

Christ's Ministry: His Two Hard Hitting Church Protests

by Ian Paisley

Christ's ministry was marked by His zeal for the Father's House and His determination to purge the Temple of apostasy and idolatry.

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:39, Psalm 69:4, Matthew 12:38, Luke 22:32, John 2:16, John 15:25, Romans 10:8

Topics: "Christ's Ministry", "Temple Purification"

Description

Ian Paisley preaches on the great first miracle of our Lord, emphasizing the significance of Christ's actions in purging the Temple, revealing His righteous zeal and the importance of faith in Him. The sermon delves into the finding, fury, focus, foretelling, faith, and finality of Christ, highlighting His unique perspective as the Son of God and His unwavering commitment to His Father's honor and the purity of the Temple.

Transcript

The great first miracle of our Lord has just taken place. Following it we read: John 2:12 'After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.'

Capernaum was a place of blessing but also a place of judgment: Matthew 11:23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

The timing is important. It was the First Passover of the three years of Christ's public ministry. Note it is not called 'The Lord's Passover' (Ex 12: 11) as it really ought to be, but rather 'The Jews' Passover'. Its spiritual significance had been swallowed in carnal, racial and nationalist bigotry.

ONE: THE FINDING OF CHRIST

John 2:13,14. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.

Here we have the first finding of Christ's public ministry. The things which Jesus found are most important. The disciples had been through the temple many times but they did not seem to be in any way struck with the apostasy indulged in there. But Christ did! The disciples were blinded. Christ's eyes were wide open.

He saw the apostasy. The Old Testament denunciations were fastened in His mind, memory and heart. He found those who made themselves at home in God's Holy Temple in order to pollute it. As Dean John W Burgon remarks:

'The sheep and oxen were kept for the purpose of sacrifice. The doves were the offerings of those who came to be purified; especially of the poorer sort of people. The changers of money found their gains in supplying those strangers and foreigners who came up, in great numbers, to worship at Jerusalem on these occasions, and brought with them the money of other countries, in order to purchase victims for sacrifice; according to the express direction of the Law: The payment of "tribute", that is, the tax of a half-shekel which all contributed towards the support of the Temple; must have also supplied these "changers of money" with occupation.'

'The "scourge of small cords" was not the instrument, so much as the emblem of His wrath. It is manifest that such a Weapon must have been powerless in other hands; certainly, it would have been ineffectual to produce the mighty results here noticed. But CHRIST wrought a miracle on the present occasion: not on lifeless matter, as at Cana, but on the hearts and minds of His rational creatures. Armed with that scourge, men beheld in Him a type of the Vengeance which will at last overtake the wicked. The traffickers in the Temple, panic-stricken, fled before the awful presence of Him, in whom they nevertheless had not eyes to discern their future Judge. And surely the spectacle is one which it will do men good to seek to realize to themselves.' (From Burgon on John's Gospel)

The temple was supposed to be the centre of purity. At the Passover the searching for and casting out of all leaven was strictly adhered to. Not so in the Temple. What was the sin practised publicly here? It is the worst form of covetousness, which is idolatry. What with the Scriptures? 1Cor 5 :6-8 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

But Christ found in the Temple covetousness which produced idolatry of the most diabolical kind Col. 3:5: Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Hear God's Word, 'Covetousness which is idolatry'. What a picture of Judaism is here portrayed:

1. A Depraved Priesthood John 1:19-26 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent

priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

2. A Desecrated Temple John 2:16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

Surely the Lord spoke truly of their Temple as made by them a "DEN OF THIEVES".

TWO: THE FATHER OF CHRIST

The Lord Jesus saw the blow that was being struck at the House of His Father. This was a unique characterisation of the Temple. No one before had ever defined it as the Father's House. Moses did not term The Tabernacle, the Father's House. Solomon did not term the Temple, the Father's House. The people of Zerubbabel's day did not term the reconstructed Temple, the Father's House. Ezekiel did not call the Temple he described as the Father's House.

The Lord Jesus, the Only Begotten Son, was the only One who could do it. Only one man, the God‑man, saw the honour of the House and the One to whom it truly belonged. Only one man was determined that His Father's Honour would be indicated and His House purged.

There is a side of Christ's ministry which has been ignored in this 'lovey dovey' ecumenically corrupt age. The Lamb is not only the Redeemer but the Ruler. The Lamb had wrath as well as mercy.

Over and over again Christ speaks of the Father ‑ the Father's business ‑ the Father's House ‑ the Father's works ‑ the Father's chosen ones, the Father's Glory the Father's Son and the Father's reward. It was these which motivated His zeal for the vindication of the Father's law and reverence of His House.

THREE: THE FURY OF CHRIST

Our Lord did not ignore what He had seen. He did not turn a blind eye on it. He did not say they have been like this for centuries. He was instead furious with the Holy Fury of a Thrice Holy God. So He prepared Himself for war, a holy war against evil practices. He made Himself a scourge of small cords. Note, this was a weapon of His very own devising. Man made weapons cannot beat down man‑made sins and crimes.

The strength of the weapon lies not in the strength of that weapon but rather in the strength of the warrior who wields the weapon.

Notice the emphasis on the small cords. If the small cords wielded by Christ can do such damage what will not His strong cords do? Who can abide the day of His coming? To quote Dean Burgon again!

Christ drove out the sheep and oxen. He hurled to the floor the money of the changers and turned over their tables. He made them seats too hot to sit on. As for the doves, Christ did not drive them out for He, as the Messiah was prophesied to deal "prudently" Is 52:13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Notice the distinction. The oxen and sheep were cleared out. They were in no danger of being lost. The money of the changers could be gathered up. The doves He ordered to be taken away so that not one of them would perish. What a perfect example of how Christ in judgment protects the weak.

FOUR: THE FOCUS OF CHRIST

'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.' It was written, 'The zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up'. John 2:16‑17. The Psalm 69 from which this is quoted contains many prophecies concerning Christ. These are quoted in, compare: Ps 69:4, John 15:25, Ps 69:21, John 19:28, Ps 69:22, Rom 11:9+10, Ps 69:25, Acts 1:20.

It is a simple fact that the Greek NT quotes sometimes from the Hebrew Scripture but alters the words. If we believe that throughout the Scriptures we have the words of God and not of man all difficulties vanish. The Divine Author can apply His own words in His own way. God is free with what are totally His Words. Hence when they are applied in one set of circumstances they may be different when applied to another. Failure to recognize this is the cause of the so called "discrepancies" and "difficulties". They are man manufactured.

Here we have the focus of Christ. He focuses in with zeal to the task of purging the Father's temple. Righteous zeal has swallowed Him up. Oh to have a baptism of His zeal as we move to purge God's House!

FIVE: THE FORETELLING OF CHRIST

John 2:18‑19: Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

The humbling of the law breakers led to this expression of hate from the would‑be law makers. They demanded a sign. He gave them the sign, the doctrine of the Christian Gospel. The Resurrection. Remember on another occasion: Matthew 12:38‑40: Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The answer which Christ gives here in John 2 is enlarged upon in Matthew chapter 12. It is of course the same promise. The highest possible claim is made in this answer. He promises He will raise up Himself from death. It should be carefully noticed that this statement of Christ was a ground of the accusation brought against Him when He was tried before Pilate.

Matthew 26:59‑61 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.

John had a special reason to put this on the record and put the record straight. The unbelieving Jews made their answer: John 2:20-21. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building; and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

SIX: THE FAITH OF CHRIST

John 2:17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

John 2:22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

It was only after the great transaction of the bodily resurrection of Christ took place that the disciples remembered and believed.

This is the Holy Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 10:8‑13. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto sal vation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved

This is the Faith that justifies. This is the Faith which satisfies. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and the justified sinner. It is the Faith of Christ.

SEVEN: THE FINALITY OF CHRIST

John 2:23‑24: Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

Man cannot know the thoughts and intents of the hearts of man. Only God can know that. That is in the power of God and in the power of God alone. God does not require a witness to inform Him. He does not need any help. He has all wisdom. The heart of man was made by God Himself and it every countenance and use is studied by Him.

The best for us is decided by Him and Him alone. Listen to these words spoken to Peter. Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Christ did not commit Himself unto them because he knew all. Christ did not commit Himself unto them because what He knew was a warning to all. Christ did not commit Himself because He knew what was in them all. We need to compare this verse with I Kings 8:39‑40 and heed it with all our soul and mind and might.

1 Kings 8:39‑40 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

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