



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 2:12-25: The Lord's First Cleansing of the Temple

“After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers and His disciples, and they did not stay many days. 13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!” 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten^[a] Me up.”^[b]

18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?”

19 Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

20 Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them, and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”

Background Notes

In verse 12 we read that after the wedding in Cana, Jesus, along with His family and His disciples, went down to Capernaum -- that is, they went down from the area of Nazareth, which is located above sea level on a high hillside, down to Capernaum, which is located on the Sea of Galilee, and is below sea level.

Soon afterwards, the Lord left Capernaum and went up to Jerusalem for the Passover, in accordance with the Old Testament Law. According to the Mosaic Law, all Jewish males were to go up to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate certain Old Testament feasts, and the Passover was one of these festivals.

When the Lord arrived at the Temple in Jerusalem, He found that the Temple courts had been commercialized: merchants were selling animals for sacrifice and money changers were exchanging foreign currency for Hebrew coins. Jewish people came up to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire at the time of the Passover, and they would have to exchange their foreign currency for the Hebrew coinage to pay the temple tax. Foreign coins were engraved with the image of Caesar. Jews were forbidden to make graven images, so Hebrew coinage had no images on it. All of these commercial activities were all

right --in their proper place. The problem was, these activities were not to take place in the Lord's House. These merchants had made the Temple courts a place for commerce. The attitude of those money changers was not worship -- it was profits! There were big profits to be made on the exchange of the money, and the selling of the sacrifices.

As a result, the Lord "cleansed" the Temple. *"When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables"(v15).*

A couple of points here about the cleansing of the Temple. This was the **first** cleansing -- the Lord cleansed the Temple on two separate occasions. One cleansing took place at the beginning of the Lord's ministry, and one at the close of the Lord's ministry. This is not the cleansing that is recorded in Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19 -- the occasion recorded there was the second cleansing. John 2 records the first cleansing, at the beginning of the Lord's ministry.

A second point: the whip that the Lord made was not a Roman whip for scourging people. Rather, it was a small lash made with strings or cords. Notice that the text does not say that the Lord hit any people. Most likely this whip was made for driving the animals out of the Temple premises.

A third point: the Lord's righteous anger displayed here was predicted in the Old Testament. Look at verse 17: *"Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."* This is a quote from Psalm 69 - one of the prophetic Messianic Psalms.

When the Jews asked for a sign in verse 18, *"What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"* the Lord answered, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"(v19).* Now we know from verse 21 that the Lord was referring to the Temple of His Body, but the Jews thought the Lord was referring to the Temple structure itself, "Herod's Temple," or the "Second Temple."

"Herod's Temple" (the Temple at the time of Christ) was an expansion of the Old Testament Temple known as "Zerubbabel's Temple." Zerubbabel's Temple was a small Temple that was built when the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon. It was built on the site of King Solomon's glorious Temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Herod's expansion was begun in about 20BC, and it had already been 46 years in construction (v20). This was the Temple that was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. The ruins of the foundational platform for Herod's Temple, that was here when our Lord was on earth, can still be seen today. In fact, the Western Wall (sometimes called the "Wailing Wall"), where devout Jews worship today, is the western side of that foundational Temple platform.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. There is a place for righteous anger.

Some folks don't like to read about the cleansing of the Temple because they feel it takes away from their concept of a meek and mild Jesus! Well, the Lord was meek, and He was gentle, but He was also angry on occasion! The Lord was angry with the Pharisees

because of their legalistic hypocrisy, and the Lord was angry that the House of the Lord had become a place for commerce.

By the way, in a coming day the wrath (very strong anger) of God will come upon unbelievers. We read in Revelation 6:16 that unbelievers of that day will call to the mountains and rocks, *"Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"* "The Lamb" in this verse is the Lord Jesus! Anger is not a characteristic of lambs, but that coming day will see "the wrath of the Lamb." Think of it - the Lamb of God being angry! This anger is not inconsistent with His love and mercy, because there is a proper place for righteous anger.

In Ephesians 4:26 we read, *"Be angry, and do not sin."* There is a place for righteous anger! To hear the Lord's name blasphemed and His character maligned should cause anger within our souls. To see sin swept under the rug, or to learn about people being treated unjustly should cause us to be angry. It is not wrong to be angry about that kind of activity -- that is **righteous anger**.

Notice that Ephesians 4:26 adds *"...and do not sin."* You can be angry, but let your anger lead you to sin. Even righteous anger, if not dealt with properly, can lead to unrighteous results.

There is a place for righteous anger.

2. There is a difference between belief and commitment.

Look at verses 23-25 once again: *"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."*

What was going on here? If they believed in Jesus, why weren't they saved? The reason is that there is a difference between **belief** and **commitment**. The Lord could read their hearts. He knew theirs was just a "profession" of faith. He knew that this was just "head belief," not "heart commitment."

The Lord knows what is in our hearts at this very moment. He knows all about the sinful heart of mankind (v25) and He knows the heart of every person (v24). He knows what is in your heart right now.

About one hundred years ago, there was a French tight-rope walker named Charles Blondin. Blondin had a cable strung across Niagara Falls, and he actually walked across Niagara Falls on this cable. He carried a person across and back, and other such stunts. In one of the stunts, he wheeled a wheelbarrow across the cable, then a person got into the wheelbarrow and Blondin wheeled the person back and forth in the wheelbarrow. The crowds were cheering! Then, as the story goes, Blondin turned to a man in the crowd and said, "Do you think that I could do that again?" The man said, "Yes, certainly." Then Blondin said, "Get in!" The man would not get in! The line was drawn between **belief** and **commitment**.

Where are you today? Do you believe in Jesus with head knowledge only -- believing just the facts about Jesus, a "profession" of faith, attending church and so forth?

Or is there true **commitment** to Jesus Christ, a commitment that makes a difference in the way you live your life? There is a difference between belief and commitment.

Practical Applications

1. Don't make God's House a "place of merchandise."

"And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (v16). A number of people are committing that same sin today -- even Christians. Religion is "big bucks" for some people, and sadly, many people are in it for the money. Certain TV evangelists are example of this.

Don't make "God's House" a place of commerce! It is possible for dedicated Christians to fall prey to this type of problem. It's easy to get involved in get-rich-quick schemes in reference to the church, or in reference to Christian ministry. We **all** have to be careful here.

Not long ago someone tried to get me hooked on some kind of "900" phone number moneymaking deal for Growing Christians Ministries. "Hey, why don't you start a phone ministry like Bible Trivia, or Knowledge of the Bible? You could even throw in the gospel! Every time people call your 900 number, your ministry makes money! You can have a self-supporting ministry using a 900 number!"

Whenever you hear about get-rich-quick schemes "for the ministry," Beware! What is the bottom line? The bottom line usually involves "**me**" getting rich off the ministry somehow, right? It is possible for Christians to fall prey for this kind of thing -- it happens all the time. We are all vulnerable, so be careful. Don't make God's House a "place of merchandise."

2. Have you cleansed God's Temple?

As the Lord cleansed the Temple, so should we. There is a model here for us to follow. What is God's Temple today? In 1 Corinthians 3:16 we read, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."* In this verse we learn that the **Church** is God's temple today.

In addition, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, we learn that the **believer's body** is God's temple today. Both the Church and the believer's body are temples -- dwelling places of the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore they must be kept holy. In many churches today, discipline for sin is not being carried out, and God's temple is not cleansed. Cleansing the temple is no more pleasant today than it was in the Lord's Day. We need to respect our elders when they feel, before the Lord, that they have to "cleansing the temple."

What about the temple of your body? Are you a Christian? 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"* Have you cleansed God's temple? Is there something in your life that needs to be cleansed? We all need to clean out the junk in our lives! Are there some secret sins that need to be dealt with? Have you cleansed God's temple?

You will never be a truly happy Christian if you have an unclean temple. Let's close with that question as a challenge! Have you cleansed God's temple?