

Teaching Points

This is one of two recorded incidents when Jesus cleansed the temple. John tells us of this first cleansing that seems to have taken place early in Christ's public ministry. The second took place only days before His crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46). Both events are very similar.

Jesus drove out men who had corrupted temple worship.

Notice what the men whom Christ drove out of the temple were doing – they were selling animals (oxen, sheep, doves) and conducting money exchange transactions.

The animals were being sold (probably at inflated prices) to provide worshipers with the appropriate legal sacrifices. The law also required a tribute to support the service of the sanctuary in the form of a half-shekel offering. Since Jerusalem was under Roman control at the time, the Jews had to exchange their Roman currency for the necessary Hebrew shekel. These money-changers charged a fee for conducting the transaction.

Discussion Question: If the animals and Hebrew currency were necessary for temple worship, then why was Jesus so vehemently opposed to what was going on in these transactions?

Thoughts: *The sinfulness of their actions can be seen in the way they were misusing the temple and profiting themselves. They weren't promoting the worship of God - they were benefiting themselves at the expense of those who came to worship. This was about making money - not honoring God.*

Jesus defends the true nature of temple worship.

He identifies the temple as His Father's house. God said this was the place where He would meet with His people and manifest His glory in unique ways. The temple was supposed to be a place where sacrifices and offerings were presented as part of the law of Moses. In this first cleansing Jesus sets the stage for His public ministry. He came to confront sin and restore God's people to true righteousness and worship.

Discussion Question: Here is Jesus cracking a whip and flipping over tables. Do you think this is consistent with how modern Americans think of Him?

Thoughts: *We have to remember that Jesus was not feminine in His demeanor nor passive in His ministry. The disciples see His passion in this moment and connect His behavior with the zeal of the Lord mentioned in Psalm 69:9. This is the perfect picture of love in action. He loved the truth and He loved His Father's house. His love was not merely a sentimental feeling - it was a deep conviction that led Him to take action.*

The Jews respond to the temple cleansing by asking Jesus for a sign. They want Him to produce some sort of evidence that He has the authority to do these things. His reply is both prophetic and instructive.

He tells them that the temple will be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. He even says that He will be the one to raise it up after it's destroyed! The Jews don't understand the prophetic nature of these words. Jesus was proclaiming to them that His death and resurrection would evidence the validity of His claims. We said last time that John's gospel records multiple signs that Jesus performed. Here we see that the resurrection would be the ultimate sign and proof of His ministry.

Notice also that Jesus says, "***I will raise it up...***" He predicted that His resurrection would be according to His own indestructible power. Jesus rising again from the dead by His own power would be even more amazing than rebuilding the physical temple in three days.

Discussion Question: How important is the resurrection of Christ to our faith? And why does Jesus talk about it so early on in His ministry?

Thoughts: *The resurrection is absolutely essential to our hope as Christians. 1 Corinthians 15 expounds on this. If Christ didn't rise again from the dead then we would still be dead in our sins. His resurrection is God's declaration that the sin debt had been paid in full. Christ drank the full cup of God's judgment and His resurrection shows us that the Father's wrath was satisfied.*

Lastly, at the close of chapter 2, we see the theme of belief again. Verse 23 says that many who saw His signs "believed" in Him. It seems that their belief in Him was superficial since verse 24 highlights how Jesus did not "believe" in them. There were many who saw His signs, heard His teaching, and followed His ministry who remained in unbelief. When we get to chapter 6 we'll see a whole crowd that sought Jesus because they were interested in His works even though they didn't embrace His message. Here, as in John 6, **Jesus knows the heart of man.**

This is a good reminder that real faith is something that produces fruit. Belief is not merely a momentary decision. Rather, saving faith is a whole-hearted commitment to Christ; one that shows itself over the course of time. This crowd may be ready to follow Jesus today...but time will tell whether this commitment is sincere or not.

Prayer Focus

Let's pray for purity in our hearts and in our church. Jesus cleansed the temple as a precursor to His public ministry. May He cleanse our hearts and fellowship from anything that doesn't honor God.

Praise God for Christ's resurrection. He did exactly what He said. He died for sinners and rose again for our eternal benefit.