

## **When Christ Cleans House**

(John 2:12-25)

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### **Introduction**

In 2018, an estimated 653 billion dollars will be spent purchasing products from the internet...

Our family will contribute to that number as we have discovered much savings from shopping online.

First, the prices are often cheaper..

Second, we also save in time and gas in having to go to a store to make the same purchase..

However, buying products online has its disadvantages as well..

The primary one is that we can't physically touch the product we intend to buy...

We can't pick up the shirt, the shoe, the TV that we are planning to buy..

However, the truth of online shopping is that people are willing to give that benefit up in order to save some money.

So how do shoppers compare products online and determine if they want to purchase them or not?

Well, that is where customer reviews play such a huge role today in online shopping..

You see, many decisions about whether to purchase an item online today are based solely on what others have said about that item..

Shoppers will often read dozens of reviews before reaching a final decision, but this is the world in which we live today...

And if you want the convenience of purchasing items off the internet, you often find yourself trusting the opinions of others who have bought the same product...

Yet, this is nothing new in our world...

In a sense, customer reviews have played a part in purchases for centuries...

How many things have you bought or how many restaurants have you eaten at because someone recommended them?

This is part of shopping because this is part of our human nature...

We have limited knowledge.

We can't know everything.

So we often depend on others to gather information and facts and opinions before we make decisions..

This is how we have been together by God as reasonable and logical creatures...

Well, that explains the Bible..

The Bible is a defense of Christianity...

It is God's word given to us as historical fact, as eyewitness testimony to convince us of the truth of Christianity...

Though the Bible is a supernatural book, it is still a book that is used to change our minds about ourselves and to change our minds about God...

Well, John's gospel is a great example of the power of testimony to change our minds about Christ..

If Jesus were simply an item on the shelf of a store that sold religion, why would we want to buy Him?

What makes Christ the only product worth buying?

What make Christianity the only true faith and religion in the world?

Well, the book of John in the Bible helps us out, and essentially serves as a customer review of sorts in our lives?

Why is Jesus the only way to God?

Why is Christ the only true religious leader in the world?

Why is Christianity the only true faith of all time?

Well, John the apostle would offer an easy answer to that.

Christianity is the only way to God because the head of Christianity is God in the flesh...

If Jesus is God, then all the other religions of the world and history pale in comparison...

And so John sets out to prove the deity of Christ..

John offers proof after proof throughout all 21 chapters of his gospel that Jesus is God...

In chapter 1, John gives evidence of Jesus' identity through the words of eyewitnesses around Christ..

He offered his own testimony first, then he offered the testimony of a prophet of God named John the Baptist, then he offered the testimonies of some of Jesus' first followers...

Then last week in chapter 2, John began to offer evidence of things that Jesus did..

The first proof was a miracle where Jesus changes water to wine proving that Jesus is God because of his power over nature..

And today, we continue with more proofs of what Jesus did as we follow Jesus in the very early days of his ministry that are described in the remaining verses of John 2..

Today, we will add to the unique character of Jesus..

Last week, we saw Jesus' deity through His power over nature in creating wine out of nothing.

This week, we add to the proof that Jesus is God by seeing #1 - Christ's Authority over Worship #2 Christ's Authority over Death #3 Christ's Authority over Man..

Let's dig into proof #1 in verses 12-17...

## **I. Christ's Authority over Worship (12-17)**

Let's read verses 12-17..

***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 a [f]place of business." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me."***

If you look at the map on the screen, you will see a picture that describes verses 12 and 13 of John 2...

Jesus was always perfectly obedient the law of God.

Therefore, he never failed to attend a Passover celebration as a boy or young man or even now as he starts out in ministry.

God had command the Jews to observe the Passover to remind them of His faithfulness to spare Israel in the land of Egypt and then deliver them to the Promised Land.

And part of the celebrating the Passover was a trip to Jerusalem to sacrifice a lamb in the Jewish temple as the Jews had done in Egypt...

That Lamb's blood was smeared over their door and the sight of that blood spared them when God sent an angel of death to kill the firstborn children of Egypt...

Well, the Passover came every year and for all his life, Jesus had observed the Passover...

So after he leaves the wedding in Cana where he performed his first miracle, he heads north to Capernaum, a small town of the shore of the sea of Galilee..

And from there, He and his family and his disciples head up to Jerusalem..

As you look at the map, you may wonder why John describes it as going "up" to Jerusalem since they headed south..

But remember that Jerusalem is on a mountain of sorts...

So no matter where you are in Israel, heading to Jerusalem is already considered going “up” to Jerusalem...

At Passover, thousands of Jews went up to Jerusalem, and so Jesus heads up to Jerusalem as well..

When he arrives, he heads to the temple..

Now to help you understand the magnitude of what is about to happen in verse 15, you have to understand the crowds that were in Jerusalem..

Jewish historian Josephus claims that it was nearly 3 million people here in Jesus’ day based on the fact that they were nearly 250,000 lambs sacrificed at the temple during Passover..

That 3 million number may be exaggerated but 1 million people in Jerusalem is a very probable number...

Either way, the temple is packed.

It is the center of Jewish religion..

It is where the religious leadership of Israel is concentrated..

So during Passover week, it is hustling and bustling..

Well, the Jewish religion of Jesus's day was a far cry from what the OT prescribed for the people...

And the greatest evidence of the error of Jewish religion was probably most evident at Passover..

You see, the temple was now a marketplace for the crowds...

The Jewish religious leaders learned what many businessmen know..

If you want to make money, follow the crowds...

Well, the crowds came to Jerusalem and the religious leaders soon learned that crowds bring money..

So they through aside the duties to the Lord and became swindlers of the people...

You see, many families would travel from all over Israel with their own lamb to be sacrificed at the temple during Passover...

But the lamb had to pass the inspection of the religious leaders before it could be offered in the temple..

Well over time the religious leadership began to turn down more and more lambs, so that they could sell their own "temple-approved" lambs...

And so the travelers to Jerusalem would simply make plans to buy their lambs when they got to Jerusalem for often outrageous prices...

Adding to that practice of forcing people to buy from them, the religious establishment also required temple tax to be paid in Jewish currency...

For Jews in Jerusalem, that wasn't a problem, but for outsiders, they had to exchange their money for Jewish money...

And most historians of the day exchanged rate was incredible in favor of the religious leadership...

Long story short, Jesus arrived in Jerusalem and was surrounded by a bunch of greedy men posing as the the religious leaders of Israel...

And needless to say, he is outraged.

Look at verses 15-16 again...

***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 a [f]place of business."***

Some folks look at this and charge Jesus with sin because of his anger...

Yet, the Bible never calls all anger sinful...

Anger that is from an intense love of God is not sinful.

Sadly, you very rarely see anger resulting from an intense devotion to God..

Most if not all of the anger in our lives is always sinful because it is a result of our love of ourselves...

WE love ourselves so much that we dont want to be inconvenienced or wrong or made to wait so we get angry and we sin in that anger..

Yet, Jesus' actions here are not a result of selfish pride but a result of his deep love for the worship of God...

The temple was supposed to be a place of worship and adoration and prayer to God but it had become a place for buying and selling and robbing of God's people..

And so Jesus makes a whip and verse 15 says that he drives them ALL out of the temple...

The people, the animals, the merchants..

The place is literally emptied by Jesus and a whip...

Now, people don't consider this a miracle but it was...

We are talking 10s of 1000s of people all driven out by a single man with a whip..

You see, Jesus is a nobody at this point in his ministry...

He hasn't really done anything in or around Jerusalem...

For most Jews, he is just like everyone else there in Jerusalem...

He hasn't called Himself God.

He hasn't performed miracles in this area of Israel yet..

So of Jesus to clean out the temple with a whip is miraculous...

Now in case this cleaning out of temple sounds familiar, it should...

Jesus does it again at the end of his ministry right before he heads to the cross...

And you can't help but see the point...

When Jesus begins ministry, the temple is a mess because the Jewish religions is a mess..

As Jesus end ministry, the temple will still be a mess because the Jewish religion will still be a mess..

In fact, when Jesus hangs on the cross, the temple curtain is torn to symbolize that man no longer needed a temple and a priest to get to God...

Now they had access to God through Christ..

But the tearing of the temple curtain also symbolized the destruction of the false religion that Judaism has become...

And in 70 AD, the whole system, the whole temple would be destroyed when Rome destroyed Jerusalem...

You see, the temple was a focal point of Jesus' ministry because He opposed everything that the temple, the people of the temple, and the worship in the temple had become...

It enraged Jesus enough to cause him to clean out the temple on 2 separate occasions...

And I would tell you this...

False worship still enrages Christ today...

Look, this church is not a temple but it represents the worship of God in the church age...

And when people step foot in a church and offer false worship to Jesus Christ, he is angered by it...

For those who drop money in the plate to look good before their friends and family, their false worship angers the Lord...

For those who stand to sing and offer words without considering their meaning, they offer false worship to the Lord.

For those who come into the church and hears the words of the Bible but never consider how to apply them to their own lives, they offer false worship to God..

False worship is all over the church in 2018...

Churches are filled with people putting on an appearance of worship but their hearts are far from God...

They “amen” the verses of the sermon but don’t obey them in their lives...

And God is angered by it..

False worship is tempting every time you walk through that door...

Don't be someone who offers false worship and angers the Christ that you pretend to love..

Or else Jesus may take you and throw you out of His presence forever...

Jesus is God because He has demonstrated his power over the temple...

Only Christ can determine what true worship is...

Therefore, you better offer true worship to Him...

A second proof of Jesus' deity is seen in his interaction with the religious leaders in verses 18-22...

We can call this Christ's authority over death...

## **II. Christ's Authority over Death (18-22)**

Verse 18..

***18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us [g]as your authority for doing these things?"***

***19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this [h]temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this [i]temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the [j]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.***

Back in chapter 1, you may remember that the religious leaders of Judaism came to John the Baptist when he was in the wilderness...

John the Baptist had been preaching and baptizing many Jews in the wilderness in preparation for the arrival of Messiah...

His ministry had caused such a stir that the leaders of Judaism had sent some priests out to him and their purpose was to find out where John the Baptist got the authority to do what he was doing...

Well, here in chapter 2, Jesus cleans out the temple and the leaders of Judaism agains show up and what do they want to know?

Who gave Jesus the authority to clean out the temple?

You see, false religious teachers are always worried that the truth will catch up to them, so they are constantly on the lookout for others...

You see, false teachers are in it for the power, the money, the fame...

They like the authority that their false teaching gives them, and anyone who challenges their authority is now their enemy..

So they come at Christ here to challenge his authority and it wont be the last time they do that...

And what they want is a sign to validate Jesus' authority..

In other words, these religious leaders want proof that Jesus has the authority to do what he does..

Now, let's be clear here..

Even if Jesus has given them a sign here, they still wouldn't believe...

The heart of unbelief is a heart of stone..

You can give it all the signs you want and it will remain in its unbelief because sin blinds it from truth..

In fact, Jesus is going to do plenty of miracles in the sight of these religious leaders, and guess what?

They still will reject Him.

However, the greatest sign of Jesus' authority will be his resurrection, which he speaks of here...

He tells these Jewish leaders...

You want a sign?

Well when you kill me on the cross, I will rise 3 days later..

That will be your sign that I can do what I want in the temple..

That will be your sign that I have the authority of God...

That will be your sign that I have authority over life and death...

But guess what?

The Jews had no clue what Jesus was talking about here..

They thought the sign he spoke of was destroying the temple that they were standing in and watching him reconstruct it in 3 days..

This is how confused unrepentant sinners are..

They think they know that truth, but they can't find truth with two hands and a flashlight...

Jesus predicts His miraculous resurrection right here before their eyes and they think he is talking about brick and mortar construction...

But look, those who are saved understand...

In fact, when Jesus is resurrected, verse 22 lets us know that the disciples remember this conversation with the religious leaders that happened 3 years before the resurrection...

You see, Christ has power over death.

Jesus has authority over the grave.

Jesus even says that He raised Himself back to life..

Look at verse 19...

***“Destroy this [h]temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”***

Only God can raise the dead, and when Jesus raised Himself back to life, he proved his identity as God in the flesh...

So far, John has offered us proof that Jesus has authority over temple worship and authority over life and death...

But there is one more more in chapter 2...

We find it in verses 23-25...

Let's call this....

### **III. Christ's Authority over Man (23-25)**

Verse 23...

***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.***

It is good that John makes a note here about what was happening in Jerusalem...

Verse 23 tells us that many were seeing Jesus and hearing Jesus at this Passover..

They were observing his miracles and believing in His name, according verse 23...

And if John had simply let verse 23 be the last verses of this chapter, we could all leave here in peace, go find some lunch and rest easy this afternoon...

Yet John doesn't end chapter 2 in verse 23...

He includes two more verses that should send a shiver down every spine in here this morning...

Verse 24...

***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 testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.***

If you translate this form the original Greek, a paraphrase of verses 23-25 would read like this..

Many were trusting in Jesus, but Jesus wasn't trusting in them because He could see their heart...

In other words, Jesus doesn't trust everyone who says they trust in Him..

And the reason for that is that Jesus knows the "inward" truthfulness of every "outward" claim...

One thing that we are going to see in John's gospel from beginning to end is false salvation...

People who claim to know Christ, even follow Christ for a while, but in the end their claims of faith are proven false..

Judas would fit that category...

The disciples who leave Jesus in John 6 would fit that category..

And so would anyone today who claims to know Christ but inwardly, has no love for Christ and no desire to obey Christ..

There may be people in here like that today..

You tell your spouse you trust in Christ...

You tell your preacher you trust in Christ.

You tell your family you trust in Christ..

But Christ doesn't trust your confession of Him because HE sees your heart every moment of every day..

And the sad reality is that you know that but you keep up the good acting on the outside while your inside withers away loving its sin..

I can think of no sadder words in the human language that to hear Christ tell people at the judgment to depart from Him because HE never had a relationship with them...

Yet, many people at the judgment will hear those words because their phony testimony of trusting in Christ will be uncovered for all to see and they will leave the presence of Christ forever..

That is a dreadful thought, but that is a reality because Jesus has the power to see true faith and false faith in people..

Jesus has authority over everyone who has ever been born, and He can see every thought that passes through our minds, every word that passes through our lips and every action that passes out of our bodies from birth to death...

His authority over our lives reveals his deity...

His ability to know what is in your heart is the third proof of this chapter that Jesus is God in the flesh...

## **Conclusion**

With those final words of chapter 2 ringing in our ears, let me end with a warning and an encouragement...

First, the warning is clear..

Don't think for one minute that you can fool Christ with an outward profession of trust in Him but an inward disobedience to Him..

What I think of you has no bearing on your eternity...

What your spouse thinks of you has no bearing on eternity...

What Jesus knows about you has all the bearing on your eternity...

And if you hope to fool Him, you are the ultimate fool in the universe..

Second, for the believer in here we also struggle with the fact that Christ sees our hearts and knows our sins...

Yet, we are comforted by two things..

One, Christ has forgiven those sins if we have truly repented and trusted in Him...

Even the sin that we commit tomorrow are forgiven today in the death of Christ on our behalf..

The second thing that brings us comfort is this..

Jesus can also see beyond our sins committed to our desire to obey Him...

If you remember Peter on the night before the cross, you remember a man who denied Jesus 3 times...

Yet, if you remember Peter, you also remember him on the beach with Jesus after the resurrection..

He is there with Christ feeling the weight of his sins of denying Christ, yet what is Peter's comfort...

Let me just read it to us...

John 21...

***15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus \*said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you [f]love Me more than these?" He \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I [g]love You." He \*said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He \*said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you [h]love Me?" He \*said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I [i]love You." He \*said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He \*said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you [j]love***

***Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you [k]love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I [l]love You.” Jesus \*said to him, “Tend My sheep.***

Dear believer, we all fail Christ and we all sin against Him as Christians...

And Jesus also knows that because he sees our hearts...

Yet, we like Peter tell him everyday...

Yes, Lord, I have sinned against you, but you know my heart and you know that I don't desire to do that...

So look beyond my sinful flesh and see the heart that desires to obey more fully each day...

And let me be clear, only a person who sins are forgiven can ask that of Christ..

I pray that your sins have been truly forgiven, and if they haven't or you don't know, I would love to speak with you after service today...

Let us pray.

