



In the first 3 lessons we've covered 22 of the approximately 154 events of Jesus' life. In the last lesson we reviewed what Jesus did during His early ministry around the northern area of Galilee where He was raised. In this section we begin with Jesus' appearance in Jerusalem as we watch His ministry start to build momentum.

23. Jesus cleanses the temple

John 2:13-25

The first glimpse we have of Jesus as a young boy is when He is at the temple discussing the Law with the scribes and Pharisees.

- He was concerned about "My Father's house" at that time,
- but as a boy, remained in subjection to His parents and elders and leaders.

As a man, however, He still has passion for the Father's house but now expresses it in a much more dynamic way since He has begun His public ministry.

There is a debate whether or not there is one or two "cleansings" of the temple.

John puts this incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry

- Matthew, Mark and Luke put it at the point where Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly and goes directly to the temple to do this.

There are good arguments on both sides – if John was writing Chronologically and put it at the beginning and Matthew, Mark and Luke put it at the end; there were two similar incidents.

- This would be like the two incidents where Jesus performed the miracle of multiplying the bread and the fish.

If John is written as an apologetic then it might be possible there was only one event that John chose to record earlier for practical purposes.

A point to consider:

The second chapter of John explains that during the Passover, Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem, made a whip of cords, and drove out the money changers who were doing business there.

- He also poured out the money and turned over the tables (John 2:13–15).
- Jesus said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” (John 2:16).



The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) also tell of Jesus entering the temple,

- driving out those who bought and sold,
- overturning their tables,
- and telling the crowd that they had turned the temple into a “den of thieves” (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46).

John describes the cleansing of the temple as occurring during the first Passover (of three) mentioned in his Gospel.

Meanwhile, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe the temple-cleansing as taking place just days before Christ's Crucifixion.

When you look closely at these accounts other differences can be found.

- In John, Jesus was immediately confronted by temple officials who asked, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"
- John revealed that the Lord responded by pointing to His future Resurrection: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19; 2:22).
- There is no mention of this confrontation or Christ's prophecy in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

In contrast to this, the Synoptics record that following the second cleansing, Jesus began to teach those who were in the temple and heal the blind and lame that came to Him.

John wrote that Jesus made a whip of cords and then drove out the money changers. The Synoptics do not mention a whip at all.

What was the Issue anyway?

1. Violation of the Law

The Jews were selling animals and exchanging money in the court of the Gentiles.

- This desecrated the place where the Gentiles came to worship.
- The temple had a series of courtyards where people prayed, offered sacrifices and received teaching.
- The most inner courtyards were reserved for the priests,
- then as they extended outward there was a courtyard for Jewish men,
- another separate one for Jewish women and finally,
- the furthest out was one where Gentiles who had converted to Judaism or sympathetic to the Jewish religion could go.

The money-changers and herdsmen set up their tables there in order to service the worshippers who bought animals, thus ruining their worship and place to gather.

Jesus creates quite a stir by making a whip out of cords and driving out the money-changers, herders and animals out of the temple area. This is done as a sign that the temple was meant to be pure and holy in every section.

2. He may also have done this to establish the idea that the temple as magnificent as it was, would one day be destroyed and a new temple, His body (the church), would be established.

The Messiah comes to His house and finds it unprepared for His sudden arrival.



- This is the "type" for all the parables that speak of the judgment to come.
- It is also a living prophecy for the Jews (their judgment is at hand), and also for Christians today (Jesus can come at any time).
- The issue for us is the same as it was for them, "Will our spiritual house be ready when Jesus comes?"

During this explosive time He also teaches and performs miracles and begins to draw His first disciples from the area of Jerusalem.

24. A visit from Nicodemus

John 3:1-21

It is natural that this event at the temple, His signs and His teachings would draw the interest of not only the crowds, but also the religious leaders.

- At the temple some leaders were questioning His right to do what He did and wondered what He meant by the idea that His "temple" would be raised in three days if it was destroyed.
- They saw Him as a troublemaker and wanted Him silenced.

Some, however, like Nicodemus came to Him secretly to learn more.

- Nicodemus knew Jesus was special, but was slow to come to faith.
- Jesus showed him that even he, a teacher and scholar, required the "new birth" in order to enter the kingdom.
- Baptism was for everyone. Nicodemus didn't understand at first.
- Later on, however, we see him trying to defend the Lord when the Jewish leaders were accusing Him unjustly.
- Finally, at Jesus' death, he provided the costly spices to properly bury Him.
- Nicodemus was a slow and cautious disciple, but he stepped from the darkness and took a stand with Christ.

25. Jesus returns to northern Judea

John 3:22-23

After this dynamic appearance, Jesus travels back to Samaritan territory in the northern part of Judea to work with John who was there preaching and baptizing.

- For a short period their work overlapped.
- Notice on the map (in lesson one) that they worked at the Jordan River in the Aenon region.
- Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples did as He preached.
- For a time their message (John and Jesus) was the same, "Repent and be baptized for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

26. John's second witness

John 3:24-36

At the beginning, John points to Christ as He is revealed by the Father and Holy Spirit. While near Jerusalem he then encourages his disciples to follow Jesus.

- Now that they are working in north Judea, side-by-side, John's disciples notice that Jesus is baptizing more people than John.
- They question him about this.

- John answers them by acknowledging that the purpose of his ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry and that it is proper that Jesus' ministry grows and his diminishes.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease."

John knew and rejoiced to see Jesus arrive and do what He was supposed to do.

- John happily accepted his lessor role.
- At this point he knew that he had succeeded in his mission - (later on he would doubt.)

27. John's imprisonment

Luke 3:19-20

John was a preacher of judgment to come. The theme of his preaching was "repent" and so much of his sermons had to do with sin and the disobedience of the people.

- It doesn't appear that he talked about the temple, or love of the brothers, or other issues, he was a one topic preacher.

His preaching applied to everyone.

- He addressed the common man,
- The Roman soldiers,
- Prostitutes,
- Businessmen,
- Even religious leaders and their sins.

He got into trouble when he meddled in the affairs of the king.

Herod had stolen his brother's wife and divorced his own to marry her (she was his niece).

- John publicly declared that this was against the Law and Herod needed to repent.

- This caused embarrassment to Herod and his wife, Herodias. Herodias is the feminine form of Herod, which functions somewhat as a title for members of the Herodian dynasty.

Historians indicate that Herod Antipas and Herodias had an affair of sorts while her husband Philip was visiting Rome.

- Herodias then agreed to leave her husband in order to become Herod Antipas's wife.
- Whether it was motivated by lust or was simply a power play, the new marriage was not honorable, and John the Baptist publicly denounced their adultery (Matthew 14:4).
- Herodias held a grudge against John and wanted him to be executed (Mark 6:19).
- Herod put John in prison for Herodias's sake (Matthew 14:3) but did not put him to death in part because he was afraid of the people, who believed John was a prophet (Matthew 14:5).
- Herod also seemed to believe that John was a righteous man and, though "greatly puzzled" by the things John said, "liked to listen to him" (Mark 6:20).

28. John's inquiry of Jesus

Matthew 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35

John the Baptist believed that the Messiah he was preparing the way for would come and usher in a great period of judgment and prosperity for the Jews. His "view" of the kingdom may have been similar to his fellow Jews of the time.

As a prophet, and like most prophets, he knew the order and general nature of the things he prophesied about in the future, but not necessarily the time frame.

- First John comes to prepare the way.
- Next the Messiah comes with spirit and power.
- Then a judgment comes on the people.
- Then a period of blessing (kingdom).

What he didn't know was how far apart these things would be in time and the exact nature of each of these events.

- He sees and recognizes the Messiah according to the signs God provided him in order to confirm his preaching.
- Then he witnesses the growth of his ministry and the number of people who begin to follow Him.
- But now he's arrested and put into prison – no judgment comes down on the evil king.
- As a matter of fact, nothing in the "big picture" changes.

When neither judgment nor a great new order of things appears right away, John begins to doubt.

- He had the sequence right, but the time frame was wrong.
- Just like the Thessalonians who assumed that Jesus was returning in their lifetime and became distressed when this didn't happen.

At this point John sends his disciples to question Jesus.

- He thinks maybe that he's made a mistake and Jesus isn't the one since his concept of what was supposed to happen didn't materialize.
- There are many people like that, if their lives don't work out like they think it should, they begin to question and doubt God.
- John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the One or should we look for another?"

Jesus replies that He was doing all the things the Scripture said that the Messiah would do when He came:

- Teach,
- Heal,
- Raise the dead.
- These were the signs given to create faith in those seeking the Messiah, and John should trust in these (not his idea of how things should be).



After they left then Jesus rebukes those who rejected John because of his appearance and what happened to him.

29. John's death

Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9

Three of four writers record John's death at the hands of Herod. Herod had an interesting relationship with John:

- As part Jew, he was familiar with the Jewish religion and recognized John as a powerful preacher and righteous man.
- He was naturally drawn to him.
- He kept John in prison for a time and would bring him to hear him preach in private.
- He was also a worldly man as well as a shrewd politician and ruthless leader so he was in great conflict about what he should do with John.

His “wife” sensed this and during Herod’s birthday celebration, Herodias’s daughter danced for the king and his guests,

- It pleased Herod so much that he promised the girl whatever she asked (Matthew 14:6–7).
- After consulting with her mother, the girl asked for John the Baptist’s head on a platter (Matthew 14:8).
- Herod was sorry and distressed over being put in this quandary,
- but, because of his vow and the guests, Herod had John beheaded in prison (verse 10).
- The prophet’s head was brought to the daughter of Herodias, who gave it to her mother (verse 11).

The Bible does not tell us much about Herodias, but her actions recorded in the Gospels show her to be an immoral, bitter, and manipulative woman.

- John the Baptist was right to warn the tetrarch and his wife of their wicked ways,
- Herodias had plenty of opportunity to repent.
- Herodias hardened her heart and plotted John’s execution—as if silencing the truth-teller could remove her guilt.
- In this way, Herodias became like Jezebel, who bitterly opposed Elijah, in whose power and spirit John had come (see Luke 1:17; 1 Kings 19:2).

When Jesus hears about John's death, He leaves the area of Judea He was working in and returns home to Galilee, a safer and friendlier place for the time being.

30. The Samaritan woman

John 4:4-42

We know that He was in Samaritan territory, baptizing with John. John is taken away and killed.

During this period, he meets a Samaritan woman at a well and speaks with her.

- She is not only a Samaritan despised by the Jews,
- she is also a much divorced woman who is living with man
- which makes her not well respected by the Samaritans either.

Jesus reveals His true person to her by knowing her past and by showing her kindness in spite of it.

- His acceptance of her and His answers to her questions win her over and she, the outcast, gains the courage to go tell her neighbors and friends about Jesus.
- We find out that because of this He stays extra days in the area (delaying His return) in order to teach and preach to these people.

31. Public ministry in Galilee

Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-15; John 4:43-45

After He finishes in Samaria the writers tell us that He returned to His home region and officially begins His public ministry there.

- Before, with the calling of disciples and miracle at Cana, He was still acting privately among family and friends.
- Once John has died, Jesus goes home and begins there to preach and teach not only about the kingdom, but now about His role in ushering that kingdom.

- At first they were happy to hear Him because many had seen Him cleanse the temple in Jerusalem and so wanted to hear Him preach in their hometown (John 4:43-45).

32. Another miracle at Cana

John 4:46-54

Jesus returned, probably to the friend or relative where the wedding had been held, for a visit.

While there a royal official (one of Herod's household?) comes to Him to heal his son lying sick across the lake at his home in Capernaum.

- Jesus sends him home telling him his son is well and while on his way the man learns that the child was healed at the point where Jesus said for him to return.
- This is the only miracle recorded during this period of His Galilean ministry.
- It is interesting to note this is the first time that the writers associate faith in Jesus with the miraculous healings.
- The man and his entire household became disciples after this incident.

This is the end of this section, after this miracle and teaching in the area Jesus will return to Jerusalem for the second Passover in His ministry.

We believe the events covered in this lesson took place over a period of approximately one year.

Lessons

1. Jesus was not soft

A lot of images show Jesus as soft, all love and tenderness, forgiving and kind. He is all of these things, but His appearance at the temple showed that He is also a zealous Lord who hates sin, hates unholiness, hates worldliness, hates hypocrisy.

We must not forget that when Jesus returns, He will not do so as a suffering savior, but as the Lord of Lords coming to judge and punish the unfaithful and wicked, and reward those who have been true to Him.

2. Christ followers must be ready to pay the price

John lived like a hermit, he preached an unpopular message; his job was to prepare the way for the glory of another, not himself; he died as a martyr for his faith.

- We all pay a certain price to follow Christ (different with each person),
- When we go into the waters of baptism to bury our old man of sin and die with Christ – what we must realize is that we've given up the claim to own or control our physical lives.
- God may permit us to have it for a while, or He may just require us to give it up for Christ in one day.

When you become a Christian you are either going to give your life to God:

- One day at a time in service, worship, giving, suffering, or
- Give it to Him all at once if He requires you to be martyred.

Either way, it belongs to Him and He will require it of us somehow.

Whether it's one day at a time or all at once, let's be like John: happy and joyful that we must decrease so that Christ can increase.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR CHAPTER 5

33. John 5:1-47
34. Luke 14:14-30
35. Matthew 4:13-17; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37
36. Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41
37. Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11
38. Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44
39. Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16
40. Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
41. Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32
42. Matthew 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39
43. Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5

44. Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
45. Matthew 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-12
46. Matthew 10:1-42; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jesus take the action to cleanse the Temple? What can we learn today?
2. Who was Nicodemus and what was significant about his visit with Jesus? What can we learn today?
3. How did John's message and the message of Jesus complement each other?
4. What was significant about John's response to his disciple's concerns that Jesus was baptizing more people than John? What can we learn from John's response?
5. What can we learn from John's imprisonment?
6. What would lead John to have doubts about the reality of Jesus as the Messiah and what can we learn from this?
7. Summarize the interaction Jesus had with the Samaritan woman from John 4:4-42 and answer the following questions:
 - Why did the Jews avoid the Samaritans?
 - How did Jesus view the Samaritan people?
 - What was significant about Jesus' response to the woman about her husband?
 - What can we learn from this woman and her interaction with Jesus?
8. What are the similarities between John's questions of Jesus, Nicodemus' misunderstanding, and the Samaritan woman's questions? How does this apply to us?
9. What was significant about the miracle in Cana from John 4:46-54? What is a lesson we can take from it?