

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S5E8

The Cleansing Of The Temple - (John 2:12-25)

Description – Today we're examining what happened when Jesus comes to Jerusalem for his first Passover as a Rabbi with his disciples.

Today we're looking at the cleansing of the temple as we continue through John 2.

John 2:12

¹²After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

It's an interesting line right here in John 2, between the first miracle at the wedding feast and the upcoming cleansing of the temple.

The text right here says Jesus has "Brothers." Now for those who like to say, "well, these are his disciples" that's not what the text says. It says his brothers, and then also points out his disciples.

Jesus's first passover: John 2:13

This could be the same one that happens at the end of Jesus's ministry and align with the other gospels. Remember, the Jews didn't have a problem with telling stories out of order to make a point.

Pastor tends to think there are two cleansings of the temple. Matthew, Mark & Luke do it at the end of the ministry, John puts it right at the beginning.

What you believe about this (one or two cleansings) determines the length of Jesus's ministry. If only one, then his ministry would have been only 2.5 years, but if two cleansings, then it could be 3.5 years.

Jesus has just come from the wedding feast, and he has his first 5 disciples with him. He's heading to the temple complex after officially starting his teaching ministry. He's coming as a Rabbi with his disciples.

John 2:13-25

¹³The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there. ¹⁵After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and

oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it is written: **Zeal for your house will consume me.**

¹⁸ So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."

²⁰ Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?"

²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

²³ While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. ²⁴ Jesus, however, would not entrust himself to them, since he knew them all ²⁵ and because he did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man.

In order to understand the cleansing of the Temple, you have to understand the temple and its function in society.

Mt. Moriah, where the temple was built, was the same mountain where Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice him. (Genesis 22:1-19)

Then we fast forward to 2 Samuel 24:13-25 where David buys the land for the temple, the threshing floor, from Araunah the Jebusite.

Why was the temple so important to them? It was the place where heaven and earth met.

Solomon builds the first temple, (1 Kings 6) and it's incredible. It's ornate and designed by the Jews and built as God instructed it to be built.

Then after the exile of the Jews, and the first temple being destroyed, the exiles returning to the land rebuild the second temple, but it's not nearly as nice or as ornate. (Haggai 2:2, Zechariah 4:6-10), In 521 BC.

So then in 21 BC Herod the Great begins to design a massive upgrade to the temple complex and it takes 46 years to finish the build. Herod's temple was more ornate than even Solomon's. They build all the way up to 63 AD on the temple complex.

There were different areas to the Jewish Temple, working from inside out:

1. The Holy Of Holies and The Holy Place
2. The Court of the Priests (Where sacrifices were offered)
 - a. Only the priests, who were of the lineage of Aaron could go in here.
3. The Court of the Jews
 - a. Only Jewish men could enter here.
4. The Court of the women
 - a. Larger than the first two, both Jewish men and women could come in here
5. The Court of the Gentiles
 - a. Non Jews, the limit of how close they could get in the Temple complex.

The Temple was one of the ancient wonders of the world, it was absolutely majestic.

Who's in control of this inner court of buying and exchanging and selling of animals for sacrifices? The corrupt priesthood, the Sadducees.

The Sadducees would set the exchange rate for the temple animals and sacrifices.

Josephus says that in 66 AD, there were 255,000 lambs sacrificed at Passover.

So just conservatively, if you said 10 people / family members per family for one lamb, then that puts the people at 2.5 - 3.0 Million in attendance for Passover.

Two things were happening in the Temple that Jesus was upset about:

Remember, on your travel to the temple, you'd bring your sacrifice; but traveling that far sometimes your lamb would get injured or have a blemish. Or you were traveling from the far east or west, and didn't bring one with you.

1. The temple was upcharging 4-5x as much for lambs as they would cost outside the city.
 - a. So if you paid \$100 for a lamb in Bethlehem, the same lamb would cost \$400-\$500 in the temple complex.
 - b. This upcharging was extremely upsetting to Jesus, as some legitimately had to purchase a lamb for sacrifice.
2. The second thing that upset Jesus was the temple tax:
 - a. The tax had to be paid in a shekel, but it was a special shekel, the Tiran Shekel, that had the image of a man on one side and an image of the eagle on the other side.
 - b. This was a violation of the law, as they had a coin that had a graven image on it, they weren't even supposed to have the coin in their pocket.



John MacArthur said the system in the temple was “A system of exploitation and perversion, it was anything but a quiet place to offer prayer to God.”

You’d think right away it was just about money, but it was way more than that. Jesus makes this whip of chords out of the “twisted rushes” or “Bull rushes” plant. It was a fibrous plant that existed and Jesus took it and made a rope whip out of it.

Why’d he make the whip? You weren’t allowed to take a weapon into the temple complex.

Zechariah 14:20-21

²⁰ On that day, the words HOLY TO THE LORD will be on the bells of the horses. The pots in the house of the LORD will be like the sprinkling basins before the altar. ²¹ Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of Armies. All who sacrifice will come and use the pots to cook in. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of Armies.

Zecharah’s prophecy about the Messiah coming to the temple showed that the Messiah would cleanse the temple from the “Canaanites” - These were viewed as merchants, as traders, and became known as brigands, troublemakers, etc. They could also be seen as zealots.

Psalms 69:9

⁹ because zeal for your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

Jesus’s mission was to restore the Temple, to put things into order.

In the Old Testament, God has a temple to be among his people. In the New Testament, God makes a people his Temple to dwell in.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

Malachi 3:1

"See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the LORD of Armies.

So the first part of Malachi's prophecy is John the Baptist, we know that. The second part is the coming Messiah.

But what does the Messiah come to do in the Temple?

Malachi 3:2-4

² But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and like launderer's bleach. ³ He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴ And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the LORD as in days of old and years gone by.

He's to restore the temple to proper order, to it's right use. He even cleanses the gold & silver in the Temple.

This is a clear part of what Jesus is supposed to do while he's here on earth. Malachi 3 says he's coming and will cleanse the temple and the priesthood.

The "coming one" was code word for "The Messiah"

Matthew 11:1-3

When Jesus had finished giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns. ² Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples ³ and asked him, "***Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?***"

What is John asking here? He's asking, Jesus, are you the Messiah?

Zechariah 9:9

⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

John is not asking about Jesus's identity. John is asking about Jesus's Kingdom prerogative. Jesus, why have you not inaugurated your Kingdom? Why is Herod still in charge? Why am I in prison?

Jesus responds to John, This is the kingdom agenda: Not the way you wanted it, and not the way you expected it, but it's happening the way God wants it to happen.

Matthew 11:4-6

⁴ Jesus replied to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, ⁶ and blessed is the one who isn't offended by me."

Jesus says basically, John, the Kingdom is here, but not the way you expected. And, John, I love you, but I'm not coming with the sword to free you from prison.

Jim Elliot said, "God, I don't want to live a long life, I want to live a life of impact for you." To recap where we are: Jesus enters the Temple for the first time as a shot across the bow to the religious leaders saying, You guys are on the clock, you need to get this mess cleaned up, or I'll do it for you. Jesus has put them all on notice, and gives them time to clean it up, but they don't. That's why he comes back a second time to cleanse the temple.

Next time we'll look at Nicodemus. (John 3)