

# John 2:11-17. Christ Purifies the Temple.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

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*Jesus purifies the temple by displaying his power and holiness, and demonstrating his zeal for God's glory, challenging us to apply the same zeal in our own lives.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 69:9, John 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 2:21

**Topics:** "Temple Cleansing", "Holiness"

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## Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the early visits of Jesus to Capernaum, highlighting the great privileges enjoyed by the city and the need for us to profit from the privileges we have, especially holding the word of God. Jesus displayed his power and holiness in Jerusalem during the Passover, cleansing the temple and showing zeal for God's house, contrasting it with the natural zeal for self-interest that consumes us. The zeal Jesus had for God's glory consumed him, in stark contrast to our natural desire for personal pleasure and honor. The sermon emphasizes the importance of hating sin and seeking God's cleansing to be vessels fit for His use.

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## Transcript

After working his first miracle, the Lord Jesus went to Capernaum, a city in Galilee, but he did not take up his abode there at present. Highly favored city, to be so early and so often visited by the Son of God! Truly she was exalted unto heaven, so great were her privileges. Do not we also enjoy very great privileges--we, who hold the word of God in our hands? May we profit more from our privileges than Capernaum did from hers!

Shortly after visiting this city, the Lord traveled up to Jerusalem, to keep the passover. In the gospel of John, all the passovers from this time until the Lord's death are recorded. It is by counting them, that it has been discovered how long Jesus exercised his ministry, and at what age he died. He became a minister at thirty, his ministry lasted three years and a half; and he died at the age of thirty-three years and a half.

When he was at Jerusalem at the passover, he made a public display of his power and holiness. The courts of the temple (not the very temple itself) were crowded by those who brought beasts and birds for sacrifices, and also by those who changed Roman money for Jewish coins, to be cast into the treasury. No doubt these traders in animals and money excused themselves for making God's house a place of trade by the thought of the holy use for which the animals and money were designed. But this excuse was not sufficient in God's sight. His temple was called a house of prayer, and it was made into a house of merchandise. He was displeased by the disturbance given to his worship, and by the disrespect shown to

himself. And may there not be customs common among Christians which are displeasing to God? We may have excuses ready to offer for our conduct; but are they such as will be received at the day of judgment?

It was wonderful that the people selling animals and changing money submitted to the authority of a poor and almost unknown man, armed only with a whip, and unsupported by the rulers. But such divine power accompanied his words and his actions, and such terror from the Lord spread among the multitude, that the traders fled before him. At the same time, Jesus openly declared that he was the Son of God, for he called the temple his "Father's house." The disciples were much struck by their Lord's conduct; they were no doubt astonished to see one usually so meek and gentle, acting with so much boldness and courage. Then they remembered a sentence in the Psalms, describing the character of the expected Messiah--"The zeal for your house has eaten me up." (Ps. 69:9.) What is the meaning of this verse?

Zeal signifies an ardent desire. Jesus was full of zeal, but on what account? For God's house. By "house" we understand not only the temple, but God's service, his people, his commandments, and all that belongs to him. A zeal for God's house means an ardent desire for his glory. Jesus had so strong a zeal that it consumed him. It is common to say, "Such a one is swallowed up of grief." It might be said of Jesus that he was swallowed up with a desire for God's honor. This was his chief desire, his ruling passion.

How different from this zeal is the desire that fills us by nature. By nature, we are eaten up with a zeal, not for God's house, but for our own pleasure, and honor, and interest. This is the reason that we take up so hotly any insult given to ourselves, but are so indifferent respecting insults offered to God. If any person reproach us, or injure us, we turn in our minds how we can prevent his continuing to annoy us. We are uneasy and restless until we can defend ourselves. But how do we feel when we hear of God's commands being broken? Are we anxious to find out some way of stopping the evil? Do we feel as David did, when he said, "My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies keep not your law;" or when he said, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not your law?" O that such a spirit dwelt in us! If we love God, we do feel something of this grief already.

There are some among our magistrates and rulers who openly speak for God, and are ready to bear scorn and hatred for His sake; for all must be prepared for such treatment who endeavor to prevent the commission of sin. Faithful ministers, who oppose plays, fairs, and parties, and other popular amusements, and who speak in the pulpit against sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and all ungodliness, are generally hated on that account. Even Jesus was hated, because he testified of the world, that its works were evil. The reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon him. (Ps. 69:9.) May we hate evil as he did, though men would hate us also. If we sincerely hate sin, we shall hate it most in our own hearts, and ask God to cleanse them, and to render us vessels fit for the Master's use.

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