

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 63

by Zac Poonen

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*Jesus taught us about the importance of understanding his balanced nature, the power of praise, and the need for faith and obedience in our lives.*

**Duration:** 24:50

**Scripture:** John 1:14

**Topics:** "Christ Likeness", "Church Renewal"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the balanced nature of Jesus, who exhibited both grace and truth in his interactions. It emphasizes the importance of understanding true Christ-likeness, which includes compassion as well as righteous anger against religious hypocrisy. The need for cleansing the church from false practices and greed is highlighted, calling for a return to genuine worship and faith. Jesus' actions with the fig tree symbolize lessons in faith, authority, and the consequences of religious emptiness. The significance of discernment, repentance, and obedience in following God's will is also explored.

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## Transcript

We continue our study today on all that Jesus taught and are now looking at Matthew chapter 21. In our last episode we considered the cleansing of the temple. Jesus entered the temple, verse 12, and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturned the seats of those who were selling doves.

We need to understand Jesus completely in a balanced way. He was full of grace and truth. Not only grace, not only truth, but grace and truth.

He knew how to speak compassionately to lepers and adulterous women, divorced women like the women of Samaria. But he also knew how to call the Pharisees a generation of vipers and to overturn the tables of people who were making money in the name of religion in the temple. This is the balanced understanding of Christ-likeness that every Christian must have.

Very often when we use the word Christ-like, we only think of the tenderness with which he speaks to sinful people or putting his arms around lepers. That's the only understanding of the word Christ-likeness that most Christians have. I would say 99.99% of Christians.

You would never think that if a man calls somebody a generation of vipers, a group of people, that he's Christ-like. You wouldn't think that somebody who turns over tables and tells people to get out of the temple is Christ-like. And that's where the devil has hidden true Christ-likeness from the minds of most Christians.

And the end result of that is most churches are in a pathetic state when it comes to purity. It needs cleansing, but there's nobody to cleanse it because everybody's trying to be Christ-like in this false way. And even preaching, there's a lot of preaching where people say we must be gracious and gentle.

True, but this is the other aspect of Christ-likeness that at least some people in the body must fulfill. I'm not saying that everybody in the body of Christ is called to fulfill this ministry, but there must be some. And I'll tell you, there's a pathetic lack of preachers in the church today who will drive out these money-loving preachers who are out to squeeze money from poor people in order to live in grand style themselves.

Especially a lot of Christian television preachers who are asking and asking and asking people for money and take money from poor people and live in grand style themselves. These are the equivalent of these money-changers today. And Jesus did it twice.

At the beginning and at the end of his ministry, he turned out of the temple those who were making money in the name of God. And that's exactly what he would do today. And he does it through his body.

And if God calls you to such a ministry, fulfill it and don't care what men think about you. And Jesus said to them, my house is to be called a house of prayer, but you're making it a robber's den. It's really become, the church has become a robber's den.

The preachers are robbers, many of them, taking money from poor people, sending reports to western countries from India, reporting of all types of things in order to get a lot of money which lines the pockets of many preachers. Talking about their orphanages and their Bible schools and some of which only exist on paper and fooling simple gullible people in the west. You see, this type of preaching is offensive to some people because they haven't seen what Christlikeness is.

We need to be Christlike in cleansing the church of God. And at the same time, you see the balance here. Immediately after that, the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he was so tender and he healed them.

Jesus could immediately switch from one to the other depending on who was in front of him. This is how it must be with us too, that when the blind, the spiritually blind, and the spiritually lame come into the church, we must be tender and kind and with encouraging words lift them up just like we use strong words to drive out the crooks. And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus had done, and there were two sides to it, one was driving out these crooks and the other was healing the blind and the lame, and they heard the children crying out in the temple saying, Save us, O son of David, save us, save us.

That's what hosanna means. They became very angry. Imagine that they became angry because they saw the children praising the Lord.

And their idea was children must keep quiet. But Jesus said, haven't you, they asked him, don't you hear what they're saying? And Jesus said, yes. Have you never read what it says in the scriptures? In Psalm 8 verse 2, Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes thou hast prepared praise for thyself.

If you actually look at Psalm 8, you learn something very interesting. I want to encourage all of you, whenever you read a quotation from the Old Testament in the New Testament, go back to the Old Testament and look at that verse. And you will find something very, very profitable.

For example, I'll show you something right now. Jesus said in Matthew 21, 16, Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes you have prepared praise for yourself. Now we can go back to Psalm 8 and verse 2 where that's quoted from.

It says, From the mouth of infants and nursing babes thou hast established strength. Or a bulwark, a strong wall of defense from the mouth of babes because of your enemies to make the enemy and the revengeful keep quiet or cease to finish their activity. So there it's speaking about, in Psalm 8 verse 2 it's speaking about strength to silence and defeat our enemies.

Remember that. From the mouth of infants and nursing babes comes strength to defeat our enemies. And Jesus said, From the mouth of infants and babes comes praise for God.

Put the two together. And what do we learn? The way we can silence Satan and overcome him is by praising God. You see, you learn something there by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Both are inspired by the Holy Spirit and Jesus preferred to use praise. And that is how we silence Satan. Whenever you find that your prayers don't seem to be going through or you're finding yourself heavy in a time of prayer or you're finding yourself sleepy when you are praying or you don't seem to make contact with heaven don't kneel down, get up and walk up and down and raise your hands and start praising God and you'll find it's very easy to contact heaven when you praise God.

Maybe difficult when you pray. And once you've established contact with praise the enemy's host are cleared the way into the heavens is clear then you can pray. This is the way we should do it.

So we learn something there just by comparing the quotation in the New Testament with the Old Testament. There are numerous examples of this that I found throughout the New Testament in my study of this subject. And then Jesus left them and went out to Bethany.

In the morning, Matthew 21 verse 18 when he returned to the city we are trying to understand all that Jesus taught and I believe he taught something here about the power of praise. When he returned to the city he became hungry and he saw a lone fig tree by the road and he came to it and found nothing on it except leaves. There we see something of his humanity.

The fact that Jesus was completely a man he did not use the resources and power that he had as God when he was on this earth. He could have used it but he didn't use it. He refused to use that power because he had relinquished it voluntarily when he came to the earth.

He was like a billionaire who had a credit card but would never use that credit card when he lived on this slum called the earth in order to teach people how to live without using any of his own resources as God. You know it's like a billionaire supposing a billionaire from some western land comes here to teach people in the slums how to live clean and simple with very little income with say a thousand rupees a month and he comes here and works like them and earns a thousand rupees a month and teaches people how to live on a thousand rupees a month and to live clean in a little hut in the slums. But he is a billionaire.

But he says I will not use my credit card I've got a credit card but I'll never use it. And this is how Jesus lived. He never used his heavenly credit card as God.

He lived only with the resources first of all with the limitations we have tempted as we are tired like we are tired hungry like we are hungry and with all the desires and passions that we have that normal human beings have apart from sin and yet he did not sin even though he lived on earth as a man he came in the flesh and his spirit was pure.

This is the secret of godliness it says in 2 Timothy 3.16 1 Timothy 3.16 Now here we see that he came near a fig tree in order to see whether there was fruit in it I mean if he had used his resources as God he could find out whether there is fruit in a fig tree on the other side of the earth or from a million miles away but he had to come near it and then he found nothing in it but leaves little things like this we see the fact that he was 100% human just like us and he said to the fig tree no longer shall there ever be any fruit from you and at once the fig tree withered now this is his not his acting as God no we need to understand this this is his acting as an anointed prophet of God which God can do through a prophet even now so even in those supernatural things that Jesus did

remember he didn't act as God the only place where he acted as God was where he forgave sins and he received worship he removed those two things receiving worship forgiving people's sins everything else he did was as an anointed prophet of God the supernatural things which God can do through any man and then we read that the fig tree withered away and seeing this the disciples marveled and said how did the fig tree wither at once the root had withered immediately as soon as Jesus spoke but the tree itself took about a day to appear withered because in another passage it says it's the next day the disciples asked this question how did the fig tree wither up and Jesus answered and said to them I say to you if you have faith and you don't doubt you shall not only do what is done to the fig

tree but even if you say to this mountain be taken up, cast into the sea it shall happen and all things you ask in prayer believing you shall receive now some people think is Jesus angry that he couldn't get fruit on the fig tree certainly not Jesus wasn't a slave to food not at all but he wanted to teach his disciples a lesson in faith and it was worth withering up a fig tree to teach his disciples a lesson in faith and to teach us for two thousand years all Christians a lesson in faith that's why he cursed that fig tree and got it withered up to teach his disciples that if you have faith you can have authority over situations like this you can even tell a mountain to get out of the way and the other reason is this in the old testament the fig tree is a picture of Israel just like the

vine is a picture of the church in the new covenant the fig tree is throughout the old testament the picture of Israel and here Jesus came to Israel symbolically speaking that means looking for spiritual desire and hunger fruit for the glory of God but what did he see in the Israeli fig tree the leaves of religion the leaves of religiosity empty religious rituals and traditions and he cursed it he cursed that religious system which was actually driving people away from God and he curses every single religious system in a church today that would turn people away from God where there are leaves and no fruit a lot of churches today and a lot of Christians all they have is leaves leaves referred to empty rituals going to church singing prayers praying and singing songs and reading the bible

and a lot of activity as well but not fruit for the glory of God it's not the fruit of overcoming sin the fruit of purity victory over sin not only children being brought up in a home that's not there but only a lot of leaves of activity and singing and praising and emptiness Jesus curses that even today so that's what we see

here and later on in Matthew 24 Jesus said let me point that out to you he said learn a parable from the fig tree Matthew 24, 32 when its branches become tender and puts forth its leaves you know that summer is near so you too when you see all these things recognize that Christ is near right at the door and that generation will not pass away which sees all these things before the Lord returns he is talking about his second coming and certain signs that would be there

in the world before he returns again and one of the signs one specific sign he said was Israel which has withered up you know in the history of Israel we read that they were already being ruled by the Romans when Jesus was there they were not really a free nation but when they rejected Christ and crucified him 40 years later they were scattered by God all across the face of the earth the fig tree had really withered the root withered as soon as they crucified Christ it became evident 40 years later like it says the fig tree they were scattered all over the earth but then he said keep a watch on that fig tree one day you will see it's putting out its leaves again no fruit yet but you'll see that nation of Israel coming back to the land and starting again to be a religious nation just like

in Jesus' time an independent nation and that happened in 1948 and they came to the city of Jerusalem in 1967 and these are signs that Jesus said that's a sign that the coming of the Lord is very near and that generation that sees these signs will not pass away till all these things be fulfilled I mean Jesus said that 2000 years ago and that's why we who are living in this time when we have seen these things have the hope that in our lifetime we will see Christ return if our understanding of prophecy is right that fig tree is putting forth its leaves so Jesus was teaching them faith and as they would understand it later there's also a parable of the nation of Israel further in Matthew 21 in verse 23 when Jesus came into the temple the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him

and you know they had seen him chasing people out of the temple and doing all that why are you doing these things who gave you this authority who gave you the right to do all this in the temple first of all I ask this question why the chief priests and scribes allow these people to make the temple the courtyard of the temple a place of merchandise and business I have a feeling it's because those traitors were giving a huge commission to the chief priests and scribes imagine the chief priests and scribes allowing them to do that without a commission it's the same thing that happens in a lot of Christian churches today yeah what pastors get is a commission to allow things in the church which Christ would not allow they get their salary so that their mouths are shut against the rich people

in the church who cannot be rebuked anymore because they are the ones and so there's someone like Christ comes along and there's hardly anybody like that today who will come up and denounce the whole thing and say this is all Babylon and Jesus refused to answer that question because they wouldn't understand it in any case so he said to them before I tell you that I want to ask you something tell me but they began to think if we answer like this what will people say if we answer like that then what will they say so they began to think now if we say it's from heaven then Jesus will say then why didn't you believe in it because they had rejected John the Baptist but if we say no that was from men all the people will turn against us because they all recognize John as a prophet so they were

caught in a dilemma because we can't say no and so they told a lie they knew it was from heaven they said we don't know they were diplomatic exactly like a lot of today's preachers and he said to them well then I'm not going to tell you either by what authority to do these things there's something we learned from here about the way Jesus lived when people came to him with these tough questions he could discern whether they were trying to deceive him or whether they were just trying to trap him and every true servant

of God and preacher and prophet who wants to live for God needs to have that same type of discernment when people come to him with tough questions are they trying to trap him into some answer and we need to seek God at such times and say Lord give me a word that I can give as

a reply this is how Jesus lived so he could know exactly what to say to each person he didn't live by a law which gave him some set of rules as to how to speak to people neither once we live by rules we must live by the leading of the Holy Spirit and then we shall have the same wisdom and discernment that Jesus had because the same Holy Spirit that dwelt in his earthly body is the one who is now dwelling in us on the day of Pentecost the same Holy Spirit that lived in Jesus' body for 33 and a half years now could come and dwell in the bodies of Christians that's why we need to be open to be filled with the Holy Spirit and keep our being sensitive to sin and keep ourselves pure so that the Holy Spirit can have free flow through us so that our minds will be sharp that's the only way to get

rid of this sin-cursed earth with so much of deceptive spirits roaming around in Christendom then Jesus said in Matthew 21 and verse 28 what do you think a man had two sons and he came to the first and said son go work today in the vineyard and he answered and said I will sir and he didn't go and he came to the second and said the same thing and he answered saying I will not go yet afterward he regretted it and went so which of the two did the will of his father and he said the latter and he said to them truly I say to you that tax collectors and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you for John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him and then you see that those to whom God comes first reject him he came to the Jewish people first and they rejected

Christ then he moved to the Gentiles and they accepted him so this is what he is trying to say here to these very religious people who thought that God would only accept them now this is a mistake that a lot of Christian groups can make too we can just because God has used us maybe or used us to restore some truth that's unknown to others or made us a blessing to others we can begin to think that we're sort of God's special favorites and that God can only use us and then we begin to be casual in our attitude towards sin see this is a picture of people who say once saved always saved son go work today in my vineyard they say yes sure and they don't do it meaning that they have asked Christ to come into their heart but they never obey him and they think yeah I'm okay then there are others

who initially may not have responded right but who later repent the main thing there is they repent and their repentance leads to life and they obey the Lord and the Lord says who did the will of God tell me these first people or the second people the answer is the second and Jesus said to these religious people who knew so much of the Bible the tax collectors and prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before you the crooked cheats and the prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before you religious people who keep preaching the Bible I believe that's a very important word that needs to be preached today in today's churches we need to understand this is the God we worship and this is the one we must proclaim we'll continue in our next episode

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