

The Lord Jesus purges the temple



John 2:13-25

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The Lord Jesus had started his teaching. Once, when he was staying in Jerusalem, he could not idly look on whilst the temple of God was used as a veritable market-place. He pushed over the tables of the cattle-dealers as well as those of the money-changers and, taking a whip, drove them all out of the forecourt of the temple together with the sacrificial animals. The Jews (scribes, teachers and temple-guards) angrily demanded to know why he had done so. They wanted to know who had authorized him to take such action. The Lord Jesus answered them: "Tear down this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it." His audience did not know that he was speaking of his death and resurrection. Even the disciples understood what he meant with this statement only after his resurrection.

The children learn that the Lord Jesus took it upon himself to maintain the sanctity of the temple: the house of God. The Lord reveals himself where we gather and, through his Spirit, also dwells in our heart. We want to keep God's house as well as our hearts holy.

Passover is at hand. People are streaming into Jerusalem from all directions. New pilgrims enter the city every day. The Lord Jesus is one of them. He has recently commenced his teaching. Some of his friends--his first disciples--accompany him. They almost lost each other in the crowded streets, but now they ascend the huge, broad steps leading up to the temple. From all sides dealers approach them, calling and advertising their wares: colourful scarves, loaves of bread, anointing oil and many other things. The Lord Jesus walks past them all. He is looking at the entrance to the temple. The disciples are very happy. On this special day they want to pray in God's house, offer sacrifices and sanctify themselves. Walking through an enormous gate they enter the huge, colonnaded forecourt. Here, too, it is extremely crowded and noisy. There is a hustle and bustle. Flawless animals are offered for sale for sacrificial purposes: cooing doves, mighty oxen which are bellowing loudly whilst pulling at the ropes restraining them, and small, frightened lambs and sheep. Contentedly the dealers think of the celebrations ahead--for them Passover is the best time of the year for business.

From the great forecourt one enters some splendid courts. "O, how beautiful our temple is!" one of the disciples exclaims in delight. "Yes, we can surely be proud of it! It is famous and has taken so many years to build, and it is still being improved upon," adds another. They look at the Lord Jesus expectantly, but he does not look impressed. He is frowning and looking deeply concerned. The noisy activity around him hurts him deeply--in fact it grieves his very soul. He thinks: "What have these people done to my Father's house? Can one pray here and sanctify oneself? Can one praise God here?" On their way to pray, the men pass the tables of the money-changers. Foreign currency, which is considered heathenish, is changed here for coins used in the temple. On these tables the coins are lying in great heaps. The money-changers' business is a thriving one. They shout and haggle with their customers. All this the Lord Jesus sees. He simply cannot tolerate these goings-on any longer. Something must be done!

Driven by holy zeal the Lord unties some of the animals and, with a whip, drives them through the forecourt and out by the gate. Whilst doing so, he calls out to the pigeon dealers: "Get out of here with your pigeons! The house of my Father is no market!" Coins roll in all directions as he pushes over the heavy

Jesus Christ is our teacher

tables of the money-changers. At first they look on in horror, then they start calling loudly for help. But this does not deter the Lord Jesus from carrying out his intention to purge the temple. Awe-inspiringly he drives out all the greedy dealers. Crowds of people look on with great interest. Some clap their hands in approval, others are horrified. The disciples are surprised by their masters behaviour. o they realise that love for his father is motivating him to act this way?

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Some of the scribes have seen everything. Indignantly they approach Jesus: "What gives you the right to behave like this? Are you perhaps a prophet? Give us a sign or some other proof!" The Lord Jesus perceives their unbelief and their greed. He could have performed many miracles, but he only says: "Tear down this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it." The onlookers start laughing at this. o one understands Jesus words. One of them says mockingly: "It took forty-six years to build the temple, and you want to do it in three days!" The crowd now slowly disperses. Only the disciples remain with their master. They do not understand his words either, but they believe and trust him. Only three years later, after the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, did they finally understand the meaning of these words. When he spoke about the temple, he was referring to his body, which was to be crucified. But after three days he conquered death. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead. What a miracle!

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The children look at and describe the picture.

The Lord Jesus could not bear to see the temple turned into a market-place. That is why he drove out the money-changers and dealers from the forecourt.

They relate what will happen next.

- 2 Do the children understand why the Lord Jesus acted the way he did? (The temple should be a place where one serves, honours and worships God. In such a holy place one does not do business. The Lord Jesus knew that these goings-on in the temple saddened his Father. He could not tolerate it.)
- 3 We explain the meaning of Jesus' words: "I will rebuild the temple in three days." The Lord Jesus spoke about his body as the temple because God lived in his heart. The Lord Jesus always did only that which was pleasing to God. Three days after his death, he resurrected. The 'temple' was rebuilt. We want to respect and keep our church, the house of God, holy. Our heart should be a place in which God dwells. We must fight and resist anything which could separate us from him. The Lord Jesus has shown us through his own exemplary life, how we should behave towards God.
- 4 How do we behave in and around the church?