

## NO HONOR IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE

John 2: 13-22 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Irreverence in the Father's house is not only gross sin, as a pastor in Clinton, Illinois, way back in 1976, decided to be upbeat in the summer, by using Pepsi, and potato chips for the Lord's Supper. That is unthinkable, and a total lack of honor for our Lord Jesus. Dishonoring Jesus in His house can be as simple as worship without reverence. Edward Seago, an artist, took two unusually wild children to a cathedral in England years ago. Walking into the sanctuary, they instantly became still, quiet, unusually solemn. In their uninstructed hearts, came a reverence that Edward Seago never dreamed was imaginable. If we come to church with an aloof, snobbish, arrogant heart, with an exclusive spirit, with proud coldness, a lack of welcome for strangers, with a desire to make God's house a closed club for good old boys, or if we come looking at others with a fault-finding bitter spirit, our haughtiness, to shut out others from the presence of the Lord is irreverent in His house. Few things bring out the anger of the Lord more than making it difficult or nearly impossible for seekers to come into His sanctuary seeking to know the Lord. That's why Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 3:14-15, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth." The church is more than a building. It's us, God's people. We are God's house. We must conduct ourselves accordingly in sacred reverence. In our Church of the Open Door on Big Creek as a boy, we had a sign in the front of our church, that read. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20)

Irreverence in the Father's house can include coming to church, and upon arriving, going through the motions of worship, but daydreaming we were elsewhere, using God's house to sit and play video games, or using the time wishing the pastor's message were over. Giving our body to God in worship, but not our spirit, is only giving half of ourselves to God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "The devil doesn't mind having half of our heart. He is quite satisfied with that. The devil is like the lying woman in scripture to whom the disputed child did not belong. She didn't mind if the child was cut in half. Worshipping half-heartedly is just as irreverent as buying and selling as thieves in the Father's house.

In 1 Timothy Paul gave Timothy instructions, telling him in 1 Timothy 3:14-15 that "he was writing these things so you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) Here's the bottom line. We cannot live in sin all week long, and then come to church on Sundays as though none of that matters. God said to the people through Jeremiah: "Will you steal and murder and commit adultery and live as you please all week long, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching!" declares the Lord." (Jer. 7: 9-11) The message is not: "Don't come to church. church." God wants you in church. He wants you to come to His house. The solution is not staying away. The solution is, forsake sin and seek God reverently, sacredly, fully.

Changing water into wine was Jesus' first miracle, performed in a semi-private setting at a wedding feast in Galilee. This temple cleansing was His first public display of authority and Messiahship recorded by John. This cleansing contains five separate actions that beg a proper explanation. By examining the reasons these actions were taken, we can come to understand who Jesus really is.

**WHY DID JESUS GO UP TO JERUSALEM AT THIS TIME?** (I.) Notice v. 13, “The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” As you know from John 2: 12, Jesus had gone down to Capernaum, the village of Nahum, the prophet, 16 miles east/northeast of Cana on the west shore of Galilee. Notice Jesus and His mother and His brothers and His disciples stayed there a few days. Each Jewish man was required to attend three annual feasts in the Holy City of Jerusalem 90 miles south the way the crow flies from Capernaum, and by walking, it was between 125-150 miles away. These three feasts were the Feast of Passover—John 2:13, 6:4, 12:1, the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles, and the Feast of Dedication, John 10:22. Jesus attended a unnamed Feast, perhaps the Feast of Purim in John 5: 1.

The city of Jerusalem would have been full. The historian, Josephus estimated that between 2-3 million people came to the Jewish Passover. The time of the year was the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, Abid or Nisan, corresponding to the closing of March and extending into early April to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Going up to Jerusalem meant Jesus went down the western side of the Jordan to Jericho, 680 feet below sea level and then up, up, up to the high place of the Holy City at 2500 feet above sea level. The crowning glory of Passover which lasted 7 days, was the eating of the roasted lamb by a group numerous enough to eat it all, along with the eating of bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. It all was in commemoration of what God had the Israelites do when the Lord smote all the male first-born of Egypt and delivered the Israelites. After killing the lamb for each household, the blood of the lamb was to be smeared on the 2 doorposts and the lintel of the house when the lamb was eaten. When the death angel came to smite the Egyptians, he saw the blood of the lamb smeared over the lintel and doorposts of each Israeli home and passed over them. At each Passover, 10's of thousands of lambs were sacrificed to the Lord. Jesus was there.

**WHY DID JESUS CLEANSE THE TEMPLE AND INDICT THE JEWISH LEADERS?** (II.) Notice verses 14-16. We read, “In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the moneychangers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And He poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. And He told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade/merchandise.” What is this all about? The part of the temple Jesus cleansed was the outer court of the Gentiles; the only part of the temple where Gentiles could enter to pray—yet this was the first part of the temple with entrance on into the court of the Most-High God. This outer court was where animals were brought for sacrifice.

For worshippers coming from a long distance like Jesus and His disciples, it was a convenience to be able to purchase them on site instead of bringing them on the trip. Originally, the Jews had animal merchants setting up their stalls across the Kidron Valley on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Since cattle/oxen, sheep, and doves were used in the sacrificial worship in the temple. But for convenience, the Jewish leaders moved the merchants of animals from the Kidron Valley to the outer court of the Gentiles—the outermost court, Since multiplied thousands came with currencies from Rome, Greece, Egypt, Tyre, and Sidon, the temple tax required of a half shekel could only be given by having a currency exchange. So, along with the outer Temple court becoming a stockyard, there sat the moneychangers doing their thievery, robbing the pilgrims blind, fleecing them and Jesus saw it all. All pilgrims wanted to bring a thank offering, but the lamb must be perfect, flawless, and unblemished. The Temple authorities examined every lamb a pilgrim brought, and their sacrificial victim was most often rejected so they had to

purchase an approved lamb from a temple booth. This was blackmail, highway robbery—the temple was now a robber’s den. Jesus was moved to a holy, righteous anger. He took cords and made a whip. With the majesty of Christ, the Son of God shining from His eyes, Jesus cleaned house in His Father’s house. The Gospel accounts are very similar, but each Gospel adds detail to the picture. Also, John alone tells us that Jesus cleansed the temple as He began His ministry, and also as He closed His ministry. In both cases, Jesus cleared His temple court, overturning the tables of moneychangers, pouring out their money, and commanding the dove and pigeon sellers to take their birds away.

Oh yes, having everything right there was a convenience for worshippers, but worship is not about convenience, but about repentant hearts eager to confess sin and worship the Lord. The Father’s house had come to resemble a sale barn or stockyard much like Steele and Simon in Sioux City, Iowa, where I delivered cattle with my brother-in-law, Paul. When a sanctuary starts to resemble a marketplace, righteous anger is in order. It was true that each worshipper could bring an animal for sacrifice, but just let him try it. It would not be approved by the privileged vendors, filling the money chests of the high priest Annas. The temple was loud and no place for a Gentile to bow to worship. Now, it had become more like an oriental bazaar with peddling, wrangling about prices, clinking of money, and the smell, oh, the smell in God’s house that smelled like an ill-kept barn. Why did Jesus cleanse the temple?

He had to. As He quietly tied a scourge or a whip out of cords, He was making no halfway measures, no gradual or gentle correction would do. Jesus’ temple had become an outrage, and it was flagrant. Jesus’ scourge was no sham. Filled with holy zeal, He overturned their tables filled with money, and told the bird sellers to take their cages and crates away. His house would not be a robber’s den. In Mark 11: 17, Jesus said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves, a robber’s den.” During the whole temple cleansing, Jesus fulfilled scripture, proving His Messiahship and His holy purpose for the temple. We read in Zechariah 14:21, “And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of Hosts on that day.” Look with me at this same Jesus who will soon return. Listen to Malachi 3:1-4. Jesus even today would come into churches across America and clean house. He was saying, “How dare you turn My Father’s house into a market? Instead of solemn dignity, prayer, repentance, brokenness, contrition, holy adoration, and prolonged petitions, there were cows bellowing, sheep bleating, haggling merchants arguing over currency exchanges and the price of temple approved spotless lambs. Jesus’ reason was not against currency exchange or the purchase of spotless lambs, but this trading, shouting, thievery and smell could not be in His holy temple, in the court of the Gentiles—our place.

### **WHY DID JESUS’ DISCIPLES REACT AS THEY DID TO JESUS’ TEMPLE CLEANSING?** (III.)

Notice verse 17. We read, “His disciples remembered that it was written in the Messianic Psalm 69:9, “For zeal for Your house has consumed Me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You (Father) have fallen on Me.” The disciples felt the first twinges of what would finally happen to their Master as they saw the anger and hatred in the eyes and words of the Jewish leaders. They had to be worried that the reproaches that fell on David would now fall on Jesus, and they did. This burning zeal for reverence in the Father’s house is still huge in the heart of our Savior. Even preaching on the subject of honor, respect, and reverence in the Father’s house is not desired today. As the disciples feared Jesus would come under immediate persecution as well as they would as disciples, they yet had no idea what a hornet’s nest was turned over, and how violent

the persecution of Jesus would become, and that it would lead Jesus to the cross to bleed and die as a common criminal to atone for your sins and mine.

The disciples heard Jesus say, “My Father’s house,” calling Himself the Son of God, Messiah. What they saw they would never forget. How remarkable and how effective this sudden act of this unknown Jew was upon these people.

Oh no, they should have admitted their sin and shame, but despite the anger this cleansing brought, it showed the moral authority of God the Son taking on the whole Jewish scandal of using the temple as a house of merchandise. Jesus, in His holy and sinless zeal, made a direct hit on the deep covetous nerve in the Jewish leaders. In His fury of righteous anger, Jesus exposed the guiltiness of the Jews in conducting covetous business in the Father’s house. Jesus already was showing His love for you and me as He called His house (Mark 11:17) a House of Prayer for all nations. What a prophetic word Jesus gave as He wanted the Gentiles coming to the Feast of Passover to long for a relationship with God, not to see the wickedness of God’s chosen people. As these covetous traders scattered, they resembled naughty boys caught stealing watermelons. The disciples feared greatly that for this zealous action there would be an equal and opposite reaction. There would be!

#### **WHY DID THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES DEMAND A SIGN FROM JESUS? (IV.)**

Notice verse 18. “So, the Jews said to Him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” They were asking, “What’s the big deal? How can you defend or vindicate your drastic action? You messed up one whole day at our sale barn here at the temple. Prove you had the right or the authority to act as you have.” Jesus had acted in the full capacity of fulfilling Malachi’s prophecy of the coming Messiah, the purifier of the sons of Levi. It is clear, that when Jesus overturned the moneychangers table and told those selling pigeons to take them away, no one, even the temple police, no one dared to resist Him. Now that was a sufficient sign in itself. It was proof positive that Messiah had entered the temple and purged it as Malachi said He would when He came. Why would these Jewish leaders ask for another sign? It was a wicked question proving they were an evil generation, (Matthew 16: 4) Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” (A type of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection.) It also proved John 1:11.

#### **WHY DID JESUS GIVE THE JEWS THE SIGN THAT HE DID? (V.)** Notice verses

19-22. We read, “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.” Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, Jesus said, “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Since they were asking for a powerful miraculous sign to justify His authority for cleansing the temple, He spoke to them in a way they thought they could call His bluff, since Jesus was speaking of His own body as “destroy this temple.” The Jewish leaders could only focus on the purely material, the natural, the physical, and not see beyond to Jesus speaking about His body as this temple. Jesus was referring to His own body, that body in which the Word became flesh, John 1:14. The Father and the incarnate Son enjoy mutual indwelling. Thus, the human body of Jesus uniquely manifested the Father, and becomes the focal point of God’s manifestation of Himself to man, the living abode

of God on earth. Jesus was referring to His ultimate sacrifice that would take place and that within three days of death and burial, Jesus Christ, the true temple would rise from the dead.

The Jews knew Herod began building this earthly temple in 19-20 B.C., 46 years earlier, and it still wasn't completed until 64 A.D, which was over 30 years after Jesus was crucified. Jesus disciples as well as the Jewish leaders failed to see "this temple" as the earthly building being a type of His body they would destroy on the cross and powerfully raise from the dead in 3 days. When these angry Jews would cry for Jesus to be crucified, the irony of it all was that putting Jesus to death was to have Him offer up the one and only sacrifice needed for sin and for uncleanness.

Thus, as Jesus died, and the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom, the temple was doomed as the place for the offering up of sacrifices. Jesus was not talking about the temple of stones and mortar in which they stood, but about His body they would scourge and crucify. What was the sign? The sign Jesus spoke of was His own resurrected body. In a veiled way, Jesus implied both the earthly temple they stood in, would be destroyed, as it was in 70 AD, and that temple is not rebuilt today. The 3 days is one of the greatest prophecies of Jesus' resurrection which the disciples finally remembered after Jesus rose from the dead, and from that sign and evidence of Jesus' resurrection, they did believe in the power of the cross, and the power in "this temple" of Jesus as our only needed sacrifice for sin.

The disciples believed in this sign. They did not argue about it, but they mightily declared and preached the risen Christ. We must do the same—as this one sign is proof of the power of the cross and the power of the forgiveness of the slain Lamb. Listen to Paul preach in Romans 1:1-4. The resurrection of Jesus is all the evidence we need, and all the disciples needed. At Jesus' resurrection, "this temple" made sense and they believed the Scripture—what scripture, and the word Jesus spoke. Psalm 16:10 states, "For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol/Hades or let Your holy One see corruption." Glory! At Pentecost-Acts 2:31-32. At Antioch-Acts 13:32-35. The cleansing from "This temple" is ours, proved by the resurrection. Hallelujah!!!!