

19. The Gospel of John—2:13-17 (d)

“The Temple of God” Pt.4

(2/18/18)

For the past few weeks, we have been studying a section in John’s gospel chapter two where Jesus cleanses the temple (v.13-17).

As we have seen, the temple was designed by God to be a holy place where people could go to have their sins atoned for and commune with the LORD—even a place where gentiles could go to ‘find’ God.

And yet, in Jesus’ day, it had been corrupted by the chief priests and Sadducees who had turned it into a money-making business—so much so that Jesus called it a *“den of thieves”*.

And it wasn’t until Jesus cleansed the temple from all of this corruption that it could become what God designed it to be—and as we said, the same is true with God’s temple, the Church (Eph. 2), today.

B. What the Church is to be

1. The Church is to be a house of prayer

Matthew 21:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

¹³ And He said to them, "It is written, '*My house shall be called a house of prayer*,' ...

Here Jesus quotes from Isaiah 56:7 where twice in one verse God calls His temple *“a house of prayer”*.

2. The Church is to be a place of worship

But the word ‘**prayer**’ in Matthew 21:13, “*My house shall be called a house of prayer*” also carries with it the idea of *adoration and devotion*—or in other words **worship**.

So not only is the Church to be *a house of prayer*—it is also to be a place of *worship*.

And as I’ve already said, we will look at the subject of worship in detail when we get to John 4—so I’ll save any further comments on worship until then.

3. The Church is to be a healing place

Matthew 21:12, 14 (NKJV)

¹²Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves...¹⁴Then *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

When I say that the church is to be a healing place, I don’t mean primarily *physical* healing—although God still heals many today from physical infirmities.

But by Matthew only mentioning the **blind** and **lame** that Jesus healed in the temple when there were obviously many more who no doubt came to Him that were suffering from other kinds of diseases and infirmities.

I see in this that the Holy Spirit wants us to broaden our understanding of the church as a healing place to include the healing of the ‘*spiritually blind and lame*’.

The spiritually **blind** would be a reference to unbelievers (2Cor.4:4); and the **lame** could be a reference to believers who’s walk is somehow impaired maybe by sin or emotional trauma or depression which has ‘crippled’ their walk with the Lord.

4. The Church is to be a place where God's Word is taught faithfully and in truth

Luke 19:45, 47 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it...⁴⁷ And He was teaching daily in the temple...

Wherever Jesus went He taught people God's Word—but especially when He was in the temple.

You see, the house of God was to be a place where people could go and know they would hear the truth of God proclaimed, whether thru prophet, priest, rabbi—or in this case thru the Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ!

We are living at a time of great deception because Satan, the god of this world, is in control of most of what flows thru this fallen world system in the way of information.

There are only two information streams (spiritually speaking) that flow thru this world from which all ideologies have descended.

They both got their start in the Garden of Eden—1) the Word of God; and 2) the lies of the Devil, sometimes called the “*wisdom of this world*”—

James 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

Folks, this, whether you realize it or not, is what spiritual warfare is really all about—a battle for control of the way people think, because Satan knows if he can control the way you think—he can control the way you live.

And that's one of the main reasons why Jesus came into the world—to proclaim God's truth—

John 18:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth..."

Satan's lies are so powerful and pervasive that only God's truth can deliver people from them—

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ ... "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." [i.e.—free from spiritual deception]

By saying this, Jesus was acknowledging that there is a spiritual war going on in this world—an invisible war that all of us are subject to.

In fact, it was with regard to this very point that John the apostle, in introducing us to Jesus, began his gospel with when he stated—

John 1:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Here, John introduces us to the classic battle between light and darkness, between good and evil—between God and Satan.

In the Scriptures "*light*" and "*darkness*" are used quite often as metaphors—

"Light" is often used in the Scriptures to represent—*spiritual truth, holiness, moral purity and obedience toward God.*

"Darkness" is often used in the Scriptures to represent—*spiritual error, evil, moral impurity and rebellion against God.*

Furthermore, in the Bible God Himself is called '*light*' (1John 1:5), and the devil is called the *power* or the *personification* of '*darkness*.'

The conflict between light and darkness is as old as mankind, as I just said it got started on earth in the Garden of Eden.

But understand, John isn't saying that they are *equal* forces battling against each other—"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend [*'overcome'*] it." (John 1:5)

By saying this, John is telling us that Jesus invaded a world of lies and spiritual darkness with the light of God's truth (the gospel) which alone could set men and women free from the devil's control.

The Bible says that Satan has taken captive the people of this world thru his lies and the only thing strong enough to smash the prison of deception and set the captives free is God's truth. (2Tim. 2:24-26)

That's assuming, of course, that Christians are attending churches that are faithfully teaching them God's Word and equipping them to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, many churches do not see themselves as spiritual boot-camps anymore (more like Christian Country Clubs), and many Christians don't see themselves as soldiers of Christ—which is a big reason we're losing the culture war.

We are losing the culture war *because* so many Christians no longer think of themselves as soldiers fighting a war—and because of it they are AWOL.

They aren't fighting the good fight of faith—because Christianity to them isn't about serving the Lord—it's about the Lord serving them.

In other words, they're not soldiers—they're consumers, and church is where they go to consume products and services.

Many modern church-goers don't come to church to be trained to fight spiritual warfare—but rather they come to church to: be blessed, to socialize, make business contacts, be entertained through skits and high-powered Christian performers, maybe grab a Starbucks and lunch in the food court...etc.

And while I'm not saying any of that is evil—it's definitely a distraction from what church is supposed to be and do!

1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵ but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Church of Jesus Christ is—“**...the pillar and ground of the truth**”.

When Paul says the Church is a **pillar**, he is using an architectural image which would mean much to Timothy living in Ephesus—for the great temple of Diana was there which had 127 pillars.

A pillar, of course, was used to support or hold up a structure—but, in those days, a pillar was often set up ‘free standing’ in a public marketplace and notices were posted on it—in that context it became a ‘proclaimer’.

And so, the first thing that we Christians are to do as ‘pillars’ is hold up and proclaim God’s truth to the people of this world (the Great Commission).

But then, Paul says that we, as the church of the living God, are not just to be pillars—but also the ‘**ground of the truth**’.

The word **ground** in the Greek suggests a *bulwark*—the dictionary defines ‘bulwark’ as: “*a solid wall-like structure raised for defense*”.

As Christians we are not only to proclaim the Word of God but we are also to defend it against the attacks of the enemy—“*earnestly defending the faith*” as Jude admonished us.

In Jude 3 “the faith” is a reference to N.T. truth and in particular *the gospel*—that we are to proclaim and defend with every ounce of strength within us as soldiers of Christ.

Warren Wiersbe—

“As a *bulwark*, the church protects the truth and makes sure it does not fall...When local churches turn away from the truth or compromise it in their ministry—then the enemy makes progress. Sometimes church leaders must take a militant stand against sin and apostasy. This does not make them popular, but it does please the Lord”.

Jesus promised that against His Church—“*the gates of hell would not be victorious*” because God’s truth would keep us safe from Satan’s lies.

Any church that is not built on the foundation of God’s Word will not stand.

5. The Church is to be a place where Jesus is honored and exalted

Matthew 21:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise*’?”

Here Jesus quoted from Psalm 8:2—but what an indictment against the hypocrisy and corruption of the spiritual leaders in His day.

Turning God's house into a den of thieves didn't bother them—but praise to Jesus did!

“Children” is literally “boys” and probably refers to the many young teenaged boys who had passed their Bar mitzvahs and had come to Jerusalem each to celebrate their first Passover as a man.

These Jewish leaders knew that **“Son of David”** was a Messianic title and **“Hosanna”** meant ‘*save now*’.

The word **indignant** means ‘*furious*’.

These supposed spiritual leaders in Israel were furious that these young people were praising Jesus.

They were besides themselves with rage that they were honoring and exalting Him as Messiah and Savior of the nation.

You say, “*Why did that bother them so much?*”

The scribes and chief priests were furious because *they* were the spiritual leaders of the nation (educated, degreed), and if *they* didn't believe Jesus was who He claimed to be and refused to honor Him as Messiah—how dare these young nobodies proclaim to Him to be so!

And that's often why revivals don't start with the religious establishment but with young people.

There are many spiritual leaders across this country that have their doctorates in theology but don't believe that Jesus is the virgin born Son of God.

They give Him lip service but will not honor Him, exalt Him or accept Him for Who He really is—and those attending their churches follow them in their unbelief.

The question as to who the Christ would be is an important one—so much so that Jesus asked some of the Jewish religious leaders about it—

Matthew 22:42 (NKJV)

⁴² ... "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"

This is the supreme question when it comes to understanding and therefore believing in the one and only true Christ—is He just the son of a man or is He the Son of God (God in human form)?

Matthew 22:42 (NKJV)

⁴² ... "What do you [Pharisees] think about the Christ [Messiah]? Whose Son is He?" **They said to Him, "*The Son of David.*"**

The response of the Pharisees to Jesus' question was the standard belief held by the Jewish people as to whom the Messiah would be when he finally came to the earth.

Most Jews believed that Messiah was going to be a descendant of David (2Sam.7), and like David *a man*—not the Son of God.

(Most of the Jewish religious leadership in Jesus' day didn't even believe He was the Messiah let alone the Son of God).

As we, as a nation, become less and less religious and more and more secular—this is becoming more and more the common view in our country concerning Christ.

Many today believe Jesus was a good man, a great more example, possibly the greatest teacher who has ever lived—but just a man not the Son of God.

How anybody can say that Jesus was a great religious teacher and yet reject everything He taught about Himself and salvation is ridiculous.

If you were to take to the street and canvass people as to who they believe Jesus Christ was—for many today the conversation would go something like this—

- ***“Who is Jesus Christ?”*** – *“Well I believe he was a great religious teacher sent here by God to teach us truth.”*
- ***“Do you believe He was God in human form?”*** – *“No not really, I believe we’re all on our way to god consciousness...”*
- ***“Well do you believe that He is the Savior of the world who came into the world to save us from sin?”***—*“No I don’t believe we’re sinners. I don’t believe there is any ultimate right or wrong—it’s just whatever is right for you.”*
- ***“Do you believe He’s the only way to heaven?”*** – *“No I believe there are many roads that lead to heaven.”*

So, what makes Him such a great teacher in the minds of so many seeing as how they reject everything He taught about Himself and salvation?

So many people want to acknowledge that Jesus was a good man, a moral man and a great teacher—but stop short of believing that He is God.

C.S. Lewis—

“I am trying to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claims to be God.” That is one thing we must not say.

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the devil of hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”

Why is this such an important issue?—Because believing that Jesus is God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity is absolutely essential for salvation—

John 8:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that **I Am He**, you will die in your sins."

Look, as C.S. Lewis pointed out—either Jesus Christ was a liar, a lunatic or He was and is LORD—the Son of the living God.

But again, many liberal churches deny all of that—they don't honor the true Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible.

Instead they have a Jesus who was a wonderful teacher and great moral leader—but not the Son of God.

In their minds He did not die to save sinners from eternal punishment in hell (they don't believe in hell); or the One Who is coming again someday to judge the living and the dead and establish a kingdom that will never end (they don't believe the kingdom is literal, they believe it's allegorical—'amillennial').

And so, they have a false 'Jesus' while failing to honor and exalt the true Jesus.

But listen to me, we evangelicals can believe all the right things about Jesus and still not honor Him as Lord over our lives—

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? (Comment)

And finally, when the Church becomes **a house of prayer and worship, a healing place, a place where God's Word is taught faithfully, and a place where Jesus is honored and exalted**—then the Church will become...

6. A place of dynamic spiritual power and effectiveness

Matthew 21:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did...**(miraculous power being demonstrated)

When the Church is holy, living by God's Word and walking in the Spirit.

When she is uncorrupted by greed, materialism and carnality.

When she doesn't just call Jesus 'Lord' but bows in humble obedience to His Lordship...

When the Church becomes all that God has commanded her to be—then and only then will she accomplish all that He has called her to do. (This also applies to us as the personal temple of God)

This is what the temple of God today must be if the Church in these last days is going to impact this world for our Savior.

I pray that Jesus cleanses the house of God in our day so that the Church can once again be all that God designed it to be.