

The Book of John - 17

Introduction - We are in John chapter 2 and looking at two events recorded for us. I do not want us to lose sight of the overall thrust of the book of John, which is found in the **20th chapter, verses 30-31**, which state, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.**”*

This gospel record should deepen our faith in the Lord and reinforce what we know about Him. As we go through these chapters, our delight is to know Him and to know His ways. The better I know my Lord, the better I may speak of Him.

In this **chapter**, the **first 12 verses** deal with the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. The **latter 12 verses** deal with the Passover observance in Jerusalem. In **verse 12**, we are told that the Lord, Mary, His brethren, and the disciples went to Capernaum before traveling to Jerusalem.

The Bible says, *“After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.”*

Verse 13 also introduces us to the second event, much like in **verse 1** concerning the Marriage Celebration.

v13 *“And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,”*

1. The Lord's travel to Jerusalem for the Passover.

As we noted in previous lessons, the Jewish Passover feast was instituted by God for the nation of Israel to commemorate the exodus from Egypt. It was celebrated on the anniversary of that event on the **fourteenth day of Nisan**. It was immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted the entire week. Pilgrims would assemble in vast numbers for this great national feast. “In NT times, all Israelite males were expected to appear in Jerusalem **thrice annually**, for the Feasts of Passover, of Weeks or Pentecost, and of Tabernacles.”¹

In the first half of the chapter, we saw how the Lord manifested forth his glory according to **verse 12**, and also, his disciples' faith was increased. Now the Lord would manifest His **authority as the Messiah and as God's only begotten Son zealous of His Father's house**. The Bible gives us the backdrop for what is about to occur as the Lord cleanses the temple in **verse 14**. This same event points us to a prophecy concerning the Lord in the book of Malachi.

Malachi 3:1-3 *“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way*

¹ New Bible Dictionary (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 872.

before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

The Lord's presence in this place made the glory of this latter house exceed the glory of the former, as was prophesied by **Haggai 2:9**

Haggai 2:9, the Bible says, *"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."*

In **Ezra chapter 3**, following the Babylonian captivity as the remnant of God's people came back to Jerusalem, the Word of God tells us that the older men wept as they looked at the foundations of this latter temple when they remembered what Solomon's temple looked like. The presence of the Lord is what made this temple more precious. **The preciousness of this place** is not found in its beautiful furnishings or grand architecture but rather in the fact that we are here to meet with and worship our people.

John 1:11 gave us the sad truth upfront concerning the nation as a whole, *"11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not."*

In one of the most sobering lamentations in all of the Bible, the Lord makes this statement in the temple in **Matthew 23:37-39** *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

How truly sad that statement is. He told them, *"...your house is left desolate..."* I thought about how truly sad that is that the Lord had pronounced 'Ichabod' upon that place and these people. How many of us have also felt the same emptiness out of fellowship with the Lord? May it not be so among God's people here at Sharon Baptist Church and in our lives individually.

2. The Lord's entrance into His Father's House.

We have been shown the first miracle, and now we see Him entering into the temple for the first time, having begun His public ministry. It has been remarked that later on, the Lord would call this place **their house**...but here, in verse 16, the Lord declares that this is His Father's house.

Half Shekel

Tyre, Greek (41-42 AD)

Roman coins produced in Tyre were highly valued due to the purity of their silver. A didrachmon, which was the equivalent of a half-shekel, was required each year from Jewish males for the temple tax in Jerusalem (Matt 17:24-27).



Front



Back

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Notice with me what the Bible says in verse 14, “*And found in the temple **those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:***”

The word translated as ‘temple’ here is the word ἱερόν (heiron). It has to do with the

entire Temple complex. A different term is used in Greek to signify the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. (**ναός -Naos**) “John is describing the entire area **comprising some nineteen acres.**” To give us some perspective on the immensity of the temple complex, which is about **14.5 football fields.** “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 designated their court as a suitable place to transact business.”²

The rationale for this business practice, **on the surface, was expediency.** We must be careful not to adopt the worldly philosophy that “It works; therefore, it must be okay.” Our choices for the Christian life ought to be rooted in God’s Word. Our choices as a local church ought to be rooted in God’s Word. In some cases, the Priests would **disallow certain animals as being defective or blemished,** thus requiring further business for the sellers in the marketplace. In **Mark chapter 11,** the Lord speaks about this using a sharp term to describe what was taking place.

Mark 11:17 “*17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it **a den of thieves.***”

In addition to the animals being sold, many Jews from the diaspora would take this opportunity to pay their **annual half-shekel** that was commanded in **Exodus chapter 30:11-16.** From **Eerdmans Bible Dictionary,** I read these words, “Coins were widely used in the Roman Empire, and many different types, weights, and sizes of coins found their way into ancient Judea. This was especially true of Jerusalem during the Passover, as Jews came to make sacrifices at the temple. In addition, each Jewish male would pay an annual temple tax of a half-shekel. Roman coins contained images of deities and

² Phillips, John *Exploring The Gospel of John*

inscriptions that proclaimed Roman domination, all of which were offensive to the Jews. Therefore, Jewish authorities insisted that the temple tax be paid with coins bearing **more acceptable images; usually**, shekels were minted in Tyre. For a nominal fee, money-changers exchanged other coins for Tyrian shekels.” “The shekel, with the laureate head of Melqarth-Herakles (a pagan deity) on the obverse and an eagle (a graven image) on the reverse, averaged 14.2 gm in weight and contained at least 94 percent silver. These coins were minted in Tyre between 126/125 BC and 19/18 BC. After the Roman government closed the Tyre mint, these coins continued to be minted at an unknown mint, probably in or near Jerusalem, from 18/17 BC until AD 69/70. The rabbis decided that the commandment to give the half-shekel Temple tax, with its proper weight and purity, was more important than the prohibition of who or what image was on the coin.”³

The Tyrian shekels contained a **purier 94% silver**, whereas the Roman coinage contained an **80% purity** which was less. **We can see how all this disgusted the Lord** as He looked upon the degeneration of His house and His people.

Merrill C. Tenney had this to say concerning this incident, “Since the temple was His Father’s house (16), He resented its degradation to the level of a market. He had come to assert the claims of God upon His own nation, and He felt keenly the spiritual indifference that had turned worship into a means of profit. Jesus’ act in cleansing the temple presupposed authority as the representative of God. As He spoke of “my Father,” He voiced His claim to a peculiar relation with God.”

I want you to notice the prudence of the Lord in His actions. He drove the animals out, poured out the coins, and overthrew the tables. But then the Bible tells us, “*He told them that sold doves....*” At every turn, the Lord acted with **great meekness**. The Lord could not bear to see the things of God dishonored and profaned. He was zealous for His Father and His Father’s house.

What lessons can we learn from this passage?

- **God is holy.**
- **How we conduct ourselves when we come together to worship the Lord is important.**
- **We, too, ought to be zealous for the Lord.**
- **Nothing that profanes the temple was to be left.** As we look at the purging in the temple, we are reminded that there is a complete casting out of all that is wrong.

³ Article from the Associates for Biblical Research

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, stated, “In reformation, it is good to make thorough work; he drove them all out;” There is no place for carnality and sin in the life of the believer. As we look toward revival, this should be the attitude of our hearts,

Psalm 139:23-24 “23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”

If we will be found meeting with God and worshipping Him, we **must first purge out the old leaven and then keep the feast**. When you study the great reformation of King Hezekiah in **II Chronicles 30**, this is what took place.

II Chronicles 30:14 “14 And they arose and **took away the altars** that were in Jerusalem, and **all the altars for incense took they away**, and cast them into the brook Kidron.”

King Josiah did the same as well in **II Kings 23:4** “4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to **bring forth out of the temple** of the Lord all the **vessels that were made for Baal**, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and **he burned them** without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.”

- **God does the cleansing work in our lives.**

I John 1:8-9 “8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**”

As Christians, we sin. When we do, as God and our conscience reveal this to us, we must agree with God that our sin is exceedingly sinful and forsake it.

- **The Lord never used force to drive any into the temple but only to drive those out who profaned it. - Matthew Henry**
- **“Reason for conviction should accompany force for correction.” – Matthew Henry**

We are not interested in the religion of “do.” We are interested in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Is the Lord Jesus Christ the goal in our lives? The Lord in our text verbalizes the reason He drove them out.

John 2:16 “16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.”

As we look at this incident, we could also ask, If our Savior came into Sharon Baptist Church, is there anything He would have to remove?

Continuing through this passage, notice with me **verse 18**.

John 2:18 *“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, **What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?**”*

We see the request for a sign. Interestingly, those who demand a sign often do not believe what is before them. Paul spoke concerning this unbelief in I Corinthians chapter 1, where he stated, **I Corinthians 1:22**, *“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.”* The sign **had been given by the Lord’s actions** of cleansing the Temple. We also understand from **verse 23** that there were other miracles that He did. And finally, as we will see here in a moment, the **final sign given would be the Lord’s resurrection**. The Lord’s response is recorded in **verse 19**.

John 2:19 *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”*

During the Lord’s trial before His crucifixion, these are the words that are repeated.

Mark 14:58 *“58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.”*

Matthew 26:61 *“61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.”*

Even then, His words are misconstrued. Their reply betrays that they did not understand.

The Bible says in **verse 20**, *“Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?”*

This spiritual blindness pervaded the people. And so, it is even today for man without Christ that spiritual blindness is the common malady of man. It reminds me of the prophetic utterance of Isaiah speaking about the region of Galilee in **Isaiah 9:2**

“2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

This record shows us that the **conversation goes no further**.

To those **who would receive truth**, the Lord graciously gave truth. But to those **who would not receive truth**, they would be given no more. The Lord, of course, always exercises perfect wisdom when dealing with others.

John gives us insight and understanding concerning the Lord's statement to the Jews, **John 2:21-22** *"21 But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."*

As we think about John's penning of this gospel record after the other gospel records, it is possible that these things were recorded **~50 years after they had taken place**. And yet we see that later on, His disciples would remember and be affected by these words. This is also stated in verse 17, how the disciples remembered the Scriptures as they gazed upon the Lord Jesus Christ's actions. There is no guessing for you and me what the Lord intended by this statement. This direct prophetic statement is just as sure as what we find concerning the Lord's future reign and His coming in **Revelation 13:8** *"8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

Notice with me the last three **verses** in this chapter:

John 2:23-25 *"23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."*

The word translated as 'believe' in **verse 23** indicates a completed action. Their belief rested in the miracles rather than the One who did the miracles. There is coming a time when many will be deceived by signs and lying wonders.

II Thessalonians 2:8-10 *"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."*

When we consider what is spoken about in the later part of Revelation 13 during the tribulation, the miraculous will take the masses. We can rest on the Lord's analysis given to us in verses **24 and 25**, which states,

*"24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because **he knew all men**, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."*

The closing comments aptly sum up the situation. We will see later in **chapter 6** how many of these followers would walk with Him no more because of the hard sayings.