

**Lighthouse Bible Church**

**September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**John 2: 13 – 25**

**‘A house of merchandise or worship’**

**Stand – Read – Pray**

You remember last week that Jesus went up to Cana of Galilee partly because He had a sovereignly ordained meeting with Nathanael to reveal to him that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus also went up to Cana of Galilee because He and his disciples had been invited to a wedding there of probably a close friend or someone they knew. While Jesus was there He performed His first recorded sign or miracle in turning water into wine, in part to save face for the family hosting the wedding as we saw last time.

But verse 11 of chapter two says that when He performed this miracle He did so to **manifest His glory** and in so doing His disciples believed in Him. Well, after the wedding celebration He and His mother and brothers and disciples went to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days and then left heading south towards Jerusalem and that’s where we pick it up in Verse 13.

**Verse 13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

That is why Jesus didn’t spend much time in Capernaum, because He and His disciples had to get back to Jerusalem, some 50 miles away, to celebrate the Passover.

You remember that the Passover was started back in **Exodus 12: 1 – 14** and really all of chapter 12, when God told Moses that there would be one final plague against the Egyptians and then Pharaoh would let the people go.

Moses and his brother Aaron told the people that God was going to **pass through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.**

He told the nation of Israel held captive by the Egyptians, in order to avoid this judgment they had to **take a lamb without spot or blemish, keep it for four days and then kill it and then spread the blood on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the house and God says when I see the blood, I will pass over you and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.**

And He says **this day shall be to you a memorial and you shall keep it as feast** (they called it the Feast of Unleavened bread = 7 days w/o leaven according to **Luke 22: 1**) **to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.** To always remind them of God's deliverance from bondage in the land of Egypt.

According to **Exodus 23: 14 – 17** and **Exodus 34: 23** all males had to go to Jerusalem 3 times a year to celebrate different feasts, one of those being the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread. (the other 2: Weeks & Tabernacles) Jesus, it says in **Luke 2: 42** went to celebrate the feast at 12 years of age.

According to **Exodus 30: 11 – 14** every male 20 years of age and older had to give a **half-shekel** to the temple as a tax to help with the upkeep and running of the temple. The ½ shekel was about 2 days wages for the average person.

You can see in **Matthew 17: 24 – 27** where Jesus and Peter paid they tax when Peter went fishing and got the tax money out of the mouth of the fish.

So Jesus and His disciples arrive in Jerusalem for the Passover so that they can fulfill the law, so that they can pay the temple tax, and so that they could celebrate the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to remember what happened so many years ago in Egypt.

By the way, one writer who studied Jewish history and customs extensively, and wrote about it, said that “**it is likely that as many as 2 ¼ million Jews sometimes assembled in Jerusalem to keep the Passover**”. *Barclay on John Volume 1.*

A Jew converted to Christianity back in the early 1800's by the name of Alfred Edersheim has written some incredible material about the Temple where Jesus and His disciples are at. He said that the main portion of the temple where the worship of the general population took place could hold as many as 210,000 people. *Edersheim 'the Temple'book*

And Josephus, who was a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian, wrote that around 65 AD a count was done of all the lambs that had been slaughtered for the Passover to convince Nero that Jerusalem was an important city, they counted 256,500 lambs slain that year at an average of 10 people per lamb that would be over two and one half million people. *Josephus and Jew.Wars 6.425; 2.280*

The temple itself is divided into several parts starting from the outside part known as the **court of the gentiles**. This is where the non-Jews could come and pray and worship but they could go no further. They had signs in different languages stating that if they passed beyond this point it would be at the threat of death. **Acts 21: 26 – 29** *Paul* Then you climbed some stairs to the next court.

Next was the **court of the women**, this was the place where the women could come and worship and observe the acts of worship from an elevated place. This court is the place that had the 13 horn shaped receptacles, each marked differently, for giving to the temple offerings. This is the place, you remember in **Luke 21: 1 – 3** where Jesus observed the widow put in her money. Climbed to..

Next was the **court of the Israelites or court of men** where the Jewish men would come and worship and it was connected to the **court of the priests** where the priests would minister and worship.

And then there is the **holy place** where the priests prepared the offerings and then the **Holy of Holies** where only the high priest could go in.

So when they go to Jerusalem and get to the temple, this is what they see in Verse 14.

**Verse 14 and He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers doing business.**

All of this is taking place in the court of the Gentiles. Remember, the temple is the place of worship, the place where God, symbolically, was present with the people in their time of worship.

When Jesus walks into the court of the Gentiles, the largest area of the temple, He sees people selling oxen and sheep and doves and money changers doing business.

They could have done this anywhere but they chose to do it in the temple. Not that it was wrong in itself because people would have to go to the temple with their animal and with their money to offer their sacrifices and to pay the temple taxes.

The problem was, they were taking advantage of the people by charging incredible prices for the animals that you could buy for much less outside the temple. Not only that but you had an animal inspector that would examine all the animals to see that they were without spot of blemish, the requirement for an animal sacrifice. And if the animal was brought in from the outside it was almost always deemed unfit for sacrifice and if it came from the temple it was usually fit for sacrifice. The inspector himself was paid for examining the animals. *Barclay page 108 – 110 John Volume 1*

And can you imagine the noise from the animals and the people and the distractions for someone who would want to come in and worship? Also the **money changers** were scamming the people as well. When you came from another place that had different coins you had to exchange them for the Galilean coins or Jewish coins that would be used for the temple tax. *IBID*

The reason being that foreign currency was unclean and could be used for regular debts but when it is offered to God in the form of a temple tax, it was to be clean and only the Jewish money was clean.

Not only that, but they would charge incredible interest to have your money changed from foreign, unclean coins to Jewish clean coins. All of this, the selling of the animals and the giving of the coins was all done in the name of religion. The priests, Alfred Edersheim, says could have made upwards of \$300,000 a year for what they would charge in the temple. *PNT Eswold John 2: 14*

One writer said “Not even the sacredness of the temple, the presence of God, the awful ceremonials of religion, deterred them from this unholy traffic. So wicked men and hypocrites will always turn religion, if possible, into gain; and not even the sanctuary, the Sabbath, or the most awful and sacred scenes, will deter them from schemes of gain.” *Barnes on John ESword*

The place where people come to worship God becomes a place of outward religious practices from a heart devoid of any love and true worship of God. It becomes a place of greed and exploiting of the poor and needy, especially, and that is why we see Jesus do what He does in Verse 15.

**Verse 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers money and overturned the tables.**

Can you imagine the chaos and confusion that began when Jesus started driving all the people and animals out of the temple and turning over the tables and the money spilling everywhere?

Animals running everywhere, people running everywhere trying to catch the animals and pick up the money. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, scattering in all directions. *Liken it to a food fight at school cafeteria.*

Jesus, in His righteous indignation, **makes a whip of cords** and drives them all out of the temple. One, because they were defiling His Father’s house, they were desecrating the temple of God, they were irreverent in their worship.

One writer said this “It may be the use of the house of God for purposes and in a way where reverence and the true function of God’s house are forgotten. In that court of God’s house at Jerusalem there would be arguments about prices, disputes about coins that were worn and thin, the clatter of the market place.”

Then he says this “that particular form of irreverence may not be common today, but there are other ways of offering an irreverent worship to God.” *Barclay page 112 IBID.*

Another reason Jesus wanted to cleans the temple was to tell the people that the whole animal sacrificial system of worship was irrelevant. The sacrificial system was to point people to their need for something outside themselves to save them from their sin, they were pointing to the ultimate sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ. And now that He is there, the sacrificial system can be done away with.

**Isaiah 1: 1 – 20** talks about God hatred of the animal sacrifice that is done from an unrepentant disobedient heart. In **Verse 11** He says **I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or goats ...He says your sacrifices are worthless.**

**Jeremiah 7: 21 – 27** says the same thing, it is never about the offerings and sacrifices but about **obedience and the proper dictates of the heart.** **Hosea 5: 6 – 7** and **6: 6** God says **with their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord but they will not find Him, He has withdrawn Himself from them** (they go to offer a sacrifice and offering from their herds to God but it is of no value. It goes on to say in Chapter 6 **for I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.**

He says in **Psalm 51: 16 – 17** for **You do not desire sacrifice or else I would give it, You do not delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, these o God You will not despise.**

Jesus despised the offerings and the irreverent actions of those in the temple in the way they were preparing and in the way they were offering them and by His actions was saying that no sacrifice of any animal can ever put a person right with God.

Some people do the same things today, don't they? Jesus said this people draws near to Me with their mouth, honor Me with their lips but their hearts are (what) far from Me and in vain they worship Me.

Jesus was righteously indignant against the people in the temple and did what He did not only for their irreverence and to show the insufficiency of the animal sacrifices but, probably most importantly, they hindered people from coming to worship God.

The court of the Gentiles was the place where Jew and Gentile alike could come and worship God, seek God and Pray to God. In **Mark 11: 17** Jesus says, while He is cleansing the temple there, **My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.** The only place that 'all nations' could worship in the temple would be in the court of the Gentiles.

And with all that is going on in there, these people, lead by the priests and scribes and Pharisees and the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin, were, in essence, preventing people, seeking to worship God, from doing so.

Jesus said in **Matthew 23: 13** **woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**

And again, it is no different today, when churches put some type of burden or requirement on people to be saved or to appease God or to please God or to be acceptable to God by saying you have to go door to door, you have to say so many prayers, you have to do so many good things, you have to earn your way to heaven and favor with God. They are in essence doing the same thing, they are shutting out heaven to those who are entering in.

In this case it is shutting them out of the place of worship where they seek God.



One writer said “the Temple authorities and the Jewish traders were making the Court of the Gentiles into an uproar and a rabble where no man could pray. The lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, the cooing of the doves, the shouts of the hucksters, the rattle of the coins, the voices raised in bargaining disputes, all these combined to make the Court of the Gentiles a place where no man could worship. The conduct in the Temple court shut out the seeking Gentile from the presence of God”. *IBID Barclay*

He goes on to write “Is there anything in our church life – a snobbishness, an exclusiveness, a coldness, a lack of welcome, a tendency to make the congregation into a closed club, an arrogance, a fastidiousness – which keeps the seeking stranger out? Let us remember the wrath of Jesus against those who made it difficult and even impossible for the seeking stranger to make contact with God.” *IBID Barclay page 114*

So you see why Jesus was so angry and indignant against those who were in the temple, because they were there to make money and not to worship God and hindered others from true worship or the ability to worship.

You see one thing about Jesus that should also be true of us also, when He was **ridiculed** and **abused** and **maligned** and **reviled** and **persecuted** He didn't try to defend Himself (**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2: 23**). But when God was dishonored and maligned and not revered, He became righteously indignant. So He tells them in Verse 16

**Verse 16: He said to those who sold doves, take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.**

Jesus identified the temple as **My Father's house** because it was. God is His Father and He was telling the people that in that statement. He was saying what others had been saying about Him, He is the Son of God.

Some people take this verse to mean that you can't have a garbage sale on church property, you can't have bake sales or you can't sell anything on church property or you can't have any type of games on the church property.

Well, people and churches have to come to their own convictions about that. That is certainly not what is intended by this passage in John. The people in the temple were fleecing the worshippers and showing irreverence to God and greedy for personal gain and doing it all under the guise of religious worship. They were impeding true worship and using the temple primarily for gain and not for God.

I would just say this: most times that churches have sales of some type it is usually to raise money for something within the church like a missions trip or fixing up the church or supporting a missionary or whatever.

You never, in scripture, see a church or believers being supported by the sale of anything or by unbelievers. It is usually another church, in that time, that would supply the needs of another person or church.

I would hope that if there were a genuine need in this church, that God would put it on the heart of those to give, those who have the gift of giving, when the need is made known. To me that is His affirmation that the endeavor is sanctioned by Him and by those in the church.

If you have a sale of some type and people in the church are against that, that may be a good indication that there needs to be caution in proceeding. Not only that but the more mature Christian would want to come to the place where, if someone holds to a conviction that no sale of any kind in the church, they would not do anything that would cause them to stumble or violate their conscience.

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**John 2: 13 – 25 Pt.#1**  
**‘A House of Merchandise or Worship’**

Introduction and review:

Verse 13 The Passover of the Jews and the Temple

Exodus 12: 1 – 4, Luke 22: 1, Exodus 23: 14 – 17  
Exodus 34: 23, Luke 2: 42, Exodus 30: 11 – 14  
Matthew 17: 24 – 27, Acts 21: 26 – 29  
Luke 21: 1 – 3

Verse 14 He found those selling and changing money

The location of the selling and money changing  
The greed of the sellers and money changers

Verse 15 He drove them out of the Temple

3 reasons why Jesus drove them out  
Irreverent in their worship  
No need for a sacrificial system  
Isaiah 1: 1 – 20, Jeremiah 7: 21-27  
Hosea 5: 6 – 7, 6: 6, Psalm 51: 16-17  
They hindered true worship  
Mark 11: 17, Matthew 23: 13

Verse 16 Do not make My Father’s house a house of  
Merchandise

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