

LESSON 12



JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

Scripture Text: John 2:13-17

Following the first miracle that He performed, that of turning water into wine in Cana of Galilee, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Jews' Passover.

This brings us to the study of today's lesson in which we are shown our Lord's respect for the house and worship of God. Jesus gives us insight through these Scriptures of how He expects men and women to conduct themselves with respect to His house of worship. Today we see a contrast of Christ's values set up against the values of the world and its worldlings concerning God's house of worship.

MEMORY VERSE: *And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.* *Matthew 21:13*

Christ Was No Religious Rebel

John 2:13 Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Our Lord's rebellion against many persons and practices of His day may cause one to be blinded to the true purpose of Christ's action. It is sure that He opposed the established religion. He poured the vials of His criticism upon those who held high ecclesiastical office in His day. This often gives the impression that Jesus was a rebel against the faith of His people, the Jews. Jesus was never in rebellion against the revealed religion which had come down from the days of Moses through the prophets and leaders of the past. He was in rebellion against the teachings of men who tampered with the true faith and revised its spiritual position for any sort of personal glory.

Cleansing the Temple

John 2:14-16 And found in the temple those that sold . . . and the changers . . . sitting. We see here the attitude of those who carried on business in the house of God, those who had no interest in true worship but for personal financial gain alone.

People coming to the Passover from a long distance found it more convenient to buy an animal for sacrifice in the vicinity of the temple than to bring one many miles. Because the Roman coins of that day bore the image of Caesar, they could not be used in any temple transaction; so the Roman coin had to be exchanged for a temple coin. At first, booths were set up in the vicinity of the temple; then, as time went on, they moved closer and closer to the holy areas. The high priests could not resist the temptation to grant concessions to these merchants for a price, and so the moves continued until all the outer court of the temple, known as the court of the Gentiles, was filled with stalls for sacrificial animals, crates containing doves, and long tables behind which sat the moneychangers.

The scene was anything but what one would expect to find in a temple. Instead of a holy quiet there was the unholy clamor of merchants selling their wares. Picture in your mind the bleating of sacrificial animals, the clinking of coins, the loud laughter, and the dealing of bargainers.

When Jesus saw this, His anger boiled. In this we see the proper use of anger, a God-given passion. To Christ the temple was a holy place, a house of prayer for all. Changing the holy use of the temple to a dishonest system of merchandising caused the pure soul of Jesus to vent the zeal of the Lord. Zeal is a word derived from a Greek word meaning "to boil." **Made a scourge of . . . cords, he drove them all out . . . money . . . tables.** Read Malachi

3:1-3. Jesus was angry. He still gets angry over men using the house of God to carry on personal business. The house of God is no place to take orders for products you are selling, whether it is Tupperware or Girl Scout cookies. The child of God should be angry over the materialism of our day, over the widespread casting aside of holy things in the interest of comfort and gain. The scourge of cords needs to be in the hands of every disciple today as it was in the hands of our Lord. We need to do all we can to drive out the people who sell alcohol to men and women who defile the temple of their bodies; against writers who deal in obscenity and pornography for a fee; against government officials who take bribes and sell allowances, and against men who use the Word of God for personal glory.

Cleanse Hearts Before Reform

John 2:17 The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. The house of God is a place into which non-Jews—unsaved ones—can enter, can pray and hear from God and receive from Him a blessing. Jesus' pattern of reform is to cleanse men's hearts first. He knew that men's hearts had to be made right with God before any real reformation in conduct could begin.

Jesus' cleansing of the literal temple is a type of the driving out of all hindering elements in this living temple of flesh that hinders one from being fully used for God's designed purpose.

We have here a picture of our Lord's deep spiritual interests in contrast with the materialism of priests and Pharisees, the religious men of His day, and their ignorance of real spiritual worth. Jesus' concern for the temple of God is His reason for coming as our Savior. He came to change men's hearts and bring life, eternal life, to dead souls. This is the thing that causes men to respond with a different attitude for the house of God. It brings respect and reverence and a concern for souls. What is your attitude toward the house of God?

JUST A THOUGHT

The divine procedure is not to count noses and then decide what is to be done. The multitude is usually wrong.