

## JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE

John 2:12-25  
Key Verse: 2:16b

Lesson 6

"How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

Jesus brought joy and blessing to the wedding guests at Cana. He demonstrated his almighty power to change wine and men. The event in the last part of chapter 2 shows another side of Jesus. He did not bring joy to the pilgrims in Jerusalem, nor to those who were the stewards of the temple. Rather, he brought severe rebuking which they did not forget. May we learn here what it is that angers Jesus, so that we may not anger him. May the Lord come and make a holy place in my heart so that he may dwell there.

### 1. Jesus clears the temple (13-16)

Passover time was the most important time in the Jewish calendar, for it marked the Exodus from a life of bondage in Egypt. The temple was the heart of the nation, for it was the dwelling place of God. Animal sacrifices were made there to atone for sin, according to the instructions God gave Moses at Mount Sinai. The sacrificial system was given to teach men the holiness of God and the sinfulness of men. Blood represented life (Lev 11:17) and blood on the altar atoned for sin. The blood on the altar looked forward to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, shed for the sins of the world, once and for all.

After the Israelites settled in the Promised Land, Solomon built the temple, following the pattern God had given Moses in the wilderness. There was only one temple in the land--the temple at Jerusalem. It was the only place where sacrifices for sin were made. It was the place where God put his name.

At passover time, the religious leaders should have been thinking about how to help the pilgrims from every nation repent of their sins and worship God. They should have made the house of God a house of prayer for all nations. But they were more interested in the business possibilities which this important feast day afforded. They excused themselves by saying that they were doing the pilgrims a service, for after all, how convenient it was to purchase animals for sacrifice in the temple courts. But Jesus didn't see it this way.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, he and his disciples went immediately to the temple. Jesus saw buying and selling in the temple courts, and he was angry. He did not lose his temper. He made a whip of cords and drove the

animals out. He overturned the tables of the money changers and coins rolled everywhere. He said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market." Jesus was the Son who came to assert rightful lordship over his Father's house, when he saw that the servants in charge were misusing their privileges.

Jesus saw that the spiritual heart of the nation was becoming hard like money. The worship of God, not the making of easy money must be at the heart of the nation. The crass materialism at the heart of the temple and in the hearts of the religious leaders was no small matter. It revealed the deep corruption and moral decay of the nation. Jesus' dramatic action was to lead them to repentance.

Jesus is still angry to see materialism occupy the hearts and minds of those whom his Father created for his own glory.

## 2. Jesus and the Jewish leaders (17-21)

The Jewish leaders were angry. They did not accept Jesus' words. They resented his interference with their business. They asked him to show them a miraculous sign as proof of his authority. Jesus' answered in a riddle. He said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." Of course, they did not understand. They thought he was talking about the temple building itself. He was talking about the temple of his body. They remembered these words however, and later used them to convict and crucify Jesus. (Mk 14:58) Jesus could not help men who refused to accept the truth and did not listen to his words. Sign-seeking faith cannot grasp the word of God.

Jesus was not just answering in a riddle in order to make them mad. He was teaching them and his disciples a deep truth of God. He said that his own body was the temple. He was speaking about his death and resurrection. They would destroy his body on the cross; but he would rise again in three days. His blood shed on the cross was for the atonement of the sins of the world. He was the perfect sacrifice. His death gave meaning to the whole sacrificial system, for he is the Lamb of God whose blood is shed for the sins of the world. His sacrifice renders the temple and its sacrificial system obsolete.

## 3. Jesus and his disciples

Jesus' disciples did not understand him either, but they believed in him. They had confessed him to be the Messiah. They must have been surprised when he cleared the temple, but they sought the meaning of his action in the word of God. They found Psalm 69:9 a verse that seemed to describe Jesus' action--"Zeal for your house has consumed me." They listened carefully to Jesus' words of explanation, and they remembered. After he rose from the dead, they remembered his words and believed in him. Their faith rested on Scripture and on the word of Jesus--not on feeling or human understanding or logic. They were truly his disciples. (8:31,32)

Jesus did many other signs in Jerusalem, and many people believed in him because of the signs. But Jesus did not have any confidence in those whose faith rested in miraculous signs. Jesus wants us to listen to his word and accept it and believe in him. He wants our faith to rest on Scripture. Seeing miracles does not change anyone in his inner man. But God's word is a living and active double-edged sword that works in us to change us into children of God. Jesus wants us to have the kind of faith that changes our inner lives.

One Word: Lord, come and cleanse the temple of my heart and dwell there