

SESSION 10: JESUS AND THE TEMPLE

COMMIT - DAY 1: THE TEMPLE

The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of God's covenant relationship with his Chosen People. We have descriptions of the Temple as it was in Jesus's day from several ancient sources, including the writings of Josephus (ca. AD 37-100), a Jewish priest, military commander, and historian. Using the descriptions passed down to us from antiquity, we can take a virtual tour of the Jerusalem Temple.

The Temple was not just a single building. It was a walled complex covering approximately thirty-one acres (about sixteen regulation soccer fields). Entering the Temple complex through the Shushan Gate, also known as the Golden Gate, in the eastern wall, we would find ourselves in the Court of the Gentiles. This court was surrounded by porticoes (covered porches) along the outer walled edge of the complex; the porch along the eastern wall was called Solomon's Portico. Walking west we would come to stairs mounting to a second wall. Passing through the Beautiful Gate in the east part of this second wall we would enter the Women's Court, also called the Treasury. In the west wall of the Women's Court there was another set of stairs leading to the Nicanor Gate, which was the entrance into the Priests' Court. This inner court was also surrounded by porticoes, and the entrance area of the Priests' Court was referred to as the Israel Court, since ritually clean Israelite men could stand in this area and witness the sacrifices.

The Priest's Court was the beginning of the Temple proper. The bronze laver for the priests' ritual washing and the bronze altar of sacrifice for burnt offerings were located here. West of the altar of sacrifice more stairs ascended to the building containing the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The gate to the Temple building was decorated with vines and clusters of grapes as big as a man, and the front of it was covered with gold. Josephus tells us that the Temple shone brilliantly when the rays of the rising sun touched it.

The Holy Place contained the golden altar of incense, the menorah, the golden table for the Bread of the Presence. At the west end of the Holy Place was a curtain; beyond this curtain was the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept before Jeremiah hid it prior to the Babylonian invasion (see 2 Maccabees 2:1-8; the Holy of Holies in the Second Temple was empty because the Ark was never recovered). Only priests fulfilling their designated time of service could enter the Holy Place; only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and even he could enter it only on the Day of Atonement.



1. Court of the Gentiles
2. Solomon's Portico
3. Beautiful Gate
4. Women's Court/Treasury
5. Holy Place

Look up the following passages. Using the diagram of the Temple, write the number of the location of each event in the space next to the citation (you will use some numbers more than once).

_____ Mark 11:15-19
_____ Mark 12:41-44
_____ Luke 1:5-23

_____ John 8:12-20
_____ John 10:22-39
_____ Acts 3:6-8

The Temple was the only acceptable place of sacrifice and liturgical worship. The synagogues in individual towns were place of prayer and teaching, but not of sacrifice. The Temple was God's house (see 2 Samuel 7), his dwelling place among his people. Read Genesis 2:8-14 and 1 King 6:14-35. What similarities do you notice between the Garden of Eden and the Temple?

God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and he dwelt in the midst of his people in the Temple of Jerusalem. Both Eden and the Temple reveal something profound about our own hearts. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Saint Paul tells us, "Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" Reflect on what you have learned about the Temple in Jerusalem. How does this affect your understanding of your own heart as God's temple?

King Solomon builds the first Temple in Jerusalem

961 BC	King Solomon builds the first Temple in Jerusalem
587 BC	The Babylonians capture Jerusalem and destroy the Temple
538 BC	King Cyrus of Persia allows the Jews to return to Jerusalem
537 BC	Zerubbabel (of the line of David) begins the construction of the second Temple, partially funded by King Cyrus
20 BC	King Herod begins a massive renovation and rebuilding of the Temple – not out of true devotion to God, but in attempt to legitimize his rule and win the favor of the people
AD 64	The renovations begun by Herod are finished
AD 70	The Temple is destroyed by the Roman general Titus when putting down a Jewish rebellion

COMMIT - DAY 2: JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

"For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult have fallen on me."
-Psalm 69:9

The Temple was the place of sacrifice and encounter with God. As we have seen, there was a large complex of chambers, courts, and porticoes surrounding the Temple building proper. These areas served many different purposes, including housing, for priests serving in the Temple and a council chamber for the Sanhedrin. The outer courts and porticoes were also used for teaching.

Why does Jesus object so strongly to the presence of people selling animals and changing money in the Temple? The problem isn't with the buying and selling and money-changing-these transactions are a necessary part of the divinely mandated sacrificial system. They allow pilgrims to purchase animals for sacrifice, rather than bring their own animals with them on their journey to Jerusalem (and risk something happening to the animal during the journey and would make it unacceptable as sacrifice). The moneychangers are necessary to allow Jewish men to change their Roman money into the Tyrian coins acceptable for us to pay the annual half-shekel Temple tax (see Exodus 30:13-15).

The problem Jesus objects to is the location of these activities. The Temple authorities move these transactions from their former location on the Mount of Olives, a short walk east across the Kidron Valley from the Temple, into the Temple compound itself. This new set-up transformed the Court of the Gentiles into a marketplace, while also greatly profiting the chief priests.

Imagine journeying to Jerusalem to worship and offer sacrifice to the Lord, then entering the Temple and finding yourself in the midst of all this activity. What do you see, hear, and smell? How do you feel? How would this affect the opportunity for listening to teaching in the porticoes or praying in the court?

Jewish men and women could depart through the Court of the Gentiles and enter the Court of Women. Jewish man could continue from there into the Israel Court section of the Priests' Court. These inner areas offered some reprieve from the buying and selling in the Court of the Gentiles, but even here it is quite likely that one could still hear the noise from the Court of the Gentiles. For Gentile God-fearers who only had access to the Court of the Gentiles for teaching, prayer, and worship, the desecration of the sacred space of the Temple was particularly unjust. Read Isaiah 56:6-8. What does God promise to non-Israelites who desire to love and serve him?

Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah in accusing the Temple leaders of profaning the Temple. He also quotes a prophecy given to Jeremiah. This abuse in Jesus's day is not the first time Israel failed to keep the Temple holy. Read Jeremiah 7:1-15. How were the people of Judah sinning against God and his Temple? What was the consequence to be if they did not amend their ways?

The people of Jeremiah's time took the Temple for granted. They thought they could ignore God's laws and still enjoy God's blessing and protection, simply because of the presence of the Temple in Jerusalem. The people did not heed the warnings of the prophets, and the Temple was destroyed when Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 587 BC. By accusing the Temple leaders of turning the Lord's house into a den of robbers in Mark 11:17, Jesus is warning the Jews to remember their history. Like their ancestors, they are sinning against God and against his holy dwelling place. And just as the first Temple was destroyed when God's people turned away from his covenant, the present Temple will also be destroyed if the Jewish leaders reject Jesus and refuse the New Covenant he has come to establish.

In John's account of the cleansing of the Temple, the Jews ask Jesus for a sign demonstrating his authority to disrupt the trade in the Temple, and Jesus foretells his Death and Resurrection as that sign (see John 2:13-22). In Mark's account of this episode, we see Jesus providing a more immediate sign-but to his faithful Apostles, not to the skeptical Jewish leaders. On his way to the Temple, Jesus curses a fig tree for being unfruitful. Jesus and his Apostles pass by the fig tree again the next day, and they find it withered. Jesus's words against the fig tree came to pass, and his words against the Temple will as well. Less than a generation later in 70 AD, the Temple in Jerusalem is completely destroyed by Rome.

COMMIT - DAY 3: LECTIO: RENDER UNTO GOD
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When the Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Jesus with a question about paying taxes, he not only evades their trap but completely amazes them with his response. A prayerful examination of Jesus's words reveals not merely a wise response to an insidious question, but a profound-and challenging-invitation to each one of us.

LECTIO: The practice of praying with Scripture begins with an active and close reading of the Scripture passage. Read the verse below and then answer the questions to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage.

“And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to entrap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, ‘Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?’ But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, ‘Why put me to the test? Bring me a coin, and let me look at it.’ And they brought one. And he said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said to him, ‘Caesar’s.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they were amazed at him.”

- Mark 12:13-17

What is the purpose of the Pharisees and Herodians in asking Jesus this question? How do they try to hid their intent from Jesus?

How does Jesus address their hidden intent? How does he answer their question?

What shows that the coin belongs to Caesar?

MEDITATIO: *Lectio*, a close reading and rereading is followed by *meditation*, a time to reflect on the Scripture passage and to ponder the reasons for particular events, descriptions, details, phrases, and even echoes from other Scripture passages that were noticed during *lectio*. Take some time now to meditate on the above verse.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
Genesis 1:26-27

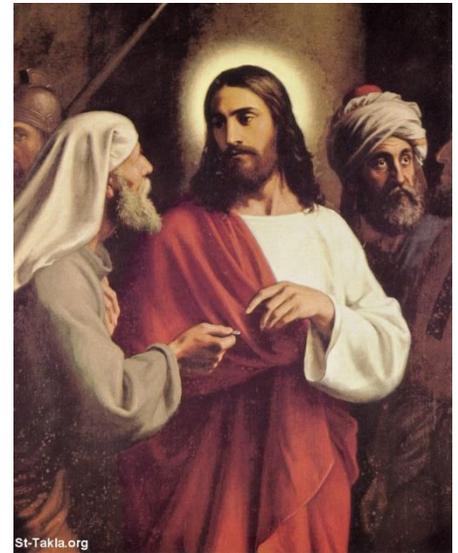
The following excerpt is from *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, a study published by the International Theological Commission (from paragraphs 25, 47):

Created in the image of God, human beings are by nature bodily and spiritual, men and women made for one another, persons oriented towards communion with God and with one another, wounded by sin and in need of salvation, and destined to be conformed to Christ, the perfect image of the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Winning our salvation through his passion, death and resurrection, Christ conforms us to himself through our participation in the paschal mystery and thus reconfigures the imago Dei in its proper orientation to the blessed communion of Trinitarian life. In this perspective, salvation is nothing less than a transformation and fulfilment of the personal life of the human being, created in the image of God and now newly directed to a real participation in the life of the divine persons, through the grace of the incarnation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit... Through this saving transformation of the person through Christ and the Holy Spirit, everything in the universe is also transformed and comes to share in the glory of God (Romans 8:21).

The Pharisees and the Herodians give the appearance of wanting to grow in understanding, but their real purpose is to entrap Jesus. What are you looking for when you approach God in Scripture and prayer? What do you do to seek to grow in understanding?

ORATIO, CONTEMPLATIO, RESOLUTIO: Having read and meditates on today’s Scripture passage, take some time to pray – bringing your thoughts to God (*oratio*) – and to be receptive to God’s grace in silence (*contemplation*). Then end your prayer by making a simple concrete resolution (*resolution*) to respond to God’s prompting of you heart in today’s prayer.



Render unto Caesar by Dorph

COMMIT – DAY4: WICKED TENANTS

As Jesus’s week in Jerusalem continues, the opposition rises. The Pharisees and scribes have been questioning and opposing Jesus almost from the beginning of his Galilean ministry (see Mark 2:5,16; 3:2, 22; 7:5; etc.). Now, after Jesus cleanses the Temple, the chief priests confront him and question his authority as well. Because the chief priests will not commit themselves to a public opinion on the authority of John the Baptist, Jesus will not directly answer their question about his own authority. But he does tell them a parable, and for “those who have ear to hear” (see Mark 4:9) this parable clearly announces Jesus’s divine authority.

The parable of the wicked tenants in Mark 12:1-2 seems quite straightforward. While Jesus’s disciples had to ask for explanations of several of Jesus’s other parables, it’s hard to imagine anyone missing the point of this one. Even so, knowing the Old Testament context for this story of tenants keeping a vineyard is crucial to understanding the weight of the charge that Jesus lays against the Jewish leaders who reject him.

Jesus’s choice of a vineyard as the setting for his parable is not merely a convenient agrarian analogy. He is drawing on a familiar theme from Israel’s history, which the chief priest would recognize immediately. Compare Isaiah 5:1-7 and Mark 12:1-12. What is similar about these parables? What is different?

In the story of the vineyard, which the chief priests already know from Isaiah, the vineyard itself is the problem. It does not bear fruit, and so the master tears down the walls and stops cultivating it for a period (a prophecy of the Babylonian exile). In Jesus's parable, the vineyard is fruitful but the people tending the vineyard are faithless to their master. The tenants reject the messengers sent by the master (an echo of Judah's rejection of the prophets described in 2 Chronicles 36:15-16), and their wickedness culminates in their rejection and murder of the owner's beloved son.

*“Turn again, O God of hosts!
Look down from heaven and see;
have regard for this vine,
the stock which your right hand planted.
They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down;
may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance!
But let your hand be upon the man of your right hand,
the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!
Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name!
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts!
let your face shine, that we may be saved!”*

-Psalm 80:14-19

This time it is not the vineyard that will suffer punishment, but the wicked tenants. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23 to highlight just how grave the sin committed by the tenants-the chief priests and other leaders-is: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This the LORD's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes.” This reference to the cornerstone in Psalm 118:22 shows that in rejecting Jesus, the chief priests are repeating history by rejecting God's Temple.

When the Jews return from exile in Babylon, they begin rebuilding the Temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel. But after laying the foundation, they nearly abandon the project. Read Ezra 3:10-13 and Haggai 2:1-9. What different reactions did the Jews have to laying the foundation of the Temple? Why did they want to quit? How does God encourage those who were tempted to abandon the project?

The foundation that the Jews rejected because it was not as glorious as Solomon's Temple still became the true Temple, as God promised through Haggai. But the prophecy for greater splendor will be fulfilled not in Herod's renovations in the Temple, but in Jesus himself.

Jesus tells this parable as a judgment against the leaders of God's Chosen People who have not proven faithful in the task entrusted to them. But the parable also provides an opportunity for us to examine our own lives to make sure we are being faithful tenants of the vineyards God has entrusted to our care. Take some time to prayerfully consider what God has entrusted to your care, and what kind of fruits he might expect from your cultivation of that vineyard. How do you offer the fruits of your work, ministry, family life, school, etc., to God? How do you offer the fruits of the vineyard of your own heart to God?

Entry of Christ into Jerusalem,

van Dyck, ca. 1617, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana.



Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) was a Flemish artist and student of Peter Paul Rubens, who described van Dyck as the best of his pupils. While being twenty-two years Rubens's junior, van Dyck died only a year and a half after his master at the age of forty-two. But as he was an accomplished artist already at a young age, van Dyck was able to complete numerous works of portraiture, as well as narrative paintings, in the short span of his life. His *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* could have been completed as early as 1617, when van Dyck was only eighteen years old.

Mark's Gospel recounts Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in Mark 11:1-10. Look up Mark 11:7-10. Jesus descends the Mount of Olives and rides a donkey into Jerusalem. What are the people doing? What are they saying?

In van Dyck's painting, we can make out the 'many' (Mark 11:8), the crowd, through the trees eagerly awaiting Jesus's arrival. In the crowd ahead, and those following behind Jesus and the Apostles, we see hands raised in acknowledgment as they proclaim a blessing on Jesus. "The King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38). With their excitement at Jesus's arrival, we can almost hear the "Hosannas!" as they cheer Jesus and his royal processions on the capital city and its Temple.

Just ahead of the donkey, a man hidden in the shadow of the tree "spreads [his] garment of the road" (Mark 11:8). Another man, in the forefront of the painting and sharing in the bright glow of Jesus and the Apostles, spreads a "leafy branch" (Mark 11:8) along Jesus's path. We do not see this man's face, but his

tron shirt and shortened tunic allow us to see the full definition of the muscles of his back, arms, and legs as he leans over the place his branch along Jesus's path.

Unlike the crowd ahead and behind, who appear in muted browns, tans, and grays, Jesus and his disciples are painted in robes of vibrant colors – reds, blues, and golds – which draw the viewer's eye to these central characters.

Just ahead of Jesus, we see Peter in his bright blue robe. He has left the other Apostles who follow just behind to run ahead and question Jesus. Peter points ahead, but turns with a look of concern to Jesus as if to ask, "Is this really the way you want to go?" Earlier in Mark's Gospel Peter rebuked Jesus for his prophetic words about the suffering and death he was to endure at the hands of the chief priests and elders. In van Dyck's painting Peter appears to make a last attempt to redirect Jesus' way. Jesus, however, with a determined look directs his gaze and points his right hand forward, recalling Saint Luke's description that Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Just behind Jesus, we see several Apostles. Two appear to be involved in a lively conversation. Given the youthfulness of one of these two Apostles, we can surmise that this is John the Beloved disciple. Perhaps, as they draw closer to Jerusalem and are caught up in the shouts of the crowd, John and his brother James have returned to their earlier discussion of the positions they are to have in Jesus's kingdom (see Mark 10:35-40), still not fully understanding the type of glory into which Jesus will soon enter.

Like Caravaggio and other baroque artists of the time, van Dyck brings the viewer into all the action and dialogue of the scene by placing the action and figures in the foreground. There is no background landscape to distract our eye. Our focus is on our Lord, as he resolutely heads to Jerusalem to lay down his life, knowing that his friends who are close by now and basking in the joyful shouts of the crowd will all fall away when Jesus is arrested and this same crowd shouts, "Crucify him!" Van Dyck seems to hint at the approaching events. We see a bird in the tree just over Peter's shoulder, anticipating Peter's denial of Jesus at cock crow (see Mark 14:72). Jesus's brilliant red robe anticipates the blood he will shed, and the lots that will be cast for his garments (see John 19:23-24).

We are drawn into the scene as it is presented to us, up close and personal. Jesus is passing by. We can almost reach out and touch him. There is only one person's face that is completely hidden from the viewer, that of the man about to put his leafy bough onto Jesus's path. He has not done it yet, and Jesus will soon pass by him completely. To put that leafy bough on the path where it will be trampled over by Jesus and his donkey is an act of submission – submitting one's self to the kingship of Christ, submitting oneself to follow behind the Lord and take up the wood of the Cross. What will this man do? What will you do?

Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text or discussion questions. List any personal applications you gained from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you've learned into specific action?
