

CHURCH.

LESSON 8

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> 1 CORINTHIANS 9 -12
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (1 Corinthians 9 - 12). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN JOHN]</i> (2) JOHN 1:16
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Review two by two.

(2) John 1:16. From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 2:1-25
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 2:1-11 together. John 2:1-11 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to his early disciples. John 2:12-25 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to the crowds at Jerusalem.

<u>STEP 1. READ.</u>	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ John 2:1-25 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

<u>STEP 2. DISCOVER.</u>	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

2:11

Discovery 1. Jesus reveals his glory by a miraculous sign.

The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is *all the divine attributes* shining through the veil of his human nature. One example of his glory is his grace and truth. In John 1:14-18 John says, "We have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth". *To see* his glory means to examine and to reflect on his divine attributes. Here, his glory is the *grace and truth* that are manifested in his *works and his words*.

Another example of manifesting his glory is *his miraculous signs*. In John 2:11, Jesus revealed his glory by a miraculous sign. He revealed his divine attributes by turning water into wine at a wedding feast. Here, the glory of Jesus Christ is contained in the following. He revealed his *perfect moral values* by honouring the institution of marriage. He revealed his *divine generosity* by supplying abundant wine and thus helping his hosts out of their embarrassment. I would like to look more carefully at the glory of Christ displayed in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

2:24-25

Discovery 2. Jesus does not entrust himself or his cause to everyone.

When the crowds at Jerusalem saw the miraculous signs Jesus was doing, many *trusted* in him (2:23). However, Jesus did *not entrust* himself to them, because he knew who they were. This means that Jesus did not view all these individuals that believed in him as being true believers. Only Jesus knows all people. Only Jesus knows what is in the

heart of all people. Only Jesus knows when a person is genuinely born again. John 2:25 says that Jesus did not need to listen to the testimony concerning any particular person, because his own penetrating eyes were able to look into the very depths of every person's heart.

In John chapter 1, Jesus did not need anybody to tell him who Simon was, when he saw him for the first time. His own penetrating eyes saw who Simon was. Jesus also did not need anybody to tell him who Nathanael was, when he saw him for the first time. He knew that Nathanael was an Israelite in whom there was nothing false. Thus, in John chapter 2, Jesus knew that the faith of many people in Jerusalem was not genuine saving faith. With his penetrating all-seeing eyes he read the secrets of people's hearts. He knew their thoughts, motives and attitudes. And in John chapter 3, Jesus did not need anybody to tell him who Nicodemus was, when he met him for the first time.

These verses are very important to me, because I realise that Jesus knows everything about me. His penetrating, all-seeing eyes are able to look into my mind, heart and whole life (cf. 2 Chronicles 16:9; Hebrews 4:13). He knows my weaknesses as that of Peter, he knows my sincerity as that of Nathanael, he knows my faith as that of all other people and he knows the questions of my heart like that of Nicodemus.

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 2:1-25 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

2:11

Question 1. What is the purpose of miracles in the Bible?

Notes.

John likes to use the word "sign" instead of "miracle".

(1) A sign is a miracle that is viewed as a proof of divine authority and majesty.

The purpose of the miracle is to lead the attention of the spectator away from the deed itself to the Divine Doer of the miracle! Miracles in the Bible occur especially around the times in history when new revelation occurred.

- Moses. Thus when God revealed the law to *Moses*, God performed miracles through Moses. He sent ten plagues against his enemies. He caused the water of the Red Sea to recede so that Israel could cross on dry ground. He made bitter water sweet, etc. Through these miracles, God (Moses) proved that the law is given by God's inspiration and authority.
- Elijah and Elisha. When God revealed his reality to Judah and Israel during a time in which they turned away from God, God performed miracles through the prophets *Elijah and Elisha*. He created food for a poor widow. He sent fire from heaven to devour the sacrifice, the water and even the stones of the altar to prove that idols have no power. He raised children from the dead. He protected his servants by surrounding them with chariots of fire, etc.
- Jesus Christ. When God took on the human nature in *Jesus Christ* and came to live among us, he performed the most and the greatest miracles. He healed the sick. He set the demon-possessed free. He set prisoners free. He made the blind see. The lame could walk again. Lepers were healed, the deaf could hear again. Dead people were raised. He gave food to a great crowd and calmed a storm on the sea. But the greatest signs were the following:
 - The virgin birth. The Holy Spirit caused his human nature to be born of the Virgin Mary.
 - The resurrection from the dead. After he was crucified he was resurrected from the dead and will never die again.
 - The ascension. He ascended into heaven and has ever since not stopped saving uncountable number of people from their sins, death and eternal damnation.
 - The eternal salvation and transformation of people. He transforms the lives of his people and makes them citizens of the kingdom of God!
- The apostles of Christ. When God established his Church everywhere through the work and writings of *the apostles*, he performed many miracles especially through the apostles. They too healed the sick, set the demon-possessed free, restored the handicapped and the blind, and raised the dead. But even more important (because the above signs were temporary), God used them to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to transform the lives of many, to establish the first congregations among the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles, and to write the last books of the Bible.

(2) A sign is a work of power in the physical realm that illustrates a principle truth that is operative in the spiritual realm.

A sign has a specific purpose. The miracle that takes place in the physical sphere of creation points away from itself to the miracle that takes place in the spiritual sphere of redemption. For example:

- In John 6:14, the sign of the multiplication of the loaves of bread intends to fix people's attention on Jesus Christ as *the Bread of Life* (John 6:35), which gives eternal life to those who believe in him.
- In John 9:16, the sign of opening the eyes of the man who was born blind intends to show people that Jesus is *the Light of the world* (John 8:12), who gives spiritual light to people who believe in him.
- In John 11:47 and 12:18, the sign of raising Lazarus from the dead intends to centre on the fact that Jesus is *the Resurrection and the Life* (John 11:25), which gives believers a new spiritual life now and will transform their lowly bodies to be like his glorious body at the resurrection (Philippians 3:21).

Only the context will show if a sign has this second deeper spiritual meaning or not. In every case, a sign always points away from itself to the One who performed it! Here in John chapter 2:11, the sign of turning water into wine is called the first of Jesus' miraculous signs. The wonder signs of Jesus intend to show that Jesus Christ has come into the world to fulfil and terminate the old order and to replace it by the new order (cf. John 2:19-21; Matthew 5:17). The first coming of Jesus Christ terminated the Old Testament order (temple, priests, sacrifices, the theocratic nation, etc.) and replaced it with the New Testament order (worshipping God in spirit and truth, the once-only sacrifice of atonement, the people of God coming from every nation in the world, etc.). The new order surpasses the old order as much as wine surpasses water!

(3) A sign is performed, not to create faith, but to strengthen faith.

The original Greek in John 20:30-31 literally says, "These signs are written so that you may continue to believe" present continuous time) that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It does not say "that you may *begin to believe*" (aorist time), but "that you may *continue to believe*"! Only the Holy Spirit creates faith in people (Philippians 1:29) by people hearing the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). The purpose of the miracles as signs is not to create faith, but to strengthen true, saving faith! Only the Holy Spirit *creates* faith and the miracles and the teachings connected to these miracles *strengthen* faith. The apostle John wrote the Gospel of John in order to strengthen the faith of the believers in the face of enemies and false teachers.

2:14-17

Question 2. Why does Jesus cleanse the temple?

Notes.

All Jews were required to celebrate the Passover Festival every year at Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17) and pay the temple tax (Exodus 30:11-16). During the seven-day Passover festival many animals were offered in sacrifice to the Lord (Numbers 28:16-25). Because many Jews came from distant countries, they had to buy their animals to sacrifice in Jerusalem. A wicked ruler of the Sanhedrin, called Annas, wanted to make a profit out of this situation. Therefore he gave permission to the vendors and moneychangers to use a part of the temple, called *the court of the Gentiles* for their business. Of course, the dealers in cattle and sheep would be tempted to charge exorbitant prices for their animals and exploit the worshippers.

Also the moneychangers used this court of the temple to do business. Every male worshipper had to pay the annual temple tribute of half a shekel. Therefore, Jews who lived in other countries had to exchange their foreign money for Jewish coins. Naturally, the moneychangers would charge an extra fee for every exchange-transaction. Here too, there were abundant opportunities for deception and abuse.

So when Jesus came to the temple, he found in the temple court people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. Thus, the temple, which was intended to be a place where people could pray and worship (cf. Isaiah 56:7), had been turned into a marketplace where people were being robbed!

(1) Jesus cleansed the temple as the Son of God.

Jesus called the temple "my Father's house" (Luke 2:49). By cleansing the temple, he exercised his authority or right as the Father's only-begotten Son (cf. Hebrews 3:1-6) to keep his Father's house holy and to restore it to its purpose as a house of worship!

(2) Jesus cleansed the temple as the Messiah.

The Jews did not know their own Bible! A thousand years before king David prophesied, "The zeal for your house *consumes* me" (Psalm 69:9). The cleansing of the temple would in some way contribute to *the death* of Jesus.

The prophet Malachi prophesied that the Lord (whom believers were seeking) (that is the Messiah) would suddenly come to his temple. He is called "the Messenger (Angel) of the covenant" (Hebrew: malak ha-berit). He would be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap ... to purify the people of the tribe of Levi (Malachi 3:1-3)! Thus, the Old Testament already proves that the Messiah has the right to cleanse the temple! When Jesus cleansed the temple, the disciples remembered that these prophecies were written about the Messiah in the Old Testament.

Jesus Christ used force to cleanse the temple, because he had the right (authority) of the Father's only-begotten Son and of the Messiah to execute an act of punishment (cf. John 5:22)!

2:18-22

Question 3. What does Jesus mean when he says, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days"?

Notes.

(1) The riddle of Jesus.

Jesus said, "Break down this temple and I will raise it again in three days". This was a kind of a riddle, because the words have two meanings. The word "temple" could refer to the temple built of stones standing in Jerusalem, or it could refer to the temple of the body. And the word "break down" could refer to the tearing down of a building, or it could refer to the destruction of the body of Jesus. And the words "raise up" could refer to the reconstruction of a building, or it could refer to the resurrection of the body!

(2) The meaning of the riddle.

Jesus means to say the following. Although the Jews will break down the temple of Christ's body, in three days he will be resurrected. By breaking down the temple of Christ's body, the Jews are also breaking down their own temple of stone and the whole system of religious practices connected with it.

Nevertheless, as a result of the resurrection of the temple of his body, Jesus Christ will establish a new spiritual temple with completely new spiritual practises, in which people will worship God in spirit and truth (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:4-5)! "Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. We are his house ..." (Hebrews 3:6).

(3) The illustration (type) and the fulfilment (antitype) cannot be separated from one another in the Bible.

The illustration (type) is Israel's tabernacle or temple building and was regarded as the place in which God dwelt (Exodus 25:22). The fulfilment (antitype) is Christ's body, which is in a far superior sense the dwelling-place of God. Colossians 2:9 says, "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

Therefore, when anyone destroys the temple of the body of Christ, he also pulls down the temple building in Jerusalem together with its cult (the religious ceremonies)!

- When the Jews and Romans crucified Jesus Christ, the temple building and its entire religious system of ceremonies ceased to have any meaning! The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).
- Stephen and Paul taught very clearly that the temple building had no more meaning (Acts 7:48-49; 17:24-25).
- Also the letter to the Hebrews teaches clearly the temple together with its religious ceremonies has been replaced by Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation!
- Shortly after, in A.D. 70, the Romans under Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple building.

In exactly the same way, the resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ implies the establishment of the new temple (the New Testament Church), "another temple that is not man-made" (Mark 14:58), where people "worship God in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). The New testament teaches that the Body of Christ or the Church is the spiritual temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16 -17; 2 Corinthians 5:16; Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5).

(4) The Jews failed to see the fulfilment (antitype).

The Jews only saw the literal temple of stone, which took 46 years to construct. If they had studied the Scriptures with a believing heart, they would have known the following:

- The LORD had warned Solomon that "this temple" of Jerusalem would be rejected by God" (1 Kings 9:7).
- In the Greek translation of the Old Testament in Psalm 40:6-7 (Hebrews 10:5-7) is written, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here am I, I have come ...desiring to do your will". The sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ (his body on the cross) replaced all other Old Testament sacrifices.
- The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the temple could not really be the house of God (Isaiah 66:1-2).
- The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that *the ark* would not be missed, it would not be remembered and another ark would not be made (Jeremiah 3:16)!
- Jesus predicted, "Not one stone (of the temple buildings) would be left on another. Everyone would be thrown down" (Matteüs 24:1-2; Lukas 19:44; Lukas 21:6).
- The writer of the letter to the Hebrews taught, "The sanctuary is only a copy and shadow (an illustration, type) of what is in heaven" (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:24). Jesus Christ serves as High priest in the true sanctuary set up by God (Hebrews 8:1-2).

(5) The disciples of Jesus failed to see that the temple of which he was speaking was the temple of his body.

Only after Jesus was crucified, after the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom and after he was resurrected on the third day, did the disciples understand the spiritual meaning of the words of Jesus!

2:19

Question 4. In which other examples from the Bible does the physical symbolise the spiritual?

Notes.

The Jews could not see that physical things could be *symbols* of spiritual things. Again and again they made unwarranted, crassly literal interpretations of the words of Jesus, which were intended to have spiritual meaning. For example, the following are some examples just from the Gospel of John.

- In John 3:3-8 “to be born again” or “to be born anew/from above” has spiritual meaning. Nicodemus gave it a literal meaning (to enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born)
- In John 4:10-15 “the living water that Jesus gives” is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Samaritan woman gave it a literal meaning (water down below in the well)
- In John 6:48-58 “the eating of the flesh of Jesus,” means to receive Jesus by faith. The Jews gave this a literal meaning (cannibalism).
- And in John 8:21-22 “going where the Jews could not come” means his ascension. The Jews took it literally to mean that Jesus would kill himself (suicide).

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 2:1-25.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 2:1-25.

- 2:1. Honour marriage as God’s idea and institution.
- 2:1. As a Christian get involved in the ordinary activities of non-Christians.
- 2:11. Meditate on the glory of Christ displayed in the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- 2:12. Spend some time with your parents and family.
- 2:15-16. Get angry at unrighteousness, but don’t sin in the process (Ephesians 4:26).
- 2:22. Believe the Old and New Testaments. Believe the words of Jesus Christ.
- 2:23. Do not entrust yourself to everyone. Learn to look at the heart of people.
- 2:25. Practise the presence of Christ. He sees and knows everything.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 2:1-25.

I want to discover the glory of Jesus Christ in the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, every time I read or study a passage in the Bible, I will ask myself this question: “What more can I learn about Jesus Christ in this passage?”

Today, I have learned that the death of Jesus Christ made an end of the Old Testament temple and religious ceremonies. And I learned that the resurrection of Jesus Christ established the new temple, which consists of believers, in whom God lives through his Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:4-11) and where people worship God in spirit and in truth.

I want my faith and worship to be oriented towards winning the lost. The temple in the Old Testament had a court of the Gentiles in order to give the Gentiles a chance to know and worship the living God. However, Jewish leaders like Annas, and Jewish merchants changed this court of the temple into a marketplace for selling cattle and sheep and into a den of robbers where people were cheated when they exchanged money. What God had intended as a blessing for the Gentile nations, the Jews had used for their own selfish purposes. Thus the Jews showed that they were against winning the lost and against winning the Gentiles. They wanted to keep their faith just for themselves. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, came and changed all this. He came for both the Jews and the Gentiles. He *fulfilled* the promises made to all believers and he established the Church for believers from every nation, and tribe and language. I will continually do my best that my congregation or I do not set ourselves against winning the lost by closing our meetings for people who have never heard the Gospel.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 2:1-25.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[INTERCESSION]</i> PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 2 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 - 16 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse, (3) John 2:25. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.