

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #12

John 2:12-22

Many people want a gentle Jesus, but most do not want an angry Jesus. However, if you want a relationship with Jesus Christ, you must take Him for who He reveals Himself to be not for who you want Him to be.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He was not a political revolutionary whose goal in life was to overthrow government. You did not find Him in Rome, trying to lead some moral majority revolt against political powers. But He was One who was repulsed by man-made religion that was not based on the written Word of God and He did revolt against it, and in this passage He “declares war” against hypocritical religion.

Everything that shows up in this Gospel of John is designed to generate faith in Jesus Christ. It is so easy to have a perspective of Jesus Christ that is good when He does something positive like be a good guy at a wedding who changes water into wine. But when He goes to Jerusalem and starts disrupting things in the temple it is a different story. Everything John writes is designed to show us how he came to believe in Christ and have a special relationship with Christ and to establish that in our lives as well. One of the things that did that for John was what happened right here. This book is designed to generate faith and to generate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and this part of the story of the life of Christ certainly does that. The main point is this:

CHRIST'S MOVEMENTS AND ACTIONS IN THE EARLY DAYS OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY ABSOLUTELY PROVES HE IS GOD WITH FULL DIVINE AUTHORITY AND THAT PROVES WE NEED TO PLACE OUR FAITH IN HIM AND IN GOD'S WRITTEN WORD.

We cannot just have our own emotional view of Jesus Christ, we must believe in Him in the way He reveals Himself to be. As we come to this portion of Scripture we come to two different trips Christ makes in the early days of His ministry:

TRIP #1 – Jesus Christ travels from Cana to Capernaum. 2:12

After the wedding in Cana, Jesus went to Capernaum. Capernaum was an unwallled, small, but prosperous coastal fishing city located on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, some 15 or 16 miles northeast of Cana. **Capernaum will actually become Christ's headquarters for the next three years (Matthew 4:13).** Capernaum was the closest thing Jesus Christ had to being a hometown. In fact, Dr. H. A. Ironside said he could not even begin to describe the emotion he had when he stood in the ruins of the synagogue of Capernaum and realized that this was the very place Jesus lived and taught (*John*, p. 82). Let me suggest four reasons why this becomes His headquarters:

- 1) His actual hometown of Nazareth tried to kill Him, so He needed another place to reside (Luke 4:16, 29). Nazareth to Cana is about 10 miles and Cana to Capernaum is 15-16 miles.

2) Capernaum was a city that initially accepted Him and His message and ministry. Christ does more amazing things and miracles in Capernaum than any other city - Matt.13:57-58.

1. Caused a great catch of fish for His disciples. Luke 5:1-11
2. Healed a demon possessed man. Mark 1:21-28
3. Preached His Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5-7
4. Healed Peter's mother -in-law. Matthew 8:14-15
5. Healed the centurion's servant . Matthew 8:5-13
6. Healed the paralyzed man. Mark 2:1-12
7. Healed the woman with an issue of blood . Mark 5:25-34
8. Raised Jairus' daughter . Luke 8:40-56
9. Healed two blind men. Mathew 9:27-31
10. Healed a man who could not speak because of a demon. Matthew 9:32-34
11. Healed a man with a withered hand . Matthew 12:9-13
12. Healed a blind man and man who could not speak because of a demon . Matt.12:22-37
13. Miraculously found money for taxes in a fish's mouth . Matthew 17:24-27
14. Preached His most important "Bread of Life" message . John 6:22-59

Christ did so many powerful things connected to this city that He pronounced a special condemnatory judgment of hell on all in this city who refused to believe in Him - Mark 11:20, 23-24.

3) Capernaum was a crucial junction for travel during Christ's day. It was a main travel artery which contained a main travel road, making this a great spot for Christ's ministry to affect all kinds of people. Jesus did not crawl back into jungles to reach a handful of natives, He went to high populated areas.

4) Capernaum was a city that was not thoroughly Jewish . There were Gentiles who lived in Capernaum, thus illustrating that Christ's ministry was going to reach out to more than just Jewish people.

These are four possible reasons Christ made Capernaum, His central place of operations.

Now notice the list of people who went with Christ to Capernaum: **1)** His mother - Mary; **2)** His brothers - James, Joseph, Simon, Judas (Matt. 13:55); **3)** His disciples - Andrew, Simon, John, James, Philip & Nathanael (John 2:12). Keep in mind the good folks of Nazareth, His hometown, had just tried to kill Jesus, so when He left town, His mother and brothers and disciples went with Him. We may also notice from this verse that there is no mention of Joseph, Jesus' supposed father, nor is there any mention of Jesus' sisters going with Him to Capernaum (Matt. 13:55-56). Most scholars believe that Joseph was already dead and that His sisters were married and were living with their husbands in Nazareth (Matt. 13:56).

Many of these people had lived their entire lives in Nazareth, but it was time to get out. You may live and worship in one spot for many many years or you may go to a church for many many years. If the place you are in does not give you a true understanding of the Word of God and promote believing the truth about Jesus Christ, it is time for you to move out to someplace else. If true ministry is not happening, it is time to move down the road and go somewhere else.

These family members sensed the power of God was with Jesus Christ and they made the move to follow Him. It was actually kind of fun to follow Jesus Christ when He was turning water into wine, but the fun of this miracle wouldn't last long.

TRIP #2 – Jesus travels from Capernaum to Jerusalem . 2:13-22

The Gospel of John records three Passover festivals, which become a basis for tracking Christ's three years of ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). The Passover, which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt, was a week long festival, which every Jewish male was expected to attend. The Passover occurred on one day, and the feast of unleavened bread took place the rest of the week. Jerusalem was and still is the religious and political capital of Israel and it is here where the Messiah was expected to appear.

From Capernaum Christ went 60 or 70 miles south, "up" to Jerusalem (v. 13). This means He went "up" in elevation, not direction. The reason He decided to go to Jerusalem is because of what John says was the "Passover of the Jews." That is interesting because John does not call it the "Passover of the LORD" (Exodus 12:27). This probably is due to a couple of reasons: **1)** By the time Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the Passover was simply a Jewish, religious ritual. The true spiritual emphasis had been lost. People were going through religious motions, but did not have a true relationship with God. They were not interested in true worship or reverence or understanding God's Word; **2)** John is writing this gospel for the Church Age and day observances were no longer mandated because they had been nailed to Christ's cross so when John writes, he no longer considers the Passover to be mandated by God, it was a Jewish ritual.

There are four main responses:

Response #1 - The response of Jesus . 2:14-16

For Jesus, the temple is not a place of spiritual comfort but a place of conflict. Leaders at the temple wanted to kill Him (8:59) and hated His teaching (7:28-30; 8:20). Christ's disciples would learn an important lesson - their relationship with Christ often means they are in war with religion.

Now we may observe the following three facts about what happened on this trip to Jerusalem:

(Fact #1) - What Jesus found . 2:14

The temple in Jesus' day was big and impressive. When Jesus got to Jerusalem and went to the temple, He found there were men who were selling oxen, sheep and doves to people and the temple was filled with money changers. The Jews used their own money that had no pictures of any foreign deity or political leader and for a fee you could purchase their money to put in the offering. When Christ got to His temple, **He did not find people praying . He did not find people studying the Word of God.** He found a religious marketing business center. His temple had become a place for lucrative business where people exchanged money and bought animals.

God had instructed the people to bring the best sacrifice of their own flocks (Deut. 12:5-7). The temple priests had developed their own marketing strategy to make things convenient for people and profitable for them.

This same stuff is going on today in churches all over the world. The philosophy is “let’s make worship convenient, not reverent.” Let’s figure out ways to interest people, not worship God. Let’s figure out ways to raise funds, and turn the sacred into the secular. Churches are now putting in athletic centers, latté machines, and feature entertainment rather than reverent worship and serious study of God’s Word. The cry of today is let’s make worship convenient, not sacrificial, not reverential and not worshipful. Jesus is as fed up today as He was the day He went into Jerusalem.

When we first moved to Pocatello, back in the early 90s, a woman came and said what we need is to have courses on business management and financial investment at church. I said you will never see that in this church, while I’m here because what God wants is prayer and careful study of the Word of God. That woman’s philosophy would have fit in quite well in Jerusalem. Not long after coming to Kalamazoo a woman contacted me to ask if we would put a drum set on our stage so her children would be interested in church. My response to her was NEVER. She would have fit in well with the religious thinking in Jerusalem.

(Fact #2) - What Jesus did. 2:15

I want you to imagine this scene because it would be like one going to Washington, D.C. and into Congress and driving out all of the people because they have made a mockery of God’s Word. **Jesus was not just a man of Divine thought and word, but also of Divine action.**

Jesus made a scourge type of whip from cords. Probably those cords of leather or rope were left over from some of the animals that had been tied up and bought. After He made this scourge, He drove all of the people out of the temple along with their animals. He poured out their money and turned over their tables. He was mad. He is not out of control. This is not uncontrolled rage, this is pure righteous indignation. He is in total and perfect control. **So many people want some false god of love who is incapable of anger, but this is not the God of the Bible.** In fact, the Word of God is not described as being a “love book” but one that is “sharper than a two-edged sword.”

There are some who question the fact that John puts this event near the beginning of Christ’s ministry and the other gospel writers put it near the end of His ministry. The simple solution to this is apparently there are two times when Christ does this in His life: 1) Near the beginning of His ministry (John 2:15) and 2) Near the end of His ministry (Matthew 21:12-13).

The sad fact is, for the most part, Jesus did not make a dent by this action, but it was the right action. Now let’s face it, from a purely human perspective, Jesus Christ was in good shape, but He was only One man. From a pure physical standpoint, He was outnumbered and the other men could have rushed Him and stopped Him. But they sensed there was a unique power that He had and they didn’t dare try. I believe it was a unique power of God.

In the O.T., the prophet Malachi predicted that when the Lord came to His temple, He would purge it (Malachi 3:1-3). This has reference both to His first and second coming. There is no doubt that these men sensed He was right in doing this. He was God. He was fed up because:

- 1) Worship had no reverence;
- 2) Sacrifice had no meaning;
- 3) Prayer had no priority;
- 4) Study had no significance.

These men had cheapened the temple and changed the emphasis and deep in their hearts they knew they were wrong.

I believe it is true today. There are churches that put pop machines in auditoriums. There are churches that take out the pulpit and bring in rock bands and put on plays. There are churches that honor godless, immoral people and I believe deep in the hearts of God's people there is the knowledge, this is wrong. This is not right. They probably won't repent, but they know it is wrong. This makes Jesus Christ mad. Holiness is being replaced by sentiment. No longer do most confront sin and deal with sin, we excuse it, we cover it with a mumbo jumbo talk of sickness and pills. God is a God of love, but He is also a God of wrath and this wrath needs to be preached (Revelation 6:15-17).

(Fact #3) - What Jesus said. 2:16

Christ said, get this business out of here. He is mad about the fact that all these things are happening in God's temple. If any person is to be right with God, there are some things one must get out of their lives. God's place of worship should not be turned into a place of idolatry or immorality. When Jesus comes back again, He will find many churches a disgrace. They rent out their building to anybody to make a buck. There is nothing sacred about much of anything and Christ will be mad when He returns for He will come back as a roaring Lion.

Response #2 - The response of Jesus' disciples. 2:17

To this point, it had been somewhat fun to be Christ's disciple. At the wedding at Cana, Jesus turned water into wine, but now in Jerusalem the trouble starts because Jesus blows His stack. If you follow Jesus Christ, you are in for a wild, roller-coaster of a ride that will feature moments of peace and passion, moments of laughter and anger, moments of harmony and hostility.

When the disciples of Christ saw Him explode, they all remembered Psalm 69:9 which predicts that the Messiah would have a passion for God's work and God's temple. This particular Psalm is quoted some 17 times in the N.T. Jesus Christ had a pure zeal for the pure work of God and when His disciples saw Him act this way, they knew it was very Biblical. This verse convicted their minds and hearts that He was doing the right thing. Now we must believe that it was God's Spirit that brought this verse to their minds, for it is not a popular verse like Psalm 23. God's Spirit was bringing about a conviction among His people that this was the will of God and it did conform to the Word of God.

There is a place for getting mad and chasing some people out of the church. God's place of worship is not to be a place of total toleration. Sometimes it is to be a place of elimination. When this happens, God's people will recognize the action is proper and does conform to the Word of God.

Response #3 - The response of the religious Jews. 2:18-22

The Jews want Him to give some sign that He has a right to do these things. The Jews always want some miraculous sign (I Corinthians 1:22). What they are saying is, prove that you are authorized by God to do this. They wanted some miracle, which Christ does not do. They are not going to get Christ to do anything because they are not right with Him. God is not in the business of conforming His plans to our whims. This is one reason why some people become so angry with God. He does not jump and immediately do what sinful humans want Him to do. People who are right with God don't just jump and immediately respond to the whims of those not right with God.

Response #4 - The response of Jesus. 2:19

Jesus says - destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days. No one had even a clue as to what Jesus was talking about here. Now, according to Josephus, the temple in Jerusalem had begun reconstruction by order of Herod in 20-19 B.C. A total of 18,000 men worked full time on this project (Gary Burge, *John*, p. 96). Thus 46 years would make the time A.D. 27 or 28, when this happened. Again we see the precision of John. Some phase of temple reconstruction had just recently been completed and it had taken 46 years, so when Christ talked about rebuilding a torn-down temple in three days, it baffled them. Christ could care less if they were baffled. In fact, He didn't even tell them He was speaking of His body. He does not beg them to accept Him. He does not jump according to their whims. He goes about His business, doing the will of God.

Eventually, when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered this and that caused them to really develop faith in the written Word and in the words spoken by Jesus Christ (v. 22).

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1. If you are not in a place that seriously believes the Word of God, get out of there.**
- 2. If you are not in a church that is given to prayer and ministry of the Word of God, get out of there.**
- 3. There is a place for getting angry when God's place of worship is being lowered and lessened.**
- 4. The more you have known and experienced from God the more accountable you are.**
- 5. To be right with God sometimes means getting rid of certain things.**

What is the temple today in the Church Age? According to I Corinthians 3:16, we are the temple of God. Is God's temple in us a den of thieves? Is it a place of immoral or idolatrous thought or action? Or is it a temple of reverent worship?