

John 2:12-25 - Jesus Cleanses the Temple

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John chapter 2, so open your Bible there please, John chapter 2. We're going to be picking it up in verse 12 so, follow along with me as I read John 2:12.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then 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 about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man." (ESV)

Let's pray. Father, open our hearts to Your Word this morning, to your Spirit as you speak to each person and open our hearts to hear your voice, the message that you have for us today. Guide us we pray, direct our hearts we ask in Jesus' precious name, amen. Amen. Amen.

This passage begins really kind of talking about the fact that Jesus and His disciples went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. In fact, this is interesting, this is the first of 3 mentions of Passover that John gives us or records for us in this account. And you'll notice, and this is kind of a side point, kind of, sort of. But in case you've ever wondered, you might notice that John says that Jesus and his disciples went up to Jerusalem.

Now that might be confusing if you know that they were in Capernaum and you know that Capernaum is north of Jerusalem. And so, you're kind of thinking, wait a minute, why would they go up to Jerusalem if they had to travel south? Because they did, they had to travel south. The reason for that is because Jerusalem is higher in elevation than is Capernaum or really any area of Galilee. And so that's the reason that they would talk about going up and down related to elevation, not north and south.

So, it says that they gathered together there for Passover. And when we say "they gathered," there are some Bible scholars who believe that when you take all of the pilgrims who would gather the Jerusalem for a particular feast, and coupled with all of the Jews who lived in the city, it would come to over 2 million people.

That's amazing. In fact, some say like 2 and a quarter million people. And so, there's a lot of people there and there's a lot of activity going on. The problem with a lot of the people who came from a distance, is that they would be required to pay the temple tax. Every household had to pay that tax, but most of the people were bringing in foreign currency, which the temple didn't accept.

Therefore, you needed the services of a money changer to convert your foreign currency to the local currency so that you could pay it, and therefore there was the need for these money changers. In addition to that, we have this issue of people wanting to offer a sacrifice. But many people traveled from such a long distance, they couldn't bring an animal with them. It was just too costly or it would slow them down. Or the other issue was, you'd bring an animal from home if you came from a long distance and there was no guarantee that the priest would accept that animal for sacrifice. So you might go to all the effort and expense to bring an animal and the priest would reject it.

So the easiest thing to do was just bring your money, buy an animal there in Jerusalem for sacrifice, and bing, bang, boom, you can get the thing taken care of. Well, this is what's happening in the temple courts and in the outer courts. And this is where this is happening, and you need to understand about the outer courts because this is significant.

The outer courts of the temple was also called the “Court of the Gentiles” and the reason they called it that was because that was the only place the Gentiles could go, that's as close as they could get.

If you were a Gentile, a God fearer they called them, the Jews called them. In other words, a Gentile who worshiped the one true God, you could come to the outer courts of the temple and no further. And so this was where you would come to pray, this is where you would come to worship and so forth, where you would come to offer your sacrifice. But the Jews decided that it was in that very place that they were going to set up a market for the money changers and the people who were selling animals.

And that was really one of the big issues. It wasn't just that they were turning the house of the Lord into a marketplace. That was bad enough, but they were infringing upon the only place of worship that these Gentiles could come. And so, we see verse 15, which is the recording of the response that our Lord had to all this.

Look with me again in your Bible, verse 15 says, *“And making a whip of cords,…”* So this tells you that He didn't just kind of have this flash anger, which people have from time to time. They see something happening, they just kind of roar. He took the time to take some twine or whatever it was and He made this thing into kind of a whip. And He, it says, ¹⁵ *“...he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen.”* And furthermore, He went over to the money changers *“And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. (literally overturning their tables) ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.””*

And as shocking as that whole event probably was for the people there, because this had been going on for a long time, it really shouldn't have been shocking frankly. I mean, not if they were really thinking.

Because one of the things that we forget about Passover, because personally I've never celebrated a Passover, I have read about it a lot. But one of the things I think we Gentiles forget about as it relates to how Passover was celebrated was they had to go through this process of cleansing before Passover began anyway.

And what they would do is they would cleanse the yeast and, or the leaven out of their homes, and they had to go through and search to see if there was any yeast or leaven, whatever you want to call it, in their home.

And the reason they had to get rid of it before Passover is because throughout the course of the Old Testament, yeast was a symbol of sin. And so in order to celebrate, truly celebrate the Passover, they had to go through this process. So, God had commanded them to remove all of the yeast and getting rid of it depicted the act that we know in the New Testament as putting off the old sinful nature.

That's what Paul calls it, he makes reference to it in that way. And frankly, for the Jews, it was very similar to the picture of circumcision. Circumcision also was a picture of putting off the flesh, cutting away the flesh, right. So, God had given them this idea, these pictures, these pictures that related to getting rid of sin. So technically what Jesus was doing when He barged into this area and started driving out the animals and the people selling them, and also turning over the tables of the money changers was, He was kind of just doing what was in keeping with the theme of Passover, which was essentially, getting rid of sin.

But see, the Jews didn't see it that way. There were certain areas that they'd overlooked. And isn't it interesting? And I just, I find it interesting that God had spoken to the Jews about getting rid of sin during Passover, using, of course, the picture of getting rid of yeast, but they didn't translate it.

They didn't go beyond. For them it was getting rid of yeast and they forgot what it was all about. They forgot the meaning, the message, the root of what they were supposed to be doing. "Oh, this is a picture of getting rid of sin." So, what they ought to have been doing was thinking through their lives about what they're doing and whether or not the Lord accepts what they were doing.

Isn't it interesting, they go through all these processes of fulfilling their religious demands. And yet at the same time, they're making plans to set up shop in the outer courts of the temple so that, there's all this buying and selling going on. And they completely missed the point of what getting rid of yeast was supposed to signify.

And I'll be honest with you, I don't think that the Jews had a corner on that particular issue or limitation. We've talked so many times over our study of the Old Testament, how God would confront the nation of Israel for being religious. In other words, fulfilling their religious requirements while at the same time excusing themselves from immoral behavior.

And we can do the same, we can do the same. And that's one of the reasons David would regularly bring his heart to the Lord, not just his offerings. “Lord, search me and know me”, he'd say. I've brought that up many times to you, but it's just such a powerful passage. “Search me and know me Lord, see if there'd be any wicked way.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

In other words, he's kind of saying, “I invite you to go through my cupboards, my pantry, see if there's anything yeast that I've kind of overlooked. Maybe there's some sin in my life that I wasn't even really totally aware of and I invite you, I invite you.” That's bold, isn't it? That's bold.

Verse 17 goes on to tell us that, “*His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”*” Where that was written was in the Psalms, specifically Psalm 69, where David had written that statement, but the disciples remembered that David was a prophet, Jesus said so. And he had predicted the consuming passion of Messiah for the house of the Lord, and they were seeing it now in real time.

But the response of the Jews, you'll notice was quite different. Verse 18, the Jews just kind of bellied right up to Jesus when this happened and they demanded He showed them a sign. They said, “... “*What sign do you show us for doing these things?*”” In other words, they're demanding some miraculous sign to prove His ability or His authority rather, not ability, His authority to go into the temple and to do what He did.

That's interesting, isn't it? There's an amazing prophecy in the book that we're about to start on Wednesday night. You know this coming Wednesday, we're starting our study of the last book of the Old Testament, and then we're going to be finished with our third time through the Old Testament.

But we'll start in Malachi and there's a very amazing passage in Malachi. I want to show you on the screen from chapter 1, or excuse me, chapter 3 verses 1 through 4, it says,

Malachi 3:1-4 (ESV)

And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the

Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

This passage in Malachi has shades of fulfillment in both the event that we're reading about here in John chapter 2, and also in the future return of Jesus Christ, where He will come and purify the temple and purify the worship of Israel on that day. But He began that work in His first coming when He purified or cleansed the temple, not just once, but twice.

It's interesting, John's the only one who gives us this event in the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the other gospel writers do it at the end. So, there was a second time that Jesus cleansed the temple. Which really, and so, we look at this in light of this prophecy that is given in Malachi, which Jesus partially fulfilled at that time.

And when you look at it that way, you see that cleansing the temple was in itself proof that He was Messiah, which of course the Jews were already ignoring. And so, they sought another sign. Kind of interesting, I've often thought to myself, well, I wonder what would've happened if Jesus would've accommodated them.

What if He, they said, "what sign will you show us?" They might not have liked the sign they got. It's like, okay, well if you guys drop dead, I'm the messiah. But He didn't do that, obviously, He didn't show any kind of a sign at that specific time.

But what if He had. What if He would've said, okay, fine, pick somebody out of the crowd who's blind or deaf and healed them on the spot. Huh? Who you ever wondered what would've happened? Would the Jews, would they have said, "well, there you go, then, I guess He is." Are you kidding me?

Jesus did do miracles in front of them. Casting out demons, healing the sick, causing the lame to walk. They saw plenty of those things, and on one particular time when they could not deny the fact that a demoniac had been set free, their excuse was, well, He's obviously in league with Satan. That's what's going on, He's in cahoots with Satan.

No big, there's no big deal here. Just, yeah. If you want to explain it away, you will. It doesn't matter how many miracles you're shown. I don't know if you've ever prayed for somebody you know to come to Christ and said, "Lord, show them a miracle." I am not so sure that's the best prayer.

Because if you want to explain something away, you'll explain it away, I don't care how miraculous it is. If you don't want to believe you, you're not going to believe.

And the Jewish religious leaders did not want to believe. It's not that they just didn't or that they hadn't seen enough evidence, they didn't want to, they refused. And that's the reason that Jesus didn't accommodate them at the time.

So, they say, “okay, give us a sign.” Look in verse 19, it says, “*Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”*”²⁰ *The Jews then said,...*” This whole thing about 46..., the temple wasn't even completed at this time. And the Jews then said, they were, it was like 46 years up to this point but it still wasn't done, wasn't completed fully. And then, so, they're saying, “it's been 46 years since we started working on this thing, and we're not even finished, and you're going to raise it up in 3 days, sure you are.”

But then we're told in verse 21, that they'd completely misunderstood what He had said because He was talking about His body. So, yeah, they misunderstood. But we read the verse and we kind of go, well, now wait a minute, who wouldn't have misunderstood, it was ambiguous. I mean, what Jesus said to them was it was veiled, it was enigmatic, right? “Destroyed this temple.” I mean, here they are just in the temple, so what are they supposed to think?

So once again, you have that question, why didn't Jesus just say it clearly? Why didn't He just say, “all right, tell you what, here's the sign, kill me, and in 3 days I will raise myself from the dead.” I mean, that's pretty straightforward you have to admit, there's nothing veiled or hidden or enigmatic about that statement.

So why didn't He just say it that way? Why say it in a way that they weren't going to get. We talked about this for those of you that have been around, we discussed this whole thing. We talked about how, this is what was behind all the parables, all the stories, all the veiled references.

We talked about how Jesus wants people to think deeply and to ponder what He's saying, because Jesus knows that when you have a heart that longs to know the truth, you're going to want to look into it. You're going to seek to know more, you're going to desire to know more. But you know those who are halfhearted and they don't really care, all they want to do is argue.

They're just going to hear what they want to hear anyway, and they're going to end up just being frustrated by what they do hear. “Well, that doesn't make any sense at all, that's stupid.” And that's sometimes that's what we run into when

we're talking to unbelievers who read passages in the Bible, but have really no desire to understand what it's saying. And so, they quote a passage from the Bible and they say, "well, listen to what it says here, this is ridiculous, this is stupid." And there were all kinds of times when people misunderstood, we're going to get further into John and He's going to, Jesus is going to say some pretty crazy things such as, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:53)

That is a tough thing to hear, and there are going to be people at that time who are going to go, "okay, you just weirded me out, I'm done." And they're going to leave. Even though if they'd hung around long enough, they would've heard Jesus say, "does this offend you?" (John 6:61) "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life, the flesh counts for nothing." (John 6:63) Now that explains it, but you see, if you don't stick around, if you don't listen, if you don't pay attention. And if you're halfhearted about trying to understand the Bible and what the Bible says, it's going to be a constant frustration to you.

But if it's something that you are willing to dig into and open your heart to and seek to know, God will open up the riches of wisdom and understanding to your heart. But it takes you having to have the desire, the drive to press in. "No, I know there's more here, I know there's more to understand here. I'm not going to look at this thing on a superficial level, I'm going to dig in. I want to know, I want to understand what this says." And the Lord will accommodate you, we've talked about this before.

Verse 22 says that, "*When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered (these things) that he had said...*" And this again was in Psalm 16 concerning His resurrection. It says they remembered and they believed the scripture. Let me show it to you on the screen. And this is just one,

Psalm 16:10 (ESV)

For, you'll not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one seek corruption.

This is part of what the disciples remembered after He was raised from the dead, and there were other scriptures. There's Isaiah 53, there's others that speak of the resurrection of Messiah. And it says that the disciples put those pieces together later. There was a whole, there was a whole bunch of missing pieces to the picture for the disciples, pretty much throughout the entire 3 years of His ministry.

And they just, good grief. It was during the last supper, they were arguing about which of them was the greatest. There was so much they just didn't get, so much they didn't understand, but they came to an understanding.

Verse 23 reminds us that Jesus did perform miracles while He was there during Passover and people were convinced of who He was, at least to some degree. Verse 23 says, “*Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw (right there, when they saw what?) the signs that he was doing.*” John doesn't go into any kind of explanation of what He was doing. We can just assume He was healing people, I mean, the usual stuff.

And it says that the people believed in His name and we really don't know what level of faith they came to, we're not really sure, but whatever it was, John tells us in the last verse of the chapter that, “²⁴ *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, ...*”. And then he tells us why at the end of verse 24, it was “*...because He knew all people.*”

And then, and as I paraphrase verse 25, John basically says this, “Jesus didn't need anyone telling Him what was in the heart of man, because He already knew what was in the heart of man.” He didn't need anybody, coming along saying, “okay, Jesus, let me give you a little insight here on what's inside of a man.”

And when we say, “man”, we're not using it as gender specific. “Mankind” Jesus knew the heart of man as the creator. So what did He know? Well, its outlined for us in Jeremiah, you guys know this. Jeremiah 17:9, up on the screen,

Jeremiah 17:9-10a (ESV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind,

And God knows, He knows what's in the heart of man and it is this condition of the heart that every one of us has to grapple with at some point. And I trust that here at Calvary Chapel, those of you who are here today and listening to me, I trust you've already grappled with this issue, and I mean, grappled.

I mean really dealt with this sort of a situation because, it is this very reality that drives us to our knees and causes us to seek a savior. It is this, otherwise what in the world, people come along talking about, “hey man, you need Jesus as your savior” and today people are like, “what for? Why.” We just, we assume they already know, they don't know, people outside of Christ, most of them don't

know because they have not grappled with this simple issue. The heart of man is “*deceitful above all things and desperately sick.*” What does the world say? “Well, I just believe people are basically good, okay.”

Have you heard that before? Anybody ever heard that before? Yeah. “I just really believe in my heart that people are basically good. They're just basically good people.” That just sounds so nice, who wouldn't like to hear that? “You're good” And the Bible comes along and goes, “no you're not, you're the farthest thing from good. Your heart is desperately sick and deceitful above all things.”

Who wants to hear that? Isn't that just, we call this, by the way, the bad news, which you have to deal with in order to get to the good news. We want to go around giving people the good news, they haven't understood the bad news.

You're lost, without God, without His help, without His mercy. You're lost and there's nothing you can do about it. That's really, we've talked about this. When Jesus was teaching the Beatitudes, which we looked at back in our study of Matthew, seems like a 100 years ago, we talked about those as steps to opening our heart, beginning to walk with the Lord. what's the very first Beatitude? What's the first step? “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” (Matthew 5:3) In other words, blessed are those who are bankrupt of self, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” There is a blessed condition pronounced upon those who have grappled with their own sinful condition and recognized it and embraced it. Jesus says, “you're blessed because now the kingdom of heaven is open to you.”

When I'm talking to somebody who doesn't know Jesus yet, but they know for sure that they're a sinner, I want to say the same thing to them that Jesus said sometimes to people, “you're not far from the kingdom of heaven because you're on that first step, you just need to keep moving.” But it's hard, isn't it? I mean, that's one of the reasons why Jesus said the way to life is narrow and hard. Those of us who have been saved for a while, we forget what it's like to address the issue of my depravity. I'm used to it now, I've been doing it, for a long time.

And so for me, when I sit down with somebody and I go, “well, you're a sinner, and you know that, right?” I forget that's offensive. I forget, because it's not offensive to me, it's just truth. And it's not scary to me either, because I know what to do with my sinful situation, I bring it to the cross.

And I, even as a believer, I still have to bring my sinful heart to the cross. That's an ongoing thing, it's not that I keep getting saved. I got saved when I first

recognized that depravity and came to the Lord and embraced Him and received what He did for me on the cross, that's when I was saved.

But that doesn't mean I'm done bringing my sinful issues to Him and to the cross. But, so this narrow, this hard way that Jesus talked about, there are steps that you got to get past. I mean, the first thing you got to get past is this whole issue of admitting that your heart is deceitful and desperately sick.

And again, that takes humility, right? You got to be humble. “No, I'm actually a good person, see, I've never cheated on my wife, I don't cheat on my taxes. I pay my taxes, every year, I've never killed anyone.” You ever notice how we always go to the biggies? “Never killed anybody, thank you, appreciate that, I'm a good guy.”

And we go, “compared to what?” Because see, that's the issue. When people start talking about how they're good, they're comparing themselves with other people. When the Bible says that we've all sinned and fallen short, (Romans 3:23) it doesn't mean we've fallen short to the comparison of your neighbor. It means that you've sinned and fallen short with your comparison to the righteousness of God.

And in that comparison, our most righteous deeds are as filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) And so we have to get past that, that first issue of admitting. Yeah, that's me. When I hear about the worst of the worst things that people can do, I have to own it and say, “that's me, my heart is capable of that, that's in my heart.” That doesn't mean it's going to, it has to come out.

Doesn't mean that I'm going to, act on it, but it's there, all of the ingredients are there. When I look at somebody who has walked in some area of just terrible sin, I have to say, “I could do that given the right circumstances.” I could do that just like they did. No, I'm not going to look down on them because my heart is the same, that's hard to do. And then next, you have to admit that there's nothing you can do to change your situation.

How many times have you invited somebody to church and they said to you, “well, when I kind of get my life together, then I'll start coming to church.” And that's just that attitude that says, “well, I know I'm not where I should be, but I'm going to work on it.” Which misses the whole point, because there's, at some point you have to say, “I can't save myself, I can't be good enough.” And then finally, I have to admit that Jesus is my only hope for being saved.

And by the way, that's narrow. "You Christians, you guys are narrow." Well, yeah, the gospel is. "You guys go around telling people that it's only Jesus, you got to have Jesus." Well, actually no, it's, He said that, we're only saying what He said. We happen, yes, we do believe it, because Jesus said, "I am the way of the truth in the life, no man comes to the Father except by me." (John 14:6) I'm it.

That's narrow. "Oh, I believe that there's many ways to heaven." Well, that's a nice thing to say too, because you don't offend anybody, but Jesus went around offending people. He offended a lot of people frankly, whenever you go around saying, "I'm the only way, in me is life, my words are life" that can be offensive, but then again, He's God in human flesh.

So you know the way the life is narrow, right? This is, deal with it. It's narrow, it's hard, it's hard to get there, it's hard to get to the place to even, you want to admit it. And then it's hard to say, "I am helpless to do anything."

So thankful that when we come to that place in our lives, Jesus is there and He says "finally, finally, now enter into the joy of your master." Let's stand.

I don't know if Jesus has been waltzing into the outer courts of your heart and clearing things out that shouldn't be there. But, if that's been going on, I want to encourage you to submit to it and just invite Him to do His work. Because He does a good work in our lives. If you need prayer, we'll invite you after we're finished here to come on down front, we'd love to pray with you.

Father, we thank you so much for the power and grace and wisdom that is in Your Word, and we just ask, Lord, that you would just continue during the course of the week to speak to our hearts and minister that grace to us, minister truth. Thank you, Lord, you are the truth, you are the only way and we just confess that right now.

We confess right now, Lord, "my heart, my heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick." Now, Lord, I just confessed that to you right. And I confess, Lord, that I cannot do a single thing to change that situation but you can. And not only Lord are you my only Savior, but you are the one who can transform my heart and form in me the heart of Christ.

And I pray that you would do that Lord, more and more every day. Form Jesus in our hearts Father, for we ask it in the name of your precious Son, and all God's people said together, amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.