

Text: John 2:12-22

Title: Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, because of His zeal for His Father's house.

Time: 1/21/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: On the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, in the village that was once called Capernaum, sit the ruins of an octagon church built in the fifth century A.D. to honor martyrs. About 25 years ago, archaeologists figured out why that church was built in that place.

Underneath the church, they unearthed a very simple first-century home. According to a Biblical Archaeology Society article, the home originally had coarse walls and a roof of earth and straw. It consisted of a few small rooms that surrounded two open courtyards. The article goes on to explain why archaeologists were so excited to have found this simple home under the church:

“In the years immediately following Jesus’ death, the function of the house changed dramatically. The house’s main room was completely plastered over from floor to ceiling – a rarity for houses of the day. At about the same time, the house’s pottery, which had previously been household cooking pots and bowls, now consisted entirely of large storage jars and oil lamps. Such radical alterations indicate that the house no longer functioned as a residence but instead had become a place for communal gatherings, possibly even the first Christian gatherings, a key factor in how Christianity began. As with many Biblical archaeology discoveries, often the small details most convincingly tie ancient material remains to Biblical events and characters” [<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/the-house-of-peter-the-home-of-jesus-in-capernaum>].

In other words, at the time of the death of Christ, this simple house in Capernaum was a special place to first century believers, who turned it into their local church meeting house. For this reason, archaeologists have concluded that this house was known by those believers to be the house of Peter, where the Lord typically stayed, and where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-16; Mark 1:29-31).

It is also where Jesus, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples went for a short time after the wedding in Cana (v. 12). It was roughly a fifteen-mile journey eastward down to the shores of Galilee. Evidently, Jesus's family, which now included younger siblings, the other children of Mary and her now deceased husband Joseph, was to make a new home in Capernaum as Jesus planned to begin His public ministry.

After not many days there, the Jewish Passover called Jesus and His disciples to Jerusalem and another special house. We know from our study of Exodus that the Passover was the first celebration of the three annual feasts prescribed for Israel. The Passover feast celebrated the birth of their nation as God's redeemed people from bondage in Egypt. The Passover lamb was the savior of the tenth plague. The feast was to be celebrated at the temple with a similar sacrifice, commemorating this miracle of salvation, redemption, and new birth.

Jesus's disciples had undoubtedly attended many Passover feasts over the years, but our text tells us that this was a year they remembered in a way they did not others (v. 17). With this quotation about Jesus's zeal from Psalm 69:9, John interprets the events of our chapter as the point at which Jesus begins to suffer in the way that this Psalm prophesied the Messiah would suffer. Paul sees the sufferings of Christ in the latter part of the same verse (Rom. 15:3, "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.'"). Verse 21 of the Psalm predicted the excruciating thirst of the cross: "They gave me gall for my

meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (see Matt. 27:34, Mk. 15:23).

And so, what was it about Jesus that initiated the hatred of His enemies and their desire to cause Him suffering? Why did they reproach Him? John’s explanation tells us that it was Jesus’s zeal for His Father’s house.

This verse gives us a great definition of the word *zeal*. It tells us that we have zeal for something when it consumes us. Whatever it is that we are willing to have eat up our time, our talents, and our treasure is that for which we are zealous.

So, in light of the prophesied suffering of Psalm 69 and the events of this chapter showing Jesus’s zeal for God’s house, the Apostle’s message for you and me this morning is that we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. We must believe this about Jesus because He possessed zeal for His Father’s house. I want to highlight three evidences of Jesus’s zeal for God’s house.

I. Jesus’s attendance at God’s house was zealous (vv. 12-13).

Illustration: I met a man in the Charlotte airport on Thursday named Chris. He was about my age and rolled up next to the crowded area where I was sitting in a wheelchair. At one point Chris got up, and it looked like he had a sore ankle as he limped away. When he returned, I asked Chris if he had injured his leg, and he explained to me that he had MS. Chris maintained a cheerful attitude in spite of his handicap.

The physicist Steven Hawking was severely handicapped due to Lou Gehrig’s disease. In spite of his paralysis, Hawking is remembered as one of the top physicists in his field. One of the keys to his success comes from a quote that has been attributed to him. Hawking said of his success: “Showing up is half the battle.” For a person with physical pain and

disability, this is certainly true. Getting to work every day could not have been easily done for these men.

Application: As members of local churches, we can see how Hawking's adage applies to our ministry for Christ. We know that the spiritual paralysis caused by our sinful flesh means that showing up is half the battle when it comes to our attendance at the house of God. Because our flesh would rather do many other things, getting here is half the battle for us too.

Jesus never struggled with a sin nature, and so He did not miss a Passover because it was one of the commandments God gave to His people. In order to be our Passover Lamb without blemish, He had to obey God's law perfectly. He did so. Jesus had to be zealous for what God's law said about attendance at God's house. He never lacked this zeal.

How zealous are we about showing up to God's house at the time and place the Lord has designed for us in the New Testament to worship in His presence? Is it a priority that we allow to consume us, to eat up our Lord's Day?

Unlike our Savior, whatever zeal we have for the things of God must war against our sinful flesh. But showing up really is half the battle. Get here, and the war against the flesh is half done. Our enemy knows this, and that is why he does all he can to keep us from doing so. Jesus's attendance at His Father's house was zealous. Ours should be too.

II. Jesus's purging of God's house was zealous (vv. 14-17).

Illustration: The needs of the people on these feast days had become a financial bonanza to the high priest and his minions in Jerusalem. There were basically three key sources of Passover revenue on which the temple priesthood capitalized. First, because the half-shekel temple-tax had to be paid in a Galilean shekel, and because worshippers came from all over the

world, money changers had set up shop in the court of the Gentiles to exchange currency for a fee. Typically the half shekel tax became a full shekel after the fee was paid.

Also, since it was impractical to travel long distances with livestock and pigeons, the temple priesthood had made available these animals for purchase at a considerable profit to themselves. Like any Middle Eastern emporium, the loud and irreverent bartering back and forth was a small price to pay for a good profit on these transactions.

And finally, even if you brought your own animals, the temple priesthood still had your coins in their pocket, because now your animals had to be inspected by them for a fee to make sure that they did not have any blemishes. If blemishes were found, the inspector had a pre-approved animal for sale to replace the one you brought. It worked kind of like a used car salesman doing state car-inspections today.

Application: Jesus wanted this commercialism and materialism out of His Father's house. He wants the love of money out of what God designed to be a house of prayer. So, what must we see that He wants from us in His house today? How might commercialism and materialism corrupt our approach to our local church gatherings?

Illustration: My mother-in-law attended a different church once while visiting with us and came home visibly upset. She complained that the service was a 45 minute rock concert followed by 15 minutes of begging for money. That was the perspective of a largely unchurched relative about a church that claims to be a gospel-preaching and Bible-believing church endeavoring to reach the unchurched.

So that is one impression we must avoid as we seek to be a Bible-believing and gospel-preaching local church. But more pertinent to our hearts this morning, I believe, is the warning

that Jesus gives the local church of Laodicea in Rev. 3:17-18, the church whose wealth had made them apathetic toward the things of God:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Today, we are God’s house. It is our love of money and materially comfortable self-sufficiency that the Lord must drive out of our hearts as we worship as His house. Whereas it should be our zeal for God’s house that consumes us, it is rather too often our love for money. Jesus warned His disciples, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:33).

Jesus’s desire to purge God’s house of materialism is just as zealous today as it was these many years ago.

III. Jesus’s identity as God’s house was zealous (vv. 18-22).

Illustration: Given all the disruption Jesus causes, the response of the temple priesthood seems relatively subdued. They merely ask for a sign of Jesus’s authority to do what He had done. One commentary gave three reasons for this: (1) the temple-market must have been highly unpopular with the people, and the authorities may have feared opposition from them (perhaps a good lesson here in the importance of the consent of the governed); (2) the ministry of John the Baptist had prepared Jerusalem for the arrival of Jesus, so politically He was already a known quantity; and (3) there was a Roman garrison overlooking the temple courtyard filled with soldiers

who expected the temple authorities to keep the peace. For all of these political reasons, they simply ask Jesus for a sign.

Application: Jesus gives them the sign in verse 19 – “Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it.” He uses a different word for *temple* here, one that refers to the sanctuary proper, the dwelling-place of God on earth, without all the other add-ons of the temple complex with its courtyards.

When Jesus said *temple*, He spoke of His body. His words remind us of John 1:14, which said that the Word became flesh and dwelt or tabernacled among us, and of Col. 2:9, which says that in Him is “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” His body is God’s temple because He is God.

In addition, when Jesus said, “*Destroy* this temple,” He used a word that “indicates a destruction which comes from dissolution, from the breaking of that which binds the parts into a whole, or one thing to another” (Westcott, 42). This dissolution is what happens to the unleavened bread we break and chew at the Lord’s Table on the first Sunday of each month.

John has explained for us what Jesus was talking about, which Jesus did not do for these temple authorities. His body is the sanctuary that these priests destroyed, the one He raised up from the dead. That was the sign; that was the miracle.

Ironically and tragically, it was both the sign these Jews failed to understand and the sign that their misunderstanding ultimately fulfilled. The sign-demand was a challenge of unbelief, not a request of faith. For John and his fellow disciples, the sign had a different result. It became the miracle that caused them to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus spoke. They believed that Jesus died for them and rose again. Do you?

Conclusion: In my conversation with Chris at the airport, I not only learned of his MS but also that he was on his way to

Boston to attend a funeral for a loved one. He showed me an inspiring quotation he had saved on his phone from an interview given by Michael J. Fox, who suffers from Parkinson's. It helped Chris in his courageous battle with MS.

It was at that point after some silent prayer that I shared with Chris that I am a cancer survivor, and that another truth had seen me through that challenge in my life. I told him that I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose again from the dead, that He is the final solution for our bodily disease and sickness. Chris nodded with a polite smile. He was not rude like these Jews. But he did not affirm his faith in the Scripture and the word that Jesus spoke, like the apostles, either.

The Jews needed to believe Jesus's "I will raise it up." We must believe His, "I am risen." What will you do with the sign of the one who was zealous for His Father's house? Will you offer a polite smile, believing that the dead stay dead? Or will you believe what the Scripture and Jesus have said?

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*