

Jesus the Temple

1. Jesus condemns false religion the Temple

- Last week looked at Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana
 - First miraculous sign > pointing to him as
 - Christ who has come to usher in the kingdom of joy
 - Bridegroom who has come to lay down his life for his bride / church

- After this we see in v12-13 Jesus heads over to Capernaum and soon after down to Jerusalem for Passover
- Passover > Jewish festival celebrated every year in Jerusalem
 - Festival was to remember Israel's rescue from Egypt (Exodus)
 - Sacrificed a lamb > blood on the door
 - God passed over Egypt, saw the blood on the door of Israelites and spared them judgment
- God told Moses and Israelites to remember that event
 - God's judgment on his enemies and his great act of grace and mercy in saving his people

- Every year ... people come from all over Israel and beyond to Jerusalem for the festival
 - Population swell from around 80,000 to 300,000-500,000
- They would get to Jerusalem ... want to go to the Temple and worship and offer sacrifices

- Original temple was built by King Solomon circa 1000BC ... but it had been destroyed by Babylonians 600 BC
 - But around 20BC King Herod started rebuilding it
 - In Jesus day ... not as grand as Solomon's Temple, but still a massive and impressive structure

- What was the purpose of the Temple
- Most significantly it was the place where God symbolically dwelt among his people
 - Jews didn't think God lived in the Temple > they knew as the creator ... the heavens and earth couldn't contain him
 - But the Temple was God's presence among them and represented the place where they could go and meet with God
 - Place where they could

- Pray
- Worship

- Part of worship of God included sacrifices
 - Some sacrifices where thank offerings to God for his provision and blessings
 - Others were for sacrifices for sin > Jews would offer an animal as an atonement for their sin
 - Idea was that the animal took the punishment for a person's sin in their place

- Rather than bring your animals all the way from countryside, like Galilee (3 days walk) ... Jews would travel to Jerusalem and purchase animals for sacrifice in Jerusalem
- If they were coming from other countries they needed to exchange foreign currency for Jewish drachma
 - You can imagine during the Passover festival ... this would be chaos
 - People yelling, bartering, selling
 - Animals bleating and mooing
 - Money changers haggling for the best price
- In and of itself ... there's nothing wrong with this
 - This is just part of city life

- Problem was ... the Jewish hierarchy had turned what should have been a place of worship into market place
 - Instead of all this happening out in the streets or in precincts around the Temple ... all this was happening inside the Temple where people were meant to be worshipping God

- So all that the Temple was meant to be and symbolize had been turned into a sham
 - Worship of God had been turned into a process
 - Very mechanical
 - Come in > pay your money > buy animal > kill it > say some prayers and you go
 - How was anyone meant to do serious business to God with all that noise, distraction and activity going on around them

- **Illustration**
 - Like have bunch of fete stalls set up here in the hall

- Come in try and worship > pray > but all around you is a cacophony of noise
- So when Jesus comes to Jerusalem for what was meant to be the most significant festival in the Jewish calendar
- A time when they were meant to come and
 - worship God and
 - praise him for his grace and mercy in rescuing them
 - repent of sin and offer sacrifices for sin ...
- Instead Jesus sees that worship of God had become
 - Corrupt
 - Mechanical
 - All about the ritual and the process
 - Making a mockery of God and all that the Temple was meant to represent
- Jesus is understandably furious!
 - *"How dare they turn worship into this"*
 - *"How dare they turn his Father's house into a marketplace"*
 - *"How dare they turn a holy place and a place of worship ... into den for robbers, thieves, corruption and false worship"*
- So he cleanses the temple
 - He made a whip out of cords, and drove out the sheep and cattle
 - He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.
 - He rebukes all involved
- What Jesus is doing ... is condemning false religion and false worship
 - The Jews had turned worship into a process
 - Very mechanical
 - Very ritualistic
 - Worship that just going through the motions
 - Jesus wanted none of it

Application

- A lot people think that Christianity today is not that different to what Jesus was condemning 2000 years ago
 - Especially if you grew up going to church in the past in some of our more traditional churches where they too can seem

- Very mechanical
- Very ritualistic
- You go to church > go through the process > follow the liturgy > stand up > sit down > listen some bloke in a dress talk say something you don't understand > have some bread > might be allowed to have wine > someone reads some prayers out of a book and you go home
- This is not true Christianity
 - Jesus condemns false religion that turns worship into meaningless ritual
- **Application**
- What we see here is Jesus is challenging > bumps up against ppl's expectations > doesn't fit with people's comfortable expectations
- This is challenging for people because they will say
 - "I like to think of Jesus like this ..."
- Many people have this view of Jesus as meek and mild ... calling the children to sit on his lap so he can bless them
 - Dressed in a flowing robe, with smouldering blue eyes and looking like Brad Pitt
- Others
 - NRMA Jesus > just call on him in an emergency
 - Baby Jesus > cute and cuddly lying in a manger
 - Vending Machine Jesus > put in a few prayers and out pops the thing you want in life
 - But those views of Jesus are to completely domesticate Jesus into the Jesus you want him to be
- **Illustration - Driving**
- Think of it like this
 - Imagine driving > weary > want to get home
 - Road veers to the left > great big tree right in front of you
 - Do you say to yourself
 - *"I like to think of this road as straight?"*
 - *"I prefer thing of this road without bends and going straight ahead"*
 - Do you do that? No!
- Instead I acknowledge the reality of the situation before me
 - I don't make up scenarios to suit my preferences
 - I deal with reality of what is in front of me
 - If I don't I die on the tree

- That's the way it is with reality > you submit your life to the reality even though its challenging and not what you prefer
- In this passage we're seeing the reality of Jesus and he's challenging us
 - He's showing us his real nature as the Messiah
 - Jesus is showing us that as the Messiah he is not tame and domesticated
 - He is one with total authority and he will judge false worship
 - He will make not life comfortable for you
- If you're here today and you feel comfortable with Jesus ... then you don't know him properly
 - Jesus is not just some personalised God who's come to provide for our felt needs
 - We can't just say
 - *"I prefer to think of Jesus like this"*
 - *"I like to think of Jesus like that"*
 - Because to do that is to deny the reality of who he is and what he has come to do
 - This passage show's us he's the Christ who's come to usher in the Kingdom of God and who will rule over you and I for eternity
- One of the ways he will challenge you and I is the way we think we gain access to God
 - If you think you can turn up and go through the motions and do all the rituals ... then Jesus is making it very clear ... you've got it wrong

2. Jesus demands true worship in Him

- When you think about the what Jesus is doing ... it's pretty radical
 - Who else could come into the Temple > the house of God > the place of worship ... at the most important festival of the year ... and do such a thing?
 - Either he's a complete lunatic ... or he's someone with great authority
- And so the Jews demand a sign from him to validate why he acts with such authority
- Notice they don't arrest Jesus > don't say
 - "You can't do that!"
 - "What you are doing is illegal"
- Why is that?

- Because they knew from the scriptures that when the Messiah came ... one of the things he would do would be to come and cleanse the Temple
- He would have a passion and desire for holiness and true worship of God

- The scripture they no doubt had in mind was Malachi 3:1-4
 - Malachi the last of the OT prophets > 400BC
 - *"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple**; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a **refiner's fire or a launderer's soap**. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.*

- So there was an expectation that when the Messiah came he was going to come and cleanse the temple and purify any corrupted worship
- That he would be like a refiners fire and a launderer's soap
 - Cleansing and purifying
- So they see Jesus cleansing the Temple > they see Jesus acting with complete and utter authority ... and so ask Jesus for a sign to see if he is the Messiah

- Jesus replies with a riddle ... something completely unexpected
 - "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."
- Jews took him literally and think Jesus is referring to Herod's temple
 - At this point they're thinking Jesus is a lunatic!
 - The Temple in Jerusalem was huge!
 - And Jesus says he can raise it up in three days!

- But here's where John helps to understand what Jesus really meant
 - v21-22 ²¹ *But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*
- You see with benefit of hindsight and indwelling of the HS the disciples were able to understand the significance of what he was saying
 - Jesus resurrection from the dead gave new perspective to these words
 - Jesus wasn't referring to Herod's temple

- Jesus was referring to his body
 - Destruction of the temple was not a demolition of Herod's temple ... but his death on the cross
 - Raising of the temple in 3 days, is not the world's fastest renovation rescue ... but his resurrection from the dead
- In effect, Jesus is saying
 - "You want a sign that I have authority to cleanse this temple?"
 - "This is my authority ... after you kill me, three days later I'm going to be raised back to life"
 - "You want to know why I can come in here as the Messiah and condemn your false worship?"
 - "Because of my resurrection from the dead"
- Now that of itself is amazing
 - Jesus is declaring straight off the bat that the religious leaders are going to destroy him / kill him ... but he will be raised back to life
 - As the Christ ... death will have no hold on him
 - He is the promised saviour king of God's people who will rule over his eternal kingdom forever¹
- But even more amazing is that Jesus refers to **himself** as the Temple!
 - What did Jesus mean by this?
 - Why does he refer to himself as the Temple?
- As with all the key roles and institutions in the OT ... they are merely shadows of the greater reality to come in Jesus
 - Jesus is the great
 - High priest
 - Prophet
 - King
 - Passover Lamb etc
 - Jesus is the perfect expression of those things
- Same is true for the Temple
 - What's the Temple for / what does it represent
- The Temple is the place

¹ 2 Samuel 7:13 - He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.; also Psalm 16:10 - because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

- where God symbolically dwelt among his people
- where people come to meet with & worship God
- where people worship God
- where people pray to God
- where people seek forgiveness of sin and offer sacrifices to atone for sin

- Jesus is saying ... I am the true Temple
 - I am God who actually is dwelling among you
 - It's through me that you come to know and meet with God
 - It's through me that you worship God
 - It's through me that you pray to your Father in Heaven
 - It's through me that you find forgiveness of sin ...
 - Because I am the great high priest, AND
 - My death on the cross will be the once and for all sacrifice for sin

- Jesus is the one true Temple > because it's through him
 - we have access to God
 - forgiveness with God
 - worship and pray to God
- This gives us a much deeper understanding of what Jesus was doing in the temple
 - Hasn't come to merely clean up what was going on in the temple
 - He's not just reforming it
 - But he's replacing it!

- Jesus is coming in judgment on false religion and false worship ... and saying
 - Worship, forgiveness, communion with God is not found in a place
 - Worship, forgiveness, communion with God is found in a person ... and it's me

- **Application**
- Obvious, but needs to be said ...
- No building ... no matter how ornate, large, lofty, full of stain glass ... can ever be the meeting place with God
 - Church buildings / school halls are not the place we meet with God
 - We use church buildings for convenience and comfort ... not to come into his presence
 - Buildings have no theological significance
 - We meet God in Jesus Christ

- You want to come to know God?
 - You want to meet with him?
 - Get to know Jesus Christ and enter into a life saving relationship with him
 - Jesus says to Phillip in John 14 > “if you know me, you know the Father also”²

- Therefore ...
- If you want to truly worship God ... if you want to come into the presence of the one who created you and loves you and wants you to be with him in heaven for eternity ... then you need to come to Jesus ... you need to come to the true temple
 - Worship of God is not about a process
 - Worship of God is not about fulfilling a bunch of rituals
 - Worship of God is not mechanical
- It’s about coming by faith to Jesus

- How is that possible?
 - God is a holy God and if anyone is to come into his presence they need to be cleansed / be holy
 - That’s what the animal sacrifices were all about
 - Kill an animal to atone for your sin > cleanse you from your sin ... that allowed you to come into the temple to worship

- But when you come to Christ as the true temple ... you’ve already been cleansed > you’ve already been made holy > you have immediate access to your creator

- How / Why
 - Because Jesus is a refiner’s fire
 - How does a refiner fire work
- A refiners fire is a furnace > a furnace works to separate the purities and the impurities in metals
 - The heat makes it impossible for the gold and the dross to stay together

- Through his death on the cross ... rather than putting us through the refiners fire ... Jesus Christ himself went through the fire
 - He took the heat of God’s wrath so that our sin could be dealt with

² John 14:7

- He took away the dross of our sin ... and cleansed us ... made us pure and new
- So it no longer depends on you and I to come to God and offer sacrifices to worship God and be forgiven
 - Christ has already done it
 - He's a refiners fire and a launderers soap
 - He's cleansed us and purifies us at the cross
- What is that friends?
 - That is amazing grace
 - That's totally undeserved
 - Jesus Christ stepped into the refiners fire so that I didn't have to
 - He sacrificed himself for you
- **Illustration – Solider & land mines**
 - Like a soldier in war > platoon comes to a field littered with land mines
 - One soldier goes ahead of the others > trips the land mine and is killed
 - But in doing so ... he opened a whole for others to follow and live
 - He sacrificed himself
- When you see that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for you ... what do you do?
- You say ...
 - *"Jesus if you offered yourself as a sacrifice for me ... then I offer myself as a sacrifice for you"*
- That's exactly what Paul says in Rom 12:1-2
 - *I urge you in view of God's mercy [grace], offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to him. This is your spiritual act of worship"*
- Our sacrifice to God is not to atone for sin ... that's already be dealt with by Jesus
 - Our sacrifice is our lives ... given to God in response to his amazing grace shown in cleansing and purifying us through Jesus
- This is true Christian worship
 - Not ritual and process
 - Giving up you life to serve and honour and live for the one who served you

- That means ... worship is all of life
 - Not just what happens in church
 - Not just what happens when you sing or pray

- True worship is when you say
 - "Lord, all of my life is in your service"
 - "All that I have
 - "All my decisions
 - "All my time
 - "All my priorities
 - "Everything I have ... I offer to you"
 - "For I know by faith in Christ ... he has already brought me into your holy and eternal presence ... so here I am to worship you with my life"

- For those of you who are regular here ... we have been considering the future of C@P
 - This is a helpful reminder isn't it
 - Worship is not ritual or process ... it's all of our life given to Jesus in response to his grace and mercy shown to us at the cross where he stepped into the refiners fire in our place

- Others of you here who are still trying to work out who Jesus is and what Christianity is all about
 - I pray you go home today with a very clear understanding that ... being right with God and gaining access to him is NOT about ritual and process and that Jesus is very much against that
 - That's just false religion and false worship
 - True Christianity means that knowing God and gaining access to him is only by and through Jesus Christ ... the true Temple
 - That's why you need to take him seriously ...
 - That's why I encourage you to investigate
 - who he is > why he came > what it means to follow him

PRAY