

April 17, 2022

“Temple is Cleansed”
Lesson 1 of Unit

John 2:13-22

Intro

Jesus' words and actions were frequently unexpected and strange to the people of His time. His opponents saw Him being degrading to things they considered sacred. His disciples frequently didn't understand what He was explaining to them. Jesus did what people did not expect—and He did *not* do what people *did* expect. Therefore, much of what He did and said appeared mysterious.

On the other side of the cross, however, the mysteries disappear. We can grasp that Jesus' “mysterious” deeds and words were showing who He was and what He came to accomplish. God was at work to bring salvation to humanity.

Today's passage deals with Jesus' cleansing of the temple. This cleansing took place at Passover, the yearly Jewish that celebrates God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Passover was a major event for Israel, with the faithful expected to come to Jerusalem to observe it.

The temple in Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life. By Jesus' time, the temple had been led for several generations of an extended family of priests widely regarded as corrupt. They allowed the outer court to be used as a “marketplace”. Animals were sold there for the sacrifices required by the law. They could only be purchased with one kind of coin, so there were moneychangers in the outer court to provide the exchange for a fee.

The truly faithful among the Jews were waiting for God to fulfill His promise that one of David's “sons” would build a “house” for God and establish a never-ending rule. They looked for the One, the Messiah, who would do this act of spiritual worship and restoration of God's kingdom.

Read John 2:13-22**1. vs. 13: Jesus goes to Jerusalem at Passover**

First, every time Jesus goes to Jerusalem, he confronts the Jewish religious leaders

Three Passovers are mentioned in John's gospel (6:4 and 11:55 also)

This first one sets the stage for the later confrontations that led to His death

Second, Passover reminds the Jews of God's liberating them from slavery in Egypt

A second liberation (see Is. 40:1-5) should also be in their minds at this time

The first part of the 2nd liberation happened when Persia allowed them to return

The complete fulfillment hasn't happened yet...

The question must be floating in people's minds and conversations:

Is Jesus the one who will finally liberate and restore God's people?

2. vs. 14: The temple court setting

Men are selling animals, others are provided a monetary exchange

This is normal—business as usual

3. vs. 15: Jesus' actions

They are swift and decisive

He makes a whip to drive the animals out of the court

He turns over the moneychangers' tables

There are a lot of people in Jerusalem for Passover

These actions would have been seen by many

No doubt some were shocked and surprised

Some also would have been provoked to think about this event

“Why is he doing this? What does this mean?”

4. vs. 16: Jesus helps provide the answer of “Why?”

Jesus says directly to the dove-sellers, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!”

It is pretty bold of Jesus to drive these sellers out of the courtyard

But He also notes that the temple is God's house

Jesus also calls God “my Father”

Israelites usually refer to God as “our Father”

Collectively, not individually

Jesus's use of “my Father” indicates a relationship to God as Son

This gives Him the right and authority to act as He does

Doves are bought by those who are too poor to buy cattle or sheep for sacrifice

A strong possibility is these dove-sellers are taking advantage of the poor

God condemns repeatedly those who abuse the poor

He wants all to be able to come to Him, to worship Him and to receive forgiveness

God would be angry with Anyone who makes that more difficult

5. vs. 17: Jesus' actions remind His disciples of Ps. 69:9:

“Zeal for your house has consumed me.”

Jesus' actions definitely show His zeal for the proper use of God's house

Psalm 69 is a plea to God to protect His faithful ones from enemies

The rest of 69:9 says, “And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.”

Perhaps the disciples see that Jesus' action in defense of God's holy temple will make Him an enemy of the temple leaders, who are known for / suspected of corruption

6. vs. 18: In vs. 16, Jesus cast out the dove-sellers from the temple courtyard

He has taken it upon himself to change the traditional way of doing things

He says that God's house, His Father's house, isn't a place for doing business

The Jewish leaders understand the deeper meaning of what Jesus has done

Only one with great authority can change what happens at the temple

So they ask Him the key question: “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

No doubt they believe that Jesus will be unable to produce a miraculous sign

The question becomes: If Jesus does produce a miracle, would they believe it?

7. vs. 19: As He so frequently does, Jesus gives an answer that is more of a puzzle or riddle
“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

The physical temple was the center of Jewish worship, therefore of the priest’s power
This is what the Jewish leaders who question Jesus are thinking (see vs. 20)

Jesus’ answer is more of the spiritual temple (His body) than the physical one

He sees the profaning of the temple by the practices which have been allowed

Jesus’ purpose in coming was to bring salvation, not to support outdated rituals

The answer He gives them is of a miracle in the future—his resurrection

“I will raise it (the temple) again in three days”

If they remember and reflect on this answer, they might come to faith in Him later

Those who harden their hearts against Him will never understand His meaning

If Jesus fulfills this claim, He will be greater than both Solomon and Herod

8. vs. 20: Jesus’ opponents immediately respond to His claim with skepticism

The temple in Jesus’ day was in the process of being built

It was begun around 19 BC by Herod

The Jews say it has taken 46 years to this point—making it roughly 27 AD

The temple won’t be finished until 64 AD

Both this temple and the one built by Solomon took decades to make

How can Jesus rebuild it in **3 days** after it is destroyed??

This statement is a “hard saying” which these Jews are stumbling over.

9. vs. 21: The answer to the riddle posed in vs. 19 is defined here

“But the temple he had spoken of was his body.”

It is the writer, John, who explains this, not Jesus to his opponents

The temple was a place where God promised to be present with His people

It was a place for the offering of sacrifices in order to receive forgiveness

The first temple was destroyed in 586 BC, due to Israel’s long term disobedience

God promised to restore the temple, to even greater prominence (Zech. 6:12-15)

Jesus is the temple for us

The place where God meets us

The place where our sins receive forgiveness through His sacrifice

10. vs. 22: John now comments about the disciples in view of this “raising of the temple”

They remembered what He said, but didn’t understand it fully until the resurrection

When their understanding grew, it says “they believed the Scripture and the words that

Jesus had spoken.”

Application: In this passage, Jesus challenges both the powerful and the long-help practices of the powerful. He established authority over both people and practices. Whatever people sought from the temple, Jesus delivered completely.

This is true for us today. Where do we look for what we need? Jobs, achievements, family, and friends are all good in the proper context. But on Jesus gives us what we truly need. The leaders of Jesus' time didn't understand that. It took the disciples years to fully understand it. We too, as followers of Jesus, are called to "believe the Scriptures and the words that Jesus had spoken." He gives us all that we need.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for bringing Jesus into our world, to fulfill Your promise to restore the temple to mankind in Your Son. Help us to understand, accept, and follow Your words so that we may be good examples of You to a world that needs Your grace, as we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.