



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN

LESSON: THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

JOHN 2:13-25

11/1/20

MAIN POINT

The main point of telling this story is to reveal Jesus' deity, His authority over all personal, spiritual matters.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson's purpose to some extent includes John's overarching purpose: But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

The record of Jesus turning the water into wine, told immediately before this story, revealed Jesus interest in natural, social, human situations. The miracle or sign, revealed his *authority over the material, physical world*, turning the water into fine wine. In taking over at the Temple, perhaps having not been there since he was 12 years old,

He was revealing *His authority over the spiritual world*, and by not committing himself to those supposing to believe in Him, He was revealing His knowledge and *authority over the individual's personal life*.

At the wedding he revealed his glory (v. 11). At the temple He revealed his judgment (vs. 15-16).

INTRODUCTION

Today we will discuss Jesus cleansing the temple. In the story, Jesus arrives to the temple which was being used as a place to sell oxen and sheep. In response, Jesus drove out the animals, poured out the coins, and overturned tables.

As we ponder the story, you must ask the question, how do you think God's people came to such a disgusting, distorted approach to worship? Desecration was never more clearly expressed.

Does it bother you that this early in John's story, he would talk about Jesus being hard and harsh with what was going on in the Temple?

Though he is known as the Apostle of Love, it seems John wanted to go ahead and deal with the most critical issue about Jesus and get it over with: who He was and what He would do. He hit it head on, if we allow that this took place at the first of Jesus' ministry. (It needs to be remembered that John has not set out to do a chronological account of Jesus.) He is more concerned with the substance than with the order of the events. He is supremely interested in showing Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah.

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:13-14

This may be a perfect study to follow on the heels of the study of Exodus. The effort of God in making Himself known in the worship associated with the Tabernacle and then in the Temple was the most prominent truth we saw in Exodus. God wants to dwell with His people. He chose to do that particularly through the cloud and pillar of fire in the wilderness journey, but then more specifically in the Cloud that came down on

the Tabernacle and Temple. The Temple was an important element of the Jewish faith, for in it God was supposed to dwell. All of the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish religion centered in the Temple.

The Temple area covered some nineteen acres. The area was divided into four courts. Coming from the east and moving toward the sanctuary itself, a visitor would successively pass through the court of the Gentiles, the court of the women, the court of Israel, and the court of the priests. With their usual contempt for all things Gentile, the Jews had designated their court as a suitable place to transact business.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:14-17

It is significant to point out that the scene most likely takes place in the *Court of the Gentiles*. It is in this location of the temple that Jesus drives out the marketers and money changers.

Our Lord suddenly appeared in the temple and cleaned house! He was careful not to destroy anyone's property (He did not release the doves, for example); but He made it clear that He was in command. The temple was His Father's house, and He would not have the religious leaders pollute it with their money-making enterprises.

Jesus revealed His zeal for God first of all by *cleansing the temple* (John 2:13-17). The priests had established a lucrative business of exchanging foreign money for Jewish currency, and also selling the animals needed for the sacrifices. No doubt, this "religious market" began as a convenience for the Jews who came long distances to worship in the temple; but in due time the "convenience" became a business, not a ministry. *The tragedy is that this business was carried on in the court of the Gentiles in the temple, the place where the Jews should have been meeting the Gentiles and telling them about the one true God. Any Gentile searching for truth would not likely find it among the religious merchants in the temple* (Wiersbe).

After watching this, the disciples began putting things together. They "remembered that it was written, *"Zeal for your house will consume me."*

How would you have reacted if you had been one of the money changers, or merchants selling animals for sacrifice?

It is obvious that Jesus is aware of what goes on when His people come to the place of worship. Do you think He might sit in judgment over us? (The letters to the seven churches in Rev. 2, 3 would confirm that He is aware and anxious for us to measure up to what He wants us to be.)

In a few minutes the place was cleared. Anger, questions, defiance and hatred must have been boiling in those who evacuated the place. This all prompted the next scene.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:18-22

John records, "... the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?"

This bold attack on the "syndicate" by Jesus, proclaimed himself in the most authentic manner possible, to be the Christ. Alone and single-handed he had taken on the establishment, including the Sanhedrin and the powerful Sadducean party, which both sponsored and doubtless profited from this traffic. He had overthrown an entrenched system of evil that posed as a public benefit. In doing so, he had proclaimed himself the Son of his Father, whose house these profane intruders were defiling.

The Jews demanded a sign. Wasn't the way he had cleansed the temple sign enough, if they had been able to see it? But they wanted more. Later, Paul would underline this demand of the Jews for signs as being characteristic of an unbelieving people (1 Corinthians 1:22).

The Lord promptly gave them a sign, but it was one they neither wanted nor understood. "Destroy this temple," he said, "and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). That cryptic statement on two subsequent occasions was used by the Jews as a basis for accusation and in both cases it was misquoted (Matthew 26:61 and Acts 7:14). The Lord was referring to the fact that his body (the temple, *naos*) would be handed over to them to "destroy" and, when that happened, he would "raise it up." The word he used was *egeiro*, which literally means "to rouse from sleep." It occurs 141 times, of which 70 refer to resurrection.

The Jews failed to discern the Lord's metaphor and took his words at face value. "Forty and six years was this temple in building," they exclaimed in astonishment, "and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (2:20).

How do you think an experience like this would help a lost person come to decide to believe on Jesus? (He was bold, fearless, dealt with religious hucksters, and cleared the way for true worship in spirit and truth to take place without distractions.)

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:23-25

The miracles or signs that Jesus did were designed to produce faith, but apparently there was a danger of a shallow faith that would not hold up when He began to state the demands of discipleship, such as denying yourself and taking up your cross.

They believed because of "the signs" he did. We must remember that John by no means records all the "signs," or miracles, which Jesus performed. *Indeed, the Gospels are sparing in recording miracles. Only thirty-six are recorded altogether (less than one*

a month on average when seen in the light of a three and a half year ministry) along with several summary statements. A faith that rests on miracles is not a very satisfactory or substantial faith. Such a faith always demands more. Entire ministries have been built around the miraculous.

John records *the flaw in the faith* of those who he says believed. The Lord did not "commit" himself to them, however. The word *commit* is the same as *believed* in verse 23, but the tense is changed. To the extent of what they saw, they accepted and believe it. Jesus would not commit to continuing faith in them. Their belief was shallow, passing. Circumstances might change them. His commitment will not change. He did not make that commitment to them because He knew theirs was shallow. They believed in him; he had no continuing faith in them. John gives the reason: "*Because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man*" (2:24b-25). *This attribute of knowing a person's innermost heart, state, and character is an attribute of God (Jeremiah 17:10; 20:12)*. Here the Lord's omniscience is clearly stated. It was universal ("he knew all men") and individual ("he knew what was in man"). He had no need for people to express their thoughts and feelings. He could read them infallibly without that (John Phillips Commentary).

"He knew what was in man" is a statement that is proved several times in John's Gospel. Jesus knew the character of Simon (John 1:42). He knew what Nathanael was like (John 1:46ff), and He told the Samaritan woman "all things" that she had ever done (John 4:29). He knew that the Jewish leaders did not have God's love in their hearts (John 5:42), and that one of His disciples was not truly a believer (John 6:64). He saw the repentance in the heart of the adulteress (John 8:10-11) and the murder in the hearts of His enemies (John 8:40ff). Several times in the Upper Room message, Jesus revealed to His disciples their own inner feelings and questions. (Wiersbe, Bible Exposition Commentary: BE Series).

G. Campbell Morgan, Pastor of Westminster Cathedral in London says, He, John, "declares that this knowledge which Christ had of men was IMMEDIATE, was PROFOUND, and UNIVERSAL." He further states that Jesus knew three things about every man. He is "a spiritual being," a "sinning being," and "salvable by grace."

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In John's epistle he wrote, 1 John 5:11-12: "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." *Do you have assurance that you have received Him and that you have eternal life?*

How uncomfortable are you when you read that Jesus knows you completely and knows what is in you? *Can you think of things He would most likely want changed?*

The manifest presence of God was what made worship special in the Bible. The desecration of the place where that was meant to happen was a grave sin. *Should we pray and prepare very intentionally for God's manifest presence in our worship experience? How might we do this?*

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

2:13. Jesus was faithful to observe all that had been commanded of God to Moses. Each Jewish man was required to attend three annual feasts at the Holy City: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). The feasts mentioned in the Gospel of John are Passover (John 2:13; 6:4; 12:1), Tabernacles (John 7:2), and Dedication (John 10:22). The unnamed feast in John 5:1 may have been Purim (Es. 9:26, 31). This took place at His first Passover Feast in Jerusalem.

2:14. Notice this passage from Malachi 3:1-2. It reads,
Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

2:16. ACCOUNT OF CLEANSING BY MATTHEW AND MARK. Two significant things are picked up in their account.

- Mt. 21:12 "It is written my house shall be called a *HOUSE OF PRAYER*.....

- Mark 11:17 “And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of *prayer FOR ALL NATIONS*, but you have made it a den of robbers.

2:16. RC. Sproul once said, “The Jews hoped that the Messiah would cleanse the temple *of* Gentiles, but Jesus cleansed the temple *for* the Gentiles.”

2:19-20. Herod the Great, an avid builder, had begun renovations of the Jewish temple in 20 B.C. Josephus says that some eighteen thousand workmen were employed in that task. It was not finally finished until A.D. 64. Three years later, A.D. 67, the Jewish war with Rome broke out and the temple's doom was sealed. It went up in flames at the end of that war in A.D. 70 (John Phillips Commentary Series).

COMMENTARIES

Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - New Testament - The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring the Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary.

William Barclay, The Gospel of John, Volume 1

G Campbell Morgan, The Westminster Pulpit, Volume II