

LESSON 8 CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Our lesson today comes from John 2:13-22.

The Passover feast was a special time for the Jews. It was a celebration to remember the Jews' deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12). This was the first Passover after Jesus' baptism. The second is mentioned in Luke 6:1; the third in John 6:4; the fourth in John 11:55.

All male Jews were required to be at this feast. Jesus was being obedient to the law when He made this appearance at the temple. He set an example for us in worshiping according to God's instruction. We should surely do the same by worshiping at the appointed time each first day of the week and at other times directed by our church leaders.

Those traveling to attend the Passover in Jerusalem would have needed a place to purchase the animals necessary for sacrifice. Sheep, oxen, and doves were all allowable animals for sacrifice. This market had been set up in the temple court, and obviously there were problems with the selling of these animals. It would appear that the animals were being sold at exorbitant prices, and they must have been using money not allowed in the Lord's treasury. Only Jewish coins were allowed.

It is obvious that something was wrong when Jesus approached this area of the temple court. He immediately made a whip of cords, and He drove out the sheep and oxen. He poured out the coins of the money-changers and turned their tables over. There was surely a lot of noise from the animals, the yelling from the money-changers, and the loud sound of the whip as Jesus slapped it against the floor. The money-changers would probably have had to leave their money or risk being trampled by animals if they tried to pick it up from the floor. As they stumbled to get out of the temple court, Jesus called to them. He said, "*Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade*" (verse 16).

We see a side of Jesus that is different from the compassionate Savior who saw the lame, the lepers, the blind, the dead and He responded by healing them. We see a man that is outraged by the attitude of these men trying to cheat God's people as they came to worship. John says that the disciples remembered that it was written,

“Zeal for your house will consume me” (Psalm 69:9). They were familiar with the writings of the psalmist, and this Scripture came to their minds.

Those watching were anxious to know what this meant and by whose authority Jesus ran off their animals, turned over their money tables, and ran them out of the temple. Jesus only confused them further. He said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (verse 19).* You can almost hear them laughing as they challenged Him. They reminded Him that it had taken 46 years to build the temple, and He is saying it will only take Him 3 days to rebuild it, should it be destroyed. John tells us that Jesus was speaking of His body, not the physical place of worship. This was also a confirmation of the writing of Hosea in chapter 6 verse 2.

So, what is special about this story? It tells us a number of things about our Lord. It tells us first that Jesus honored and respected His Father while He was on earth. He fulfilled His responsibility as a Jewish man to worship, to celebrate the holy days required by the law, and He did it according to instruction in the law.

Second, it shows us that Jesus was willing to stand up for what is right. He didn't just walk into the temple and ignore the men cheating the people by charging them too much and possibly selling them animals that did not meet the specifications required by the law.

Third, this lesson shows us that we can be angry and not sin. Jesus was defending His Father's house. It was the place of worship, and He reminds them that this is God's house, and it should be honored as such.

FOR DISCUSSION: WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE LESSON?

1. Should our places of worship be honored in the same way as the Jewish temple?
2. Which is more important today, our places of worship or the worship itself?
3. How would Jesus' driving out the moneychangers have affected those who saw this happen?
4. Discuss the significance of being angry and not sinning.
5. What are some ways we can stand up for truth regarding our worship to God?