

The Supreme Sign of Christ's Office

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[0 : 00] I would like you to turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 2.

John chapter 2, and I want you to follow with me as I begin reading there in verse 13 in your own Bible. I'll take a minute and let you get squared out in the passage.

John chapter 2, verse 13. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple, he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting there and making a whip of cords. He drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away. Do not make my father's house a house of trade. Father God, we're very thankful that in your infinite mercy, you graciously have given to us your word, which is the complete revelation provided by you, whereby we may, as it says in 2 Timothy, have all that we need for life and godliness.

[1 : 43] We want to be a people that rely upon the word this morning to govern not only what we sing about, but also what we think about and what we say. And we ask that our time in the scriptures, enabled by the Spirit, helps us grow in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ and our sincere desire to be more like him.

Pray for those that are here this morning that do not know Christ as their personal Savior, that this morning would be the hour of their salvation and the day of their deliverance from the bondage and the burden of their sin, and also the uncertainty of their eternal destiny.

We ask that you would be a people, that you would help us be a people that have our hearts focused by your Spirit on your glory and your truth.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Well, let me kind of frame the background of what we're looking at this morning. And so, if you would think with me just for a moment, this passage in chapter 2 of John is the second little picture that we have of John the Baptist after that lengthy introduction that we found that explained to us in brief how the book of John was going to play out. I remind you that John is different than the other Gospels in that it uses very, very few actual illustrations of the things that Jesus was engaged in doing publicly.

[3 : 18] The first thing that we saw in John chapter 2, you'll remember, was that he was at a wedding and his mother came to him and asked him about the problem that they had with the lack of wine, and Jesus turned the water into wine, did a miracle, and we understand that not many people actually were affected by that.

We know that five of his disciples knew what had happened. We know that the servants knew what had happened. And maybe a few other people kind of heard about what that was and were affected by the reality of the power of Christ displayed over natural things.

And so, here we have that little picture of Jesus doing something relatively quiet, and then we have this picture of Jesus walking into Jerusalem and kind of dropping an atomic bomb over Nagasaki, over Hiroshima.

Do you follow me? What he did in the temple was an absolute blast in comparison to that little quiet miracle that he did at the wedding. We tend to think about Jesus either as a relatively quiet, little kind of milk toast kind of guy going around and, you know, putting flowers in people's hair or something like that.

Particularly if you rely upon the liberal picture of Jesus. He's kind of some soft little guy that goes around saying sweet things and, you know, just kind of love everybody. And it's important to love people, but I want you to understand that the picture we have in the Bible is far more complex than that.

[4 : 54] And as we come to this passage, the background of the Lamb dealing with the wedding feast now comes face to face with the Lion of Judah and the judge of the whole earth.

And so I want you to begin by first of all recognizing that Jesus steps into a situation where glory was corrupted. After spending a few days, and that's what we find there in verse 13, the Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

What had happened earlier in verse 12, it says that he spent a couple days with his family and now it's time to go up to Jerusalem to be part of that holy celebration. It was a requirement.

The law stipulated that the Jews were to gather in Jerusalem on a regular basis annually and they were to remember the Passover. The Passover was a very special, a moment in the life of God's people in particular because it was that day when God had delivered them from the land of Egypt where they had been enslaved by the Egyptians.

And how did God do that? Remember? He came to them and said, I want to tell you something that this night is going to be absolutely unique. And in order to protect your family, you are to kill the sacrificial, the Passover lamb, and you are to put the blood of that lamb on the lintel over the top and on both sides on the doorposts.

[6 : 28] And when I send death through the nation of Egypt to kill every one of the firstborn where the mark of the blood is seen, death will not enter.

And so every year, God had ordained that the nation of Israel was to remember the Passover and it was a time when the people gathered to make sacrifice.

They were required to do that. And incidentally, when you made sacrifice, you didn't just bring any old whatever you had. You had to bring a lamb that was spotless, that was pure.

Over time, it had kind of developed into the fact that the lamb, how many of you know what the word kosher is? How many of you ever see it? A kosher salt, right? Kosher dill pickles.

What does kosher mean? Does anybody know? Does anybody know what kosher means? It means that it has actually been approved for consumption by Jewish people.

[7 : 29] And who has approved it? Is it Pillsbury? Or is it Heinz? Who approves kosher? Kosher. There has to be a priest who's involved in determining that those pickles really are kosher.

I'm going to tell you something. You don't have kosher on there without somebody involved in saying that it's kosher. Do you understand that? And so, over time, this idea of bringing your own lamb and just whatever you wanted to do into the temple to have sacrifice, it kind of moved over to the side of, if you really want to bring a lamb in to have it sacrificed in the temple, you had to have a priest sign off on it.

And so, I want you to understand that this beautiful area, the temple, and the word that is used there in the Greek communicates that it was the larger part.

There was a court of the Gentiles, a very large area. And that large area had actually been turned into a bazaar where the pilgrims were being cheated.

You see, here's how it plays out. One commentator, doing some research on ancient history, discovered that a five-cent dove, when it became kosher and was carried into the temple for sacrifice, became a four-dollar option.

[8 : 55] Now, if a five-cent dove became a four-dollar option, guess what it costs you to buy a kosher lamb? You got it? Way up the food chain.

Not only that, there was another thing that was required of a good Jewish man. He had to pay a temple tax. And when he would come in, he would pay his half shekel. Now, a shekel is a piece of Jewish money.

And the high priest, I mean, outside of the temple, you could use any kind of money that you had in your pocket. But when you went into the temple, if you wanted to pay your tax at the temple, you had to have a half shekel.

And guess what there were provided or was provided for you? There were very kind, congenial businessmen that were sitting there that had half shekels in abundance.

But guess what happened to the translation of the fees? How many of you have traveled around the world or somewhere where you've had to have your money changed from good old U.S. dollars into rubles or into rupees or into yen or whatever?

[10 : 00] What happens at the money changer? Does anybody know? Tom, what happens?

There's a little bit of profit. Well, I want you to know that the money changers were not into a little bit of profit. I mean, how many of you have been to an OSU game and noticed what happens to bottles

of water there?

I've been once in my life. And I remember going in and I got thirsty and I was sitting way up there in nosebleed.

I was having to suck oxygen to make it through the day. But anyway, I was way up there and I thought, well, I think I'll go get a bottle of water. I mean, there are a lot of people sitting around drinking water and drinks and having hot dogs.

And I remember when I walked in that they wanted me to, you know, do you have anything in your coat? You know, no, I'm clean. So I thought I'd walk down to concession stand and get myself a bottle of water and a couple hot dogs or something like that.

I changed my mind. I mean, what you can buy at Meijer or Walmart for pennies was a \$4 option. And hot dogs, forget it.

[11:04] There was no way in the world that I was going to indulge those thieves for the price that they were asking for. Now, I want you to imagine that you can't worship without buying in to the lamb and to the temple tax.

Do you follow that? It was an option for me to say no to the \$4 bottle of water and no to the, I think it was like \$6 or \$8 for a hot dog.

It was like, I can't do this. And they had a monopoly. By the way, it was the high priest and his family that were the beneficiaries of this legislation that meant that in the temple only those lambs and goats and doves and whatever else that had been koshered, right, kosher, were allowed to be sold. And so here we find in verse 15, Jesus comes in, he makes a whip of cords and he drove them all out of the temple. Do you get the picture?

Now stop just for a minute because I want to correct what may be happening in your mind. You might be thinking that Jesus made this great big bull whip, you know, you know, out the door they went.

[12:30] The Greek word talks about a whip that was made out of just the normal cordage. How many of you have ever baled hay?

Hay balers. Basically, that is the word that is used. It's just the common string that was used for kind of keeping the animal in check when you were taking it in to where it was going to have its throat cut, you know.

Now by the way, the animal did not know what was coming so it was like just lead it along with a little string and you'll get it there. Jesus took some of these strings, picked them up, probably just walking around just kind of stewing, you know, picking them up, grabbing this one, grabbing that one and he kind of put them together and he let people know that this was not going to do.

We sometimes have this picture of Jesus MMA walking in to the temple and just putting the smack down on everybody and terrifying them with his physical presence.

That's not true. What is it that frightened people? It was the holy righteousness of God himself indignant with the sin that he saw.

[13:44] I have to confess that we are all far too careless with sin, aren't we? All of us.

And when you look here at Jesus in verse 15, it says that he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and he poured out the coins with the money changers and he overturned their tables and he told them who sold the pigeons, get them out of here.

You have made my father's house a house of trade. By the way, in the synoptics, Jesus referred to the temple a different way and I think it's instructive.

He said that my father's house is a house of prayer. Listen to me carefully. When people that profess to know Christ diminish the significance and the priority of prayer, there's something serious going on in their lives spiritually.

Jesus walks in here and says, in essence, you guys have made a horrible mess of this situation. So why did Jesus do that? That's a fair question.

[15:02] How many of you figured that out? When you're trying to understand what the Bible is saying, one of the first questions to ask is what? Why? Why is this here? Well, when we think about it, I want you to turn back in your Bible.

You are there in John, but just go back a little bit. Don't have to go very far. Go to Malachi chapter 3. Malachi chapter 3. In Malachi chapter 3, verse 1 and 2, we find prophetic utterance about Christ's coming.

Behold, I send my messenger, that's John the Baptist, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his, what?

Underline it in your Bible. Temple. And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord. But who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. You know what I'm saying? When Christ comes in his righteousness and his holiness, all will be profoundly humbled because of the darkness and the wickedness of their heart.

[16:23] we'll eventually get to John chapter 8 and there are going to be some who may dispute whether or not that is in the earliest manuscripts.

I fully accept it, but you'll remember that when Jesus had the Pharisees and the priests bring up the woman who was caught in adultery and said, shall we stone her?

Remember how they all scattered when he said, hey, the one that's without sin can throw the first stone and they all scattered.

Beloved, when the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is at work, we understand that there is an effect upon the life of those who are sinful.

And so, when you think about Jesus coming, we have two little kind of pictures. We have Jesus at the wedding feast and he's doing this little thing on the side with wine. But now, we have Jesus in the temple and I want you to understand that as he walks into the temple, there was no little soft syrupy little voice saying, I hope you guys are getting along and making a good profit.

[17:35] It was like clean house. He came to confront sin and fulfill prophecy. How did Jesus do this?

How did he clean up? I mean, stop and think with me just for a moment. If you kind of think forward into the book of Acts, you'll remember that all it took was an accusation that Paul the Apostle had brought Gentiles into the inner part of the temple and they had a riot that brought in Roman soldiers.

Jerusalem was a hotbed of rebellion. and anything that you know about the ancient world in particular there in Jerusalem is that they could get pretty fired up in a moment and really go ballistic about almost anything and for one man to clean house in the temple, it's worthy for us to ask just what was it that Jesus did?

I want you to understand that he and his absolute holiness and righteousness brought the issue of the personal sin of those who were involved in what was going on to the forefront and that wave of shame and guilt swept through the crowd and they were all quieted in the presence of Christ.

I want to assure you there will be a day when the brassiest of liar, the most arrogant fool and the angriest of men will be utterly overwhelmed at the holy presence of Jesus the judge of the whole earth.

[19:21] And as you think about this setting I think it's appropriate for us as believers those who know Christ to recognize that while Jesus loves us unconditionally and we are so blessed by the richness of his grace we who have been so richly forgiven should not be a people that are careless with sin.

Would you agree with that? Well I want you to recognize glory challenged. I love what comes next. Look at that part if you will. there in verse 18 so the Jews said to him what sign do you show us for doing these things? I can't help but think about the pastor and the princess bride at this moment it's like what a jerk.

Okay forgive me I know some of you have not watched that classic and go home and do it but anyway here are the priests and the rabbis that kind of come up you know waddling up you know and there they are in their regalia you know what I'm talking about?

I mean they had their robes on and by the way something about the priest's robes were pretty spectacular I mean it showed your rank I mean oh that's the high priest how can you tell?

[20:42] well look you know the average yokel over there is wearing something that just costs \$3,000 but the high priest he's decked out in jewels and blah blah blah and here they come kind of waddling out in the front of you we gave you the right to do this and who are they standing in front of?

Jesus now remember our idea of Jesus is ill informed we either have this idea of a wuss or we have this idea of Mr. Smackdown MMA you know it depends and I have to tell you if you read the book of

Isaiah it tells us that he was nothing spectacular just ordinary there he was standing in ordinary clothes by the way it's no accident that evangelical preachers are not all about finery Connie where are you Connie there you are Connie throws away a magazine periodically that talks about robes for pastors right throw it in the trash I don't need one the one thing I want you to remember is the authority and the sufficiency of the word of God and there is Jesus standing with simplicity and he announces to those who ask him what authority do you have to do what you've done in cleansing the temple he'd exposed sin for what it is and what sign did he give them let's look let's pick up on this because it's glory confirmed you look there in the passage and Jesus answered them verse 19 and he said destroy this temple and in three days

I will raise it up the truth of the matter is that the Jewish leaders would end up having Jesus crucified and we understand that in this declaration what he is saying is that you're going to kill me and three days after that I'm going to come out of the grave in the face of what Jesus had prophesied I am struck when I turn over and I want you to look at it just for a moment Matthew chapter 27 go back for a second Matthew chapter 27 verse 63 in this passage we find that Jesus is already dead and buried and those people who were involved in putting him to death have some anxiety the next day that is after the day of the preparation the chief priests and the Pharisees gather before Pilate you can hear them again with that little whiny voice sir we remember how that imposter said which he was still when he was still alive after three days

I will rise you know you can hear that right no stop and so by the way they're the ones who paid attention to the prophecy the disciples what were they doing hey he's coming back three days it's alright he'll be out of the grave it's good news no but the Jews were a little bit nervous now they were having all kinds of trouble with the absolute reality of Jesus' miracles do you follow that remember when he raised Lazarus from the dead do you know what they were thinking about doing with Lazarus who knows raise your hand if you do they were going to put him to death I mean hey if you don't like the information get out get rid of it pretend that you lost it or that you shredded it you know it's like gone Lazarus who's he and they the unbelieving Jews were a little more sensitive to the power that he had well I want you to know that Jesus would indeed rise on the third day and his resurrection would be the central sign to all the world that salvation was in his name and work alone I want you to turn in your Bible to Romans chapter 1 verse 4 as we wrap things up this morning and pay attention to the clarity of what Jesus tells us about his resurrection Romans chapter 1 verse 4 how do we know that Jesus is the son of God remember John chapter 20 verse 31 where Ethan recited last week right these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the son of God and believing that you might have life everlasting eternal life and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord how do you know Jesus is coming back he rose from the dead how do I know that my sins are completely forgiven because he rose from the dead how do I know that he is going to be the judge of the whole earth he rose from the dead how do I know that he is going to be the Lord and sovereign of all of creation and every knee shall bow and worship him with glory and adoration or spend eternity in the absolute horror of hell because of the resurrection so let's think what we learned from this passage this morning

[26 : 27] I want you to recognize that Christ's love involves confronting sin one of the troubles that we have today is that we have a tendency of calling sin by all different kinds of names other than what it really is hey do you realize there are probably people making a living trying to figure out new ways to justify what you're doing but sin is still sin and there is no remedy for sin except for the finished work of Christ I want you to understand also that Christ's zeal is for his father's glory alone you know there are some things that we all get worked up about that really don't amount to a hill of beans in eternity and we do well to remind ourselves of that finally I want you to understand that Christ's resurrection is a declaration of victory over sin and also the certainty of judgment and so we who are believers look to the empty tomb and we say hey listen it is finished and my salvation is settled and I have confidence because Christ Jesus rose again from the dead and if you are here this morning and you don't know

Christ I want to assure you that judgment will come and the one who died and paid the penalty for your sins will also be the one who judges you for your willing rejection of the clear gospel truth that Christ came into the world to let people know the desperate condition of their soul is personal sin and the satisfaction for that penalty of debt that my sin has created is the blood of Christ shed for me you know here's something I want you to understand the Jews knew exactly who they were

dealing with and they rejected do you understand that and I want to appeal to you this morning if you are sitting here and you do not know Christ that you plead with the Holy Spirit to give you a broken heart to trust in Christ and if you're here this morning and you know Christ as your Savior I would appeal to you this morning that what you do what you do is that you cry out and say Lord give me a desire for holiness and purity and my life makes a difference let's bow our heads in prayer and as we're praying we'd ask John to come up with the band and I'm going to ask that the candidate for baptism come forward this morning so we can celebrate the joy of Christ in baptism you pray with me with your heads bowed gracious Father I am thankful this morning for the glory of Christ that he indeed is the Savior of the world thank you for the clarity with which this little reminder in scripture lets us know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners but it also involves telling people there's a problem in your life and you can't solve it yourself Jesus came to pay the penalty for our sins that as it says in the scripture whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed I pray for those who are here today that need Christ as their Savior that this morning where they sit their heart would be drawn to the cross and they would believe in him I ask this in your precious name Amen Thank you Gary Stand together Stand together