

## **Life of Jesus**

### **Story 8**

#### **Jesus Cleanses the Temple John 2: 18 – 25**

**Principle Truth: It is the mission of Jesus to rescue people from spiritual blindness and redirect their passion toward what is true and beautiful.**

**The sanctuary of your heart is the home of the God of the universe.**

**We must approach the written word to encounter the living Word.**

- I. Passion to Know Christ: What We Must Desire Above All**
- II. Passover: What is Was and What it Had Become**
- III. Paradigm Shift: What Had Been and What Was To Be**
- IV. Prediction: A “Sign” of the New Temple**
- V. Precaution: What Jesus Knows About Human Nature**
- VI. Processing the Lesson: All In or Still on the Fence?**

## Lesson #8

### Public Ministry and Miracles

#### Series 2 - Story 2

### Jesus Cleanses the Temple

John 2:12-25

*GOD IS CONCERNED FAR MORE WITH INNER HOLINESS THAN WITH OUTWARD EXPRESSION.*

#### Story Outline:

- I. Partnership with Christ Grows
- II. Passover with Promised Messiah
- III. Purging of Temple/Prophecy Fulfilled
- IV. Purification Promised

#### Life Application Principles:

1. To be effective followers of Christ we must be willing to introduce Jesus to the world.
2. Jesus' Messiahship is validated by the precise fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
3. Corruption in the house of God by the people of God does not go unnoticed by God.
4. The grace of God must be balanced with the fear of God.
5. Impurity in our worship dishonors a **HOLY** God.
6. Jesus came to rebuke empty religion and to ordain personal relationship.
7. Purity and power go hand in hand.
8. Peace is the result of purification of one's sins.
9. Our body is God's temple and He expects it to be pure and in order.
10. Rationalizing sin shows a lack of true fear and reverence of a **HOLY** God.
11. The prerequisite for purity is confession of sin.
12. God is a God of mercy but also a God of justice and majesty.

## NAME OF JESUS

### Devotional Reading

#### “HOLY ONE”

*“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God Almighty!”* We say it, we pray it, we even sing it, but do we really know the depth and the richness and the infinite worth of what we are proclaiming? Do any of us truly understand what it means to say God, Jesus Christ, the Son and His Spirit are **HOLY**? As with all things that are of God and from God, the best place to start is His Word, the Bible.

Throughout the Scriptures the word **HOLY** is used hundreds of times to describe something or someone set apart and distinct in quality and character from all else. In relation to God, **HOLY** or “holiness” is often spoken of as one of His greatest and most predominant attributes because it is the foundation upon which His awesome and powerful characteristics lie. A.W. Tozer states, *“HOLY is the way of God. To be HOLY, He cannot conform to a standard. He is the standard. He is absolutely HOLY with an infinite, incomprehensible fullness of purity that is incapable of being other than it is. Because He is HOLY, His attributes are HOLY, that is, whatever we think of as belonging to God must be thought of as HOLY.”* In other words, when we look at God through the lens of holiness, our whole perspective and understanding of WHO He is will change. Like a magnifying glass it will enlarge and intensify all that He is and all that He does. It will illuminate and make more meaningful everything we know of God. And in light of that, it should help us see more clearly who we truly are and send us to our knees in adoration, worship and repentance.

So, what exactly does “**HOLY**” mean and how does it apply to Jesus? Simply put “**HOLY**” means perfect, pure, sinless, bright, separate, set apart and sacred. Regarding Jesus, God’s angelic messenger, Gabriel, declared to Mary before Christ was born saying, *“The HOLY Spirit will come upon you; and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called HOLY—the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35). The writer of Hebrews explains: He is *“HOLY, innocent, unstained, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens”* (Hebrews 7:26). As made known throughout the Word of God, Jesus is the Son of God, yet He is coequal with God *“for in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”* (Colossians 1:19). He is set apart and distinct from all creation. In heaven above and earth below, there is no one like Him: *“what god is there in heaven above or on earth beneath who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?”* (Deuteronomy 3:24). He is the sinless Son, the **HOLY ONE**, come to earth as the crystal clear and bright Light of the world. His purity pierces through the darkness and stands as a beacon of hope to all who are suffering and lost. And His pure, unbiased love is incomprehensible. In His book The God You May Not Know, David Jeremiah adds to our

understanding, *“He is absolutely good to the fullest extent there is in goodness. In His nature there is the total absence of any taint of evil. No shadow of sin comes close to His person. He is pure and sinless—**HOLY** in all His being, in all His words, in all His ways.”* His holiness is all at once an awesome, fearful and frightening thing to behold!

Yet, we are called to not only behold Him, which means to look at and observe Him, but to also draw near to Him. In light of His perfection and holiness how can we draw near to such a God? How can we, who are by nature since the fall impure, rebellious and wickedly sinful, come so close as to have an intimate and deeply personal relationship with the God the Father and His **HOLY ONE**? As the psalmist cried out, *“Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His **HOLY** place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully”* (Psalm 24:3-4). In other words, only those who are **HOLY** can come close and have fellowship with the **HOLY ONE**. Long before this psalm was written, God Himself set this requirement when He said to His children *“For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be **HOLY**, for I am **HOLY**”* (Leviticus 11:44). God has set the standard: we must separate ourselves from the world and the life of sin and seek a life of righteousness and purity if we are to come close to Him.

But how??? How can you and I leave this life of sin as long as we live in this world? How can we become **HOLY**? Apart from God and His intervening grace we can't! Only BY Him and THROUGH Him is holiness possible. Remember however, God never commands us to do something without also making a way for us to do so. In pure, unfathomable love, God sent Jesus, the **HOLY ONE**, to meet the just demands of His **HOLY** nature. In that same love, the **HOLY ONE** willingly came to be the final unblemished sacrificial Lamb sufficient to die for the sins of the world. As declared by God, when we look on the Lamb who was slain, and repent of all our sins and cast them all upon His broken body, we are washed clean from all our sin and declared **HOLY** and acceptable to God. David Jeremiah continues: *“When Jesus paid the penalty for our sin something wonderful happened. He came down from the cross, took all His holiness, wove it into a suit of clothes, and gave it to you and me. We walk around today wearing the holiness of Jesus Christ. When God the Father looks at me though I am sinful, He doesn't see my sin. He sees the clothes I wear---the holiness of the blessed Savior who paid the penalty for my sin.”* Now, wrapped in Christ's sinless purity we meet God's standard for holiness and relationship. Forevermore, through Christ's righteousness we are now fully accepted by God and given access into His **HOLY** presence.

In light of this truth we see that holiness begins at the Cross where the **HOLY** Lamb of God was slain. It is there in His body that we see God's absolute hatred of sin and His absolute love for us. So amazing is Christ's love and desire to be in relationship with us that He willingly left His throne in Glory to die in our place. Let that sink in... the **HOLY ONE OF GOD** laid aside His purity and put on our putrid wickedness and died a most cruel death in order to make us clean and acceptable to God! In the greatest act of love ever known, Jesus, the Righteous, the **HOLY**

**ONE**, died for the unrighteous! And now, for all who will come, His blood washes the sin away and declares the sinner “**HOLY**.” Forever! That’s the power of the cross!

For all men, no matter how dark and sinful, the first step toward holiness is to simply come. . . to come to the Cross of Christ and to behold the **HOLY** Son of God bleeding and dying as the Lamb slain so we might be forgiven and set free. Then to remain there and to let the truth of His sacrifice wash over us until it leads us to repentance because without repentance there is no forgiveness of sin. And without forgiveness there can be no great exchange . . . Christ’s purity for our impurity, His righteousness for our unrighteousness. Without repentance there is no transformation from unclean to clean, from un**HOLY** to **HOLY**. Without repentance there can be no holiness and without holiness there can be no peace and fellowship with **HOLY** God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the **HOLY ONE**.

Therefore, the pursuit of Christ and His holiness must become the main goal of life. In order to “*be **HOLY** as He is **HOLY***” we must see Him as He truly is and we must see ourselves as we truly are. We must see our sin from His perspective and agree with Him that it is the great barrier between us that must be thoroughly removed. Sin’s removal and our increasing purity is possible only through Jesus Christ, the **HOLY ONE**. However, as Charles Spurgeon clarifies, “*holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness*” (CH Spurgeon). It is not something we can earn. It is a free gift from God.

After being made **HOLY**, the pursuit of maintaining and growing in holiness is a lifelong process, a continual drawing near to God and being purified. It is not enough to go to Church and to read and study the Bible, we must also **AGREE** with and **DO** what the Lord says. Obedience to the Word of God and genuine repentance are the keys to **HOLY** living. Only as we apply God’s standards of holiness into every area of our lives and allow Him to cut away all that is sinful in us, will we be transformed into His likeness. Jesus died to transform us into **HOLY** people for the Lord not just for our sakes, but also to be used by Him to draw others to Him. “*For you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **HOLY** nation, a people of His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:9).

As the writer of Hebrews encourages his readers to “*pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12:14, NKJV), so I encourage you today. Take time to be **HOLY**. It is only when Christ, the **HOLY ONE**’s holiness increasingly begins to touch every area of our lives that we can make progress in being **HOLY**. Ask Him to show you your sin. Cry out with the psalmist: “*Search me, O God and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*” (Psalm 139:23-24). Return to the foot of the Cross often to repent and be purified that you might grow in your relationship with Him. Ask Him to teach you the reality of living His way in everything and to empower you to leave behind all that He calls sin and separates you from Him. Ask Him for the strength to “*be separate*” and to walk according to His Word. Plead with Him to remove your love and longings

for the things of this world. Finally, as you increase in holiness, ask Him to shine His light through you and to use you to bring His light into the darkness of this world that others might seek the way of salvation.

**“Be HOLY, for I am HOLY”**  
**(Leviticus 11:44)**

# THE DOCTRINE

## THE TABERNACLE

*To the Holy One,*  
*What is worship?*  
*What does it mean for me to bring you the offering of my life?*  
*Passion*  
*Illumination*  
*Fire that consumes, cleanses, renews.*  
*Fire that frees and ignites,*  
*Spark and blaze and licking flame.*  
*This is the journey from dust to fire,*  
*Desert to spring, from cold coal to flaming glory.*

*Worship begins with a single note*  
*And ends with an all new melody.*  
*Draw me deeper into the song.*

(A poem by Jonathan Williams from “*The Big House*”)

### **I. The Tabernacle: A Picture of Creation to Glory**

The earthly tabernacle and later the Temple designed by King David and built by his son, King Solomon was considered to be the home of the God of the universe. This earthly temple was the place that overlapped with God’s heavenly home. The temple was the place where God lived and ruled all creation as King. The building itself however was just a symbol speaking to the truth that all of God’s creation is His temple. In Genesis 1 God created an ordered world out of a dark wasteland by simply speaking over a series of 7 days. Then, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day God’s presence filled creation as he took up His rest and rule. Similarly, centuries later the tabernacle as well as the Temple were built and dedicated in a series of 7 speeches and 7 days after which the priest or king could rest and rule in God’s presence. So the tabernacle therefore and later on the temple were modeled after the Garden of Eden, filled with the beauty of gold ornaments, flowers and imagery reminding all who entered of the beautiful garden where God’s creation began. The Menorah symbolized the tree of life – an image of the place where God dwelled with His people. In the temple the Israelite priests and Levites were to work and keep the temple in God’s presence – just like man was to work and keep the garden in the beginning of Creation in God’s presence. But instead of ruling with God, man chose to rule on his own terms and eventually man and woman were exiled from the Garden “*temple*” -- just as Israel’s leaders eventually

chose independence from God as well, and they too were exiled. The temple was destroyed, and the presence of God altogether removed from Israel. However the biblical prophets spoke consistently of a new day when God promised that He would create a new temple with a new priesthood. Jesus pronounced that through him, God's presence and rule were coming into our world in a new way, and with Jesus' birth as a baby in Bethlehem, He presented himself to mankind as a new kind of prophet, priest and king. Jesus said that God's presence – his rest and rule was now filling the world through His own life, presence, and resurrection, and He prophesied that His new kingdom would expand to include all creation. After Jesus' resurrection, He said that God's presence would come to dwell in and among his followers through His spirit – so that they would become mini-temples or communities of people where God rests and rules. This is the church – not a building – but as 1 Peter 2:4-5 says - *“living stones built up as a temple for God's spirit to dwell.”* What we find in the last book of the Bible is the culmination of what the “temple” will ultimately be in its final state. Revelation 21 declares: *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, arrayed like a bride adorned for her husband, and then I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying See! The tabernacle of God is among men, and He will live among them and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will no longer be death; there will no longer be sorrow and anguish or crying or pain for the former order of things has passed away . . . . . I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its temple. And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to give light to it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and the Lamb is its lamp and light.”*

## **II. God's Explicit Instruction of Tabernacle Construction – A Shadow of the Reality**

The first mention of the tabernacle appears in Exodus 26 with a meticulous description of the place where God Almighty chose to make His dwelling among His people as the nation of Israel was initially established. The tabernacle was directed by God through Moses to be a portable worship center that was always to be placed at the geographical center of the nation of Israel, with each tribe carefully and strategically located around it in a designated formation. Approaching the tabernacle, an Israelite would first see white linen walls of the court of the tabernacle, which formed an enclosure 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. The linen fence that surrounded this area was suspended on pillars of bronze; the whiteness of the fence announced to everyone who approached that this was a holy place. Most significant was the fact that access to the outer court was gained only through ONE GATE (27:16); the single gate was 30 feet wide and seven feet high. The entire nation of Israel had only ONE WAY TO GOD – a perfect image of the fulfillment of this Old Testament “shadow” of the tabernacle (temple) of God found in John's gospel. *“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the Way (to God) and the Truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me’”* (John 14: 6).

Located inside the outer court was the tabernacle (temple) itself. The word “*tabernacle*” means “*tent*.” The tabernacle was a flat-roofed, oblong tent 15 feet in height and width and 45 feet long. It was covered in three layers. The first consisted of gorgeous woven tapestries of blue, purple and scarlet yarns and linen. That layer was covered with two layers of animals skins – one being a dyed red ram skin (a symbol of the sacrifices offered at the tabernacle) and the second layer, a dolphin skin (used as a protective layer from the elements). The tent itself consisted of framed boards overlaid with gold and was entered by a doorway made of drapes. The lovely woven tapestries emphasized the beauty of true worship of the Most High God – reminiscent of the beauty and purity of the Garden of Eden.

Inside the tabernacle were two compartments divided by an ornate veil woven of the same colors as the outer covering and embroidered with gold and inlaid with cherubim. The temple veil was supported by four golden columns set on silver bases. The first compartment was called the Holy Place, and the second compartment was the inner chamber known as the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. The floor of the tabernacle was the desert sand, a significant reminder that the priests were still human beings of the earth and that nothing was permanent about their position (Exodus 26:31-35). Every detail of construction and operation was significant and symbolic. Therefore for centuries, God’s people “*practiced*” interacting with these symbols in their worship in order to recognize Jesus – the reality of these symbols when He came to earth as our Lord and Savior.

### **III. God’s Temple Today**

#### **WE ARE GOD’S TEMPLE!**

Some approach the Bible to gain insight, truths and principles, however this lesson of Jesus cleansing the temple clearly shows us the danger of coming to the word of God with your head only and remaining untouched in your heart. True riches are found only as we learn to know the Lord Jesus Christ through the heart. Thus, the power of Jesus action in John 2 shows clearly the need for purity in the heart of the worshipper, for only as the sanctuary of the heart is pure will we ever be capable of beholding the beauty of Christ and receive all He desires to show us.

The Pharisees made a deadly error in how they approached the “*Word*” of God. “*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God*” (John 1). Tragically they dissected Scripture cognitively, but failed miserably to see the heart behind the truths revealed in the words. Thus they came to know the Book – (the words) - but not the Author of the Book. This is what Jesus meant when He said: “*You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life; and these (scriptures) are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*” (John 5:39-40). Everything in the Scriptures was screaming at the Pharisees, but they refused to make the connection. “*See Jesus as you read the scriptures, see Jesus! He is in every line.*” But they missed it entirely. The scriptures have always been intended by God to

direct our hearts to a Person. 1 Timothy 1:5 tells us that the entire purpose of the Old Testament was to ignite the hearts of God's people to "see" the beauty of his Person. The religious leaders of Israel however got hung up, on dogma and creed and missed the living relationship that God so longed to have with them. In their insistence upon following religion and ritual, they missed the reality that was standing right in front of them! They thought they knew God and were operating in their various roles within His kingdom, and therefore they had need of nothing. They were therefore, not teachable, not open to the new thing God was doing, and not willing to change their viewpoint in the least.

Jesus' words to the Pharisees raises a frightening possibility: We too can read the Bible daily and never get to know the "Word" that the scriptures speak of. Even though Jesus is pointed to on every single page, it is entirely possible to read over the words and never develop a burning heart relationship with Him. Essentially Jesus was warning us not to come to the Scripture to gain knowledge about a BOOK, rather come to the Scripture to gain a relationship with a PERSON. The Living Word desires to meet us in the Written word if we will but come into His presence (enter the Sanctuary of our heart in the right way) in the reading. So – just as the tabernacle and the temple were the place of encountering God, likewise the Living Word desires to meet us in the written word, if we will only come to Him in the reading. Your personal encounter in the word can be a dynamic and living encounter with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn the life transforming lesson from John 2. Refuse to approach the word (and the living Word) out of a sense of rote or duty to mark off your daily quota of chapters, don't attempt to encounter God in the word in order to master spiritual principles or glean clever insight. Come for one reason only. Come to worship in spirit and in truth. Come to gaze upon the majesty and mystery of the altogether Lovely One, the One who is compelling and will capture your heart. He is always there in the quiet place of your own heart - waiting for you behind the temple veil - watching to reward those who yearn for Him as one yearns for springs of living water. Come with a cry in your heart to see Him more clearly, to know Him more intimately, and to worship Him more purely. With a tiny breath of his Spirit on a single word of Scripture -- He can and He will set your heart on fire with fresh revelation of his person, presence, power and glory. There is nothing in this life more fulfilling than this! Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and the Sadducees time and time again throughout his earthly ministry with a sobering indictment that still speaks strongly to each of us today. Jesus said: "*You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*" (Matthew 22:29). This suggests three tragic possibilities that are all too familiar in our churches today:

1. We can know the Scriptures - but not the power of God.
2. We can know the power of God - but not the Scriptures.
3. We can know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

We must approach the written word to encounter the living Word who is always there. To know more of Christ requires deep revelation, and revelation requires deep and concentrated

meditation in the word. *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 2:18).

The more we see Jesus in the word, the more we realize that He is nothing like us! But seeing Him in His majestic uniqueness is the very thing that draws us most passionately into his heart. Jesus is stunning – compelling in His beauty and matchless holiness. What a privilege we as followers of Christ have to enter into the place where He now resides - to gaze upon Him as He unfolds more and more of this beauty to us in the quiet place of the sanctuary of our own heart.

*“Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary  
Pure and holy, tried and true  
With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living  
Sanctuary for You!*

*Lord, conform me to Your image  
Your salvation the world to see.  
Sanctify me by your Spirit  
Jesus Christ to live in me.*

*Lord, equip me in Your service  
Take my life and let it be  
A reflection of my Savior  
Consecrated, Lord to Thee.*

*Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary  
Pure and holy, without blame  
Then in glory I can praise You  
Holy! Holy! Is Your Name!”*

*(Words by Sid Conner)*

## Questions for Reflection

*Read John 2:12-17*

1. Why did Jesus go up to Jerusalem? What is significant about that particular feast?
2. What did Jesus discover was going on within the Temple and what was his reaction and His immediate response?
3. Why do you think He reacted that way? In your opinion, was His response justified? What lessons do you learn about anger from His actions?
4. Symbolically speaking, what does the Temple represent? What present practices defile the temple of your own heart and grieve the Lord? Will you confess them and allow Jesus to drive them out, making room for more of Him to dwell within you?
5. Read v.17. What does it mean to be zealous for something? How zealous are you for God's house and for His reputation?
6. How can religious practice become a substitute for a personal relationship with Christ?

*Read John 2:18-22*

7. Explain in your own words the “*sign*” Jesus gave to the Jewish religious leaders. (see also Matthew 12:38)
8. How is this statement a sign of His Identity and authority?

9. What does asking for a sign reveal about the Jewish leaders' hearts and their understanding of the Scriptures?
  
10. Why do you think Jesus was reluctant to give the religious leaders more signs to prove His identity?

*Read John 2:23-25*

11. Why do you think Jesus did not “entrust” Himself to those who professed to “believe” in His name? What was “*in a man*” that He knew about?
  
12. Read Romans 10:8-11. What is the basis by which Jesus Christ will entrust Himself to you? How is the heart involved? When Jesus looks at your heart what does He see? Can He fully entrust Himself to you? Why or why not?

*Jesus, Holy One*

13. How has your reflection on the Holiness of Christ deepened your understanding of Him and of His righteous requirements for His children? As you reflect on your own heart and life choices, what is The Holy One convicting you of that needs to be cleansed and removed?

## **SALVATION CHALLENGE**

Have you entered into a permanent relationship with Jesus? Have you ever truly acknowledged that you are a sinner and asked Jesus for cleansing that He might dwell forever in you and be Lord of your life forever?