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JESUS: GOD'S POWER IN ACTION

The Messiah Challenges the Corrupt

Bible School Lesson for April 6*

By Robert E. Gurwell-Robles

Exposure identifies corruption for what it is—evil. Corruption eats away at integrity, moral uprightness, and virtue. It looks good on the outside, but is bad inside. Jesus graphically described corruption: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27, *New King James Version*). Corruption hates those who expose its putrefaction, as Jesus did at His last Passover.

The Passover, a compulsory feast, recalled the time God delivered Israel from Egypt. People flocked into the narrow streets of Jerusalem from around the world. Some estimate an attendance of 2 million to 3 million pilgrims. The huge crowd was abuzz with talk that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. They wanted to see Him and show their willingness to place their hope upon Him. He must be the promised Messiah!

Jesus until now had remained relatively silent concerning His messiahship, but now His time had come. His enemies would not avoid hearing Him speak about the power of truth and the evil of corruption. They would not escape His open and public declaration of kingship.

Jesus, in one act, challenged the corruption the religious leaders perpetuated and encouraged for years. During the three years of Jesus’ ministry, His enemies saw Him chip away at their traditions and teachings. Now it was a direct attack as He denounced at least two of the popular views.

Corrupt View of the Messiah

We can only imagine the shouts of acclamation and praise that filled

the streets as Jesus rode by. Zechariah prophesied the Messiah would humbly enter Jerusalem riding a donkey, a sign of peace. Those who saw this, while not aware of its spiritual significance, understood the symbolism. Here was royalty and authority. Nevertheless, how would He deliver them? Is this the mighty warrior/conqueror? How would He overthrow the Romans and again establish Israel as a royal kingdom? Their idea of the Messiah was misguided—corrupt.

We know Jesus could have allowed them to crown Him an earthly king. He could have shown military force, against which none could possibly prevail. A few days later, in His words to Pontius Pilate, He explained why this was not to be. “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews.” Jesus rejected the popular view of a material messiah/king—and thus expects us to do the same. Our Messiah is far greater than any earthly king could be.

Corrupt View of Worship

After the crowd quieted, Jesus headed to the temple. He gazed upon the faces of the temple authorities, their vitiated hearts filled with arrogance, fear, and murder. He saw not the house of prayer and worship the magnificent temple was meant to be, but commercialism, injustice, exploitation, hypocrisy, and greed.

Jesus walked away. The temple, the nation, and the leaders of worship each failed inspection. There was much promise of fruit, but, like the fig tree He used to illustrate the point, there was show but no substance. The next day, the Messiah cleansed the temple and exposed its barrenness. He declared

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| March 31 | Mark 11:1-11 |
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| April 4 | Mark 11:20-25 |
| April 5 | Mark 11:27-33 |
| April 6 | Mark 12:1-12 |

himself Messiah and the true object of praise and worship.

The leaders asked, "Where do you get your authority to do these things?" The Jewish leaders, accustomed to following their own standards of interpretation and worship, refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. He skillfully parried the Jewish leaders' questions concerning His authority. He easily exposed their weak and empty authority. Throughout it all, Jesus maintained that human machinations do not make for true worship.

Corrected Views

Jesus declared the truth of His regal, eternal nature and the failure of a corrupt human worldview. While His kingship is not of this world, He brings it to earth, so He might influence, control, and motivate us on a daily basis by His presence and power.

He offers himself as our king of peace. He is a conqueror, but one of our hearts, minds, and attitudes. He has a kingdom, but one of spiritual ideals and principles. He has a reign, not one of military force, but truth. He is the Messiah, who delivers from sin and the corrupt nature it produces. He is worthy of worship.

True worship begins with faith in God. As the surprised disciples see the withered tree, Jesus tells them, "Have

faith in God." You cannot reduce worship to the right religious rituals. Real worship creates dependence, trust, and humility before God. These are the true markers of godly standards, by which we, as Jesus, must confront and expose the evil nature of corruption.

THE LESSON WRITER:

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Lesson text: Mark 11:1–12:12. Printed text: Mark 11:1-9, 15-18. Memory text: Mark 11:15. *Lesson based on International Sunday School Lessons, ©2000 by the Lesson Committee.