

Purging and Prophecy at Passover

John 2:13-25

Reading: Psalm 93 – **Reader?**

Lord's Supper

Mission Trip Meeting

Bethany Baptist Church

March 8, 2020

...pray...

Is God always *happy* when the church doors are *open*...?

Is everything that passes for worship *acceptable*...?

Consider the worship of...

Uzzah (1 Sam 6). King David placed the *ark* on an ox-drawn *cart*. The brothers *Uzzah* and *Ahio* led the cart. The oxen *stumbled*. *Uzza* reached out to steady the ark, and God *struck Uzza dead!* *Uzzah* wanted to *help* God, *Uzzah's* way. God **didn't** need *Uzzah's* help, and said *Uzzah's* worship was *irreverent*.

Ananias and *Sapphira* (Acts 5). The couple *sold* a piece of property. They *brought* part of the proceeds to church and *put* the money in the offering plate. So *far*, so *good*. But they *told* everyone they were giving **all** of the proceeds. God *struck* *Ananias* and *Sapphira* *dead*. Their worship was *dishonest*.

Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8). *Simon* was interested in the power of *magic*. Then *Simon* was interested in the power of the *Holy Spirit*. He tried to *buy* the power of the Spirit. The Apostle Peter *rebuked* the magician – “*May your silver perish with you...repent of this wickedness of yours!*” *Simon's* worship was *self-serving* and *evil*.

Don't get me wrong, God *loves* and *looks for* your worship, but you have to *worship* God, God's *way*.

Ecc 5:1,2 - King Solomon said, *come* to church, but *come* **carefully!**

Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. ²Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.

Friend, if you want to make God *mad*, try to worship Him *your* way, instead of *His*.

Return w/ me to John 2: 12-13.

There was some serious *bad worship* going on in the temple precincts!

Jesus' *fixed that* in a shocking demonstration of His *divine authority* and then provided a *camouflaged preview* of His *resurrection*.

It was a *sign*, ... the ***second sign*** in John's gospel (the ***first*** was at that wedding in Cana).

Jesus' signs **produced** *faith* and **proved** His *deity*...

By *purging* the temple and *pushing back* on the Sanhedrin, ...

Jesus' deity was demonstrated in a Passover drama, in four acts:

- 1. Act 1 – A problem *Passover* (vv.13-14).**
- 2. Act 2 – A passionate *purging* (vv.15-17).**
- 3. Act 3 – A puzzling *prophecy* (vv.18-22).**
- 4. Act 4 – A passing *profession* (vv.23-25).**

The curtain lifts on Act 1: A *problem* Passover (read vv.13-14).

1. We're not *Jewish*, so maybe we should *remind* ourselves about the importance of the Passover.
 - a. Passover is the *most important feast* on the Jewish calendar, celebrated on the **14th** of Nisan (a date occurring ~ March/April).
 - b. It started with *Moses* and the slave-nation, Israel.
 - c. God said that every family should *slaughter* a lamb, *cook* the lamb, *eat* the lamb, and *get ready* to leave Egypt in hurry.
 - d. Oh, and *one more thing....* Take the *blood* of the lamb and *smear* it on the *doorpost* of the house before dark. *Every* house of *every* Israelite enslaved in Egypt.
 - e. That night, God sent the *Death-angel* to visit all the *houses* and *barns* of all the *families* and *cattle* in all of Egypt.
 - f. In every house, the *Death-angel* killed the family's *first-born*. From Pharaoh to servant. And of all the cattle.
 - g. But where the *Destroyer* saw the bloody door-post, *that* home He *passed over*.

2. **FF 1500** years and our story take us to early April in **30 AD**.
 - a. Jerusalem was *stuffed* w/ *hundreds of thousands* of Passover worshipers from around the Romans Empire.
 - b. Jesus and His disciples went *up* from Capernaum to Jerusalem; this is **not** Jesus' first Passover (Luke 2:41ff), but it *is* the first of **three** Passovers that will mark the timeline of His public ministry.
 - c. The Galilean is **not** *happy* with what He *finds* in Jerusalem!

3. Let's call it the *commercial corruption* of Passover.

- a. There are **two** types of *transactions* taking place in the *temple precincts*: *selling animals* for sacrifices and *exchanging currency* to pay the half-shekel temple tax.
 - i. The *animals* were sold to be sacrificed during the Passover, for example (of course) *sheep*.
 - ii. *Every Jewish male*, age **20** and over, was required to pay the *annual temple tax*. It had to be paid in either *Jewish* or *Tyrian* coin, because those coins had a very high *silver content*.
- b. It would have difficult to *bring animals* from across the Empire, and not everyone *traded* in Tyrian currency from day to day, so the *need* for these services was *real*. So what was the *problem...?*
- c. *Jesus' words* (16) and **OT** *prophecy* have the answer, and perhaps there were **two** issues:
 - i. *Price gouging!* The *crowds* were huge and they *needed* these services in Jerusalem *that week*. A *captive market!* Jesus said, "*stop making My Father's house a place of business!*"
 - ii. *Gentile snubbing!* **Andreas Kostenberger** (NT scholar) points out that while these services were once offered *outside* of Jerusalem, **now** they were held in the *outer courts* of the temple, designated at the "*Court of the Gentiles.*" → Why..."
 - iii. Because these *outer courts* were the *closest* a Gentile God-fearer were allowed to come to YHWH's temple.
 - iv. So even though Isaiah had written (56:7) that the LORD's temple was to be "*a house of prayer for **all the nations**,*" these *money changers* and *merchants* had *crowded out* the Gentiles from the *only place* in the temple they were allowed to worship!
 - "*After all, who cares about those Gentiles, anyway...right!?!?*"

The importance of Passover and the needs of Passover were being exploited, worship was being corrupted, and that was big problem!

Act 2 of this drama spotlights an angry Jesus and a zealous purging.

(read vv.15-17)

1. These verses, in the most *minimal* way, *spotlight* the sign that Jesus provided through what He *did* (15), what He *said* (16), and what His followers *remembered* (17).
 - a. Can you *imagine* the *anger*, the *shock*, the *counter-anger*, the *clamor*, the *confusion*, and the *motion* that lie *just under the surface* of John's brief account?
 - b. The *singing* scourge, the *shouting* and *screaming*, the *bawling* of cattle, the *crashing* of tables, the *ringing*, *rolling* of coins, the *scrambling* of moneychangers (the *cursing* of the moneychanges) ... the *reactions* from the crowd?
2. What did Jesus *do*? He made *whip* out of cords (bind animals?). He *pushed* into the midst of the animals and *drove* them out. He *reached* onto the tables of the money changers, *grabbed* their coffers, and *poured* their treasure out on the floor. Then He *turned over* their tables.
3. What did Jesus *say*?
 - a. V.16 – “**Take these things away!** He was speaking to the *dove sellers*. The *doves* were in *cages*, so He wanted them *carried away*.”
 - b. Then to *everyone* He shouted: “**Stop making My Father's house a place of *business*.**”
 - c. And *then*...the Court of the Gentiles (masquerading as a *Passover Convenience Store*)... was empty. Empty except for Jesus, *standing* there with His *scourge*.
 - d. The *hucksters* were gone, the *animals* were gone. The crowd was undoubtedly *still watching*...but from a *safe distance*.
 - e. And the disciples **weren't** *far off*, either.

4. His disciples' eyes must have *this big...!* Then they all *remembered*, and perhaps *whispered* among themselves, a *messianic prediction* from **Psa69:9**.
 - a. In fact, **Psa69** previews several *messianic truths*: Christ's *anguish of soul*, the *vinegar* at His crucifixion, His *estrangement* from His own people. But in **v.9** it prophecies the *righteously angry motivation* for His **second** sign, this *purging* of the temple:
 - *Zeal for Your house will consume Me! ...eat Me up!*

5. Let me make a few *observations* before we move on.
 - a. If you are a *careful reader* of the **NT**, you know that all **four gospels** record a temple cleansing. But the **Synoptics** (M, M, L) record a purging at the *end* of Jesus' ministry, *after* the His Triumphal Entry, during His **3rd** (final) Passover.
 - b. **John**, clearly, places today's account at the *beginning* of Jesus' **1st** Passover.
 - c. *Who's right....?* *Everyone* get's to be right! Jesus cleansed the temple **twice**; **once** to *launch* His ministry, a **second** time to *draw* it to a close.
 - d. *Bookends of holy zeal* for the *sanctity* of *pure worship*. This is a *big deal!*
 - e. Does *your* worship ever get *sloppy, careless, selfish*? **Don't** wait for Jesus to bring the *scourge* of His holy zeal to *your soul/conscience* to purify *your worship*.
 - f. The **Lord's Supper** this morning would be a good time to *think about that...*

Jesus is willing and able to address unholy worship, wherever He finds it.

But John's real point is this: what gives Jesus that right?

Which brings us to our *third act: an angry challenge which leads to a puzzling prophecy* (read vv.18-22).

1. The temple court **wasn't** *empty* for long. The *Sanhedrin*, perhaps with the *temple police*, show up. Instead of *arresting* Jesus, or *driving* Him off, they issue an *angry challenge* (18). The key words are *sign* and *authority*.
 - a. What gives you the *right* to clear the temple? What gives you the *authority* to *crack* the whip and *call* YHWH Your Father?
 - b. What gives you the *right* to judge our *worship*?

2. Jesus' answer was a *profound* but *camouflaged* prophecy (read v.19).
 - a. The Jews were *proud* of their temple! It was sign of both *religious* and *national* identity.
 - i. *Solomon* built the first temple and *Zerubbabel* rebuilt it when the Jews returned from *Babylonian* captivity.
 - ii. *Herod the Great* started a major temple *restoration* effort **46** years before our story in **30 AD**, and that *restoration* would continue until the late **60's**, just **2-3** years before the Romans *captured* Jerusalem in **70AD** and *destroyed* the temple again!
 - iii. The Jerusalem temple has *never* been rebuilt...
 - b. So they are *shocked* and *confused* when Jesus *commands* them to *destroy* their proud temple ("*destroy*" v.19 – Gr. present imperative) and *promises* to rebuild it in *just 3 days*.
 - i. But if you've *read* the Gospels carefully, you *remember* that Jesus **wasn't** opposed to *camouflaging* His teachings from time to time!
 - ii. In fact, He once *explained* to His disciples that *wrapping* the truth in a *parable* was sometimes a way of *judging* His *audience*.

iii. John steps in to make it clear for us (21): Jesus was speaking of the *temple* of His *body*.

1. In fact, if we read this in the Greek, the Jews (18) use a word for “*temple*” that clearly means a *physical building*.
2. But Jesus answers right back (19) with a different word for “*temple*” that meant a *spiritual building*.
3. And if Jesus is predicting the *destruction* of His *body*, we know He’s previewing the most *powerful sign* of *all eternity*: the *bloody cross* and the *empty grave*.
 - His *crucifixion* and *resurrection* is the *sign* that *validates* Jesus’ right to *judge/order* our worship.

3. Jesus’ *camouflaged prophecy* stuck in their minds!

- a. For the *Sanhedrin*, it stuck in their *minds* because it stuck in their *craw*!
- b. **Three** years later (Matt 26:61) they used Jesus’ words in their *trumped-up trial* with the High Priest, Caiaphas.
- c. Then just *months after the Resurrection*, they used Jesus’ words again against the **martyr Steven** (Acts 6:)14, and *condemned* him to a lethal *stoning*.
- d. This *temple purging* was clearly a *huge sign* in Jesus’ ministry!

4. And so, Jesus’ disciples *remembered*, too. But **not till later... (Read v.22)**

- a. Jesus would soon begin *preparing* His friends for His *purpose* in coming – *to give His life a ransom in the place of many*. But they were a little *slow* on the *uptake*!
- b. The disciples didn’t *fully* understand the *connection* between the *Scripture* of Psa 69 (*zeal for Your house*) and Jesus’ *words* (19) until they could *look back* on this day through the *lens of the Resurrection*.

But when they got it, they believed it.

We could have ended this drama with v.22 – *they believed*. The disciples *truly believed* and their *faith* just kept getting stronger – *day by day, sign by sign*.

But no matter *what signs* you see, or *how emotionally excited* you get, *not all faith is real faith*.

Which brings us to the final act: a *passing profession of faith*.

1. While He is still in Jerusalem Jesus *performed* many more *signs*, which John **doesn't detail**. But he **does** report the *results*. And the *results* aren't as *good* as they *seemed* on the *surface*. **Read vv.23-25**.
2. Why **didn't** Jesus *trust* their faith? Because it was a *shallow, temporary* faith.
 - a. It was only a response to *seeing signs*. And perhaps *nourished* by their own ideas of what kind of *Messiah* they were looking for: a **Super David** to *run out* the Romans and *restore* Israel to her **OT** glory.
 - b. **Not** the kind of *King* that Jesus would prove to be.
 - c. Do you recall Jesus' *parable of the soils*...? Particularly, the *shallow soil* and the *weedy soil*. The crowd's heart was *weedy* to distraction, and *shallow* to the point of eventual destruction. **No real faith – no eternal fruit**
3. But *how* did Jesus *know*!?! John is so *clear*: **v.24** – *He knew all men*; **v.25** – *He Himself* (emphatic) **knew** what was in all men.
 - a. NT Scholar **Merrill Tenney** writes that Jesus' *knowledge* of the human heart, *person by person, personally, individually, deeply*, is the *ground-zero principle* for understanding how He relates to everyone in John's Gospel. And that means how Jesus relates to *you*!
 - b. In the *encounters to come* (e.g. *Nicodemus*, the *Samaritan woman*, a *Gentile official*) John will make it *very clear* that Jesus *knows* your *worship*! Your *faith*. Your *heart*.

Jesus can read your heart more accurately than your cardiologist.

Jesus can spot the cancer of sin more clearly than any high-tech MRI.

All the signs point to this: *Jesus is God! He is “The Word Become Flesh.”*

1. What does that mean for your *worship*? Jesus has the *authority* to define our worship.
 - a. We must *worship*, and we must worship *His way* (→ Word).
 - b. We are **not** at liberty to worship *any which way we want*, just to *please* ourselves (as in the temple, today’s text) or *conform* to culture.
2. And today’s text traces a *powerful lesson on faith*.
 - a. The Sanhedrin had **no faith** – in fact, their *hatred* for Jesus just grew.
 - b. The *crowds* had *shallow, weedy* faith. They were in it for the *signs*.
 - c. But Jesus’ followers had *growing faith*. Motivated by the *signs*, to be sure, but *beyond* that, a faith nurtured by the *life* and *words* of Christ.
3. Yet John’s *main point* is always Jesus!
 - a. Our Lord has the *ultimate authority* over *worship*. He’s the *ultimate Judge*.
 - b. The Lamb of God’s *eternal mission* was **always** to *go to the cross* to *redeem His people*. His *veiled prophecy* in **v.19** shows that Jesus’ *face* was *set towards Calvary* from the very beginning. **For us!**
 - c. And God’s Son *knows* everything, including *your heart*. **But Who knows everything?** Only God! *Omniscience* is a “God thing.” And *Jesus is God!*
4. *Authority + Deity + Salvation?* Add in that He *knows your heart*. What do you *do* with all that?
 - a. Friend, maybe it’s time for a *faith check*. What does Jesus *see*, when He *looks into your heart*...?
 - b. Is *your* faith grounded in **who** Jesus *is* and **what** He *demands*, or is your faith been in something you just *made up*, to *make you happy*?

...pray... *The Power of the Cross (reflect); Lord’s Supper*