

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 30 A

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time before His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion and death. His past encounters with the different groups of people in Jerusalem provided many valuable spiritual lessons but none more significant as the events leading up to His crucifixion.

As He approached Jerusalem, He wept as He was tender-hearted. He grieved over Jerusalem because of her unbelief and rejection of Him. Jesus cursed the fig tree as a warning to the Israelites of their lack of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple manifests His love for the honour and glory of His Father in heaven. These are

some of the precious lessons we can learn.

UNDERSTANDING

Lament Over Jerusalem: Luke 19:41-44.

As He was approaching Jerusalem, Jesus fixed His eyes intently on it and wept over it (literally: He burst into tears). Jesus' keen spiritual perception saw what dull human eyes could not see. Many of the people who were praising Him would also be crying out for His death. The hearts of the people were hard and filled with unbelief.

The Jewish leaders were bent on killing Him in order to protect their position and privilege. He had come to bring peace and salvation to them but they rejected Him. Soon they would be shouting to crucify Him. They misinterpreted the Word of God and looked for a political and military Messiah to overthrow Rome, and set up the kingdom on earth as promised to David. Jesus lamented over their unbelief and rejection of Him. The Messiah must first come as a suffering Servant before He comes as the conquering King of kings. Because of the hardness of their heart, they were blind. They had not understood Jesus' mission. The Messiah was right in front of them and they could not and refused to see.

Jesus predicted the terrible siege that would happen to Jerusalem and that people would be killed. Jesus mentioned that because of the hardness of their heart, they could not know the time of their "visitation." The word "visitation" is used in Scriptures to

describe God's coming to His people. It could mean for good or evil; and for deliverance or judgement. In its usage here it means judgement upon the people because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Jesus' prediction of the fall and destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans marched into Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple and the city.

Jesus wept. We recall that Jesus wept also at Lazarus' tomb. It is not recorded that Jesus ever smiled. But this does not imply that Jesus never did. He could have smiled lovingly at the little daughter of Jairus as He raised her from the dead. He could have smiled when the little children were brought to Him to place His hands on them and bless them. It was recorded a few times Jesus "rejoiced in spirit" (Luke 10:21; John 15:11).¹ However, the life of Jesus was marked with the dark side of life. The blind, the lame, the crippled, the sick, the deaf, the demon-possessed and the bereaved were those whom He mingled, met and touched.

In addition the Jewish leaders were unbelieving and they harassed Him. The people loved darkness more than the Light of life. Jesus was more acquainted with those who were suffering and

grieving. He is called the "Man of sorrows."²

We learn one very important truth that while God extends His love to man, the period of this extension is not infinite. This window of privilege and opportunity to accept God's love and forgiveness is known only to God. But that does not mean that man can be complacent as if he has many more days and opportunities to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. **2 Corinthians 6:2**, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)"

As a result God's visitation, His judgement follows. By that time, there will be no mercy shown. Repentance would be too late. It is the time of sight, for the sinner will SEE Christ for who He is, the very Son of God in all His shekinah glory. Sight is not faith. The just shall live by faith. That is why salvation must be now and not tomorrow!!

The Jews were given enough opportunities to repent, believe and receive Jesus as their Messiah, but they rejected Him again and again. They tried to trick Him on many occasions but Jesus was always one up on them. Jesus did miracles in front of them so that these enemies of God

¹ Luke 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

² Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. {we hid...: or, he hid as it were his face from us: Heb. as an hiding of faces from him, or, from us}

might believe. But all was in vain. That resulted in God's visitation of judgement upon them. Similarly, people who reject the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ and who persistently reject Jesus Christ are in danger of God's visitation of judgement upon them. When they die in their sin and without Christ as their Saviour and advocate all avenues of mercy and love from God will cease immediately.

Visit to the Temple: Matthew 21:10-11; Mark 11:11.

The whole city of Jerusalem was excited when Jesus entered it. Some asked, "Who is this?" The multitude responded, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." The response from the multitude reveals that the people knew Him as a prophet. They knew His hometown and the main field of His ministry. They might be expressing their surprise that a prophet should come from Nazareth, a place they considered to be of ill repute.

Jesus looked around. The time was nearing late evening, and He retired to Bethany. They knew about or of Jesus but they did not know Jesus and Jesus also did not know them. There was no intimate relationship and fellowship between Christ and the people in Jerusalem. They knew Him as a prophet but not as their personal Saviour! Today there are many who may acknowledge Christ as some kind of a prophet or even a great teacher but never their Saviour! How sad. There are also those who know Him very well in terms of head knowledge because they have gone through the Sunday School or even Bible

College or Seminary training, but they have never known Christ at all nor were they even known by Him.

Cursing of the Fig Tree: Mark 11:12-14; Matthew 21:18-19.

The next morning, a Monday, Jesus returned to Jerusalem. Jesus was hungry and from a distance He saw a fig tree which had many leaves. The fig-tree was a most unusual tree compared to the rest in that the fruits will appear first before the leaves! But when Jesus came to the tree, He found that it was fruitless. These words in Mark, "for the time of figs was not yet" means that "it was not in full season yet." What Jesus looked for were the small budding fruits that were supposed to be found in the fig tree during this time of the year.

This was not the norm for the fig tree. They **MUST** bear fruit when it was time! Jesus then pronounced a curse upon the tree: "Let no fruit grow on thee, henceforward, and no man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever." The tree then withered away.

From a human standpoint, Jesus' cursing of the tree seems arbitrary, unreasonable and unjustified. Thus some Bible scholars rejected the fact it ever happened; explained that it was only a parable. But there is no indication to say that Jesus spoke a parable. The divinely inspired record should be not rejected. We should accept that it happened precisely as reported by Matthew and Mark.

Earlier, in another instance, Jesus spoke of a parable in which the owner wanted to cut down the fig tree that did not bear fruit in his

garden. But his workers pleaded with the owner to give it another year and if it did not bear fruit, then to cut it down (Luke 13:6-9). In the Old Testament, the fig tree or the vine is often compared to Israel.

In this parable, Israel was found to be barren, not producing the fruit which was intended and expected of her. Because of this reason, judgement is fallen upon the nation of Israel. As God's special chosen people, Israel plays an important role as the source of God's redemptive hope for the world. Israel should be proclaiming the Word of Truth, and the gospel of salvation to the world. But alas, instead of fulfilling the hope by accepting Jesus as the Messiah, they rejected Him. Instead, Israel had embraced empty religious rituals and traditions. The people were filled with the great sin of pride!

Jesus' cursing of the fig-tree that did not produce fruit teaches us some important spiritual lessons. Israel was not producing the fruit that was expected of her. Instead of obeying God and doing His will, Israel paid more attention to keeping the traditions of men. This is also a lesson for many churches today. If a church fails to produce the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance), and fails to do the will of God, it will face the same judgement as the fig-tree. It will become useless and will wither away. This is also true of the individual Christian when he or she does not produce the fruit of the Spirit, obey God and do His will. If a Christian is only outwardly religious but is devoid of spiritual

substance and power, he becomes a useless professing Christian. He fails to be the light and salt of the world. He has never been a light at all in the very beginning!

Second Cleansing of the Temple:

Mark 11:15-18; Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-48.

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple. He was in the Court of the Gentiles. This court was for the Gentiles to worship the LORD God. But Jesus found that the priests had turned the area into a marketplace. Jesus wasted no time and 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."

Jesus gave His reason for doing what He did. Jesus cited the words of the prophet Isaiah (56:7): *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 an house of prayer** for all people [emphasis added].* And from Jeremiah, Jesus cited (7:11): ***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 [emphasis added].* The priests had allowed a part of the Temple which was designated for all other races to worship God, to become a place for profiteering. The Temple provided money changing services. Roman coins were not accepted to pay the half-shekel Temple tax required by the

Law from every Jew annually. The coins of the Roman with the heads of their Caesars on them were considered unclean. These Roman coins must be changed into shekels before they can be given to the LORD as tithes and offerings! An exchange fee was charged by these money changers. Animals and birds for sacrificial purposes were also sold in the Temple for profit.

This was not a bad thing initially for it was meant to provide a service of convenience for the worshippers who came from afar. They would not bring an animal from a far for the animal could become lame by the time it reaches Jerusalem. Such animals will definitely not meet the requirements of the Law. The priests would reject the animal. This provision of convenience had degenerated into a system for profiteering and misuse of funds. The profits went into the pockets of the priests. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus had cleansed the Temple once before. Now more than one year later they came back and set up the business again.

In addition Jesus "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple" (Mark 11:16). The word "vessel" could mean any implement, household utensil, or domestic equipment. What happened here was that the people had made the Temple area a short-cut between the city and the Mount of Olives! This practice showed that the people had very little respect for the sanctity of the Temple. Jesus forbade it. The Temple was a sacred place of worship and not a convenient short-cut pathway.

Imagine what would a Gentile think when he entered the Court of the Gentiles to pray to the LORD God? Would he think that this was the place to find the presence of God or the things of the world? Would he be encouraged to pray to God seeing the nefarious activities that were going on? He would be so shocked and would surely turn away. What is the difference between the Gentile worshipping their gods with all their idolatry and sin compared with the Jews in their business and profiteering ventures! None at all!! Jesus was justified in restoring the place for worship, and the honour and glory of the name of God His Father in heaven!

The Temple was the home of God. It was symbolic of God's presence in Israel! But this was categorically rejected by the priests, Pharisees, scribes, and all the lay leaders! Perhaps they were sincere in their rejection. The question is whether sincerity should count for something in the eyes of God or not?

PRACTICAL VALUE

We can learn many spiritual truths in these encounters of our Lord Jesus Christ with the people. There is much tenderness and beauty in Jesus as He made His entrance into Jerusalem for the last time before His death. As He made His way from the Mount of Olives, and overlooking the Temple, He wept over Jerusalem, the holy city of God. There stood God's Temple, the temple of His Father in heaven. It grieved His heart. While Jesus had come to save the nation Israel, they would not accept him. Jesus pronounced

the first judgement against the nation of Israel. Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed and the people therein.

This judgement of Israel was emphasized again when Jesus cursed the fig-tree. The fig-tree symbolized the nation Israel. It had failed as a nation to bring deliverance and hope to all the other nations. It had failed miserably as God's visible witness on earth!

Jesus teaches that hypocrisy is more than what a person is not. It is failing to produce what is promised. If our spiritual lifestyle promises great expectations, but fails to produce what is promised, this is hypocrisy. Our religion is false. We must be careful not to "mistake spiritual style for spiritual substance."

Jesus always had time for the outcasts in the community. Jesus cared for those in need like the blind, the lame and the widowed. We must be like our Lord Jesus Christ. We may be strong in doctrine and teaching, and that is necessary. But we must also match our zeal for the word with the care for the needy, especially those of the household of faith. Preaching the Word, and teaching the Word, and care and concern for the social and physical needs of the needy are three major missions of the church.

In the cleansing of the Temple, we too must be very careful that we do not turn our church into a place of convenience or into a club house for fellowship. The church belongs to Jesus because He bought us with His precious blood. We must constantly guard against the encroachment of materialism and Epicureanism. We must be

aware of the church's sacred missions, and to fulfill them for Christ's sake and glory. AMEN

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LESSON 30 A

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Luke 19:41-44.; Matthew 21:10-11; Mark 11:11.

TUESDAY: Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matthew 21:18-22.

WEDNESDAY: Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matthew 21:18-22.

THURSDAY: Mark 11:15-18; Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-48.

FRIDAY: Mark 11:15-18; Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-48.

Discussion Questions

- 1. How does this passage show that love and judgement are two sides of the same coin, and that opportunities for salvation do not last for ever?**

2. What may we learn from the attitude of the multitude towards Jesus?

3. If the fig-tree is a symbol of Jerusalem to Jesus, what lesson is taught here about the fig-tree and His judgement upon it?

4. What does Jesus say can be done by the prayer of faith?

5. What other factors relating to prayer did Jesus mention apart from the prayer of faith?

6. What were the reasons for Jesus' actions in the Temple?

7. What aspects of Jesus' character are manifested in the cleaning of the Temple?

8. Would you say that what Jesus did was it done in love? Did Jesus say the truth in love?
