

- I. The second of many signs and wonders (the second half of the story)
 - A. John 2:13-22 . . . The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [14] And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. [15] And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; [16] and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." [17] His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." [18] The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" [19] Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [20] The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" [21] But He was speaking of the temple of His body. [22] So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.
 - B. We started this story two weeks ago, and at that time we looked at three truths conveyed by this story for living the Christian life. First, like Jesus, we are to have a tender heart toward the poor. Second, true and lasting change requires changing on the inside as well as the outside. Third, like Jesus, we ought to have a devouring zeal for the purity of God's dwelling places – which includes you and me, each local gathering of believers, and the church universal.
 - C. Pray
- II. Review and reminder about zeal for holiness
 - A. I know our study today is supposed to be the second half of the story I just read, but I want to begin with a prophecy from Zechariah 14:20-21, that speaks of a time when all that is in God's kingdom will be pure and holy – just as God is pure and holy.
 1. Now you may be wondering why I am starting here, so let me explain. We ended our study of the first half of John 2:13-22 with an emphasis on having a consuming zeal for the purity and holiness of God's dwelling places. And though you may feel like you have heard this emphasis more than you need to, I want to start here today in order

to reinforce a truth that is too often overlooked or even forgotten by Christians. And that truth is this: Following repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from the penalty, power, and practice of sin,

- a. Holiness of life is the only path to the abundant life of confident faith, inward peace, and heavenly joy – regardless of the circumstances.
 - b. Holiness of life is the only way to draw near to God so that He draws near to you.
 - c. Holiness of life is the only path to a genuine, heart-felt confidence that your security is in God, or in other words, that you are always perfectly and totally safe in His hands.
 - d. And holiness of life is the only way to enter into and enjoy intimate fellowship with God.
2. You see, God does not require and I do not promote purity and holiness of life for its own sake, but rather because a pure and holy life, or at least a sincere and intentional pursuit of a pure and holy life is the only path to possessing and enjoying all the wonderful things God has for us and Jesus died so we can obtain them.
- B. And so, with that in mind, I will read Zechariah 14:20-21, “In that day (which is also known as the Day of the Lord, or the day when Christ returns) there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD" (This is significant because it indicates that all the animals will be holy, not just those on God’s list of animals that can be sacrificed.). And the cooking pots in the LORD'S house will be like the bowls before the altar (The cooking pots refers to the pots used to boil the part of the sacrifice that was to be eaten by the one making the sacrifice and by the priests and Levites on duty. The bowls were used to hold the blood from the sacrifice, which was then sprinkled on and around the alter. In other words, when Christ returns and sets up God’s eternal kingdom, the cooking pots will be as pure and holy as the bowls used to catch and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice). [21] Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts (So not just the cooking pots in the Temple, but every cooking pot in the city and entire kingdom, will be holy); and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day.” (Some Bibles put the word “merchant” in place of Canaanite. If we use the word “merchant,” it gives this prophecy a clearer link to Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple. And yet, if we use the

word Canaanite, the point is still clear, for both the word merchant and the word Canaanite refer to what is impure and unholy, and God is saying that neither will be in His dwelling place in that day.)

1. This raises the question: Why is God so intent on having everything that is in His eternal kingdom, perfectly and completely holy?
 - a. First of all, let me remind you that perfect and universal holiness has been God's intention from the beginning. And as we know, it was not God, but the devil and the foolishness of our ancestors who brought rebellion and sin into God's pure and holy environment.
 - b. Therefore, though this prophecy in Zechariah speaks of something to come, it is not speaking of something new, but something restored. Which takes us back to my question: Why is God so intent on having everything that is in His eternal kingdom, perfectly and completely holy?
2. The answer is simple. There can be no heaven, no pure love, no untainted righteousness, no perfect peace, no unabated joy, no perfect health – physically, mentally, and emotionally, no damaged or broken relationships, and no mutually satisfying and unending intimacy with God where any amount of selfishness, sin, and the influence of the devil exists.
 - a. The reality is, the devil's power to deceive and sins power to damage and destroy what God created for good cannot be contained. It must be removed.
 - b. And that is exactly what God will do when Christ returns. He is going to remove the devil and all those who have followed the rebellious and sinful ways of the devil.
3. Now if God has made it clear that evil must be removed in order for us to dwell in a perfect and heavenly environment for eternity, then surely the same must be true for us today. Selfishness and sin must be removed and replaced with purity and holiness if we are to enter into – as much as is possible in this world – the abundant life God created for us to experience and enjoy.
 - a. Now it is true that we cannot – in this life – enter into this abundant life as fully and perfectly as God intended from the beginning.
 - b. However, by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the illuminating and leading work of the Holy Spirit, the empowering work of God, the application of the living word, and by the encouragement and help of each other, we can make great progress in the pursuit of

purity and holiness of life, and in so doing, go deeper and deeper into the abundant life God has for His children.

4. Therefore, we can, and we will experience the beginnings of heaven in this life if we will actively and persistently pursue purity and holiness of life in all our behavior.
5. And so, having been reminded of this truth, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1), for if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we will gain that life and relationship with God which truly satisfies, both in this life and in the life to come (Matthew 5:6).

III. Jesus explains the basis of His authority for cleansing the Temple

A. John 2:18 . . . The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

1. The Jewish religious leaders did not respond to Jesus' cleansing the Temple by having Him arrested, but rather they asked Him to justify His actions by showing them some miraculous sign to prove He had the right to do what He did. Why?
2. The most probable answer is that they thought He might be the Messiah, but they wanted proof before they would accept Him as such. So they asked Him to do something miraculous, that is, something only God could do.

B. As we compare vs 17 to vs 18, we see two different responses to Jesus actions in the Temple that day.

1. As the disciples watched what Jesus did, they remembered that in Psalm 69:9, it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume Me." In other words, upon seeing what Jesus did, they turned to God's word to see what it had to say about such behavior.
2. In contrast, the Jewish leaders watched and then asked for some supernatural proof that Jesus had the right to do what He did. In other words, the Jews looked for some immediate, visible, and miraculous proof to confirm that Jesus' behavior was from God.
3. My point here is that the disciples looked to what God had already revealed in order to understand the situation at hand. In other words, they trusted what God had already revealed, in the scriptures, to give them sufficient information to make godly sense of the current situation.
4. In contrast, the Jews were unwilling to depend on what God had already revealed in His word. They wanted see proof with their own

eyes, and they wanted that proof presented according to their ideas of what would confirm that God was present and active in the situation at hand.

5. But why does this matter?
 - a. Because trust in God should drive us to the word of God as our first and foremost source for understanding and making sense of life and life's situations.
 - b. God's word is to be our first and foremost source for discerning right from wrong – in ourselves and in others, and for determining what to do when we do not know what to do.
 - c. I understand that this requires a growing faith in God, a growing knowledge of God's word, prayer for insight and understanding, and the time to ponder portions of scripture that are not easily understood or where the application is not crystal clear.
 - d. However, we are able see into God's word – and especially so as we take the time to do so, and as we live a pure and holy life, and as we are empowered by God and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.
 6. Therefore, let us be like the disciples, and turn first to the word of God to discern how we are to understand what is happening, or what we are being told, or what is coming.
- C. John 2:19 . . . Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
1. Instead of giving the Jews some immediate miraculous proof that He was the Messiah and that God was in His actions, Jesus gave them a prediction that had to be fulfilled before it would provide an indisputable sign.
 2. Now let me remind you that John's primary purpose in telling these stories is to show that Jesus is both human and divine. And to that end, John presents us with a statement by Jesus that confirms He is both human and divine.
 - a. The first part of this statement, "Destroy this temple," shows us that Jesus is human in that He can be put to death.
 - b. The second part of this statement, "and in three days I will raise it up," show us that Jesus is divine in that He can and will raise himself up from the dead.
- D. John 2:20 . . . The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

1. Interestingly, the Jews asked for a miraculous sign as proof of Jesus' authority to cleanse the Temple, but they decided Jesus' proposal of a miraculous sign was too impossible to believe.
2. Sadly, Christians too easily do the same thing in relation to some of God's revealed truth in His word.
 - a. Some doubt because they hold science, logic, and the teachings of intellectuals to be more credible than what God has said.
 - b. Some doubt because of cultural or social pressure to distrust God and His word.
 - c. Some doubt out of fear that God will not do what He says in the way they want God to do it.
 - d. Some doubt because they are unable to figure out how God could possibly do what He says He will do.
3. In other words, though we Christians want an all-powerful God who works miracles, some of us decide some of what He claims to have done, or is doing, or says He will do is just not believable.
4. My choice is to trust God first, and from that position look at life as it is or as it is becoming. I urge you to do the same.

E. John 2:21 . . . But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

1. The Jews misunderstood what Jesus was saying. They were thinking He was talking about the Jerusalem Temple when He was speaking about His body. But to be fair, even the disciples did not see the practical truth in what Jesus was saying until after the resurrection.
2. However, looking at Jesus' words after the fact of the resurrection and in light of the larger messages of the Bible, we can see in it a truth that we are wise to unquestionably believe and live accordingly.
 - a. And that truth is simply this: To bring to us all the benefits of the resurrection, Jesus had to die. And in that same way, to gain all the benefits of the resurrection – in this life and in the next – we must die.
 - b. But why must death precede life? Why must we die in order to be born again?
 - (1) Death is the only way to break the hold Satan and sin have over us, and it is only in breaking that "hold" that we can live unto God and godliness.
 - (2) Now it makes no difference if our dying is all at once or incremental, we still must die before new life can come.
 - c. In other words, just as a seed must fall into the ground and die in order for new life to spring forth and bear fruit, so we must

die to the world, to sin, to our fleshly desires and ways, and to the devil's sweet treats in order to come alive to God and the abundant life.

3. Returning to John's explanation of what Jesus meant, we know from other scriptures that Jesus' body was a temple because He was a dwelling place of God. For example, Paul affirms this in Colossians 2:9, where he says, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

IV. Conclusion

- A. John 2:22 . . . So when [Jesus] was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.
 1. You may not understand what is happening at the moment or you might not have any idea how God could work out a particular situation for good.
 2. But once again, I encourage you to be like the disciples. As situations come up, or as you are passing through them, or after they have passed, look back to what you already know from God's word to see if there is something there that enlightens your understanding and strengthens your faith in the love and goodness of God.