



Jesus Defends God's Honor

8

Key Theme

- Jesus rebukes false teachers.

Key Passages

- John 2:13–16; Matthew 23:23–28

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe what Jesus did when God was not treated with respect.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, have them recite the verse to a partner or to the class using only the letter clues.



Activity 1: Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes

Students will fill out the Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

Jesus defended God's honor when He drove the sellers and money changers out of the Temple and when He confronted the religious leaders because they were hypocrites—pretending to be holy while their hearts were wicked.



Activity 2: Pick a Point Review Game

Divide students into teams. Teams will take turns answering questions. They will earn points for correct answers by picking numbers from the cup.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- ☐ Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- ☐ Memory Verse Poster
- ☐ Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



JESUS DEFENDS GOD'S HONOR CLASS NOTES

- ☐ Print one Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- ☐ Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- ☐ Study the Prepare to Share section.
- ☐ Go Before the Throne.

- ☐ Student Take Home Sheets



PICK A POINT REVIEW GAME

- ☐ Print and cut apart the Game Point Cards from the Resource DVD ROM. Put them into a cup, bag, or basket.
- ☐ Print one Pick a Point Questions Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.

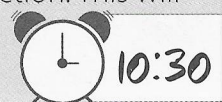
- ☐ Pick a Point Questions Sheet
- ☐ Game Point Cards
- ☐ Cup, bag, or basket to hold the cards



Memory Verse

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read Matthew 5–7 along with this background.

In Lesson 7 we discussed and studied Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. In it Jesus addressed the religious leaders who had distorted the Law and made it a list of good works by which self-righteousness could be attained. Many of the Jews perceived God's laws as a call to outward appearance only. But Jesus called attention to the heart issues. He insisted that real holiness comes from a heart that is striving toward obedience and holiness inwardly—a heart desiring to please God. Such a heart comes only through being born again.

We have discussed that Jesus came to earth to do the will of the Father. He was God in the flesh, possessing all of the attributes of deity, though veiling His glory. Christ's divine attributes include justice, holiness, and truth. The passages we are examining this week present Jesus as one who continued to defend the honor of His Father and who showed God's anger against the sin of distorting and maligning God's Word.

Much of the corruption Jesus encountered was among the religious leaders. They had set aside God's Law, invented their own rules, and oppressed the people in the name of God. Jesus was not afraid to address these leaders in the name of His Father. One such rebuke came in the Temple during a Passover celebration (John 2:13–25). Jesus entered the Temple where He encountered money changers and merchants selling animals (John 2:14). But why were these people in the Temple?

Those selling animals were there to provide a service to God's people. The merchants were providing animals for sacrifice during Feast time. This was a convenience for Jews traveling great distances. They would not need to bring livestock with them; they could buy the necessary sacrificial animals right at the Temple. The money changers were also there for a service. A tax was collected from every Israelite twenty years old and up (Exodus 30:11–16). When Jews came to Jerusalem to pay their Temple tax, they could only pay it with a special coin, the half-shekel. It was the only silver coin at that time without the image of a pagan Emperor, and therefore to the Jews it was the only coin acceptable to God. The money changers exchanged unacceptable coins for these shekels. While our text does not mention it, these animal sellers and money changers were probably overcharging the pilgrims and extracting a hefty profit.

When Jesus entered the Temple, He was enraged at what He saw. God's House, His Temple, should have been a house of prayer, worship, and devotion, but they had made it into a house of merchandise. So Jesus made a whip of rope and chased them out of the Temple, overturning their tables and stools. He also verbally rebuked them for the way they were dishonoring God and His Temple (John 2:15–16).

Matthew 23 records Jesus's last public message before He died on the Cross. Here again Jesus showed His righteous anger at the dishonoring of God, His laws, and His Word. Jesus's rebuke was directed toward the religious leaders—the scribes and Pharisees and their religious hypocrisy (Matthew 23:27). Jesus had some very strong words for these religious leaders, calling them blind guides, fools, sons of hell, hypocrites, and whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones! These leaders had put off God's righteousness and instead were seeking to establish their own means of righteousness (Romans 10:3). And they were demanding others do the same—burdening the common people by insisting they abide by the rules and regulations they had developed as a means of achieving salvation.

Jesus would not have it. He would not allow His Father's name to be dishonored by these false teachers. They focused on the externals of religion—looking pious, saying long prayers, giving tithes—but Jesus said they had “neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matthew 23:23).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Throughout the Gospels we see a number of Jewish religious groups mentioned. These include the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes (or lawyers). Who were these groups, where did they come from, and why did many of them oppose Jesus and His teachings?

Pharisees

The Pharisees were the keepers of the Law. They believed the entire Hebrew Bible (what we call the Old Testament) to be the Word of God. They emerged from the Babylonian Exile as the chief religious faction. They understood that Israel's exile was a result of forgetting God's Law and living in disobedience. As a result, the Pharisees sought to present God's Law and impose it on the people so the nation would never again be exiled as punishment for their disobedience.

However, many of the Pharisees presented a law

that was greatly compromised by their belief that oral traditions of their culture passed down for generations held the same significance and authority as God's Word. This is clearly forbidden in Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2). These Pharisees sought to strictly obey these traditions themselves and demanded the same from others. Many of the traditions they held to are seen throughout the Gospels (Matthew 9:14, 15:1–9, 23:5, 23:16, 23:23; Mark 7:1–23; Luke 11:42).

Many of the Pharisees were not fully devoted to all of God's Law and had added their own beliefs and traditions to it. Because of this, they missed the Messiah when He was in their very midst. They saw Jesus's miracles and heard His words, but instead of believing in Him, they did all that they could to stop Him, eventually calling for His crucifixion because He claimed to be the Son of God, making Himself equal with God.

Sadducees

Not much is known about the Sadducees, since the only historical information we have comes from the New Testament and some writings from the Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus. Sadducees were more affluent than the Pharisees. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priest and high priest. They also made up a majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees were more sympathetic to the Hellenistic movement, a movement seeking to combine Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture. They were more willing to submit to the prevailing powers (Rome) because they realized it was economically and politically advantageous for them to do so.

Religiously, the Sadducees were more conservative than the Pharisees in that they did not give oral tradition equal authority to the written Word of God. However, they were misguided on a few other issues. For example, they denied God's involvement in everyday life. They denied the resurrection of the dead. They denied any afterlife, believing that the soul perished at death, and they denied the existence of a spiritual world (i.e., angels and demons).

Because the Sadducees were more concerned with politics than religion, they were unconcerned with Jesus until they became afraid He might bring unwanted Roman attention. Finally, they joined with the Pharisees in their opposition to Jesus.

Scribes

The earliest scribes of Israel served as official secretaries, writing and issuing royal decrees (e.g., 2 Samuel 8:17, 20:25; 1 Chronicles 18:16, 24:6; 1 Kings 4:3). After the return from the Babylonian captivity,

the scribes concentrated their activities on the Law, becoming "teachers of the law," or "lawyers."

Scribes in Jesus's time were men whose primary occupation was writing out copies of the Jewish Scriptures and teaching the people the Law. Because they copied the Old Testament books, they were familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures and were respected in society for their literacy and knowledge. The scribes took their job of preserving Scripture very seriously; they would copy and recopy the Bible meticulously, even counting letters and spaces to ensure each copy was correct. We can thank God for using the Jewish scribes in preserving the Old Testament.

The scribes were closely associated with the Pharisees and are often mentioned together in the Gospels. Throughout the life of Christ, the scribes were among His most vigilant and determined opponents. Their many accusations are recorded in the Gospel accounts.

The scribes complained that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30). When Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins, the scribes charged Him with blasphemy (Mark 2:5–7). When Jesus cast out demons, the scribes said that He cast them out by Beelzebub, "the ruler of the demons" (Mark 3:22). They sought to accuse Jesus if He healed on a Sabbath day (Luke 6:7). And finally, the scribes took counsel with the chief priests as to how they might destroy Jesus (Mark 11:18), and when Jesus was brought before Herod, they vehemently accused Him (Luke 23:10).

These three sects of Jewish leaders often went beyond the written word of God, incorporating their own doctrines, beliefs, and traditions. And in so doing, they were blinded when the Messiah they had read about and waited for finally came.

What we can learn from these leaders is that we need to make a commitment to God's Word, with a heart for God, as our final authority by which our lives and decisions are made.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, you are strong, mighty, and wonderful! You defended your Father's honor. Help me to be more vigilant to defend your honor in my home and sphere of influence. May my students come to understand the importance of loving you with all their heart, mind, and strength. Use this lesson to show them that it's not enough to look good on the outside. Change their hearts by the power of the gospel to desire to please and glorify you in all they do.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a friend or to the class.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes

MATERIALS

- ☐ Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes for each student
- ☐ Jesus Defends God's Honor Class Notes Answer Key
- ☐ Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. We'll complete them together during the class.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see what Jesus did and said when the religious leaders did not honor God.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 7 Lesson Theme Poster. We learned in Lesson 7 that Jesus did not teach the same as the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus taught that the sin we commit begins in the heart. It is not just about our outward behavior.

- ? What did the Law say about murder? *You shall not murder, or you will be judged.*
- ? What did Jesus say about this law? *He said you shall not even be angry at your brother.*

Because murder begins with the sin of anger, Jesus said anger with others is also sin. Sin begins in the heart. It isn't just about our outward behavior.

➤ Use the New Testament History Poster included with your teacher kit as you teach the lesson. Emphasize that Jesus ministered only 3 years, and He lived only about 35 years. Yet His life changed the world forever and brought eternal life to all who believe.

John 2:13–16

The scribes and Pharisees were more concerned with how they looked, what they did, and what people thought of them. They did not consider the sin in their hearts but just wanted to look good for other people. They thought looking good to others would get them into heaven.

This is not the case. Jesus explained that true obedience comes from the heart. And true obedience is not easy! We are all sinners, and we can't keep all of God's rules perfectly—no one can. Our sin will always keep us apart from God. That is why Jesus came. We need a Savior.

Today we will see that Jesus found people who were not respecting God and His ways. They were dishonoring God's name. Jesus did not like that! We are going to read how Jesus dealt with these people who were disrespecting God, His Temple, and His Word. Turn to the book of John. Let's read John 2:13–16. *Choose students to read.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Sounds like Jesus got angry! Let's find out why!

Observe the Text

? What Jewish holiday was mentioned in John 2:13? *The Passover.*

Yes. The Passover was a big celebration for the Jews of Jesus's time. It included coming to the Temple in Jerusalem and making animal sacrifices. The Jews did this to remember God's faithfulness when He led them out of Egypt.

? What did Jesus find in the Temple? *John 2:14. People selling animals and people changing money.*

Now, because it was the Passover, people came from far away to worship God. That worship included the sacrifice of animals. But instead of bringing their animals from home, they would buy them at the Temple. Not only that, but their money would need to be changed to the Jewish money that was used there. The animals were sold and money changed right in the Temple of God! And it was also likely the sellers were making a nice profit by over-charging the people for the services and animals. This is what Jesus saw when He came to the Temple—to the place where God was to be worshipped.

? Jesus made something for Himself. What was it? Look in John 2:15. *A whip of cords.*

? What did Jesus do with that whip? *John 2:15. Drove out the sellers and money changers.*

? Yes. And what else was driven out of the Temple by Jesus? *John 2:15. The sheep and the oxen.*

? Then what did Jesus do to the tables the money changers were sitting at? *John 2:15. Jesus poured out the changers' money and turned their tables over.*

- ? And what did Jesus say to the men who were selling animals? *John 2:16. Take these things away. Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!*

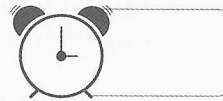
Discover the Truth

- ? How would you describe Jesus in this account? *Allow discussion.*

Jesus was angry. Now last week we discussed being angry, right? And Jesus said we should not be angry. But last week Jesus was talking about anger against our neighbors, friends, and family.

Jesus's anger here was different. Jesus was in God's Temple—a holy place where the holy God was to be worshipped and adored. These men were not honoring or respecting God or His Temple. Jesus showed righteous anger to these men. He was defending God's honor. And it was OK for Jesus to drive out the sellers and their animals along with the money changers.

- ? Let's go to the class notes. Will someone read #1 for us? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Passover. Have students complete #1.*
- ? And what about #2? What did Jesus see in the Temple? Will someone read that? How will you finish that sentence? *Assign a reader. Animals. Have students complete #2.*
- ? And what about #3? Which answers are correct? *Assign one or more readers. All are correct. Have students complete #3.*
- ? And how about #4? What is the answer? Will someone read that? *Assign a reader. Honor. Have students complete #4.*



READ THE WORD

Let's read more. Jesus was serious about dealing with people who did not treat God with respect! And the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus's time were just such people. They were full of rules and laws. They considered themselves better and holier than other people. They were proud of their knowledge, and everyone knew it. In general, they did not respect God or His ways. They were more concerned with their own ways.

What we are about to read are the words of Jesus. This is what Jesus thought of the scribes and Pharisees who made up lots of laws but failed to honor God with their hearts. Let's see what Jesus had to say to them! Turn to Matthew 23:23–28. Let's read that. *Choose students to read the verses.*

Matthew 23:23–28

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Look again at verses 23, 25, and 27. Which words do all of those verses start with? *Woe to you.*
- ? What do you think Jesus meant by "woe to you?" *Allow discussion.*

Hypocrite:
Someone who
says one thing
but acts in a
different way.

“Woe to you” was Jesus’s way of saying, “How dare you?!” Jesus was confronting and condemning these men because their lives did not show that they truly loved God. After all, these men were the teachers and the religious leaders. Yet Jesus knew that their outward appearance of holiness did not match their hearts.

? And Jesus even had a name for them. What was that name? What did Jesus call these men? Look in Matthew 23 verses 23, 25, and 27 again. *Hypocrites.*

? What is a hypocrite? *Allow discussion.*

A hypocrite is someone who says one thing but acts in a different way. Hypocrites pretend to be something that they aren’t. A hypocrite is someone whose outward actions do not match his heart. These religious leaders were hypocrites. They pretended to be holy and righteous, but Jesus knew their hearts were not right toward God.

? Let’s go back to the class notes. Who can read #5? What is the answer? *Assign reader. Dare. Have students complete #5.*

? And what about #6? What is a hypocrite? Will someone read that? *Assign a reader. Pretends. Have students complete #6.*

Now back to the Bible. Someone read Matthew 23:27 again. Jesus was comparing the Pharisees to something. *Assign a reader. Read Matthew 23:27.*

? What did Jesus say the scribes and Pharisees were like? *Matthew 23:27. Whitewashed tombs.*

? And how do whitewashed tombs appear on the outside? *Matthew 23:27. They are clean and beautiful.*

? But what is inside a tomb? *Matthew 23:27. Dead men’s bones and uncleanness.*

Jesus compared these men to dead men’s tombs. And He explained what He meant. Listen while I read Matthew 23:28 again. *Read Matthew 23:28.*

? How did the Pharisees appear on the outside? *Matthew 23:28. Righteous to men.*

? And what did Jesus say these men were filled with? *Matthew 23:28. Hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

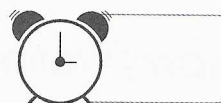
? Will someone read #7 on the class notes? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Outside, inside.*

Discover the Truth

Jesus defended God’s honor. He wanted the people to love God on the outside and the inside! The religious leaders were not doing that! They wanted to look good. But how they acted on the outside was not what was in their hearts. They were not friends of Jesus or God! They were hypocrites—pretenders! They were pretending to be very holy, but their hearts were not holy or right with God. So, Jesus said to them, “Woe to

you!" or "How dare you?!" God would judge them based on what was in their hearts. Jesus defended God's honor when He told these Pharisees and scribes the truth.

- ? Will someone read #8 on the class notes? What is the answer? Assign a reader. Honor. Have students complete #8.



➤ If time allows, assign students to re-read the points on the class notes as a review and briefly discuss them.

Pick a Point Review Game

MATERIALS

- ☐ Pick a Point Questions Sheet
- ☐ Game Point Cards in a cup, bag or basket

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the students into teams of 4–5 students each. Have each team take turns answering a question. After each correct answer, let a member of the team draw a point card from the basket. If no one can answer the question, you may want to allow teams to look the answers up in their Bibles. Allow the first team to get the answer to draw a point!

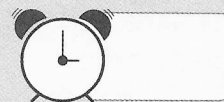
The number of points on the cards will vary, so the score will have nothing to do with how skilled one team might be. The effort to earn points will keep the students tuned into the game. Keep a list of the team's points to determine the "winner" for the day. If time allows, repeat the questions!

OK. Now you are going to get into teams. We are going to play "Pick a Point." Each team will take turns answering questions from the lesson. If you get the answer right, you will draw a point card for your team. I'll keep score here on the board.

Get together with your team, and let's get started. Play the game.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Good job, everyone! Jesus wanted the people to know that God deserves our love, honor, and worship. He was not afraid to defend God's honor in the Temple or to the Pharisees.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson 8 Lesson Theme Poster. When Jesus went to the Temple, He saw how that special place—that place of worship—had been turned into a marketplace. He was outraged, and He did something about it. Jesus made a whip and drove out those who weren't supposed to be there. He rightly defended God's honor when He rebuked the sellers and the money changers who were defiling the Temple of God.

Jesus also defended God's honor when He condemned the Pharisees. They were religious leaders who were supposed to be role models for the people. Yet, they were not pleasing God at all. They were trying to prove their righteousness with their acts which were insincere and hypocritical.

Their good works were dead because in their hearts they did not love God or people. They were proud and arrogant instead of loving and humble. And Jesus exposed their sinful hearts.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

The Pharisees of Jesus's time appeared holy on the outside, but their hearts were wicked, and they were sinful. We can often be guilty of the very same thing.

You see, we know we have to obey or pay the consequences. I have to get my work done or get fired. You have to obey your parents, or get grounded! We get rewarded if we are "good" in class or in the car or while mom is napping. But why are we being good?

We are being good because we don't want to get in trouble or we want to be rewarded. That is just the way our hearts are . . . until we learn about Jesus. When we realize who He was, what He did, and why He did it, our hearts begin to change. If we KNOW that Jesus is God, that He died a horrible death on the Cross so sinners could live for all eternity, and that God sent Jesus because of His great love for us . . . then we begin to want to be obedient. Not because we are afraid of trouble, but because we want to please the almighty God who loved us enough to die for us!

Jesus knew the hearts of the Pharisees. He knows our hearts, too. And He knows even if we are squeaky clean on the outside, we can be covering up darkness and sin on the inside. Only Jesus can change our hearts to want to obey just because we love Him. And He promises to change the hearts of all who will come to Him, truly repent, turn away from their sins, and trust Him completely.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for His Word that shows us how we can enter the kingdom of God.
- Thank Jesus for being with us through His Word and Spirit, even though He is no longer here physically.
- Ask God to help us honor God with our actions and our hearts.