

Jesus Purges the Temple (John 2:13-25)

Jesus made a bold statement about His messianic and divine authority by purging the Temple in Jerusalem. He declared Himself to be the unique Son of the Father. He displayed His zeal as God's Messiah. He predicted His own resurrection. In unmistakable terms Jesus made His presence known to the religious leaders. This event may have been Jesus' first public act in the Jerusalem as a part of His earthly ministry. The Synoptic Gospels record a purging of the Temple at the end of Jesus' ministry, but John's record seems to record a similar but distinct event. By purging the Temple of the merchants and moneychangers, Jesus prioritized worship over worldliness, piety over profit, God over greed. In a similar way, Jesus wants to purge our hearts of sin, restoring us to a relationship with God. His example teaches us that our zeal for revering God should supersede all other priorities in life.

Jesus displayed His divine zeal by purging the Temple (2:13-17).

Jesus' act of purging the Temple was motivated by His divine zeal. Jesus was zealous for the proper reverence toward His Father and toward the Temple as the focal point of God's presence.

When Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover He found the Temple courts filled with merchants (2:13-14).

The feast of Passover was approaching, a time when all devout Jews made their way to Jerusalem. Jesus had accompanied His parents on such journeys as a child. Now, having inaugurated His public ministry at the Jordan River and then in Galilee, Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. There, in the Temple courts (the Greek term used in verses 14 and 15 refers to the broader Temple compound) Jesus witnessed what was to Him an appalling scene. People were selling cattle, sheep, and doves. Others were exchanging money. The Temple courts had become a market place. The animals were, of course, sold for sacrificial purposes. The money changers made it convenient for those traveling from a distance to exchange their currency for that which was acceptable for paying the Temple tax. In both cases these sales and exchanges brought profit to the merchants and, likely, a healthy return for the priests at the Temple. The whole scene screamed irreverence toward God.

Jesus purged the Temple courts, defending the Temple as His Father's house (2:15-16).

Observing this sacrilege, Jesus made a whip out of some of the ropes that may have been used to tether the cattle and drove the animals out of the Temple courts. He also sent flying the coins of the money changers, overturning their tables. He ordered those who were selling doves to take their merchandise away. Jesus then demanded, “Do not make my Father’s house into a market house.” The Greek word for “market” gives us our word “emporium.” The fact that Jesus referred to the Temple as His Father’s house indicates that Jesus claimed to have a unique relationship with God the Father. Jesus is God the Son, the second member of the triune godhead. By defending His Father’s house, Jesus was thereby declaring His deity.

Jesus’ disciples remembered that the Old Testament attributed the Messiah with zeal for God’s house (2:17).

Psalms 69, a Messianic Psalm, states “Zeal for your house consumes me” (Psalm 69:9). The promised Messiah would be zealous for the house of God. This verse came to mind when Jesus’ disciples saw what He was doing. Jesus’ zeal, revealed in His confrontation with the merchants and money changers, was fitting. His righteous indignation forever serves as a reminder to us that the sacred things of God deserve our utmost respect, reverence, and protection. In addition, just as Jesus purged the Temple of that which was unholy, so He can purge our hearts through faith in Him.

**Jesus displayed His divine
power by rising from the dead (2:18-22).**

Although the resurrection was still a considerable time away, Jesus’ veiled prediction of this event indicates that He knew from the beginning the path that would lead to our redemption. He would die for our sins and then rise from the dead, proving His claim to deity.

The Jewish leaders demanded a sign that would prove Jesus’ right to do what He had done (2:18).

Understandably, the religious leaders in Jerusalem (John simply calls them “the Jews”) took offense at Jesus’ actions. By upsetting the money changers’ tables, Jesus had also upset the prevailing religious climate. These pompous leaders demanded that Jesus show them some miraculous sign to prove His authority to purge the Temple in this way.

Jesus told the Jewish leaders to destroy the Temple and He would rebuild it in three days (2:19).

Without hesitation, Jesus answered the religious leaders by challenging them to “destroy this Temple” (the Greek term for Temple in verses 19-21 refers specifically to the innermost holy place, the dwelling place of God, in contrast to the Temple courts). Jesus then claimed that He would raise the Temple in three days. Later accusers would use these words in a contorted way at His trial leading up to His crucifixion (Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58).

The Jewish leaders insisted that such an idea was preposterous since it had taken decades to build the Temple (2:20).

The Jewish leaders claimed that it had taken forty-six years to build the Temple. In fact, Herod the Great had undertaken a major renovation of the Temple around 19 B.C., a project that was still under way in Jesus’ day. While the Jews placed a high value on the appearance of the Temple, they showed little respect for the One for whom the Temple stood. The Jewish leaders mockingly denied that Jesus could perform such a miracle as rebuilding the Temple in just three days.

Jesus had actually been referring to His body which would rise from the dead after three days in the grave (2:21-22).

Jesus had something entirely different in mind when He said that He would raise the Temple in three days. He was predicting His own resurrection from the dead. The Jewish leaders would destroy the Temple—His body—by putting Jesus to death. But Jesus would rise again after three days. After the resurrection, Jesus’ disciples remembered these words. They realized that Jesus had predicted His own death and resurrection. This realization brought Jesus’ disciples into a deeper faith in the Scriptures and in Jesus’ words. Jesus is God. He would prove His deity by rising from the dead.

**Jesus displayed His divine
wisdom by evaluating people’s hearts (2:23-25).**

Many people believed in Jesus because of the miracles He performed, but their faith was apparently superficial in many cases. Because He is God, Jesus knows the nature of the human heart.

Many people witnessed Jesus’ miracles and put their faith in Him (2:23).

Jesus must have performed a number of miracles during His time in Jerusalem, because these miracles became the basis of belief for many people during the Passover season. These

people put their faith in Jesus' "name," that is His character and claims. Jesus undoubtedly made His deity and messianic identity known at some level.

Jesus was cautious about trusting these people because He fully understands the nature of the human heart (2:24-25).

Even though people believed in Jesus, Jesus was cautious about believing in them. He didn't commit Himself to these early believers because, as John writes, He "knew all people." No one had to testify to Jesus about human nature because Jesus "knew" what resides within people, within the human heart. He knew by experience that people's hearts are fickle. Those who believed in Him early on might later turn against Him (as indeed happened, according to John 6:66). Jesus' knowledge, while based on experience with people, was the full knowledge of deity—He knew "all," all people and all about people. By His divine wisdom Jesus evaluates human hearts. He knows our faith, our fears, and our doubts. However, true faith in Jesus transforms our fears and doubts, allowing us to follow Him throughout our lives. He purges our hearts through faith and helps us to revere that which is holy and true. Our zeal for revering God should supersede all other priorities in life.