

The Second Sign John 2:12-25 *www.bible-sermons.org* June 15, 2008

Last week we saw that Jesus' first sign that declared Him to be the Messiah was the fulfillment of the prophecy Jacob gave to Judah. Jacob predicted that a descendent of Judah would be a great leader and would have such abundance that he wouldn't worry about tying his donkey even to the best of grapevines. (Genesis 49:10-11) There would be so much wine that he would wash his clothes in grape juice. It was a poetic way to say that this descendent would usher in abundance for the descendents of Israel. Jesus' first miracle sign, changing those 180 gallons of water to wine, declared that that time had come. He was the One that ushers in abundance, abundance of grace, mercy, love, joy, and peace. (John 10:10)

Commented [notes1]: 10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.
11 He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.
Gen 49:10-11 (NIV)

Today we are going to look at the second sign, the cleansing of the Temple. Jacob also told Judah, ⁹ *You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness--who dares to rouse him?* Genesis 49:9 (NIV) Gentle Jesus meek and mild is also the Lion of Judah.

Commented [notes2]: 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
John 10:10 (NIV)

Our passage begins with Jesus' family and disciples traveling to Capernaum from Cana. It is about fifteen miles away, a six to eight hour walk. It is difficult to tell where this fits in with the other Gospel writers' accounts. I think it is before the rejection in Nazareth, Jesus' home, and the attempted assassination of Jesus because his family is still with him. (Luke 4:29) This would be taking place in the spring of either 27 or 30 A.D. (The two popular opinions differ on the date.)

Commented [notes3]: 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.
Luke 4:29 (NIV)

¹² *After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.* The wedding was en route to Jerusalem, so instead of returning home, they kept going in the direction they would travel to the Passover Feast. Later, He will move to Capernaum and make it his home. (Mark 2:1) It is where Peter and Andrew were living at the time. The very home of Peter has been discovered. The ancient synagogue was just a block down the main street. (Mark 1:29)

Commented [notes4]: 1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.
Mark 2:1 (NIV)

¹³ *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* Cana, where the wedding took place was in the hill country. Capernaum is on the shore of Galilee, 700 feet below sea level. They would travel down the Jordan Valley to the lowest spot on the surface of the earth, Jericho (-1350ft.), and then up to the central mountains in which Jerusalem lies (2500 ft.). That is why we have these up and down words in the text. Jesus had probably made this journey every year with His family. Now His ministry has begun and some disciples are with Him.

Commented [notes5]: 29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.
Mark 1:29 (NIV)

¹⁴ *In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.* Sometime during Jesus' younger years (6A.D. – 15 A.D.), Annas had become the High Priest. He instituted a system for selling of sacrificial animals and exchanging money in the outer court of the temple. It was a very lucrative business and made his family very powerful. Jesus must have witnessed the changes in the Temple after Annas became high priest.

If you brought a lamb all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem, you would first have to have it approved in the temple by specially trained priests. The sacrificial lambs

were to be unblemished. You wouldn't want to give to God some animal that you didn't want because it was blind or lame. (Malachi 1:8) Not only did the lamb foreshadow the Savior who would become a sacrifice for our sins, but it was also a gift of gratitude to God. It shouldn't be something you were getting rid of.

The priests took this to the extreme. They would train as shepherds to get to know the sheep and learn any possible reason to disqualify an animal. Did it have any scars under the wool? Were there any discolorations or birthmarks? Did it have something that could develop into a blemish? If they looked hard enough, they could probably find something. Then you had to buy one of the lambs from the vendors in the outer court. The outer court was to be a place for teaching and for Gentiles (anyone not Jewish) to worship. (Isaiah 56:7) But now it was filled with merchants hawking their animals and exchanging coins. You paid the priest to inspect the animal you brought, and it was probably rejected. Then you bought a pre-approved lamb from a merchant at up to seven times the market rate.

You also had to exchange your coinage for the temple tax coin, the only one acceptable for the adult male tax. (One tetradrachma for two males over 20) The tax was for the upkeep of the temple and was necessary, but what wasn't necessary is the requirement that only a special coin be used. A coin changer could make close to a day's wages on one exchange. The priests got their cut of all this moneymaking. After encountering all that, you'd really be in the mood to worship, right? And if you were a foreigner, coming to find out what the God of Israel was all about, what kind of impression would you get standing in that outer court?

I think Jesus saw this year after year before His ministry began. When it was time for Him to begin, He was anxious to right this horrible wrong. At the leading of the Holy Spirit, He could finally do something about it.

Imagine if we rented spaces in the entryway of the church, and you had to buy certain items for worship. One vendor says, "Hymnals for only \$75! Another shouts, "Get your non-gilded hymnals for only \$60!" This is going on while you are trying to listen to the sermon. And then see the tourists poke their heads in to see what Wayside is all about. I don't know about you, but I'd be ready to make a whip of cords.

But it was worse than that. The temple was **the** place to worship. This was the place that represented God to the world! And the pastor is driving a new Mercedes and has a 10,000 square foot mansion in a country club. (Similarities to any existing churches or pastors are purely coincidental.) There is nothing wrong with merchandising, or money making, or wealth, but when it is done in the name of God, at the expense of people longing to find the true God, out of a heart of greed, it breaks the heart of God! Justice probably isn't far behind. (Micah 3:11)

¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. Filled with a just and righteous indignation, He cleaned up the outer court. This was no small task. It was nine football fields long and several wide. It was

Commented [notes6]: 8 When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty.
Mal 1:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."
Isaiah 56:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 11 Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."
Micah 3:11 (NIV)

probably the shaded colonnade areas on the sides near the entrance that were franchised out for merchandising.

¹⁶ *To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"* Are you surprised that the temple guards didn't stop Jesus? I imagine the crowds that had gathered were cheering Jesus on. The guards didn't dare stop Him or they'd risk the wrath of the crowd that detested this extortion. Those new disciples of Jesus must have been proud but a little frightened at the same time.

Like the first sign, this sign fulfilled many Messianic expectations. Ezekiel had predicted a new temple. Zechariah wrote of a cleansing in which there would no longer be a (Canaanite) merchant in the house of the Lord. (Zechariah 14:21) Malachi predicted that the Messiah would purify the priests so that righteous sacrifices could be offered. (Malachi 3:1,3) Passover itself was a time to think of purity. Before Passover, every Jewish family to this day cleans their house of leaven, which represents sin. (Exodus 12:15)

¹⁷ *His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."* Jesus would later prophesy that the temple would be completely destroyed. (Matthew 24:2) If He understood that, then was He only speaking about that which was passing? Or is He also speaking to what the Temple represents. Today, you and I are the habitation of God by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) When He comes to your heart, what does He find? Is it so filled with the commotion of business and greed that genuine worship is next to impossible?

The outer court of the Temple was that area where the world came in contact with the faith of the Jewish people. Our outer court is our body. It is where the world comes in contact with our faith. How we act and what we say gives them an impression of our God. Are we wondering if they are a potential customer, a possible tither, a new business contact, or are we thinking of their eternal soul and God's heart for them? When Jesus comes into our temple, does He need to sit down and make a whip, or is He glad to see genuine worship with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? Is He glad about the loving way we represent Him to the world, or full of righteous indignation that we would so misrepresent Him? What a picture this action paints for us today!

Just as God dwelt in the inner court of the Temple in the days of Jesus, so Jesus dwells in our inner court, our spirit, today. (Romans 8:9) The only way we can represent Him to the world is through our outer court. Individually we are the temple of God, but we are corporately as well. As an individual, we are each give people impressions of our God, and corporately as a church we do too. What a tragedy to misrepresent Him. Amen? Jesus is zealous for His house, because He loves the world.

We often hear people talk about how they don't believe in Christianity because of an encounter they had with someone who said they are a Christian or because of an experience they had with a church. Someone's outer court has misrepresented Jesus. Are we zealous, like Jesus, to see today's temple represent Him?

Commented [notes9]: 11 Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."
Micah 3:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: Malachi 3:1 (NIV)
1 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

Commented [notes11]: Malachi 3:3 (NIV)
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,

Commented [notes12]: 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.
Ex 12:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."
Matt 24:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.
Eph 2:22 (KJV)

Commented [notes15]: 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.
Romans 8:9 (NIV)

In referring to Psalm 69:9, John was also associating Jesus with the righteous sufferer. In the Psalm, David had been forsaken by family, mocked, and hated. (Psalm 69:8) It foreshadowed what was to come. It was zealous love for you and me that ultimately consumed Jesus on the cross. That was the ultimate display of zeal for his house. (John 6:51)

¹⁸ Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" They dared not stop Him, but they did challenge His authority to take such action. They asked for a sign. He was acting with prophetic authority, so they wanted a sign to prove He had it. Just as Moses threw his rod down and it turned into a snake and put his hand in his robe and it turned leprous, so they thought Jesus should give some miracle sign. (Exodus 4:3-8)

Do you need authority to do what is right? Doesn't right action come with God's authority? You can demand a sign of God, but He isn't going to give one unless it will have a positive affect on the heart of those who see it.

Jesus' answer to their challenge was the ultimate sign and a reinterpretation of what the temple is. ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." This is Jesus' answer to everyone that says, "If you'd just give me a sign, I would believe." He did! After performing the second sign, He spoke of the ultimate of all signs, the seventh sign, resurrection. We (mankind) destroyed His body and He raised it up in three days. That is an indisputable miracle that can speak to the greatest skeptic. John will testify at the end of this Gospel of the spear that pierced his side and how the blood and water flowed out. (John 19:34) He was dead. They carried His body to a tomb, and three days later, He raised it up and walked out of that tomb alive.

Andre Cole, a venerated illusionist and creator of illusions, said that to try to recreate the miracles of Jesus as illusions, he'd need semis full of elaborate equipment and a team of technicians. Illusionists do some pretty wild things, but do you think one of them will ever say, "Destroy my body, and I'll raise it up?" Not on your life – or theirs.

There is an interesting theme in some of the conversations in the Gospel of John. Jesus says something profound and significant, and people completely misinterpret what He is saying. We'll see it in the next chapter with Nicodemus and the following one with the woman at the well. The religious leaders think Jesus is talking about the Temple Herod had remodeled. ²⁰ The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

This second temple was built by Zerubbabel, but Herod the Great began a remodel of the Temple inner building 20/19 B.C. and finished it in a year and a half. Then the work began in 18/17 B.C. to remodel and expand the temple outer court. It was such a magnificent site that some rabbi said that if you haven't seen the Temple, you've never seen a beautiful building. The religious leaders thought Jesus was referring to that magnificent Temple. ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. Jesus is speaking prophetically and the religious leaders are thinking in the natural realm. If the Temple was the dwelling of God on earth (2Chronicles 7:2),

Commented [notes16]: for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
Psalms 69:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 8 I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;
Psalms 69:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
John 6:51 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 3 The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.

4 Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

5 "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has appeared to you."

6 Then the LORD said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow.

7 "Now put it back into your cloak," he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

8 Then the LORD said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second.

Ex 4:3-8 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

John 19:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 1 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

2 Chron 7:1 (NIV)

there has never been a more perfect temple than that of Jesus of Nazareth in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Colossians 1:19), the exact representation of God's very being. (Hebrews 1:3)

Commented [notes22]: 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, Col 1:19 (NIV)

²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. I can imagine that it wasn't long after the resurrected Jesus showed up in that locked room in which the disciples were cowering (John 20:19), when one of them, maybe John, said, "Hey, remember when Jesus said that the sign he would give was that if they destroyed His temple He would raise it in three days? He must have been talking about how they would crucify Him and how He would rise from the dead." And looking around the room of disciples, you could see the light come on each face. And then someone chimes in, "Yeh, the zeal for His house did consume Him!" and all together they said, "Whoa!" That's a contemporary version, but you get the idea.

Commented [notes23]: The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Heb 1:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" John 20:19 (NIV)

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. Wait, didn't the leaders just ask for a sign? Many people saw the signs, then why didn't the religious leaders? This is the first Passover of Jesus' ministry, and He is displaying the power of God in healing those in need. To believe in His name is to place their faith in Him as Messiah.

²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. ²⁵ He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man. Jesus didn't let a campaign manager direct Him. He didn't confide His heart to anyone, nor did He lay out the things that God had planned for the next two years of ministry to anyone. Man would certainly try to steer Him in a different direction. When He finally did tell the disciples about the cross, Peter rebuked Him and told Him that will never happen. (Matthew 16:22)

Commented [notes25]: 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Matt 16:22 (NIV)

Jesus doesn't need anyone to tell Him about how wicked and treacherous the heart of man is. He knows what is in man. He knows what is in your heart and mine. He knows what temptations we would succumb to. He knows Satan's trump card in our lives, and so He teaches us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." (Matthew 6:13) There must have been dozens of people that approached Jesus with a great plan for His life and power, but Jesus did not entrust Himself to them. He knows our motives.

Commented [notes26]: 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ' Matt 6:13 (NIV)

Our passage today teaches us that Jesus gave signs and the ultimate sign, resurrection, for those who are seeking the truth. If we believe in Jesus, He comes and makes His home with us, which makes us His temple. (John 14:23) Still, we must be very careful what the world sees in us. Do they see just another greedy soul, or the life of Jesus? We know what is in the heart of man too, perhaps not to the extent that Jesus did. We know that if our outer court is to be a place of prayer, inviting others to know Jesus, our inner court must be transformed by His presence. Does your outer court need a cleansing this morning? Are there things that need to be chased out so that it can be a place conducive to worship? Can you be still within and know He is God or is there too much racket? The world so desperately needs to see Jesus in us. Let's cooperate with His Spirit. Amen? Let Him purify your temple.

Commented [notes27]: 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. John 14:23 (NIV)