

The Messiah's Zeal

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 2:12-25

Preached on: Sunday, November 17, 2013

It is with utmost joy that I stand before you again on behalf of our glorious God to minister his word to you. Will you take your Bibles and turn to the gospel of John 2. We find ourselves this morning in verses 12-25. I've entitled my discourse to you "The Messiah's Zeal." Let me read this passage to you.

"12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days. 13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; 16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house of merchandise.' 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for thy house will consume me.' 18 The Jews then said to Him, 'What sign do You show us seeing that you do these things?' 19 Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' 20 The Jews then said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. 23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."

May God add his blessing to the reading of his word.

This is a fascinating passage of Scripture, one that has profound implications with respect to our Lord's Second Coming. You will recall that John's gospel portrays the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that is the emphasis, and this morning this aspect of his portrayal will help us see, I believe, three things: 1. we are going to see his zeal for holiness; 2. we are going to see his power over death; and finally, his knowledge of men's hearts.

Jesus' portrayal of Jesus as the son of God cannot be understood apart from the proclamation of the king and his kingdom being offered originally to Israel alone. It's important for you to understand this. You will recall in Matthew 15:24, Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Also, in the original mission of the 12 apostles, they were expressly forbidden by the Lord to go to the Gentiles or to the Samaritans but to go only, according to Matthew 10:5, to the lost sheep of the house of

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Israel. Later, even the scope of the ministry of the 70 that Jesus sent out, was limited to Israel. To Israel alone belonged the covenantal rights of the Davidic Kingdom, so John the Baptist, you will recall, came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, according to Matthew 3, beginning in verse 2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of the one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" "

You see, this speaks of the Old Testament earthly kingdom which was a part of the Abrahamic and the Davidic and the New Covenant promises. But you must understand that the initial offering of the kingdom was conditioned upon Israel's repentance and faith in their king. In Mark 1:15, Jesus says, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." The imperatives of the gospel of the kingdom makes it very clear that the chosen nation must make a decision. As we read the gospel narratives, we find the words "repent, believe, receive, confess and follow." This was the urgent message of Jesus and his messengers. Jesus was offering himself to Israel as the Christ, the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. If you will accept, I will bless you and the kingdom would be established upon earth and there would be national blessings but if you reject, there will be judgment and the kingdom would be postponed and there would be national punishment. And you know that they rejected and we continue to see the outcome. Unfortunately, they rejected their Messiah and in John 1 we read that "he came to his own and those who were his own did not receive him."

Now, it's important for you to understand as well, that Jesus knew that this would be their response which led to his announcement of the building of a new thing, his church, that he would build and bless, a body of believers, both Jews as well as Gentiles which would be invested with special authority in the future kingdom that he would establish upon the earth. But the Messiah King made it very clear that this establishment of the kingdom would be connected with the Second Coming of the King for which we await.

It's important also for you to understand that the Jewish rejection of their Messiah did not nullify the unilateral, unconditional, irreversible covenants that God made with Abraham and with David concerning the establishment of the earthly kingdom. It only postponed it. The custodianship of divine truth would be taken from the Jews that rejected it and transferred to the Gentile church temporarily. In Matthew 21:43, "Therefore I say to you," Jesus says, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it." In Luke 20:16, this makes it very clear, "The Jews," he says, "who killed the prophets and killed the Son," referring to Jesus, "will lose the vineyard," the vineyard being the sphere of God's saving purposes and then the privilege and the responsibility of disseminating that truth would be given, therefore, to the Gentile church.

So, for this reason, the gospel was eventually taken to the Gentiles. The keys of the kingdom were taken from the Jews, given to a new people, given to a new set of leaders, namely: the apostles, the New Testament prophets, evangelists, teaching shepherds. These all became the new vine growers, you might say. So, the Jews were set aside and a

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new guardianship was established in the Gentile church. But you must remember that this transfer is not permanent. Jesus said in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." The Apostle Paul said the same in Romans 11:25 that "a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and thus all Israel will be saved just as it is written. The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

So, my friends, we must be very careful not to permanently replace Israel with the church and say that God is finished with Israel. We must be careful not to say that the promised earthly kingdom has been permanently exchanged for some spiritual kingdom that we're living in now. There is not one verse, not one verse in all of Scripture that would suggest that the promises to Israel are permanently canceled and transferred to the church. Not one passage tells us that the future reign of Christ on the earth in a glorious kingdom that was promised all throughout the Old and even the New Testament, is canceled and now replaced by some mere spiritual kingdom. I would humbly submit that I believe according to Scripture, that that is a grievous error.

Now, as we come back to the text in light of that background, here in John 2 in verse 13 and following, we see our Lord Jesus Christ make the first great public assertion of his Messianic rights. And how fitting this was to do so at Passover. You will recall that he has just left the wedding feast at Cana where he turned water into wine, where you will recall, the wine symbolized the blood of Christ. All of that symbolized Jesus as the Messianic bridegroom who alone could supply the wine needed for that Messianic banquet, so to speak, that he likened to the kingdom. So, the wine also became both a symbol of the redeeming and cleansing power of the blood of Christ but also a metaphor used to describe the New Covenant that would replace the Old.

But now, think about it, how fitting it is that he assert his Messianic rights at Passover. Why? Because, according to the law, at Passover every Jewish family had to thoroughly rid their homes of leaven because leaven symbolized the defilement of sin and how sin can influence our lives. We all know that that's what leaven does. And this would, unfortunately, cause them to be ceremonially unclean. Well, the same now must be done in the Father's house. This was Jesus' Father's house. This was the temple. The temple was the epicenter of Israel's ceremonial purity, the very place where Jehovah would come and dwell in their midst. But there was a big problem: the temple was filled with leaven, shall we say. "This is my Father's house," we know that, Jesus said that, but now it needs to be cleansed.

You will recall in 1 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 6, the Apostle Paul says, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens," what? "The whole lump." It just takes a little bit. It's just like if you've got a little bit of cancer, what's going to happen? That's why even if you've got a little bit of it, you want to get rid of it, it's the same idea. He went on to say, "Clean out the old leaven that you may be a new lump just as you are in fact, unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate

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the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Then, it’s interesting, he goes on to describe some of the people that would be indicative of leaven, people that we should not associate with and in verse 10, these people include: “those who are immoral, covetous, swindlers, and idolaters.” Yet, think about it: the temple now is filled with these kind of people. Do you understand why this had to happen at Passover?

So, we read in verse 12, “After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.” Then we read, “The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.” Now, let’s get a picture of this: at Passover there would be tens of thousands of worshipers from all over the Roman world that would come into Jerusalem, into the temple, and they would want to purchase an animal for their sacrifice. Most of this took place in the outer court of the temple which, by the way, would be about 14 acres if you want to get a sense of that. This was separated from the inner court of the temple and there was about a chest high wall that would have been there and there were signs on that wall that would say that if you’re a Gentile, if you go beyond this point, you’re going to be killed. The outer edge of this court was graced by magnificent marble colonnades that included really four rows of pillars. There was a big cedar roof that they had over it to give shade to all of the merchants and the money changers down below. These money changers were needed to exchange the coinage of the people that brought their money from various places, even the Romans, because if any of the money had the image of a man, that would defile the temple and so forth.

So, you had to exchange your money but it cost a little bit to do that. In fact, it cost a whole lot to do that. There was usury going on. Under the corrupt rule of the Chief Priest, the temple was no longer the glorious symbol of God’s presence; it was now a symbol of man’s depravity. It was a den of thieves. It was a paradise for con artists who were notorious for swindling the poor. Worse yet, imagine if you were there: if you know anything about sheep, if you know anything about cattle, they stink and they make a lot of noise. Then you have the boisterous vendors creating an atmosphere of chaos, not an atmosphere of worship.

So, such desecration of his Father’s house enraged the holy Messiah with a righteous indignation and so: 1. we see his zeal for holiness. Notice in verse 15, “And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of merchandise.’” Now, my friends, please note: here we have a clear affirmation of his deity. He was letting them know that he was the Son of God. Again, this is John’s purpose in his gospel.

So what we have here is the Messiah King of Israel coming to purge his Father’s house of sin. But we see something else here: here we see the Son of Man exercising his divine

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authority, an authority that was so powerful and so supernatural, so indescribably holy that no one offers any resistance. Don't you find that interesting? There were temple guards all around and overlooking the whole thing from Fort Antonia, were all the Roman garrison that were there. They were watching all of this. Picture the scene: all of a sudden, some guy comes in and he's chasing all of the animals and all of the money changers, all of the people away, turning over everything, coins flying everywhere.

My friends, one of the things that I want you to bear in mind is too often, I believe, Jesus is characterized as some effeminate pusillanimous girly-man, the kind that glided along in his robe and he would make gestures at people like the pope. My friends, this is not the Jesus of the Bible. The Jesus of the Bible was a man's man. He was the perfect specimen of an unfallen man; the only one since unfallen Adam. Furthermore, this is God incarnate. Think about it: this is the uncreated, self-existent Creator and Sustainer of the universe. That's what John has emphasized in the first chapter. That's who's running all these people out. In fact, later on, you will recall, when approximately 1,000 soldiers come to arrest him in the garden, they ask, "Where is Jesus of Nazareth?" And he says, "I am he," and what happens? Just the sound of his voice throws them all to the ground. So, I'm sure his power somehow prevented anyone from coming and stopping him from doing what he did.

Oh dear Christian, this is the incarnate King of kings and Lord of lords. And we cannot even imagine the majesty that will be revealed when he comes in all of his glory. In fact, his unveiled deity at his Second Coming is precisely what is prefigured in this account. There are several passages that attest to that. For example, Malachi's prophecy in Malachi 3, beginning in verse 1, we read this, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts. 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 fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD."

So, because of his zeal for holiness, Jesus cleanses his Father's house at Passover. It's important for you to note that he is going to do this again at the close of his ministry. Now, some think that this account here is actually the latter cleansing, that there was only one cleansing. There are many reasons why I find that position to be unconvincing. I'm not going to take time to go into them but I will mention one and that is that the second cleansing recorded in the synoptic gospels occurs during the Passion Week of Christ's ministry, not the onset of his public ministry where the Lord here, I believe, is revealed more as the Messianic Prophet as well as King. The second cleansing at the close of his ministry, it's clearly he's revealing his authority as the Messianic King. For example, you may recall that the second cleansing is going to be a prophetic fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9. In fact, in verse 25, we read about a day that is going to happen that

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is going to come, a day where the Prince would arrive. In that passage we read, "It will be from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." So, a very clear and precise prophecy.

Daniel predicted that there would be 69 weeks of prophetic years of 360 days each. By the way, if you do the math, that's 173,880 days. And then on that final day, our Lord would, as the prophet says, ride into Jerusalem and present himself to Israel as their Messianic King. Well, guess what happened? Exactly on that day as predicted, we have the Triumphal Entry of Christ and what was his initial act when he came into Jerusalem? To once more assert his Lordship over the temple. That's his second cleansing.

Now, will you also notice that from the very onset of Jesus' public ministry his message of the kingdom was met with opposition as he asserted his Messianic rights. He had no regard for diplomacy. He had no regard for being politically correct or making sure everybody liked him so he could attract a crowd. It's interesting that he publicly violated the legalistic traditions of the Jews which included, for example, the healing of the impotent man on the Sabbath. We'll read about that in John 5. Yet he defended even that act of compassion by saying in verse 17 of John 5, "My Father is working until now and I myself am working."

So, the point is: the only thing that mattered to our precious Lord was doing the will of his Father and this absolutely infuriated the Jews who sought to kill him. Would that we'd be so bold. He characterized the ruling elite of Israel as we read in the gospels, by calling them hypocrites, wicked and adulterous generation, he said the publicans the harlots will enter the kingdom before them, they were children of hell, blind guides who strain at gnats and swallow camels, they are full of extortion and excess, white washed tombs filled with dead men's bones, a generation of vipers. He just laid that out, didn't he? Very clearly. You see, he was zealous for holiness and that kind of zeal requires a proclamation of the truth come what may.

So, here in this first cleansing, Jesus, the Messiah King, presents himself in the role of a prophet to the temple authorities and they recognized this as we will see. It's interesting, Jesus' disciples must have been dumbfounded with all of this. Can't you imagine they're looking around thinking, "My goodness, what is going on?" But they were also exhilarated because we see in verse 17, John says, "His disciples remembered that it was written," by the way, let me stop here. Remember John was one of them watching all of this and so he's basically saying in so many words, "Let me tell you what all of a sudden we all said to each other." His disciples remembered what was written, "Zeal for thy house will consume me," Psalm 69:9, which, by the way, is a Messianic Psalm of David and the second half of that verse, by the way, reads, "The reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me."

First we see his zeal for holiness, secondly, his power over death. Now, think about what's going on. The temple authorities are wondering, you know, who is this guy? And they would have been representatives of the Sanhedrin who were ultimately in charge and

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now they're going to confront Jesus and challenge his authority to act in such a way. But they must have suspected that he was some kind of a prophet and we see this by what they say here in verse 18. There we read, "The Jews therefore answered and said to him, 'What sign do you show to us seeing that you do these things?'" By the way, they would not have asked this if they thought that he was some lunatic that was off of his medication, you know? They had to think, "This guy might be a prophet." But think of the depravity in their question: rather than acknowledging the truth, rather than examining their hearts and confessing the wickedness that had defiled the temple, they challenged Jesus to defend his authority. Beloved, you don't challenge Jesus. You obey him.

Verse 19, knowing their evil hearts, "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" This enigmatic mysterious response shocked the Jews. We even know that it shocked his disciples as we're going to learn later. Can't you imagine now, there's a whole crowd of people and they're eavesdropping, they're listening to what's going on and they heard what Jesus said. The reason we know that is that later on they would repeat Jesus' words when they mocked him hanging on the cross. Because of the hardness of their hearts, Jesus responded to their challenge in a way that they could not understand. He would often do this to judicially seal unbelievers in their unbelief. According to verse 21, we read that he was speaking of the temple of his body. He was not speaking of that magnificent temple that Herod began building some 46 years earlier at around 20 BC.

Verse 20, "The Jews then said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'" Beloved, isn't it sad to see the consequences of arrogance? They cannot understand spiritual things. What a different outcome it would have been if they would have humbled themselves before their Messiah and begged for forgiveness. Then, perhaps, he would have said to them, "You know, I have just come from Cana where I turned water into wine symbolizing the blessing that I will lavish upon you as the result of the New Covenant, the new that would replace the Old and now I come to my Father's house and I want to provide something else new for you. I want to provide for you a new access to God in perfect righteousness that will be made available by the shedding of my blood, my atoning work on the cross of sacrifice acceptable to God. One that will be proven by my resurrection from the dead on the third day." Obviously, none of that happened. They didn't understand that.

Beloved, don't miss this: even as the stone pots at Cana used for ceremonial cleansing were made obsolete by the new wine of the New Covenant, so too the Jerusalem temple would be made obsolete by the resurrection of Christ which would ultimately lay the foundation for the new spiritual temple that would replace it and what is that? It is the church. It is you and me. 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul says, "Do you not know that you are a," what? "A temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." 2 Corinthians 6:16, we read, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God." Paul says as well in Ephesians 2,

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beginning in verse 19, that “as saints we are God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

But obviously, the Lord did not reveal all of these glorious truths to them because of their unbelief and yet these truths, these veiled truths, were the sign that Jesus offered, signs pertaining to his Messianic authority. Again, beloved, don’t miss this: ultimately it would be in the human body of Jesus that the perfect and final sacrifice would be made. Isn’t it amazing? We understand that now, don’t we? We can see that so clearly. Three days after his death and burial, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true temple, would be raised up. Later on the disciples understood this. Notice verse 22, “So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” You see, they struggled with all of this resurrection stuff as well for a long period of time.

And with the resurrection came something else: the amazing gift of the indwelling Spirit of God that would cause them to remember the Scripture and be able to apply it, be able to see with spiritual eyes of discernment all that Jesus had said. Perhaps it’s for this reason that Peter, an eye witness of this account, would later, by the power of the Spirit, recall Psalm 16:8-11 and then include that text in his great sermon at Pentecost that we read about in Acts 2. In verse 25, here’s what Peter said, “For David says of him, ‘I saw the Lord always in my presence; for he is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow your holy one to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ Brethren,” Peter says, “I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, the Messiah, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh suffer decay.” This Jesus God raised up again to which we are all witnesses.

So, here John records not only the Messiah’s zeal for holiness but also his power over death which he prophesied as the Messianic Prophet. Remember it this way, I think this might be helpful: the feast at Cana pointed to his death, the feast of Passover pointed to his resurrection. But notice what John records next in verse 23, “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.” We’re not told the signs that he performed that day but there must have been many. But certainly they captured the attention of many that believed in his name. Although, as we’re going to see, they believed the wrong things for the wrong reasons and their faith was not a saving faith. But think about it: once again, here the Son the God, the Messiah King of Israel who has come to offer his kingdom, is not only exercising his authority by purging the temple but also by performing miraculous signs. Beloved, think about it: here the Messianic King takes up residence in his own temple

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and no one sees it. In fact, all through his public ministry, the people of Israel get a taste of the glorious blessings of the Messianic Kingdom from the hands of the King himself and they don't see it. By the time of Jesus' death, there is virtually no disease in Palestine. What they witnessed even here in this cleansing, was a sample of what could have been theirs without limit, without disruption, had they only humbled their heart and embraced their King.

The Scripture records, the King would weep over his own city, his own nation, because of their unbelief. You recall the text in Luke 13, beginning at verse 34, Jesus says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' My friend, that day is coming. But all the blessings of Messianic Kingdom would have been short-lived if they would have somehow understood what was going on, if they would have had no means, as well, of understanding the way for eternal life and, therefore, the Lord had to go to the cross. Why have all of the blessings and not have eternal life? Why have blessings here on earth and then perish in your sins? So, the cross had to take place.

So, ultimately what we have here is the Messiah King heading towards the cross. You see, only his death would bring many sons to glory, Hebrews 2:10. Only if he dies can there be much fruit as John is going to say in John 12. Only if he dies can that happen. At the end of his ministry, as he prepared to face the cross, Jesus said this in John 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The Lord knew this so he marches to the cross.

But John went on to explain that even Israel's rejection of her King was part of God's sovereign plan even though she will be held responsible as will all who refuse to believe. And here we see this amazing mystery between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. John went on to say in John 12:37, "But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him." Then he says this, "This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 'He has blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and receive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.'" Another example of that inscrutable mystery of what seems to be incompatible and that is the nature of the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility which is perfectly compatible in the mind of our glorious God.

Finally, we see not just his zeal for holiness and his power over death but his knowledge of men's hearts. Notice verse 24, "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Folks, this is both amazing as

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well as it is sobering. Think about it: our Lord has absolute knowledge of our innermost being. There is nothing we can hide from him. His penetrating eye peers even into the secret caverns of our imagination. Indeed, he is the living word, right? He is the word, therefore, that can judge the thoughts and the intentions of our heart, Hebrews 4:12.

Like so many people today, Jesus knew that the only reason the general public believed in him was because of the physical blessings that they thought he would give to them, how they could somehow benefit from his miracles. But they had absolutely no intention of bowing before him in genuine repentance and obeying him as Lord. My friends, we must remember that all is not gold that glitters, as the old saying goes. RBG Tasker put it well, he said this, "Jesus regarded all belief in him as superficial which does not have as its most essential elements the consciousness of the need for forgiveness and the conviction that he alone is the mediator of that forgiveness." My friends, believing in Jesus intellectually is altogether different than believing in him as the only hope of your salvation. The former will make you religious, the latter will make you righteous. Hell will be filled with religious people but only the righteous will enter into heaven, those made righteous by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

By way of application, I wish to focus on three things very quickly because we always want to ask the question: what does this text say to us right now? I've given you much of the theology of it, much of the richness of what was going on and where it's leading but we cannot lead it there. We've got to come back and say, "Spirit of God, help me think through how can this text make me think and act different from this day forward." And I would submit to you that on the basis of this text, there are at least three things that emerge that should characterize our lives. Let me give them to you and elaborate on them: we need to have a zeal for holiness, a hunger for righteousness and a longing for the King and his kingdom.

1. A zeal for holiness. Do you hunger for righteousness? Do you long for the kingdom? Those three things, especially beginning with a zeal for holiness. And by that, I mean, do you share Christ's zeal for purity? Purity in your life? You're the temple now, right? The Spirit of God dwells within you. Do you have a zeal for purity in your family? In your church? Is there a cleansing that needs to take place? Only you can answer that question. Are there attitudes and actions that need to be chased out with a scourge of righteous indignation against your own flesh? Christ's zeal for holiness led him to a cross. He had one desire: to do the will of his Father. My friend, what are you willing to sacrifice?

Secondly, do you have a hunger for righteousness? Not a hunger for religion but a hunger for righteousness? Do you merely believe in Jesus as these people did because of some physical benefit that you think you can receive from him, that you want him to provide for you? Or do you believe in Jesus because you are horrified at the reality of your sin that separates you from a holy God and you know that only by placing your faith in him can you ever be reconciled to that holy God? That only by him can you truly receive his righteousness because your righteousness is so woefully inadequate?

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The Messiah's Zeal

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 2:12-25

Preached on: Sunday, November 17, 2013

Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied." My friends, we cannot be saved apart from the righteousness of Christ and that comes to that great truth of justification whereby we are declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us so now God no longer sees our sin but sees us hidden in his beloved Son. But then there is also sanctification that begins to take place as the Spirit of God conforms us to the image of Christ. This is progressive righteousness that occurs as we walk by the Spirit and begin to manifest the fruits of the Spirit as the Spirit of God conforms us into the image of Christ. Ultimately there is glorification where there is perfected righteousness. My friends, do you hunger for that? Is your life characterized by that?

Finally, do you long for the King and his kingdom? Didn't Jesus teach us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" My friends, is this the theme of your prayers? Is this ever a part of your thinking? Is this the passion of your heart? Do you long to see our King glorified on earth? Does it break your heart to see Jesus mocked and ridiculed? To you long to see him return in power and great glory and renovate this earth as he has promised and establish his glorious kingdom upon the earth? Or are you more interested in the details of your life?

May I remind you of something in closing? After Jesus' resurrection, he presented himself to his apostles and for 40 days he gave them instruction about two things: concerning himself, Luke 24, and "the things concerning the kingdom of God," Acts 1:3. And we know that the source of the materials that he used were the Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke 24:44, we read that he used "all the things which are written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Which, by the way, was the customary threefold division of the Old Testament books. It's fascinating. Jesus wanted them to know how both the King and the Kingdom are brought together as the one central theme of Old Testament prophecy upon which our Lord rested his regal claims as the King of God's Kingdom on earth.

Why would he do that? So that they would teach these things to us and so that we would learn them and we would look forward to that day when our King is revealed. O beloved, do you have a zeal for holiness? Do you have a hunger for righteousness? And do you have a longing for the Kingdom? Because the King is coming and it could be very soon. And because of this, later on John would write this in 1 John 3, "Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not yet appeared what we shall be but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him just as he is." And he says this at the close, "And everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure." I pray that these things will characterize your life and if they do, you will see God blessing you in ways that you cannot imagine. What a hope we have in Christ. Amen. What a hope we have.

Let's pray together.

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Father, may these great truths abide in our hearts in such a way as to cause us to be changed. And, Lord Jesus, we pray that you will come quickly. But we also pray that you will use us as mighty soldiers of the cross until you come and when you come, may you find us at our post, faithful for that for which you have called us. Lord, for anyone that does not know you as Savior, I pray that you will burden their heart and make them miserable in their sin, cause them to run to the foot of the cross and cry out to you for the mercy that you will give so graciously, so mercifully. Use us to these ends I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org

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