

Beloved in the Lord,

We are confronted with another dimension of Jesus Christ that, quite frankly, is all too acceptable and unacceptable on false grounds. There are those who, in the name of Christ, have embraced Hegel as expounded by Marx, who then believe that society will and must progress when two contrasting ideas that cannot live side by side are joined, either joined or one is overcome by the other. Marx further explained that we must always have a revolution, for he said that history has shown that to be true. It is also morally proper that the socially downtrodden- namely, the poor of society will and must revolt against the oppressor. So married to Christianity, Jesus became a social revolutionary, a man who took a whip and cleaned the temple out because of the oppression of the poor of the day. Weirdly, the poor did not embrace Jesus that way in His own day.

On the other hand, the pacifists and liberals of our daily struggle with this passage, for such does not conform to the gentle sort of Jesus they like. Jesus was about peace and love, and non-violence. So, what do we make out of all this? Let's investigate this portion of Scripture with the theme and points:

Jesus Reveals His Glory in Jerusalem:

1. The Son of God 2. God With Us, and 3. The Son of Man

God's Wrath: John provides us with one of those transitions by time, place and people. Sometime after the miracle in Cana, Jesus went to be with His family and disciples in Capernaum. Just a note Jesus went down to Capernaum, some 600 feet below sea level, and then later up to Jerusalem, some 2800 feet above sea level. On another note, though Rome and some Lutheran commentators continue to promote the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity, that is, the only child she gave birth to was Jesus because she never slept with Joseph), the natural reading of the Greek is not the Hebrew sense where brothers can mean any male relative but that these brothers were the children of Mary and Joseph and thus Jesus' half-brothers who are named for us in Mark 6:3. Scripture is clear that Jesus was Mary's firstborn, not her only Son. Jesus then in Capernaum was with his mother and brothers. We would add that this transition confirms John's witness of the events.

We will get back to this in a moment. Jesus, we read, went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. John and the other Gospels mentioned three Passovers, and thus we understand that Jesus' ministry was just over three years from Baptism to crucifixion. John reveals Jesus to be the Son of Man and God. He is the light of the world. He is the one who causes the shadow of the Passover to form. The Lamb of God goes to Jerusalem to partake of the Passover lamb offered in remembrance of God's mighty act of salvation of the slave people of God from Egypt. The Lamb of God that takes away the world's sin has no sin and has no need of deliverance, is perfect, and is the founder of the law, is yet His father's son and therefore does as He is told. It is a different time, however, when he went as a young man with Joseph and Mary and amazed the temple leaders and drew his parents' ire when He stayed behind. Yes, now He ordained through His baptism begins His public ministry abruptly and poignantly.

When Jesus came to the temple, nothing new had been happening for years. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon's temple, the returned exiles built a temple that paled compared to that temple's grandeur. Herod the Great began a rebuilding program from the foundations around 19 BC and was finished in 63 BC, long after his death. It was made up of three worship centers, the outer and larger area for the people, called the Gentile court; from there, the women's and men's courts led to the Holy Place, where only the Priests could go. In Jesus' day, the Gentile court had become the place to buy the offering animals. You could enter the court and purchase a Passover lamb or other animal sacrifice, oxen, sheep, pigeons, and the like. Also, to pay for the upkeep of the temple, an annual temple tax was charged that could be paid only with the temple shekel (a twisting of Exodus 30:11ff). The Sadducees offered these services in the temple to make worship and offerings more convenient. Added to this was the abuse of a man taking an animal from home only to have it rejected by a temple judge so that he would have to buy one of the temple-offered animals anyways, thus making it easier to buy at the temple. Now, this is Jesus' first temple clearing. The point here, as opposed to the avarice and greed of these merchants, is that Jesus' wrath against the House of His Father has been turned into a marketplace where one comes to worship and must deal with the stench of animal filth, animal noise and the constant bartering and economic tyranny that went on. As well, the whole sense of sacrifice was ruined. The sacrifice was much more significant when a man took an animal he had raised and cared for from his flock. Worship had been replaced with an impersonal rite that padded the merchant's pocket and brought no honour to God.

Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary, brother of their children, rises now to show Himself as God's Son. At Cana, he broke with His mother and, in fullness, showed His glory as the Son of God. John tells us that He picked up some cords, twisted them together, and began whipping men and animals, driving them from the Gentile court and violently turning the tables on them. There was no reason they had to be there! They could have set up shop anywhere. Doing this, Jesus says, "You have turned My Father's house into a house of merchandise, a lowly bazaar or marketplace." This is intolerable, and Jesus, as the Father's Son, has rights in the Father's house and quickly, unannounced, provoked by sin, executes His Father's wrath. No, Jesus is no revolutionary seeking a communistic Utopia, nor is He some pacifist; He is the Son of God who is righteously indignant at what is happening in His Father's house. Do you see Jesus? Then behold your God,

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, four and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. (Malachi 3:2-3)

Jesus' glory-God's glory is also revealed in His hatred of impure worship, sin and abomination. Grace does not tolerate sin. The wicked cannot embrace grace. Work righteous ritual had led to a formidable income, but Jesus, like some Jehu, was filled with Zeal for the Lord's clean house. Ahab's sons were killed, Jezebel was thrown from the tower, and the dogs licked her blood. Yes, that is God's glory revealed in vengeance on the wicked. A Son comes home and finds the house a mess and cleans up.

Then the disciples remembered it was written, "***Zeal for your house will consume me.***" That is a quote from David's Psalm 69:9. There, David sings of his anguish in a wicked Jerusalem. David is mocked and ridiculed because his desire for purity of worship and honour for the house of God is denied by the people of God. How much more the Son of God honours His Father and reveals the glory of God! Look, Jesus was downright angry and, though he never lost His temper in complete control of spirit and emotion with righteousness, said little and did so much, and the people there looked upon him with surprise. God's glory and God's Son do that. Suddenly the wrath of God comes when the wickedness of the wicked is complete. Behold your God! Behold the Christ, for if the sign of water into wine is acceptable to you, this sign must be acceptable! Jesus left Capernaum, their mother and their family behind and stepped up for the Father! See His zeal for the Lord!

Do you see Him now? John by the Spirit has written this so that you might believe. For that zeal will drive Jesus to the cross. Not the temple nor those sacrifices of old can save you but only Him. He spoke of his death on the cross and that he would rise from the dead in three days. This is the great sign and though you have not seen it, believe it and be saved!

God With Us: It will never be enough if you do not believe. No matter what God does, a birth, a death, war or wealth, a snowstorm or a lovely summer day, you know God, or you do not. The problem so often is the so-called expert about God who does not know God. We take the Jews, for example. The reference "the Jews" is becoming a term of hostility. They have come to find out how Jesus dares to do these things. Now they ask for a sign. Why? They just saw a sign—Jesus' violence upon the temple merchants. They ask because there was an eschatological excitement, and it would make sense that the messiah would do such things. However, they want some proof that Jesus was the Messiah.

Now, look at what Jesus had just shown them! He told them, "You have turned My Father's house into a house of merchandise!" He made clear that He is the only Son of God. No Jew would have spoken this way and called God "my father." He had shown the righteousness of God and the judgment of God. The Son of God is standing right before them. He has shown them His glory. It is not enough. Now Jesus speaks cryptically, so to speak, because they do not believe the Word made flesh, the Word Spoken, nor the Word executed. So Jesus answered them, ***Jesus answered them; "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."*** We must be careful here. It is not "If you destroy" but "Destroy." Jesus speaks in this same way three years later at the Passover seder to Judas, ***What you are about to do, do quickly.*** The sense is a command to continue with the sin of the defilement of the sanctuary, and Jesus will correct it!

There is no faith, and thus there is no understanding. It was not to be revealed to them. Jesus speaks now to harden their wicked hearts. Faith is God's action in a man that spurs him to action. They behold the revealed glory of God, and instead of asking Jesus to cover it like the people asked Moses when He glowed with God's glory after he came down from the mountain, they are utterly blind to it. Three days! It has taken 46 years of rebuilding to make this temple

look like this. And the irony is that when these same folks of Jerusalem condemn Jesus to the cross, they will incur the wrath of Christ, and the Father and the temple will be crushed in 40 years. The wisdom of God is foolishness to the wicked, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Do you understand it?

The disciples didn't understand it till three years later either. Then they recalled the words when they witnessed the Son of God in His resurrection. He meant His body was dead and resurrected. Three days in the grave, Jesus was resurrected from the dead! Still, because of the Baptist's call and Jesus' word, they followed and believed without signs!

John helps us to understand that Jesus compares Himself to the temple. He was the light that threw illumination that caused the temple's shadow. The antetype stands in the type! It pleased God to dwell with His people, so He chose Jerusalem and provided for and chose to be with His people in the temple. The temple was Immanuel- the symbol of God with us. Now Jesus says if you reject Me, you reject the truth of the temple, and if you defile the temple, you reject me!

Destroy the temple as you are doing and will do to me. I will raise it on the third day. Jesus makes the temple superfluous. Yes, they recalled the words. Why? Recall Jesus' words, "***All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.***". And then, through Paul, ***Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*** In AD 70, 7 short years after the completion of the temple, God destroyed the temple. He punished those who destroyed His Son and the temple's purity. The temple did not resurrect, but Jesus did. He bore God's wrath and rescued our lives from the pit. Oh, how they destroyed Him. Hung Him up on a cross and ridiculed Him. How he suffered for the zeal for His Father's house. He was vindicated.

See God's glory in the Son, Immanuel- God-with-us, the Word became flesh; ***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** What sign did they need? What more do you need to believe the wonder of Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel?

The Son of Man: Isaiah said,

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears, but with righteousness he will judge the needy; with justice, he will make decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked. (Isaiah 11)

This, too, is the Son of Jesse of David. Look and see!

After these things, in Jerusalem, Jesus performed many signs. John doesn't tell us what these signs are. In this case, it isn't necessary to achieve John's goal of presenting the evidence needed for us to embrace Jesus as Christ. No, it is the response of the Son of man to the Sons of God. The Jews were impressed with the signs Jesus was performing, and they trusted that, as far as they were concerned, He was something special. Jesus, however, did not entrust Himself to them. We get a glimpse of His glory again. You see, when He looked at Nathanael, he said, An Israelite in whom there is no guile (no Jacob). He looked into the heart of Nathanael and saw what was good. (John 1:47) Now, Jesus looks into the Israelite's hearts and sees Jacob. Jesus is no fool and is not impressed that the folk are impressed with Him. He is the Son of God and desires the Father's favour. Jesus knows what is in a man. Jesus was the Son of Man, but He was not just a man. Jesus did not answer, man, either. They believe the signs but not the Son. Jesus knew that command would be heeded, and the Jews would destroy the temple. They would destroy Him.

Beloved Jesus is no revolutionary, nor is He some pacifist guru. He is the Son of God, radical in His devotion, powerful in His zeal, omniscient in His perception of man. He walked the earth; Immanuel went to the temple and threw on all the lights for all to see. It was too bright and blinding. They received the command to destroy Him. The lights were on in the Father's house and city. It might have been easier to return home to Mary and the family. It was a time of transition—water into wine, wilderness to the land of Promise, from external worship to internal praise. Repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand.

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, four and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. (Malachi 3:2-3)