

John 2:13-25 The Glory of the Son in the Cleansing of the Temple

Before moving to our text, let's think of our context in the Book of John. Here, in cp. 2 Jesus has just begun his earthly ministry as the Messiah. He is in the early stages of calling disciples (cp. 1). He is just beginning to proclaim his kingdom, to perform miracles (cp. 2), etc. So, John is building his story. (The more I study John, the more I am amazed at the literary structure of this book!) Last week, we saw Jesus' first miracle of turning the water into wine (the new has come, the old is passing away). And John tells us in v. 11 that his "**disciples believed in him.**" So, in this story today, we are STILL in the beginning stages of Jesus ministry. AND, John is building the structure of his book to show this progression. This "sign" at the temple, is given, so that John's readers might see the events in the life of Jesus as a progression, leading to cross and the resurrection and his glorification . . . to see his glory and believe in him (20:31). Today, we look back on this text. BUT, understanding John's progression helps us make sense of the entire Book and of Scripture as a whole, as the entire Bible is written for the same reason: that we might SEE the glory of the Son. In our text today we need to see the glory of the Son as he cleanses the temple. I have 3 truths. We see the glory of the Son in his 1) Authority, in his 2) Desire (motive), and in his 3) Purpose.

1. We see the glory of the Son in his authority. In our story Jesus establishes his authority as the Lord of the temple and everything it represents. This truth corresponds clearly with John 2. At the wedding in Cana Jesus begins to show and teach that He is the fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant, particularly the ritual of cleansing as he fills the VERY LARGE stone purification jars with water and turns it into wine (the old is passing . . . the new has come). And where do we find Jesus in this story. We find him at another festive event, the greatest of all Jewish festivals, the Passover as Israel remembers their great deliverance from Egypt, in the city of Jerusalem right in the middle of the temple. We have moved from a small town "redneck" wedding in Landis, NC to Washington D.C. on July 4th, viewing fireworks from the West Wing of the White House.

Now, in Jerusalem, in this great Temple, the place where God revealed himself in power and glory under the reign of Solomon . . . later destroyed by the Babylonians and then rebuilt in the days of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest and Zechariah the prophet . . . and had recently been refurbished under King Herod . . . Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, with no reputation, not owning a home, no authority given by the Jewish religious leaders, etc. Yet, he comes to this temple (his temple). He comes at the beginning of his ministry (he comes a 2nd time before his death). He comes to establish his authority!

Brothers and sisters, I think maybe John is thinking of Mal. 3:1 as he prophesies: "**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.**"

So, how does Jesus establish his authority over the temple? Well, he enters the outer court, the place where the Gentiles could enter and join Israel in worship. In Jesus' day the Passover was the greatest of festivals as so many Jews (and Gentiles) from all over the world would come and offer sacrifices and pray and hear sermons and buy food and drink to celebrate the great works of God. And as Jesus entered looked around to find money changers who were exchanging "foreign" currencies (with a fee) into the proper silver coins used for the temple tax, as well as those who were buying and selling the necessary sacrifices (oxen, sheep, pigeons, etc.). And he made a whip and began to turn over their tables . . . he began to drive them out of the temple. And he **"told those who sold the pigeons"** to **"take these things away."** And in v. 16 Jesus says, **"Do not make my Father's house a house of trade!"**

Here, I see at least 3 ways Jesus establishes his authority. 1) He establishes his authority as a prophet. The people, and maybe even the religious leaders did not mind that Jesus did what he did (this is obvious as the Roman authorities are not called in). But, they demanded a sign for his authority to act in such a way. This is the example of the OT as the prophets often gave miraculous signs for their calling. In other words, *"If you come from God as a prophet, as one who can disrupt our system of worship in the temple, you MUST give us a sign."* In other words "Where is your authority?"

2) By calling the temple "my father's house" he gives HIMSELF a place of authority as the Son. Look back at 1:14: **"the only Son from the Father,"** the **"Word that became flesh."** (He did this another time at the age of 12 when his family came to the Passover in Jerusalem. For whatever reason, they started to leave the city and found out they left Jesus. When they went back to find him he says, **"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"** (Luke 2:49)). As the TRUE SON from the Father, Jesus has every right to cleanse his temple.

3) By saying, **"Do not make my father's house a house of trade,"** he establishes himself as the ONE who defines TRUE WORSHIP. Now, I don't think Jesus' point is the ethics of their buying and selling and exchanging money. After all, many people came from all over the world and needed animals to sacrifice and currency to spend. D.A. Carson says this: *"Jesus' complaint is not that they are guilty of sharp business practices and should therefore reform their ethical life, but that they should not be in the temple area at all!"* He was saying, "how dare you turn the temple of the living God into a market!" "This is a place of worship and prayer (for Gentiles in the outer court). This is a place of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration, meditation on God and his Word." Instead, there was the bellowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep, NOISY COMMERCE. But Jesus says, **"NOT IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE."** This act was an act of prophetic symbolism; it was a denunciation of worship that was not PURE. Right from the beginning of his book, John wants his readers (us) to know that Jesus is LORD over his temple and everything that happens inside it.

So, how does this apply to us today?

Application. Jesus has the right to tell us exactly how we must worship in the church. We will see why later in our text. But, as the SON, as the TRUE PROPHET, as the TRUE ISRAEL, as the VERY WORD of God we have no right our authority on our own to regulate our worship except by the Word of God. Today, where is the temple? Are we making pilgrimages to Jerusalem. NO! Jesus tells the woman at the well of Samaria, **“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father”** (John 4:21). Today, because of the person and work of the Messiah, the Son of God, we worship the Father in the CHURCH . . . as people from all over the world who believe in the SON of God; we believe He is the TRUE TEMPLE. As our high priest he laid down his life as a sacrifice. And he rose again; he ascended into the VERY HOLY of HOLIES . . . the temple veil in Jerusalem was torn in two. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, He is building his church. Jesus is the true temple; and in him WE are also called the “temple.”

And why do we gather? Because he tells us to. **“Do not forsake the gathering of God’s people”** (Heb. 10:25). Why do we preach the Word? Because he tells us to (many places). Why do we pray and sing and call elders and deacons the way we do? Because the NT instructs us to do so. Today, the church is the heavenly sanctuary of God on earth.

Another application is this: We must be holy in our conduct! Most of us have just read what Paul says to the Colossians in 3:5-10: **“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”**

Another application: It is of my strong opinion that in our gatherings we do not have the right to venture out beyond our examples in the Bible, particularly the NT; much of what we see in the church is FULL of entertainment, full of tickling the ears, full of smoke screens and concerts; practices that cannot penetrate to the heart of pure worship that Jesus requires. We must continue to keep things simple . . . according to the pure worship of the Son in the Church!

2. We see the glory of the Son in his desire. In this passage we see the motive of the Lord Jesus as to why he came to cleanse the temple, as to WHY he came to do everything he did. Look at v. 17: **“His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”** Now, John the Apostle is looking back; I do not believe Jesus’ disciples fully understood this truth at that time.

(Quick application: God does not always reveal to us a clear understanding of his purpose in our lives. It takes time. And often, we don’t even get an answer for WHY things happen (Job did not). This means we should not murmur and complain in our hearts when we do not understand the deep reasoning of God in how he works in our lives AND in this world. Calvin says this:

“When God holds us in suspense it is our duty to wait for the time of more abundant knowledge, and to restrain the excessive haste which is natural to us; for the reason why God delays the full manifestation of his works is, that he may keep us humble.”) Now back to our truth.

Looking back, John quotes Ps. 69:9 which says, **“For zeal for your house has consumed me . . .”** In this Psalm David is those who oppose him and persecute him for his faith. And in that day, there was no temple, only the tabernacle and the ark, the place of God’s dwelling. So, I believe David speaks of his great desire and love for God, his place of worship (tabernacle), AND all the ways God commands Israel to worship. In other words, David loves God and his name. And he is loves the pure worship of God. In the same kind of way, David pictures the PURE desire of Jesus, the GREATER “son” of “David,” the GREATER “king” of “Israel” to come one day. And we know that David was a great sinner, yet his desire, by faith, was good and right.

So, in Jesus we find the purest of motives with the greatest of love for the Father and the ways of the Father. In John 4:34 Jesus says, **“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”** In John 5:30, Jesus says, **“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”** In John 14:31 Jesus says, **“but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.”**

And, because Jesus loves the Father and came to do the will of ‘the Father He cannot help but desire pure worship in this world. And his motive for coming is described as “zealous.” Our motives often fall way short because of remaining sin, but the Son never falls short in his motive to do the will of God. And where does this “zeal” lead the Lord Jesus? It leads him to the cross! The very thing he hated (the worship in the outer court of the Gentiles), he himself would soon lay down his life to atone for such worship. Only the zeal of the only begotten Son could result in the pure worship we have today in the church! The blood of bulls and goats could never atone for the sins of this world! All the righteous deeds of Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon (every righteous person combined) could never restore the worship of God in this world; ONLY the SON, all stemming from the purest of motives for the glory of his name and pure worship of his name in this world! Here, in John 2, Jesus enters HIS temple with the greatest of zeal. But, this event is merely a picture of the true ACT when Jesus will actually “cleanse” his temple. Brothers and sisters, we are recipients of the new covenant in his blood, by the power of the Holy Spirit. He has written his laws on our hearts. By the Spirit he teaches ALL of us his ways. He is our God! We are his people! All because of the pure motive and work of the Son of God!

Application: Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. John and the disciples remembered David’s words from Ps. 69. So must we read and meditate upon and memorize and pray over and trust the word of God!

3. We see the glory of the Son in his purpose. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus replaces the temple. Look at vv. 18-22: **“So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”**

As we look back upon this exchange with Jesus and the religious leaders (like John) we see the glory of the Son in his death and resurrection. This is why he came! In his death and resurrection Jesus Himself replaces the temple. The temple in Jerusalem was given to Israel (and the world) as a type of the TRUE temple to come. When Jesus drives out the moneychangers and the sellers of animals the leaders come and ask, “What sign do you give us that you have such authority?” Now look down at vv. 24-25 for a moment. **“But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”** Jesus knows the motive of these religious leaders; he knew their hearts So, he speaks to them in parables (as Isaiah prophesied). He says, **“destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”** They immediately think he is speaking of the physical temple. But, he is speaking of his own body.

Today, as those who have the Holy Spirit and look back upon these words by faith, we know what is true. Jesus came to replace the temple and its worship; to fulfill the old covenant under Moses. In other words, all the worship centered around the temple must turn to HIM. The Son came as the true temple! In Phil. 2:6-11 Paul says, **“though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. THEREFORE, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

Today, in the Son (pictured in this early entrance to the temple) we know that there is only one mediator between God and sinful men. We know that true worship centers around the person and work of the Son. And, this is why, in Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus says to us: **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**