

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

**John 2:12-22 | Cleansing the Temple**

Sunday October 18, 2026

**WELCOME:**

Announcements

**CALL TO WORSHIP:**

- **Prayer:** Psalm 95:6-7
  - **Music**
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**REVIEW:**

Please open your Bibles. We continue in our verse-by-verse exposition of John's Gospel this morning.

- Last week we studied the first miracle of Jesus—Jesus was asked to solve a problem at a wedding/water into wine.
- Learned how wine and joy are two sides of the same coin in the Jewish culture.
  - When Mary told Jesus, “The have no wine,” it could have been translated, “They have no joy.”
- Witnessed a divine transition from the mother-and-son relationship between Mary and Jesus to a Savior-and-sinner relationship. Why?
- Jesus doesn't respond to human pressure—even to His own mother- but to the Father's providence.

- Trust: Mary trusted Jesus to help even though she didn't know how he would help.
- Irony: Jesus performed the miracle, yet the wedding staff did all the work.
  - The Lord works in similar ways today—not through prophets or apostles, but through ordinary people.
- I closed by suggesting we put ourselves in Mary's sandals—she didn't know what would happen—just as we don't know what will happen in our lives tomorrow.
  - And that's where our trust comes in.
- We talked about the idea of accepting God's will vs. resisting God's will.

Lastly, we looked at how this wedding in Cana points to the “marriage feast of the Lamb” in Rev 19:6–9.

This upcoming wedding celebrates the union between the Lord Jesus Christ (the Lamb) and the church (his bride).

Will you be there? The invitation is before you—that you would believe.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- Today we come to another familiar and famous passage—the first cleansing of the temple.
- We'll see Jesus' zeal and passion for true worship.
- He'll address the distractions that took place in the first-century temple.
- We'll see how all of this impacts your corporate worship today.

*Please stand as we read and honor God's Word.*

**SCRIPTURE:**

**John 2:12**—After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

**John 2:13**—The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

**John 2:14**—In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there.

**John 2:15**—After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables.

**John 2:16**—He told those who were selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

**John 2:17**—And his disciples remembered that it is written: **Zeal for your house will consume me.**

**John 2:18**—So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"

**John 2:19**—Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days."

**John 2:20**—Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?"

**John 2:21**—But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

**John 2:22**—So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

*May the Lord bless the reading of His Word.*

**PRAY:**

*How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord of Armies. I long and yearn for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cry out for the living God. (Ps. 84:1-2)*

**EXEGESIS:**

**John 2:12**—After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

Verse 12 transitions us from the wedding at Cana.

Today, John gives us Jesus' itinerary.

Capernaum is about 15-20 miles from Cana—so this is a day's walk.

It's like walking to Camp Verde.

Both Peter and Matthew lived in Capernaum.

Picture Capernaum as a much smaller first-century Lake Havasu.

It seems that after facing rejection in his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus moved to Capernaum and lived with Peter and Andrew.

Jesus chose Capernaum because it was easily accessible to most Galilean towns and villages.

**John 2:12**— together with his mother,

So we have Jesus' mother, Mary—Mary still at her Son's side.

The rebuke from the wedding didn't deter her from following Him.

I'm guessing the miracle brought them closer—that's what iron sharpening iron is supposed to do.

**John 2:12**— *together with his mother, his brothers.*

This is new—John doesn't mention Jesus' brothers being at the wedding, but obviously they were.

Maybe they were the ones drinking all the wine!

John never names them; however, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark name them as —James and Joses (Joseph), Jude and Simon.

Jesus also has sisters, but they aren't named.

What's interesting are the family dynamics.

Jesus was miraculously conceived through the Holy Spirit.

After His birth, Scripture teaches that Mary and Joseph had more children.

The Gospels agree that none of Jesus' brothers believed in Him during his lifetime.

However, after His crucifixion and ascension, Jesus' brothers were present during Pentecost (Acts 1:14).

The Apostle Paul later records that Jesus appeared to his brother James, who became a pastor in the early Church.

James and Jude also went to pen the epistles that bear their names.

**John 2:12**— *together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples,*

The disciples mentioned here are the five that Jesus brought to the wedding: Simon Peter, Andrew, John, Philip, and Nathanael.

So this was a fairly large group traveling together—probably a beautiful springtime hike from Cana to Capernaum.

As they approached Capernaum, they probably saw green rolling hills, the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee, along with Mt. Hermon in the background.

**John 2:12**—*and they stayed there only a few days.*

They stayed in Capernaum a few days and got ready to leave again. Why?

**John 2:13**—*The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

We know it was springtime because of the Jewish Passover.

Passover was a joyful time for Israel—even more so for Jesus' family and new disciples, especially after Jesus' first miracle.

I'm guessing that as they walked to Jerusalem, they felt an energy in the air— kind of like when we get our Christmas spirit.

Passover celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians.

The celebration was so large that the city took a month to prepare.

They repaired the roads, maintained the bridges, and painted the tombs and gravesites so people wouldn't step on them.

Josephus, a Jewish historian, says 2.5 million people came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

People arrived a week early and stayed in nearby villages, homes, and inns, but mostly in tents.

As you can imagine, the sheer volume of visitors created both logistical challenges and security concerns.

Rome brought in extra troops and posted guards around the temple grounds.

As Jesus, his family, and the Disciples hike to Jerusalem, we can imagine how the entire land was buzzing with the spirit of Passover.

**John 2:13**—*and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

People went up to Jerusalem because the city itself was built upon Mount Zion.

Jerusalem was and still is the capital of Israel.

We can only guess that the closer they got to the temple, the more congested everything became.

Think of going on a road trip to Phoenix to see a large concert or watch the Suns or the Cardinals play.

As they entered the city gates, imagine vendors selling trinkets and souvenirs on all sides.

**John 2:14**—*In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves,*

The key phrase is “in the temple.”

It's one thing to sell merchandise and to deal with noise in the city on the way to the temple.

But it's another when you actually enter the temple grounds.

**John 2:14**—*he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves,*

Imagine coming here this morning—where farm animals are running free.

Picture vendors setting up booths in the aisles—clamoring for your attention to sell you something.

And all you're trying to do is find a chair and prepare to worship.

Would all this activity distract you? Could you sing, listen, or pray?

That's exactly what's happening in the temple.

The sacred grounds set apart for worship had become worldly and chaotic.

I'm sure the priests in charge of the temple were trying to convince themselves that they were just being relevant and seeker-sensitive.

But this one decision to sell goods in the temple affected everyone's ability to worship.

**KEYPOINT 1:**

*Noise and activity are not conducive to worship.*

Why were farm animals for sale in the temple?

These animals were used for the Passover sacrifices.

It was a convenient service to the people, so they didn't have to travel with the animals.

But it was more than a service—it was extortion.

These animals underwent careful examination to ensure they had no defects—they could not be crippled, lame, or otherwise flawed.

The inspectors of these animals underwent rigorous training.

They spent eighteen months on a farm learning to distinguish clean animals from unclean animals.

By the end of the training, they could identify an animal that would one day become unclean, even if it was clean at the time!

The inspectors had a good thing going for them.

If they didn't approve an animal, it wasn't approved.

So some people did bring their own animals for sacrifice, but the inspectors wouldn't approve them, forcing them to buy one in the temple.

Tragically and demonically—extortion was common within the temple.

To make things worse, Annas, the high priest, was behind it all!

He was the religious kingpin—the mob boss —because he sold the franchises to work in the temple.

Then Annas would take a cut of everything sold.

**John 2:14**—and he also found the money changers sitting there.

Notice that they are not on their knees praying.

They are not on their face before a holy God begging for forgiveness.

They are sitting doing business.

These money changers are similar to the currency exchange booths you see at international airports today.

Question: Why are they there?

They provided a service too.

Every Jewish man starting at the age of 20 had to pay the annual temple tax (Ex. 30:13–14; Matt. 17:24–27)

But they could pay only with Tyrian coinage—because of its purity.

Like travelers today visiting a foreign country, they exchanged their money for the national currency.

Here's the deal: because the money changers had a monopoly, they charged an outrageous fee—as high as 12.5 percent!

This brought a ton of money into the temple.

So all that to say—when the Lord Jesus entered the temple, He didn't find people praying and worshipping His Father.

He found a religious circus! How does He respond?

**John 2:15**—*After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables.*

Many of us are familiar with this verse—many of us have seen movies or movie clips of Jesus clearing the temple.

Before we get into the specifics, I want us to recognize why Jesus does this first.

**John 2:15**— *he drove everyone out of the temple...*

If these activities had been going on outside the temple, Jesus wouldn't have done anything.

In fact, people used to set up these same booths across the Kidron Valley, up on the slopes of the Mount of Olives—far from the temple complex.

But the problem is that these worldly things are going on inside the temple.

So, Jesus takes a good look around and is filled with holy indignation.

He is appalled, offended, and outraged by the deseccration of His Father's house.

**KEYPOINT 2:**

*The ultimate source of our Lord's anger was love—the love of God.*

It's hard for us to grasp this moment because we're not first-century Jews.

What we have to understand is that the temple, which began as the Tabernacle, symbolized God's holy, holy, holy presence.

God's presence dwelt with His people! The temple's very purpose was to glorify God.

**KEYPOINT 3:**

*We don't come to God's house on our own terms; we come to God on His.*

- Think of all the details, rules, and regulations that God laid before Israel during the Exodus.
- Consider the specific measurements in building the Tabernacle.
- Remember what happened to Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, when they thought they could make an offering to God on their own terms?
- Consider what happened to Korah and his family when he tried to overthrow Moses (Num. 16).

Dear friends, we don't worship via our opinion—God tells us how to approach Him.

And here's an example of what happens when we don't.

**John 2:15**—*After making a whip out of cords,*

Jesus doesn't lose his mind and sin.

He doesn't fly into a fit of fury or humanistic irrational rage.

He calmly, methodically, and specifically starts looking for materials to make a whip.

These "cords" are plants that the animals slept on.

Why a whip?

Because whips were the device used to move farm animals from one place to another.

It's a practical tool for managing animals.

Jesus making this whip is completely consistent with how farmers would have moved their own herds.

Jesus didn't whip people—as we'll see, He talked to people.

**John 2:15**—*He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables.*

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus sat at the table—in the temple, He overturned tables.

Here, the Lamb is also a Lion.

For Jesus, worship is paramount.

His righteous indignation was unmistakable.

The Lord Jesus will not tolerate any mockery of true worship.

#### **KEYPOINT 4:**

*You can learn more about a person by what he hates than by what he loves.*

Jesus hates fake, false, and worldly worship—and He does something about it.

So this was a scene of incredible chaos, but not violence.

If we think about it, it's an amazing feat for one man to clear the temple—but Jesus isn't just any man, is He?

Next, Jesus clears the temple because the OT prophesied it.

**Malachi 3:1**—*See, I am going to send my messenger (the Baptizer), and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple.*

**Malachi 3:2**—*But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and like launderer's bleach.*

**Malachi 3:3**—He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi (temple priests) and refine them like gold and silver.

Malachi emphasizes the Lord's purity—that nothing is mixed into His character.

This is also how we are to approach the Lord in His house today—with purity.

**John 2:16**—He told those who were selling doves, “Get these things out of here!

This statement shows that even in His righteous anger, Jesus was totally in control of His emotions.

He's not running wild in a blind rage.

If that were the case, He would have knocked over the cages of doves, where they could have been hurt or even killed.

But Jesus didn't—He told the owners to get the doves out of the temple.

**John 2:16**—*Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!*”

Jesus' reference to “My Father's house” reminds us of both His deity and His messiahship.

Let's fast forward to today—what does the Lord think of churches that have restaurants in them? Bookstores?

What about coffee and donuts that are brought into the sanctuary before the worship service begins?

Isn't Jesus's command crystal clear? ***“Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!”***

**John 2:17**—And his disciples remembered that it is written: **Zeal for your house will consume me.**

The word “consume” in Greek means to be eaten up/devour.

Jesus refers to Psalm 69, written by King David.

**Psalm 69:7**—For I have endured insults because of you (God), and shame has covered my face.

**Psalm 69:8**—I have become a stranger to my brothers and a foreigner to my mother's sons

Why?

**Psalm 69:9**—because zeal for your house has consumed me (excessive fervor/passion/love), and the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

David was clearly in deep emotional pain as he wrote these words—why?

Paraphrase: *Because I have proclaimed Your word and told the truth, I have become a disgrace in my own family. Because of my zeal for Your house, a zeal that consumes me, a passion that eats me up, I'm despised.*

**John 2:17**—His disciples remembered...

Seeing Jesus cleanse the temple, His disciples later made the connection.

This also happens to us—we'll remember after the fact too.

We seldom see the Lord's immediate activities in our lives, but over time we start to understand why God does what He does.

The disciples eventually come to know and share the Lord's zeal for His house.

But Jesus wasn't simply motivated by zeal for the temple.  
It was His passion/love/devotion for worshiping His Father.

Jesus' zeal for God's house shows us that our worship is measured not by American standards—the number of people, programs, or budget.

It is measured by the purity with which we worship.

**KEYPOINT #5:**

*How we approach God during corporate worship is paramount.*

This level of concern for purity has almost completely vanished from contemporary Christianity today.

Jesus clearly shows that the temple—AKA today's church—is holy ground.

Why is today's church holy ground? Because the Spirit of Almighty God is present when we gather.

Today's church is a place for adoration, worship, repentance, prayer, and biblical exposition.

What do we see in today's churches?

Is it not a 21st-century version of a spiritual circus?

- People coming in late and leaving early
- Talking through the service
- Sipping on their coffee
- Complaining about the music

Many people walk into church acting like they're the ones others should worship!

You want to know what's worse than having a circus on Sunday mornings and calling it a "worship service."

People call the worldliness, the noise level, the chaotic activity—they blame the Holy Spirit for all of it!

Our enthusiasm doesn't prove that our worship pleases God.

It's no wonder people don't want to go to church anymore—and I can't blame them.

Yet, after the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church how to orchestrate their worship services, he says, "***God is not a God of disorder but of peace.***" (1 Cor. 14:33).

**John 2:18**—*So the Jews replied to him, "What sign will you show us for doing these things?"*

The Jews want a miracle—and we'll see this demand emerge as a theme as we study John's Gospel together.

Unbelieving people—especially those hostile to God — demand miracles.

Like the Jewish leaders, unbelieving people today constantly ask for signs—and then mock God when He doesn't perform on demand.

In all fairness, the priests run the temple, and they have the right to ask questions.

But asking a question and demanding a miracle are two completely different things.

Their question was not a request for information, but a challenge to His authority.

Although the priests challenged His right to do what He did, they didn't arrest Jesus.

They didn't ask, "Why are You doing this?"

Everyone knew the reason why.

Instead, they asked about His authority—His right to take over.

So they demanded a sign from Jesus—how did He respond?

**John 2:19**—*Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple,*

First, notice that Jesus ignores their demand for another sign—He just gave them one.

Second, the Greek word translated "temple" is *naos* (nah-ohs), and can be translated as the "Holy of Holies."

Maybe Jesus physically pointed to Himself when He said, "***Destroy this temple.***"

Jesus is far from clear—He answers with allegory because the priests can't comprehend anything spiritual.

Jesus is the Master of allegory—think of all the parables.

The Lord calls His body a "temple"—meaning that there is a transition from worshipping in a building to worshipping a person who is the God/Man—the Messiah.

**John 2:19**—*and I will raise it up in three days."*

Here the Lord prophesies His most important miracles:

The crucifixion, resurrection, ascension.

Jesus asserted that He had the right to do what He did, simply because He is the Lord of the temple.

Likewise, He is the Lord of the church today.

But the priests don't like His answer.

**John 2:20**—*Therefore the Jews said, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and will you raise it up in three days?"*

The priests are astonished by Jesus' reply.

They respond with shock and indignation. Why?

Because unspiritual people cannot and will not understand spiritual things—we'll see this next week with Nicodemus.

The priests misunderstand Jesus and take him literally.

**John 2:21**—*But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*

Even the disciples were equally confused.

Not understanding everything immediately is different from refusing to believe indefinitely.

There's a big difference between the priests not understanding and the disciples not understanding.

Only after Jesus was resurrected did they make the connection.

So, John inserts editorial help.

**John 2:22**—So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this,

In His final instruction to the disciples before His arrest, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will remind them of what He taught.

**John 2:22**—and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

Last week, after the miracle at Cana, “***Jesus revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him.***”

We see that word again—believed.

**APPLICATION:**

As I close, I'd like us to consider two things about worship.

1. Personal worship
2. Corporate/Sunday worship.

When it comes to personal worship, today is a great day to check our own hearts.

Let me ask three questions that aren't in your notes:

1. ***Does zeal for God's house consume you?***
  - If it doesn't, then what does?
2. ***What have you personally let into this sanctuary that shouldn't be here?***
  - We are all part of the Body, and what we do and what we bring affects everyone else.
3. ***What table is the Lord turning over in your life today?***
  - Is there something that you know God will not tolerate in your life, but you do?
  - Name it, repent of it, and walk away from it.
  - Please know you will be tempted to turn that table upright.

So those are some thoughts on your personal worship.

**2. Regarding our Sunday/corporate worship.**

Every church has a culture—it's own DNA.

Every church has a personality shaped by the congregation.

What is our personality at RBC? What is our culture? Our DNA?

What does the Verde Valley say about our worship?

Not about our music—our worship of the one true living God?

As a congregation, do we have a *zeal for God's house that consumes us*?

Or have we become desensitized to God's holiness?

Do we value the reverence that Jesus taught us today?

In Revelation 2, Jesus writes seven letters to seven different churches and critiques them.

Without sounding trite or silly—*If Jesus wrote a letter to us at River Bible Church, what would he say about us?*

What would He say about our worship?

Would he say that we:

- Lost our first love?
- That He's going to remove our lampstand?
- Are not to be afraid of what we are about to suffer?
- That we have some people in the church who hold to false teachings?
- That we tolerate Jezebel?
- That we think we're alive and well/healthy, but we're really a dead church?
- We are lukewarm in our faith.

Or would he say that He knows our works, that He knows that we have little power, but we have kept His Word and have not denied His name.

And because of that—He has left an open door for the Gospel.

I don't know what the Lord would say—but what I do know is that it's not up to me.

The health of any church depends upon its individual members.

There are five ways to view “church.”

I’ve used these examples before, and I’d like to use them again.

**1. Church Home vs. Church Hotel —**

- A church home is where we pray, serve, give, worship, and love others.
- A church hotel is where we expect to be served—it’s a temporary stay.

**2. Transformational vs. Transactional —**

- In a church home, we cooperate with God as He transforms us through His Word and His people.
- In a church hotel, Sunday worship becomes a business transaction.

**3. Spiritual vs. Personal —**

- A church home promotes spiritual growth.
- Personal growth is personal preferences, including music, sermons, and even donuts.

**4. Community vs. Commodity —**

- A church home is a spiritual community where people worship God and serve one another with their spiritual gifts.
- When church becomes a commodity, it focuses on tasks, output and performance.

**5. Holy vs. Happy —**

- A church home is a place of spiritual transformation and biblical community—transformation and community lead us toward zeal and holiness.
- Treating the church as a hotel, searching for happiness, ultimately leaves us dissatisfied, depressed and discouraged because we’re consuming God’s gifts for ourselves.

So let me end where we started:

- Does God's zeal for His house consume you personally?
- Does God's zeal for His house consume us, as a congregation of Saints, here at River Bible Church?

**PRAYER:**

**SONG:**

**BENEDICTION:**

*May the LORD bless you and protect you;*

*may the LORD make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;*

*may the LORD look with favor on you  
and give you peace." (Num. 6:24)*

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