

The Cleansing of the Temple

“God Visits His House” Part II

John 2:13-25

INTRODUCTION:

Last week, we discussed the history of the Temple and got into Temple theology. It is so important to do so because it really helps in understanding so much of the Bible that if not taken this way remains a mystery. Today, we are going to look at when God incarnate visits His house and the reaction that He had. Hopefully, now having a brief understanding of the history of the Jewish Temple will help bring to light the actions of Christ in our text.

JOHN 2:13-25 NLT

¹³ It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵ Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables.

¹⁶ Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, “Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!”

¹⁷ Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: “Passion for God's house will consume me.”

¹⁸ But the Jewish leaders demanded, “What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it.”

¹⁹ “All right,” Jesus replied. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

²⁰ “What!” they exclaimed. “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?” ²¹ But when Jesus said “this temple,” he meant his own body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

²³ Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. ²⁴ But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew all about people. ²⁵ No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person's heart.

I. The Setting

- A. John's Gospel records that the Passover festival was "at hand."
- B. Three festivals required Jewish pilgrimage to the Temple each year.
 1. ***Feast of Unleavened Bread/Passover*** – from the Exodus.
 2. ***Feast of Weeks/Pentecost*** – celebrates the culmination of God's people at Mt. Sinai.
 3. ***Feast of Booths/Tabernacles*** – celebrates the giving of the Law and renewal of the covenant between the Lord and Israel.

The Jewish religious calendar called for the observance of a weekly Sabbath, some less significant monthly festivals, and seven annual festivals. Three important festivals—Passover, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), and Tabernacles brought large numbers of pilgrims to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41). Most Jews refrained from interpreting the biblical commands concerning these festivals (Exod. 23:17; Deut. 16:16) as mandating attendance three times a year. Jews who resided far from Jerusalem contented themselves with attendance once in a lifetime.¹

- C. This festival was to celebrate the Passover regarding the Exodus when those who had put blood on their door post so that the judgment of God would pass over them. This was later the week that Christ died for the sins of humanity.
- D. John's record of the Temple cleansing is at the beginning of his book whereas the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) record before the crucifixion. This still is a mystery in scholarship.

¹ Lea, T. D., & Black, D. A. (2003). [*The New Testament: its background and message*](#) (2nd ed., p. 60). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

II. The Situation

Hendricksen & Kistemaker

Probably in late February or early March of the year 27 A.D. Jesus in the company of his mother, brothers, and disciples went down to Capernaum, the town of John and James. After a brief visit there he went up to Jerusalem, to attend the Passover, a religious and harvest festival, lasting seven days. When, upon entering his Father's house, he observed the terrible traffic that was being conducted in its outer court, the graft connected with the sale of animals and money-exchange, he made a whip and drove out of the Temple all these thieves, together with their animals. He upset the little tables of the money-changers so that the coins were poured out over the floor. To those who sold pigeons he said, "Take these things out! Stop making my Father's house a house of merchandise." His disciples saw in this a fulfillment of Ps. 69:9. The Jews, utterly failing to understand that what Jesus had just done was a fulfillment of Mal. 3:1–3 and therefore a proof of his authority as Messiah, asked that he would vindicate his deed by means of a sign. Jesus then uttered the profound mashal, "Break down this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews, because their minds were darkened by unbelief, expressed amazement at the idea that Jesus would raise up *in just three days* a structure which had already been in building for forty-six years and was not yet finished. However, the Lord actually referred to the sanctuary of his body, of which the earthly Temple was a type. The very fact that Jesus arose *on the third day* opened the minds of the disciples so that they then understood the veiled saying about raising up the sanctuary *in three days*.²

- A. Because of the pilgrimage, there was a marketplace for those who could just buy a sacrifice instead of trying to make the journey with an animal.

A.J. Köstenberger

The sale of sacrificial animals rendered a valuable service to those who traveled to the Passover from afar, enabling them to buy the animals on site rather than having to lead or carry them for long distances... The moneychangers likewise rendered a service: visitors to Jerusalem needed their money exchanged into the local currency because the temple tax, paid by every conscientious Jewish male of twenty years

² Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of the Gospel According to John*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 126–127). Baker Book House.

or more, had to be paid in that currency. The coinage of choice was Tyrian, owing to its high silver content ³

- B. So, the setting would have been a busy, hustling, and bustling type of experience to take care of all the visitors in town for the Passover festival.
- C. When Jesus walks in He sees a market rather than a sacred and holy place where God and mankind can have communion.
- D. What does it mean to commune with God?
- E. Communion means “the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.”
- F. The Temple was built so that God’s people would have a sacred and holy place to commune with their Creator.

III. The Significance

A.J. Köstenberger

The Jerusalem temple was a symbol of Jewish national and religious identity. The original Solomonic temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and later rebuilt by Zerubbabel. It was renovated by Herod just prior to Jesus’ coming. Both OT and Second Temple literature express the expectation of the establishment of a new temple for the messianic age. It is against this backdrop that Jesus’ rather striking action of clearing the temple must be understood.³ What may at first appear to be an impetuous outburst of uncontrolled anger is cast by John as an outflow of genuine spiritual zeal. Thus, Jesus is shown to typify the pronouncement of Ps. 69:9: “Zeal for your house will consume me” (quoted in John 2:17).

In part, Jesus’ actions are directed against the subversion of religious worship into commerce (Mark 11:17 pars.; cf. Jer. 7:9–11). This constitutes an offense to God, who is personally associated with the temple. His holiness and purity cannot tolerate the consistent defilement of “his house”—judgment is inevitable. In prophetic style, the temple clearing therefore represents a symbolic act conveying the inner meaning of Jesus’ crucifixion and bodily resurrection,⁵ by which he becomes the temple’s replacement in the life and worship of his people (2:19–21). Tragically, the very place where God’s glory is to be revealed—the temple—becomes the site where his glory in Jesus is rejected by his people, the Jews (cf. 1:11, 14; 2:11; see Lieu 1999).

Furthermore, in Jesus’ day the temple had become a Jewish “nationalistic stronghold,” a place where Gentile worship was obstructed. This ran counter to the original Solomonic vision (cf. 1 Kings 8:41–43; see Evans 1997: esp. 437–40). According to the prophet Isaiah, God wanted his “house” to “be called a house of prayer for all the nations” (Isa. 56:7), not only Israel. By selling sacrificial animals and setting up their currency exchange in the court of the Gentiles, the outer

³ Köstenberger, A. J. (2004). *John* (p. 105). Baker Academic.

court of the temple, the merchants in effect torpedoed Gentile worship in the only place where it was possible. And that is what flew in the face of God's, and Jesus', desire for the temple to be a place of worship not just for Israel, but for people from all the nations.⁴

1 Kings 8: 41-43

⁴¹ “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake ⁴² (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³ hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.⁵

A. God visited His temple this time in flesh and blood.

B. To go back a bit in our study to chapter 1:14, the word “dwelt” literally means “tabernacled.” In this instance God did not tabernacle in a tent or Temple, but in human flesh.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ⁶

C. The God they met behind the holy curtain is now in flesh and blood among the people running people out with a whip. This would have taken place in the Court of the Gentiles.

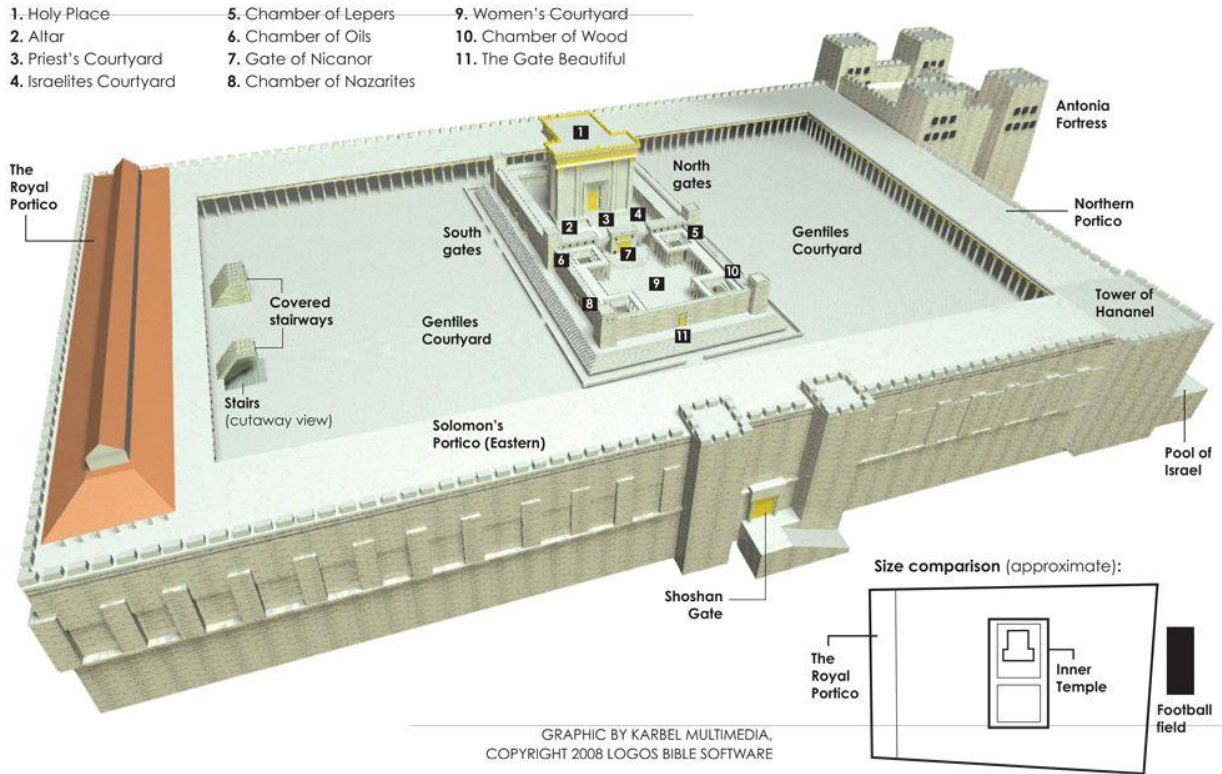
⁴ Köstenberger, A. J. (2004). *John* (pp. 102–103). Baker Academic.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (1 Ki 8:41–43). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Jn 1:14). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

Herod's Temple

King Herod the Great began renovations on the Second Temple approximately 20-19 BC. The entire temple wasn't completed until approximately 62-64 AD, only to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.



D. Christ in his actions brought judgment on the people.

E. It upset Jesus because the activities of the Temple were preventing people from experiencing God in the way the purpose of the Temple was supposed to be which was why “zeal for your house will consume me.” It did consume Jesus!

F. He made a whip to run people out of the Temple and remember its sacredness.

G. He flipped coins. He saw red because the greed of man had infected that which was holy and sacred.

- H. Jesus was questioned as to His authority by the religious ones who were most likely connected with the Sadducees because they were in charge of the Temple.
- I. Jesus gives the insight that the Temple of God, where Heaven and Earth meet, will not in the end be mortar and stone that is God's temple, but in His resurrected body.

IV. The Sentiment

- A. This little verse at the end of the passage almost reads as an afterthought to the event.
- B. Jesus did not entrust Himself to humanity because in the end, He knew why He came because He knew what is inside of each one of us.
- C. Jesus expressed wisdom because He kept a distance even though many believed in Him after they saw the signs He was doing because He knew the sin inside them and He knows the sin inside each one of us.
- D. In the end, his most trusted friend denied that he knew Jesus at His greatest hour of need and Jesus already knew it. One of his own disciples who had followed Him betrayed Him and sold him out to the religious leaders, and Jesus knew that would happen when He called him. Jesus knows us!

CONCLUSION

- If our body is now the Temple of God because we are in Christ Jesus then how might He react when He evaluates the activities of our heart?
- Would He be pleased, or would He have to run the idols, greed, etc. out of your heart because He sees them stealing the opportunity you could have with Him?

- What activities do you give heart space to that would not be pleasing to God?
- Will you repent? Or will Jesus have to run you from His presence because your heart was not with Him?
- Jesus knows what is inside all of us. Come to Him, and He will clean you up.

Psalm 51:1-2

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

In the end, Christ will either clean us up or have to clean us out.

James Stuart

“He was the meekest and lowliest of all the sons of men, yet he spoke of coming on the clouds of heaven with the glory of God. He was so austere that evil spirits and demons cried out in terror at his coming, yet he was so genial and winsome and approachable that the children loved to play with him, and the little ones nestled in his arms. His presence at the innocent gaiety of a village wedding was like the presence of sunshine.

No one was half so compassionate to sinners, yet no one ever spoke such red-hot scorching words about sin. A bruised reed he would not break, his whole life was love, yet on one occasion he demanded of the Pharisees how they ever expected to escape the damnation of Hell. He was a dreamer of dreams and a seer of visions, yet for sheer stark realism, He has all of our stark realists soundly beaten. He was a servant of all, washing the disciple’s feet, yet masterfully He strode into the temple, and the hucksters and moneychangers fell over one another to get away from the mad rush and the fire they saw blazing in His eyes.

He saved others, yet at the last Himself He did not save. There is nothing in history like the union of contrasts which confronts us in the gospels. The mystery of Jesus is the mystery of divine personality.”