Christ's first and second coming: (1) The donkey versus the horse, (2) the multitudes with palms in their hands versus the armies clothed in "fine linen, white and clean," and (3) the cleansing of the temple versus the cleansing of the earth.

**Lesson Aim:** To present principles related to the rejection of truth.

**Theme Verses:** [Romans 11:20-21](#). “Well: because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”

### **Lesson Text.**

#### **Desecrating the Temple.**

##### [Matthew 21:12-16](#)

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, <sup>13</sup>And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. <sup>14</sup>And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. <sup>15</sup>And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, <sup>16</sup>And said unto him, Hearst thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

#### **Failing to Bear Fruit.**

##### [Matthew 21:17-20](#)

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. <sup>18</sup>Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. <sup>19</sup>And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. <sup>20</sup>And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

#### **Seeking to Kill the Heir.**

##### [Matthew 21:33-41](#)

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: <sup>34</sup>And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. <sup>35</sup>And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. <sup>37</sup>But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. <sup>38</sup>But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves,

This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.  
<sup>39</sup>And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.  
<sup>40</sup>When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? <sup>41</sup>They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

### **Facing God's Judgment.**

[Matthew 21:42-46](#)

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? <sup>43</sup>Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. <sup>44</sup>And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. <sup>45</sup>And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. <sup>46</sup>But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Desecrating the Temple**

1. Why did Jesus respond as He did in Mathew 21:12-13?
2. What does the irony of Mathew 21:15 reveal about the chief priests and scribes'?
3. How would we be tempted with similar irreverence and disrespect'?

#### **Failing to Bear Fruit**

4. What is symbolized by Jesus' cursing of the fig tree?

#### **Seeking to Kill the Heir**

5. What does this parable reveal about the heart of God in His dealings with Israel?
6. Can leaders today fail in a similar manner as these husbandmen? Explain.

#### **Facing God's Judgment**

7. What is the prophetic fulfillment of Mathew 21:41 and 43?
8. Explain the contrast of the stone and the two falls in Mathew 21:44.

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Jesus' movements in chapters 21-24 are significant. The primary focus is the temple. Jesus entered the temple (Mark 11: 11) on the day He arrived at

Jerusalem on the donkey. The following morning He entered the temple again and began to cleanse it (Matthew 21:11 Mark 11: 11 15). The next day Jesus again entered the temple and taught there for a while (Matthew 21:23; Mark 11:27-33). That evening Jesus left the temple, never to return. Jesus, in cleansing the temple, did not use physical violence on the "thieves" to chase them out of the temple. In Christ's presence, they simply had to cooperate. He did, however, overthrow the money tables and the chairs of the dove sellers. We must remember that Jesus also was divine. He was Lord of the temple (21:13). Scripture does record that "judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17).

The fig tree was the perfect example of hypocrisy. Fig trees typically bore fruit before the leaves appeared, so if the leaves were on the tree, there should have been figs as well. The fig tree was symbolic of the nation of Israel, and they were not bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance. The only remaining prospect was destruction, a reality that occurred in A.D. 70.

The chief priests and Pharisees did seem to grasp the fact that Jesus' parables implicated them. But rather than fulfilling their obligation as religious leaders, they were more interested in protecting their position and reputation. Jesus concluded with a woeful judgment (Mathew 21:44) and emphasized again the need to bear good fruit.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Desecrating the Temple**

1. Distorted worship leads to the rejection of truth (Mathew 21:12-13). We cannot place a value upon the solemnity and reverence of our worship services. The "house of prayer" is where we meet God in a special way. When men depart from truth, one of the symptoms is a switch to casual expression and entertainment in the worship services. This is why we are concerned about the dignity and bearing of our song leaders, Sunday school teachers, and other brethren leading in worship. When reverence departs, we rob God of what is rightfully His.

2. Those who reject truth are irritated by lowly and simple expressions of faith (Mathew 21:14-16). The blind, the lame, and the children saw in Jesus the answer to their needs. Their faith was simple enough to take Jesus at His word. The chief priests and scribes did not appreciate the people that Jesus sought to help. They viewed Jesus as a threat to their sophisticated religious system. Do we appreciate the simple and the lowly, or do we aspire to be cultured and elite"

3. Those who reject the truth seek for praise themselves (Mathew 21:15). Man's nature is subtle. The chief priests and scribes could not stand to see the carpenter of Nazareth receive more praise than they. He seemed to be the object of everyone's attention! They wished that they could do wonderful things too, but for a very different reason. To seek praise for self is to deflect praise from our Creator.

#### **Failing to Bear Fruit**

4. Form without fruit results from rejection of truth (Mathew 21:19). It is possible to have the leaves without the figs. And it is possible to have the outward appearance of a separated people without the inner fruits of courtesy, compassion, and joy. But it is inconsistent to be truly born again and to have a spiritual interest without also outwardly expressing a plain and separated way of life. The danger of hypocrisy is very real for all of us, yet the danger of pietistic self-expression seems to trap more people than the traditional forms of nonconformity to the world.

#### **Seeking to Kill the Heir**

5. Truth is rejected when people reject the trust committed to them (Mathew 21:33). These husbandmen received a charge to care for the master's vineyard. Sadly enough, the householder's meticulous preparation did not guarantee fruit bearing, or the right response from the husbandman. The husbandman needed to choose to labor and to respect the interests of the householder.

We likewise have a heritage and an opportunity today that is unprecedented. Sound teaching, Christian day schools, Bible schools for our youth, and a connection with history are but a small part of our heritage. We must choose whether we will appreciate that heritage and instill that same interest in the next generation. We are not forced to be faithful in this, but one day our Lord will return to evaluate our commitment to the trust He has given us.

6. Truth is rejected when people fail to cultivate and maintain the way to truth (Mathew 21:34-35). Instead of being fellow helpers to the truth, these people hindered others from walking in the way of truth. These husbandmen even withstood the king's own messengers! How do we respond when applications to truth are made across the pulpit? Are we as family leaders charting a course that makes it easier or harder for our families and others to do what is right?

7. Truth is rejected when inert become self and focused on themselves (Mathew 21:38-39). The husbandmen's problem was one of greed. They

wanted the inheritance for themselves, failing to see that reward is based on faithful, loyal service.

In the past, talented men have sought to gain a prominent place in history. We are not beyond doing the same thing today. We do well to examine ourselves. Are we motivated by humility, love, and loyalty in our service for the Lord?

### **Facing God's Judgment**

8. Truth will be taken from those who reject it and given to a people bearing the fruits thereof (Mathew 21:43). The salvation of the Gentiles is proof of this fact. Many today apostatize and turn from the truth, but while time remains, God will have a people who are living faithfully for Him.

9. Truth rejecters will experience divine judgment (Mathew 21:44). All men will one day reckon with this "stone," Jesus Christ. Men can choose to have their wills broken now on that Rock, or they can choose to be ground and Crushed in eternal destruction. Which will you choose'!

### **Important Teachings**

1. Distorted worship leads to the rejection of truth (Mathew 21:12-13).

2. Those who reject truth are irritated by the lowly and simple expressions of faith (Mathew 21:14-16).

3. Those who reject truth seek for praise themselves (Mathew 21:15).

4. Form without fruit results from rejection of truth (Mathew 21:19).

5. Truth is rejected when people reject the trust committed to them (Mathew 21:33).

6. Truth is rejected when people fail to cultivate and maintain the way to truth (Mathew 21:34, 35).

7. Truth is rejected when men have become selfish and focused on themselves (Mathew 21:38-39).

8. Truth will be taken from those who reject it and given to a people bearing the fruits thereof (Mathew 21:43).

9. Truth rejecters will experience divine judgment (Mathew 21:44).

10. Truth is rejected when those who proclaim truth are rejected (Mathew 21:35).

11. Those who reject truth stumble over the simple path to truth (Mathew 21:42).

12. Those who reject truth endeavor to destroy the source of truth (Mathew 21:45-46).

## Answers to Questions

1. Why did Jesus respond as He did in Mathew 21:12 and 13?

These people knew better; Jesus had cleansed the temple three years earlier. The Old Testament Scriptures outlined the house of the Lord as a house of worship and prayer in Isaiah 56:7. The temple was intended to be a place where Gentiles, such as the Queen of Sheba, were drawn to respect and adore the God of Israel. (See also Malachi 1:11.) They were robbing God of the worship that He deserved (see 21:13 and Jeremiah 7:11). Matthew 21:14 reveals God's deeper purpose and intent for the temple—the healing of the blind and lame.

2. What does the irony of Mathew 21:15 reveal about the chief priests and scribes?

It reveals the dark selfishness of their hearts. They were jealous of the honor and the glory that Christ was rightfully receiving. They were cruel and merciless in their intentions, because they could not rejoice with the blind and the lame who were healed. It revealed that they had hearts of stone. Their goal was to do away with Jesus.

3. How would we be tempted with similar irreverence and disrespect?

The chief priests and scribes did not arrive at this level of disrespect and hatred for spiritual things all at once. We need to be alert to the seeds of irreverence in our own lives. Watches beeping or cell phones ringing are both disturbing and irreverent in our church services. How many business transactions do we conduct at church, even on weekday evenings? Allowing ourselves to bask in the glow of compliments we may have received for a devotional or song we may have led is taking credit that belongs to the Lord.

4. What is symbolized by Jesus' cursing of the fig tree?

The fig tree represented the nation of Israel. Jesus came to proclaim "the acceptable year of the Loan," and the Jews had had plenty of opportunity to receive Him in the past three years. Outwardly they appeared to be religious, but inwardly they were hypocrites. The day of vengeance on Israel was coming for rejecting their Messiah. Our Lord absolutely hated hypocrisy and the absence of spiritual fruit. Jesus sought to impress upon His disciples the seriousness of spiritual pretense and its damage to His cause.

5. What does this parable reveal about the heart of God in His dealings with Israel?

God had done everything to assure their fruitfulness. He hedged them to keep wild beasts away. He built a tower to guard against intruders. God

made it easy for them to maintain their loyalty to Him by sending servants to the husbandmen to receive the fruits. Isaiah 5:1-7 further details God's care of the vineyard. God greatly desired their fruitfulness, and He was very long-suffering and patient.

6. Can leaders today fail in a similar manner as these husbandmen? Explain.

Yes, leaders can fail. Anyone can for that matter. A lack of respect for the Lord of the vineyard is the first step. Despising the messengers of God who come to evaluate and sample the fruit is another step. To fail to appreciate God's efforts to prune and cultivate His vineyard is the same as not appreciating direction on the practical issues of life. When leaders seek to take the credit to themselves, they are robbing God of His rightful fruits.

7. What is the prophetic fulfillment of Mathew 21:41 and 43?

To understand these verses, we need to recognize that Christ was speaking to a Jewish audience. Due to Israel's rejection of their Messiah, God would give special opportunity to the Gentiles in the Church Age. Jew and Gentile alike can be saved, but God would no longer work through Israel as a nation while the church is His primary witness in the world.

8. Explain the contrast of the stone and the two falls in Mathew 21:44.

The stone of verse 44 is the same one as in verse 42. This stone is Jesus, who was rejected by the Jewish builders but nevertheless became the cornerstone of the church (Acts 4:11). The "stone," Jesus Christ, was a stumbling block to many at Christ's first coming (1 Peter 2:7, 8). But at His Second Coming, Christ will utterly destroy any who resist His authority as the Son of God. It is better to be broken on the Rock and surrender our lives to Him now than to face judgment later.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

It is no secret that we live in a day of unprecedented truth rejection—and the shades of truth denial are many and varied. But can we also see that the headstone of the corner, Jesus Christ, is building His church? Can we say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"?

### **Research Guide**

Compare the other synoptic Gospels for a more complete picture of Jesus' activity in this chapter.