

He Loved Me . . .

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 2:12-25

Topic

Jesus made a whip and drove out those who were making His Father's house "a house of merchandise"

Title

"Take a Whip Down Merchandise Lane"

"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

On June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan challenged the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to remove the Berlin Wall.

Two years and five months later, the wall separating West and East Berlin for twenty-seven years came tumbling down.

Jesus said, "[Tear down] this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Jesus made His declaration in the breathtaking remodel of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. He was zealous for the purity of the stick and stone structure. Worshippers came there to meet with His Father. Merchandisers and money changers were defiling it.

The religious leaders questioned Jesus about the tearing down of the Temple. They did not know He “was speaking of the Temple of His body,” predicting His flesh and bone resurrection from the dead.

You and I are likewise God’s Temple.

- In First Corinthians 6:19, we read, “[Your] body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God...” Your **individual body** is the Holy Spirit’s Temple.
- In Ephesians 2:19-22, we read, “You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy Temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” The **corporate body** of believers who comprise the church is the Holy Spirit’s Temple.

Jesus is zealous for you, the Temple “not made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Jesus Is Zealous To Safeguard You**, and **#2 Jesus Is Zealous To Save You**.

#1 - Jesus Is Zealous To Safeguard You (v12-22)

Indiana Jones was seven years old when he saw a whip-act in a traveling circus. Later, when he accidentally fell into a wagon transporting a lion, he noticed a lion-tamer’s whip and grabbed it to fend off the animal. The rest is, as they say, fantasy.

Jesus was an accomplished whipster. Or would it be whipper? He could make a whip from “cords” and use it when the need arose.

Jesus brandishing a whip is unexpected. I never picture Him that way. Let’s take a look.

Joh 2:12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

The apostle John provides a few travel notes:

- Capernaum would serve as Jesus' ministry base.
- His travel team consisted of His mother and brothers, born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus. They were James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. He also had sisters, though their number and names are not recorded (Matthew 13:56).
- Also on the team were five disciples: Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.

Joh 2:13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Adult male Jews made an effort to attend Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Jesus had been in Jerusalem many times in His life, but not like this. He had been identified as the Messiah by John the Baptist, and He would act like it.

Joh 2:14 And He found in the Temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.

Animal sacrifices went on from morning to evening. On Passover, thousands of additional lambs were slain. Merchandisers sold pre-inspected animals that were guaranteed "unblemished."

Male Jews over the age of 20 were required to pay a Temple tax. Since it had to be paid in the Temple coinage, a currency exchange was necessary.

Before we criticize, let's understand that providing animals was a terrific convenience. Think, for example, of traveling with your sacrificial lamb 80 miles from Capernaum to the Temple. A lot could happen to your unblemished animal along the way, rendering it unfit on arrival. You would have no sacrifice. Having animals on hand to purchase was a big help.

Money changers were equally convenient. I can't tell you what an absolute hassle it was to exchange money on trips to the Philippines in the 1980s.

The issue was *how* and *where* this was being done:

- The money changers were charging exorbitant rates. They were like store owners who hike the prices of essential goods in a crisis.
- The sticker price on the animals was sky-high.
- The money changers and merchandisers were both doing business in what was called the Court of the Gentiles. It was a special place non-Jews could come for prayer. The business being conducted interfered with praying.

Joh 2:15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.

We're never told Jesus whipped anyone, not even animals.

You've heard the crack of a whip. A whip 8' long is preferred today if you want to make it crack, but a 6-footer will do with practice.

The crack of the whip was enough to scatter the animals and have them wreak havoc. If not the crack of the whip, the sight of it would inspire animals to obedience.

On walks, I carry a flashlight that is a one-million-volt stun baton. The noise is enough to strike fear into the unleashed dogs that sense my fear and perceive me as a quick bite.

John puts the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The other Gospels have it happening at the end. Most scholars agree Jesus cleansed the Temple twice.

Joh 2:16 And He said to those who sold doves,
"Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!"

Jesus 'cracked the whip,' overturned tables, and gave verbal commands. It was a mini-riot. It went unchallenged. Seriously, where was security?

Jesus is always the highest authority. No one challenged His authority to drive-out the defilers.

The Lord has delegated His authority to us. We declare that a man can have his sins forgiven, be born-again, and enter Heaven. That is real authority.

The apostle Peter warns believers in the current Church Age that false ministers will, "In covetousness... with feigned words **make merchandise of you**" (Second Peter 2:3 RV).

This doesn't mean you cannot buy or sell Christian merchandise or collect offerings.

It describes a person who covets money taking advantage of believers as a source of income for furthering their gain and not God's Kingdom

- Churches should not have the motivations of the unsaved.
- They must not use the methods of the world.

We try to abide by the modern proverb, "Where God guides, God provides." We should **not** think, "Where I guide, I will manipulate and pressure God's people to provide."

We fall into worldly thinking about the church. If more people come to your services, and you have bigger, more modern facilities, you are seen as successful. Since success is equated with spirituality, God is blessing you. You must be special to Him. Perhaps you are more gifted than other, lesser ministers.

No; not true. Numbers and facilities are a matter of God's grace that we cannot fathom. God looks upon the heart in a way we cannot. We *can* discipline ourselves not to judge by outward, physical criteria.

Joh 2:17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE HAS EATEN ME UP:"

Jesus' disciples are criticized for failing to see simple spiritual truths. This time they hit a home run. The quote is from Psalm 69:9. It was understood to be a prophecy that zeal for the Temple would characterize the Messiah.

Joh 2:18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

You could paraphrase this, "If by your zeal for the Temple you are claiming to be the Messiah, prove it to us by doing a miracle."

Jesus performed a miracle in Cana, turning water into wine. He would perform more miracles, culminating in raising a man from the dead. The Jewish leaders won't believe. With each miracle, they hate Jesus more until they plot His death.

Miracles, signs, and wonders followed the believers after Jesus rose from the dead. *Miracles, signs, and wonders have not ceased.*

You must admit, however, that they are fewer and farther between. They are as scarce among Pentecostals and Charismatics as they are among conservatives and cessationists.

Jesus came to Earth and performed the signs the Old Testament said would identify the Messiah.

Israel's official rejection of Jesus as their Messiah put God's program for Israel on a temporary hold and ushered in the mystery of the Church Age.

The Church Age is characterized not by signs as much as by sufferings.

The apostle Paul writes, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24).

Paul understood his sufferings, and ours, were the visible reenactment of the sufferings of Jesus so that people will see the Lord's abounding grace.

One commentator said, "God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering He experienced so that when we offer the Christ of the Cross to people, *they see the Christ of the Cross in us.*"

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Why not just say, "You're going to kill Me, but after three days I will rise from the dead by My own power."

It's better for us that we discover spiritual truth through prayer and Bible reading. Jesus is a romantic and wants you to seek Him for answers and insights.

Joh 2:20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

- God provided Moses with plans to construct a moveable Tabernacle in the wilderness.
- Approximately 500 years later, Solomon built a permanent Temple from the plans and provisions his father, King David, had left behind.
- Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians when the Jews were taken into a 70 year captivity.
- The Persians conquered the Babylonians, and King Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem. They did, and over some time completed a second Temple.
- Rome was their next oppressor, with Herod ruling them in the time of Jesus. He was a fantastic builder. He remodeled the second Temple into the structure we've all seen in mock-ups.

The bulk of the construction was completed in 10 years. The decorative work, however, was not finished until 64AD. Six years later, in 70AD, the Romans burned and destroyed the Temple.

- Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jesus predicted a third Temple would be in operation during the future seven-year Great Tribulation.
- There will be a Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom.
- The Revelation declares that there will be no Temple in the future heavens and Earth because “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple” (21:22).

Joh 2:21 But He was speaking of the Temple of His body.

Jesus was fully man. His physical body was the Temple of God the Holy Spirit, same as us.

We are drawn to the indwelling Holy Spirit empowering Jesus’ miraculous works. There is something first, more fundamental. As God’s Temple, Jesus walked in perfect obedience to His Father. From womb to tomb, the Lord never once strayed from the will of God. Not one time did Jesus act independent of His Father and use the prerogatives of His deity.

Jesus did no miracles for His first thirty years. He did, the Bible says, learn obedience.

The Holy Spirit empowers our obedience.

We ought to value obedience over every comfort, every advantage, every success, every desire, over our health and wealth. For example: Married believers too often value their personal happiness over their vows before God and obeying His Word. God is not against happiness, but He knows it can only be genuine if it is grounded in holiness.

Joh 2:22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Paul Little wrote a book called, *Know What You Believe*. You don’t know very much at the time of your conversion. You discover what you believe.

Jesus braided a whip and cleansed the Temple.

He did it to safeguard the worshippers.

Sadly, there are congregations that become spiritually unsafe. You can tell when, as Jesus' dear sheep, you are being *fleeced* instead of *fed*. Get out!

#2 - Jesus Is Zealous To Save You (v23-25)

Sebastian the crab might comment, "Jesus was under a lot of pressure down here." Everyone tried to influence Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth:

- Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world.
- The crowds tried to make Him their king before it was time.
- The disciples continually pressed Jesus to establish the Kingdom.

The Kingdom would be nothing without its saved citizens. The Cross must come first.

Joh 2:23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

There is a kind of belief that isn't saving faith:

- High-ranking Anglican cleric Dr. John Shepherd said in an Easter sermon in 2008, "It is important for Christians to be set free from the idea that the resurrection was an extraordinary physical event, which restored to life Jesus' original earthly body. The resurrection of Jesus ought not to be seen in physical terms, but as a new spiritual reality."
- A survey in 2017 in once-Great Britain revealed that 25% of people who describe themselves as Christians do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

Here is a quote that answers that belief: "The claim of Jesus's bodily resurrection is central to the Gospel message. Without his bodily resurrection, Jesus's claims to divinity would be empty, and the Gospel's claim to be the power of God for salvation would be false."

Joh 2:24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men,

The Lord would not let anyone, either supernatural or human, deter Him from His commitment to His Father to die on the Cross as the last lamb.

"He knew all men" is explained in verse twenty-five:

Joh 2:25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

One commentator says, "Jesus was realistic about the depth of trust in those who were now following Him. Some would endure; others would fall away. Jesus was discerning, and He knew that the faith of some followers was superficial. Some of the same people who claimed to believe in Jesus at this time would later yell, 'Crucify Him!'"

Did Jesus know this because He was God and saw each individual's heart? Maybe, but that gives us no example to follow as mere humans.

Jesus, as a man, "knew what was in man" *the same way any of us can*. We take the Word of God for it that every human is born dead in trespasses and sins and has a sin nature.

Jesus is the exception. He was virgin-born to receive a sinless human nature so He could take our sins upon Himself and give us His righteousness.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians expressed Jesus' zeal for our salvation: "[Jesus] for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

You are the joy that was set before Him.

In the Church Age, we read that Jesus has torn down the “wall of separation” between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14). Everyone who is saved becomes a living stone in the Temple on earth.

We are being individually fashioned so that when we come together, we are a building pleasing to Jesus.