The Gospel of John  
**2.3—CLEANSING GOD’S TEMPLE – JOHN 2:12–17**

**INTRODUCTION**

What was it about Jesus that proved He was the Messiah? Was it the miracles alone, or were there other messianic prophecies that He fulfilled which, even without the miracles, were clear and undeniable evidence that He was indeed the Savior they were looking for? Today we’ll study one of the most extraordinary events in the ministry of Jesus; the cleansing of the temple. We’ll not only see how even the consideration of attempting such a thing would cause the average man to retreat in fear, but we’ll see the motivation behind such a daring endeavor, and why fear had no power to stop Jesus. I also want you to see that Jesus was not requiring something from others that He Himself was not willing to do. And lastly, I want us to see how this applies to us, and how Jesus is here today to cleanse our temples.

Before we read about the cleansing of the temple, let’s read John 2:12–13, a couple of verses that seem to some people as merely transitional, or unnecessary. But remember 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” So these verses do, indeed have relevance.

**So let’s read John 2:12–13**

**Let me read some comments that come from Dr. Steve Schell’s commentary:**

**v12**: After the wedding Jesus walked with His mother, brothers and disciples from Nazareth down to the town of Capernaum, on the north shore of the Sea (lake) of Galilee. It’s a distance of about 18 miles. John doesn’t tell us why they spent these few days together. We’re left to wonder why he even mentioned it. But the simplest explanation is that he recorded the trip to Capernaum because it happened, and he remembered it because he was one of the disciples who was there with Jesus. We’re not told what took place during those days, but one possibility is that this was the moment of transition for Jesus. He may have wanted time with His family to explain to them what had happened to Him at the Jordan River and in the wilderness of Judea.

Also, His brothers must have known about the miracle He had just performed at Cana, and surely they would have had questions about that. Also, their relationship with Him was about to change. This was the time when Jesus was stepping out of His role as the eldest son and primary breadwinner for their family. Now the other sons would have to carry a greater responsibility for their mother and younger siblings. Jesus was leaving home and stepping into His ministry. He would never live at home again. And all these things needed to be discussed, and those few days spent together in Capernaum may have allowed for that discussion.

**v13**: The first four chapters of John’s gospel (Jn 1:19–4:42) take place during the first year of Jesus’ ministry. Thankfully, John includes in these chapters a number of events which the other gospel writers do not. Beyond their accounts of Jesus’ birth, childhood and baptism at the Jordan River, Matthew, Mark and Luke begin their descriptions of Jesus’ ministry at the point when He returned to the Galilee region. But John begins with John the Baptists’ announcement at the Jordan River, and follows Jesus north to a wedding at Cana, and then down to Capernaum for a few days together with family and disciples. He tells us that after that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the first of three recorded Passovers (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55).

Next, John tells us that Jesus left Jerusalem and spent an extended period of time (months?) somewhere in the region of Judea training His disciples and baptizing believers (Jn 3:22). Then we learn that while He was there in Judea, Jesus was told that the Pharisees had discovered that He was baptizing more people than John the Baptist (Jn 4:1). I think that dangerous moment may have occurred shortly after John the Baptist was arrested (Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14). When Jesus heard what had happened to John, He quickly headed north toward Galilee, passing directly through Samaria (Jn 4:3–4). While there He spent two days evangelizing in the city of Sychar (Jn 4:43) and then finally returned to Galilee.

Without John’s gospel we would not have known about these activities which took place in the early season of Jesus’ ministry. Knowing about these things provides some important perspectives on certain events which otherwise seem very sudden and unexpected. An example of this is the amazing amount of hostility the religious leaders from Jerusalem felt toward Jesus from, what appears to be, the very earliest days of His ministry (Mt 15:1; Mk 3:22; Lk 5:17). But because John shows us that Jesus actually went to Jerusalem at least four times during those years (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 12:12), the first being the Passover we’re reading about now, we understand why. We discover that upon his first visit to Jerusalem Jesus immediately clashed with the religious leaders.

**Read John 2:14–17**

**What is surprising when we read this account of Jesus cleansing the temple is the lack of resistance by the merchants. For some reason a large number of people allowed one man to walk in and totally disrupt their business activity. One would have expected a fight to break out or the temple police to intervene, but none of that happened. And though Jesus was certainly a strong, young man, having worked for years as either a stonemason or a carpenter, no matter how strong or angry an individual may be, a group of furious merchants could have stopped Him. But none did. And I believe the reason is they were ashamed of what they were doing. Moving all those stalls and tables into the Court of the Gentiles was a fairly recent and very unpopular decision. Annas, the high priest, had decided to do this, and Josephus (the historian) describes him as a "great hoarder of money and very rich." He had moved those merchants onto the temple grounds as a means of generating personal revenue, and it quickly became a principle source of income for his family. In time that policy of using the Court of the Gentiles as a market would come to be called "the bazaar of the sons of Annas," and after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Annas was thought to be the person whose sin had caused God to allow the destruction of the temple (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, E.R. Herrick and Co, 1886).**

**Dr. Schell said, *“what Jesus did that day was probably seen as a prophetic act. Many who watched understood why He was doing it. It's possible that some of the religious leaders refused to step in because they too were troubled by a guilty conscience. In fact, Jesus may have had a crowd of supporters cheering Him on.”***

**Psalm 69:9 (ESV)** For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

**2 Chronicles 3:1 (ESV)** Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

**Matthew 3:11–12 (ESV)** “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

**1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,