

The New Temple

John 2:13-22, Part Two

You recall that the purpose of John's gospel is that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Today we take up where we left off a couple of weeks ago, and we see his disciples coming to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. You can look ahead in v 17 — His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." Then in v 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. You can even look back up further into v 11 from the wedding Cana when Jesus changes water into wine— the disciples saw this sign that manifested Christ's glory and they believed in him. We are also going to see others who saw the signs, want more signs, but did not come into a saving faith in Christ. All of this is in the context of a massively significant teaching that Jesus injects into this sinful profiteering and hindrance to worship that the religious leaders engaged in. John writes this way in overlapping layers. So let's read and pray for God's help. **John 2:13-22** — 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

2

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.

PRAY

We spent much time talking about the meaning of the temple when we last looked at this passage. When we understand that God is taking the initiative to shrink the distance created by sin, and that he is giving his people an opportunity to come into life-giving worship through the Tabernacle and through the temple, it gives us insight into why Jesus is furious about what is happening. A reminder that this is the first cleansing of the temple, and we have a lesson that we learned here. At the second cleansing of the temple that happens just before he is crucified, we have additional lessons that we learn about the temple. The lesson here tied to his fury is that the religious leaders are through unbelief, disoriented to the communion of worship God calls us to.

Worship is not just a religious activity we do to check a box. Worship is communion with God that recovers what was lost in the garden. There was perfect communion with God there, and then they were driven away from the table of communion because of sinful rebellion. Worship is what we were made for. Worshipers in spirit and in truth are what God is seeking. We will see that in Ch 4. The communion that we experience in worship orients us to who our God is: *He is our very life!* Life is in Christ and in communion with him. Apart from him, there is no life in us.

So these currency exchangers and sacrifice salesmen have set up shop in the Temple Court, and the religious leaders are getting a cut of the business, perhaps as high as 12%.

3

Rather than being a house of worship set apart from the world where life-giving communion with God was recovered, the temple had become a house of trade that was not oriented to knowing and loving God, but an unruly, smelly corral of sheep and oxen, and pigeons, all of which lined the pockets of the religious leaders.

The sons of Korah wrote Psalm 42, thought to be an account of David's time fleeing from Absalom's rebellion. In that Psalm we have a picture of what temple worship was meant to provide for God's people: 1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation 6 and my God.

The temple represented the dwelling of God on earth. It was a place where the soul was satisfied in communion with God. It was the place where the hope and certainty of God's goodness was seen, and tears were wiped away, and encouragement was poured out in abundance. *Our God is with us!* It was a place of gladness and joy and praise. It was the place where the salvation of God was on blazing display. He had drawn near.

All of that was lost and obscured by those who were using the very things of God to advance their own agenda and exalt themselves. And those whom Christ had come to save and call to himself, were inhibited from getting to God by this wicked disorientation to

4

God and worship. In his passion, Jesus begins driving them all out. Bags of money are poured out. *He made a whip!* How long did it take to drive them out — huge oxen and all?

We should learn a critical lesson concerning worship. God intends worship, and the communion that we have with him in worship to be a time that we are reoriented to him. It is a time when our hope and certainty of God's goodness is reinforced. It is when we see our reigning King, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high and know that he is the victor. It is where tears are wiped away – tears of loss that are wiped away with the encouragement and hope of the resurrection. It is the place where we see and know our King and are reminded that God is with us, and God is for us. Worship is to be a place of gladness with joy and praise.

Do any of those things sound like something you need in your life? We are under his command to come and worship and bow down before him because he is worthy of this. But worship is not mere duty, but life-giving communion. Of course there are times when there are providential hindrances. But I am shocked when I hear of churches that take a Sunday off to give their people a break. What are they taking a break from? A number of churches do that the Sunday that occurs between Christmas and New Year's. They have become disoriented to what God intends and worship. Let this spark you to be present with the Lord when you are discouraged, or weary, or given to worldliness. Being in God's house with his people, and let the Lord drive out anything from your heart that would keep you at a distance from him.

As all of this commotion is going on as he cleanses the temple, the religious leaders are alerted to this, and no doubt quickly come down to confront him. Their response has an angry, "who do you think you are" tone to it. They were unbelieving of Christ, and in their

5

unbelief are totally disoriented not only to who Christ is, but to who they are. They imagine that they are in charge. They think it's their house. But it's not their house, as Jesus said. It's his Father's house. But their perceived authority is threatened, and they demand a sign from him. This is an interesting demand that they will continue to make as we will see throughout the gospel. By the time we get to the crucifixion a multitude of signs will be displayed and yet they remain in unbelief. But they are challenging the Lord's authority: On what basis are you cutting into our profits? On what basis are you undoing what we have set up? We are the keepers of the temple. We determine what goes on here.

But now an incredible teaching from Jesus about the very temple that they think belongs to them. ***You want a sign about who is in charge of the temple? How about this: Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up.*** They understood "this temple" to be the Stone building in front of them. But you will remember that John told us in the prologue that Jesus has come in the flesh to ***dwell*** among us— the word "dwell" can be translated ***tabernacle***, the forerunner of the temple.

Their response is certainly indignant. But not believing that he is the Messiah, they must think he's insane. In fact, it is insane to think that what took 46 years to build could be raised up in 3. It sounds like mental illness if Jesus is not who he says he is. If he is just a man who is a good moral teacher, he is indeed crazy. Or he is a liar who is trying to set a record for the most outlandish thing anyone could make up. And so we get CS Lewis trichotomy: liar, lunatic, or Lord. No man can do what Jesus just said he was going to do.

But he was speaking about the temple of his body. And he was not lying. Nor was he insane. While the Pharisees doubted his authority, he never doubted his own. In **John 10**, beginning in the middle of **v 17** he says, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again."¹⁸ No

6

one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

This redefinition of the temple that Jesus engages here is stunning, and our very salvation rides on what he is teaching. The statement about tearing down the temple is foreshadowing exactly what happened in 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed. But peeling another layer of the story down a little deeper, Jesus is saying that all the function of the temple is being transferred to him through the death, burial, and resurrection of his body, the new permanent temple of God. The sacrificial system of the temple where bulls and goats are slaughtered in order to make atonement for sin – all of that sacrificial system is transferred to his body, the temple of God. All the source of hope, encouragement, joy, and promise of a glad life is transferred to the temple of his body. All the life-giving communion and worship that the temple represented as God closed the gap created by sin is transferred to the temple of his body as he comes in flesh to dwell amongst us, no longer at a distance. All of this is realized in Christ alone. This replacing of the temple with his own body becomes the means to the end that we get to in **Revelation 21:3–4** — And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

There is no more need of a brick-and-mortar temple, as **v 22** in **Revelation 21** says: And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

7

To wrap this up today, consider what Jesus calls you to. He is not merely calling you to religious duty, or religious activity. He is calling you to himself. Because in him is life, and there is no other source of life. Have you believed on Christ and by faith entered into his temple to receive his life and be oriented to his agenda, his eternal kingdom? We live in a world that is in despair, where young couples are even choosing not to have children because they are in despair about the future of the world. Well, the world is a place of despair. But there is no despair in Christ. There is hope and future, salvation and grace, meaning and encouragement in the one who made us for himself. The religious leaders in the temple like the power that they had as religious leaders. They liked the money they made. They liked the way people deferred to them. But none of that gave them life, or hope. They died in their sinful unbelief, separated from God. Do not assume that the outcome of anyone who chases power, or money, or popularity will have any different outcome than they did, because none of those things are a source of life. Christ retains life in himself. Take a negative lesson from the Pharisees and flee from what only brings despair and death.

Turn to Christ, who has replaced the entire temple system by paying the price for your sin with His own blood. Enter into Him by faith. Trust Him, place all your confidence in Him, and live. There is no other way. There is no other hope. Worship the lamb of God who was slain, and by his blood ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and made them a kingdom and priests to our God.

PRAY