

# **The Wrath of Jesus**

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**John 2:18-22**

So in days past Christian kids used to start their prayers with something like this, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild. Look upon a little child." Anybody here remember that, anybody here pray that? "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," nothing harsh or stern or even violent. Because He's gentle. Nothing strong or loud because He's meek, nothing at all, extreme or severe because He's right in the middle. He's mild. After all, He is the Lamb of God, John 1:29. And who's afraid of a lamb? When a lamb comes out from behind a tree, nobody runs away in fear, do they? They're gentle, they're meek and mild. Now there were certain times that Jesus was gentle meek and mild. He called himself gentle and lowly and Matthew 11:29, He was the kind of person that kids loved to come to. He allowed a woman to pour expensive oil on His feet.

He had dinner with a hated tax collector and all of those events, He comes out and projects Himself as gentle and meek. But to picture Jesus as soft, timid, spineless, effeminate like the last guy you'd want to pick for your sports team. That's the exact opposite of who Jesus really is. In fact, what we just saw him do in the temple that day. I bet there's not a man's man alive that would have the courage, the harshness, the strength, and the guts to do the same thing. Because we live in a day of meek and mild. We're being unlike the Jesus of our text is what people, especially men are supposed to be right? Just don't rock the boat. Don't upset the status quo. Don't have a spine, just go along, get along, shut up and do what you're told."

Be safe and comfortable. And you'll be the most praised person in our society. And you'll be the most unlike the Jesus in our text. Jesus didn't hang on cross because He was too nice to people. Jesus hung on a cross because of events like one we're going to look at today. In our text, we're going to see the wrath of the Lamb. Twice in John Chapter One, Jesus is called the Lamb of God. And here He is in real life, in a real place. The temple complex in Jerusalem, clearing it out in His wrath against the Jewish religious system in its corruption. And He did this during preparation for the Passover, which is the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar. Look at verse 13, the Passover of the Jews was at hand. Each year around the end of March, beginning of April in our calendar, the Passover is celebrated and we as Christians, we celebrate the Passover every year here, at Redeemer, we just have a different name for it.

We call it Good Friday because on that Good Friday, the day of the Passover, that was when our Passover Lamb was sacrificed once and for all. This was done, the Passover was celebrated to remember the 10th and final plague. Do you remember that? The death angel killing the first born in Egypt, that the angel would pass over your house and spare your first born only if the blood of the lamb covered the doorpost of your front door. After that event, God sets His people free from 400 years of Egyptian slavery, which by the way is longer than our country has existed, sets them free and this Passover becomes a most significant event in Jewish history and Jewish religion. And it's most significant to John as well. See John mentions three Passovers, John Chapter Two, Chapter Six and Chapter 11, which is why people say Jesus' ministry is about two to three years.

This first Passover, He went to was here in our text. And the last one was when He's executed and rises from the dead. So John is showing that Jesus public ministry begins and ends at

Passover, which makes sense if you're the Lamb of God who takes away this sin of the world. And Jesus always goes to the Passover because Jesus always followed God's law. And if it said, "Go to the Jerusalem for the Passover," He did it to fulfill all righteousness. He did everything right. He followed God perfectly. He has the perfect righteousness of God Himself so that when a person believes in Him, when a person gives their life to Him, He trades it for His perfection. He is punished for your life and you are blessed eternally for His life. That's grace. That's why He's there on that day. Now you Bible nerds out there probably wondering something like, "Wait a minute. I thought he cleaned out the temple at the end of His ministry like Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say, but here He is in John cleaning it out at the beginning. What's going on here?" Good question.

He did it twice. That's what happened. Once at the beginning. And once at the end and both at Passover, this is the most natural way to read the four gospels together. John's not putting it here when it really didn't happen here because it fits some kind of theological agenda that he had. He's been meticulous in his chronology up to this moment, the next day, the next day, the next day. And then on the third day, and then at the end of verse 12, they were in Capernaum for a few days. He's being very detailed in the chronology up to this point. So he just doesn't just throw it all out at this point. One cleansing, the last one gives His final opinion is final judgment on Jewish religion. His first one, this one gives them a chance to repent, but the money was too good and the system was too corrupt.

So they don't end the practice. And that's why He does it twice showing God's judgment on their religion. Now let's see. First, if you want headings, here's the first heading discovery. What did Jesus discover when He celebrated the Passover? When and what would maybe be like the second week of his public ministry? Look at verse 12, after this, after the wedding in Cana, he went down to Capernaum. He had an entourage with Him, His mother and His brothers. So Mary had children after Jesus and His disciples and they stayed there in Capernaum for a few days. The Passover, the Jews was at hand, it was close. And so Jesus went up to Jerusalem, left Capernaum, went up to Jerusalem. Now it says, "Went up to Jerusalem," even though if you know the geography Capernaum is in the North, Jerusalem is in the South, but it says He went up to Jerusalem because from Capernaum to Jerusalem is a 3000-foot elevation increase.

That's why it says up to Jerusalem. And when He arrives, He goes to the temple, verse 14. In the temple, He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there. Keywords, I want you to see are, in the temple. If Jesus discovered all of this happening outside the temple, I don't think He would've done anything. What He saw, wasn't the issue as much as where He saw what He saw, that was the issue. And I'm going to show you that in the temple, most likely meant the court of the Gentiles, which is the only part of the temple complex, where you and I were Gentiles, non-Jewish people could go to worship God, you were not allowed in the court of the Jews. They actually have found plaques had say like, "It's on your head if you die if you cross this line into our part of the temple."

So you Gentiles, this was the only spot where you could worship, but they turned it into a marketplace. In the temple, He finds first, the animals used for the sacrifices. He says the sheep and the oxen and the pigeons. Pigeons were sold, if you were poor and you couldn't afford an ox or you couldn't afford a sheep, you could buy two pigeons. These were being sold because it was convenient to purchase the sacrificial victims on site, rather than walking them from wherever you came from, from all over the Roman empire, you could just one stop shop. You're there to celebrate. You, buy your animal, you sacrifice it right there. And then you're done. And then you

go eat food, holiday. Second notice. He also sees the currency exchange. Temple tax was required when you showed up for every adult male, over 20 years old, you had to pay your tax.

So if you're coming from all over the empire to celebrate the Passover, you need to exchange your money for the approved currency to pay your tax. And isn't that wonderful? The money changers are right there to help you out and ready to take advantage of the situation as well. See the priests and these small business owners created a monopoly. And so their priests sanctioned, priest controlled and priest benefiting monopoly was allowed to charge excessive prices for the animals and for the exchange rate of the money. And we know this, everyone has been to a sporting event, a movie, an airport, a concert, a carnival. We know that, we know this right, where there's no competition prices are set to what? To as expensive as the owners can get away with. So that quarter, it cost for that water at Walmart cost \$5 at Chase Field.

Well, that was what was going on here. And one author, I read said two pigeons outside the temple could be the equivalent of our nickel, but inside the temple could be the equivalent of \$4 or another one, two pigeons on the outside could cost \$5 on the inside, they could cost 100. I've read anything from a couple percentage point, increase to 80 times the normal price was the upcharge on things that people needed to celebrate the Passover at the temple. And if you tried to buck the system like hiding candy in your pockets when you go to the movies. If you tried to get around the extortion, it was certain that your animals would be rejected because the inspectors were trained to reject your animal for the slightest, even the smallest, something that was on the approved animals, but on your animal, "Oh yeah. We got to get rid of yours."

And you had to pay them to inspect your animal too. They were very happy to get paid, to inspect your animal, fail it and go, "Oh look, but we've got a bunch of them right there. So you can and just buy an approved one and get that other one out of here." One author said that people knew they were being publicly blackmailed into paying extorted prices if they wanted to worship. All being done in the name of God. Now, as you think about you're going into of the temple area, you're there to celebrate the Passover. And you know that extortion's going on just like when you go to a baseball game you're going to get extorted. Add to that the sounds, the hustle and bustle of commerce, the whining of the sheep, the moaning of the ox and the cooing of the pigeons.

And then add to all of that, the stench that those animals create. And you begin to get an idea. I think of what's going on in Jesus' mind, as He responds in verse 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 and their tables. So from His discovery in verse 11, or 14, we see second, His disapproval in verse 15 of what was going on. So you got to picture Him. This is maybe football sized field, like a football field size area. And He's walking around in there and He's seeing all of this and He's hearing all of this and even smelling all of this. And He is picking up the cords that were probably used to tie the animals down or used for the bedding for them to sleep on.

And He's walking around and He's braiding them into a whip. His rage is growing with every step that He takes. And when His righteous soul can take it no more. He clears out the temple area again, about the size of a football field. Thousands of people, tens of thousands of animals, dumping tens of thousands of dollars all over the ground as people are scurrying away from Him. And remember, no one knows who Jesus is at this time. This is a very beginning. This is right at this point, He's got a massive following of about five to six people.

So at this point, He's not the preacher with tens of thousands coming to hear Him and all the influence and the religious leaders going, "Who is this guy? And we got to stop Him," is none of that. And this moment, He's just a face in the crowd that day. But this what happens when the Son of God goes to the real-life temple. If the religion is corrupt like a tumor, He cleans it out to show His disapproval of what they're doing in His name, to His people in His house, on His holy day, which by the way, pointed to who?

Him.

Nobody's sees that, nobody's amazed at the wonderful sacrifice that God in His grace would give to sinners so that they wouldn't stand under his judgment. None of that is being experienced by the people. He's restoring it to the original design, which was to be a house of worship where people would come and pray offer their sacrifices and worship God for the forgiveness of their sins.

Interestingly, the Jews expected that when their Messiah came, that he would come with vengeance and attack who? Right, their enemies in this case, the Romans, when the Messiah did come, He attacks them and He attacked them at the very high point of their year, the Passover. At the very high place of their religion, the Temple Mount, judgment was coming, but it was coming for them. And why look at verse 16, because they had turned their God revealed religion, a religion that came through prophets over hundreds of years that this unique revelation given to the world through the Jewish people, they had turned that into a business. And third, the deity, the deity who revealed that religion who was there that day was not okay with what was going on, verse 16. And He told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away, do not make my father's house, a house of trade."

He's speaking to those who are selling the doves. And He doesn't remove those with a whip, presumably because they're in cages and He's like, "Pick those up and get those out of here." And then He tells them why He disapproves of what's going on. His complaints on this occasion notice has nothing to do with their corruption, which He high highlights in his second time that He does this. And in Mark Chapter 11, He says that you've turned my father's house into a den of robbers. So He's highlighting the corruption the second time. The first time notice His complaint is, "You're doing business in the temple." That's not where this belongs instead of reverence and prayer and other forms of worship taking place in the temple it's business. It's the merchandising of God. Notice Jesus calls the temple, what? His father's house, the place that His father would live and dwell among His people.

But notice if it's His father house, that means that He's what? That He's God's son. And God's son means He is deity with a body, making this what we see here, God's view of their religion. He speaks and acts on God's behalf whose holy zeal is ignited by what He saw that day. So instead of broken and contrite heart, instead of joy and adoration for God's forgiveness, it's the clanking of coins that He hears. It's the murmur of business transactions. It's the smell of animals. It's the seeing and the hearing of everything that is the exact opposite of what it should have been there that day. The only worship taking place in the temple was of the almighty dollar, not of Almighty God. Place all that stuff outside the temple.

You know for hundreds of years, it was on the Mount of Olives, which is right next to the Temple Mount. You take, do all your transactions there and then you walk your sacrifice down the Kidron Valley and up to the Temple Mountain and it's sacrifice there. Then you're good to

go, but that's just too inconvenient. "So let's just put it right in the temple," is the idea. He doesn't attack the sacrificial system. He just cleans out all the business.

Because that place was holy. It was special. It was supposed to be unique to any other place on the planet. Why? Because that's where God promised to dwell among His people. And instead of showing it reverence and respect, they desecrate it and they do it with the thumbs up of the religious authorities who benefited greatly from God being dishonored with all of the money that was coming in. Of point number one is the discovery of what was taking place in the temple that day and point number two is His disapproval in verse 15 and the expression of that disapproval as deity, verse 16, we see the disciples' response in verse 17. His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Zeal is what drove Him to do what He did in verse 16, which means He can't read verse 16. Like, "Hey guys, could you take these away? Yeah, yeah. I know. I know I'm just kind of weird, but could you take care of this for me? Thank you. Oh, thank you so much for following my little religious weird things." No, you've got to read verse 16 with rage.

Because this is an expression of his zeal. He wasn't zealous or angry because of personal offenses against Him. That's what we get zealous about. Someone offends me personally, then the zeal comes out. He wasn't angry because He didn't like something or had a different opinion about what should be taking place. His response was because God was being dishonored. His name was being trampled on. At some point, the text, doesn't say when, the disciples connected Psalm 69 with Jesus actions in the temple that day, see the Bible was the grid through which these men filter Jesus' actions and understood who He is and what He did. And they connected Jesus actions to Psalm 69, which is a passage in the New Testament that's referred to 17 times, which means that Psalm 69 is a song about the Messiah, a song sung about the one who was in the temple that day.

Even though it was written 1000 years earlier, Psalm 69, if you read it's about David and David being hated for no reason by people who reject him and want him dead. And they want him dead because he's faithful to God. And that causes them to freak out. And so in a zeal for God, it arouses their hatred, but he proclaims God's grace and his protection that they're not going to win. They're not going to have victory in God's time. He will rescue him from his enemies and then God will judge them decisively. His disciples, connect Jesus to that song. Even though, while David wrote that song, he's writing about his own experiences, those experiences actually pointed forward. They were prophecies of his promised descendent the King would sit on his throne in Jerusalem and reign, but before He does, that would be rejected and hated by his enemies.

And unlike David who was not killed by his enemies, He would be killed by his enemies, but then rise from the dead and reign. God was being dishonored in His own house. So Jesus couldn't help, but act and act decisively to empty the temple of its desecration. So people could worship there once again. I want you to picture that in your head football field, full of people, transactions taking place all over the place to nobody there and just Jesus. That's that's the picture. The honor of God consumed Jesus. So nothing would stop Him. When I think about zeal, I can't help but think of this definition from J.C Ryle's book, Practical Religion, J.C Ryle, R-Y-L-E, Practical Religion. He says zeal for God is, "A burning desire to please God, to do His will and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way." I might have read that too fast. So let me say that

one more time. "Zeal for God is a burning desire to please God, to do His will and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way."

Now, if you think about it, the more you grow as a Christian, what is the direction that the Holy Spirit is taking Christians towards? There's a goal for our growth. Where is that goal? What is that goal that we're moving towards?

Christ likeness, right? Being more like Jesus. So what that means is that the more you become like Jesus, the more zealous for God, you will be the more zealous you will be for His greatness being seen by others you will be. Now zeal for God doesn't come naturally to any of us. Every Christian has it though. We all have it to greater or lesser degrees. Some have it so much more than others right? That these are the zealots, the fanatics, the Jesus freaks, you know, but that's because they don't care about what other people think about them. They only care about what God thinks about them.

They care about one thing. And that one thing we deserve is what? Pleasing God, doing His will, advancing His glory in the world. That's it. So they'll endure every trial, push through every trouble, remove whatever they must from their lives, suffer, toil, labor to exhaustion, spend and be spent, even die if they have to all so that God will be honored. Everything else is second place. Everything else. See, he only has one pursuit, one passion. And that is Christ. Doesn't matter if he's rich or poor, it's Christ. Doesn't matter if he's sick or well, it's Christ. Whether he's going to be thought wise or foolish, whether he is known or unknown, whether he's liked or disliked, honored, or shame, none of that matters.

All that matters is Christ, his zeal for the honor and glory of God will always find an outlet. Because it is the passion. The vision of his life. Ryle continues saying, "He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives through one thing, he swallowed up," or in the words of verse 16, he is consumed with one thing. He burns for one thing, that one thing is to please God.

So as we see Jesus in this text, as we behold His glory, the goal is that we change into the same image that we become like Him in His zeal to honor and please God. So where are those zealous for God in our day? When it's not just Jesus, but when his followers are so meek and mild too. People will always air on this side of safety, who always side with comfort and compromise their convictions who have no convictions, except for looking down on people who do have convictions. Who love applause when it comes while weakening their allegiance to Jesus for that applause. See we admire zeal in others, but we tend to run away from it in ourselves.

So we kind of live through others' zeal, and think, "Well, because there's zealous, I am too," until time comes to actually be zealous. When the Bible says to live is Christ. Zeal means I've got something to live for. There really is something worth living for. We just celebrated Thanksgiving, where we spend a day thanking God for His many blessings in our lives. So let us not forget that it was men and women of zeal that passed the Bible and the message of Jesus down through history to us.

seen this. I've seen Bibles with blood stains on them, martyrs giving their lives because they had a Bible and giving their lives so that others would have the gift from God of having a Bible. Let us not forget that it was zealous men and women who remained faithful when lions or stakes or firing squads stood, ready to take their lives, their crime being that they were Christians. Let us not forget that it was zealous men and women who fought and died for the freedom we have in this country to worship Jesus publicly and without fear. Let us see the zeal of our savior in the

temple that day and pray for more zeal and pray for more men and women with zeal like His, who will risk people's approval in order to defend and advance the honor of God like Jesus did on that day.

Now we admire what Jesus did in that moment. We know more about it, all the details. And we're like, "Yes, that's wrong." That, "That should be confronted." That, "That should be denounced." We admire Jesus for what He did, but would we do what He did?

In places where Jesus is being dishonored, where His word is ignored, where His will is rejected, where His ways are denounced, would you, would I, would we stand against it? In places of worship where God is dishonored, where people can't worship God, because that's being drowned out by distractions and lesser things where people are being taken advantage of in His name, like the people were being in this moment, would you, would I would, would we stand against that? I mean if someone attacks our sports team, we stand against that, right?

Someone attacks our family member, a friend, our Alma mater, like we stand against that. What about attacks on our savior? Even if it costs us friends, even if it costs us our reputation with family members, even if the social media mobs come after us, even if they pick it outside of our homes. Will you, will I, will we stand? Jesus, didn't He say something like, "Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation of him will the Son of man also be ashamed when He comes in His glory,"? That's Mark 8:38. Will we stand? Or will we fold like so many Christians are doing today? Let us not forget that the day we stand before Jesus and give an account for what we did with our lives is a very real day, more real than anything going on in our lives right now. Let us not forget that day is an appointment that no one here is going to miss.

So let's live our lives, let's carry ourselves and our homes and our jobs and our schools in ways that show that day is coming. That that day is real. That that day matters to us on this day. And when we do, when we live in light of that, I think that's going to birth in us, or it's going to encourage a little more zeal than we may have right now.

You see the gospels, give us Jesus first public ministry, but He's going to have a second one. And when His second public ministry begins, it's going to be a ministry of zeal. Revelation 17 and 18 show that downfall of many things, including false religion when Jesus returns and unleashes the full force of his wrath, which we just saw a very tiny, microscopic example of in John Chapter Two. And when He does that, He's not going to clear people out of a temple. He's going to clear people off the face of the earth. In the words of Revelation, 17:15, they will try and fail to, "Make war on the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them for, He is the Lord of Lords and King of kings." And we kind of miss the irony of that statement. Think about it, all the strength, all the power, all the authority, all the pomp and circumstance of all the greatest people on the planet at the time. And they're all routed by a Lamb.

Because that Lamb is also a lion. Now in having said all that it may be that you don't have much zeal for the Lord in your heart because you need your temple to be cleaned out metaphorically. If Jesus came to the temple of your life, what would He clean out with his zeal for God's honor. What would His fury focus on? What would He take a whip to? Is there anything in your life that needs to be cleaned out? I'm sure that if there is the Spirit is making that clear to you right now, Spirit would never encourage you to disobey His word. His encouragement, His leading, His guiding is always in line with His word. So whatever that is, that's coming to mind right now, Christian follow His lead, no matter how much it'll hurt, follow His lead. It's better for you to

clean it out with His help in accordance with His leadership for Him to clean it out against your will. Finally, did you notice how the Lamb of God cleaned out all the temple of not only the people, but verse 15, all the animals, all the sheep and oxen and verse 16, all the pigeons too?

Think about it. All the sacrificial animals that Jesus saw when He entered the temple courts that day are gone except one, The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. And I don't think John intended this to be a foreshadowing of the cross. John is merely recounting a historical event and connecting it to the Old Testament to say that Jesus is the Son of God, so that all people everywhere will recognize that and believe in Him. However, picturing the scene that I asked you to do earlier, the empty temple ground silent now, nobody there no animals, just Jesus, the Lamb of God, all the lambs are gone, except for Him.

That places us on a trajectory that inevitably does take us to the cross, which takes us inevitably to the empty tomb, which takes us inevitably to sinners, Revelation 5, surrounding the throne in heaven one day worshiping the Lamb who was slain, which means that as you picture this scene, it's not only a picture of future judgment, but it's a picture of the day that you will be seated around the throne, worshiping the Lamb of God. And if that's your future, then clean out your temple and pray for more zeal, pray that His will in your life is your will. Pray that you live for His approval.

Pray that His name when it's dishonored you not only feel it, but you respond, yes in wisdom, yes in love, and yes in mercy, but also with zeal. Why? Because He is not just the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, But He's the Lamb of God who took away your sins too. Nothing is better and nothing is more important to live for and be zealous about than Him.

Let's pray. Jesus, while we become a very meek and mild people, we are attracted to zeal. People who are zealous are the people that we give attention to that we listen to, that we follow, that we want to get more of from them. We are attracted to zeal. And yet it's one of those things that we're attracted to and yet we don't do. And I pray as a result of our time here, it's not that we see the glory of Jesus that, "This is God coming to His temple," but that as we see His glory, we would be transformed into His image conformed to His image. And that as a result of our time of seeing Him clearly in the text, which it would turn up the dial of our zeal just a little bit more than we had when we came here today. It's critical because there will be a day when we do surround the throne, the Lamb who is left by himself on that day, and the temple will be the Lamb who is seated on the throne and who is worshiped by all of his people. And on that day, our zeal will be perfect. And on that day, our joy will be perfect. Because we will see him as He is, and we will be what you intended us to be all along, worshipers of our great God and savior Jesus Christ in His name, I pray. Amen.

Amen.