
Last week we found Jesus in a small town in Galilee named Cana where He performed His first miracle—changing water into wine. And before we move on in John, I want to take a moment and have you consider the parallel between this first miracle that Jesus performed and the first miracle that Moses performed in front of Pharaoh. Do you remember Moses’ first miracle – he changed water into blood (a Biblical symbol of judgment and death). I find this interesting because Moses’ is a symbol of the Law of perfection—or God’s standard of righteousness. All who fail to comply with this Law, in its entirety, are held in bondage to judgment and certain death (***Romans 6:23***).

Yet, Jesus changed water into wine—a symbol of the Spirit of God, of life, of merriment, of joy. According to ***Romans 7:6***, we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. And ***Romans 8:6*** tells us that the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

I think these 2-first miracles stand in wonderful contrast to each other and combined they preach the good news of the gospel to all who are willing to listen. These 2-first miracles are a picture of the problem of man and the solution that came through a man as God’s power of *creation* is unleashed through Jesus Christ to confirm His *covenant of blessing* to all mankind.

John 2:13-22

It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove

out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables. Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures: "Passion for God's house will consume me." But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it." "All right," Jesus replied. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

"What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?" But when Jesus said "this temple," he meant his own body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

After the wedding at Cana, Jesus takes the 60+ mile trip down to Jerusalem to take part in the Passover Celebration. This was a mandatory trip as all able bodied males over the age of 13 were required by the Law to be in Jerusalem for Passover. And this was no small event; there would literally be millions of people who would show up for these festivities as they celebrated their great delivery from bondage in Egypt. At this event thousands upon thousands of lambs would be slaughtered and sacrificed in memory of the night when the blood of the lamb was placed on the mantel of the door providing a covering for all who took refuge in that house, as the Angel of death passed over all whose homes were marked by the blood.

This was a monumental and powerful time in Jewish history and a time that God never wanted them to forget. Therefore, God wanted them to celebrate this event each year so that generation after generation would remember the God who saves. But like every good memorial and national holiday, it soon becomes less about the memory and more about the production itself and the economic machine behind it; and what a machine it was.

The years from A.D.1 to A.D.33 were considered to be the high point for Jerusalem and the middle of its great renaissance. The Temple had been restored by Herod the Great and was transformed into a world-renowned wonder (although it would not be entirely finished until A.D. 67—just 3 years before Rome destroyed it). And Jerusalem, well it was more than prosperous. It is said that during this time there were not any real poor living within the city walls, just rich and less rich.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem He would have seen a wall 150-foot high—a wall not of the temple itself but of the gigantic platform upon which the temple was built. The tallest part of the Temple would stand still another 80 feet above this platform. Herod was a construction maniac. He had rebuilt the city's crazy curved roads into a paved grid-system; he built himself a moat-ringed palace complete with water gardens, which was a big feat in this water starved area of the world; he built an amphitheater (in full Greek fashion) and a hippodrome for horse and chariot races. He was the one who was largely responsible for those in Jerusalem adopting the lifestyle of the Greeks.

But his greatest achievement was the Second Temple. Herod built this splendid structure as an extension and enhancement to the Temple which was built after the Jews returned from their exile in Babylon some 500 or so years earlier. If you remember their history, the original Temple built by Solomon was destroyed when

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. 70-years later Darius the Persian, the then ruler of the Babylonian kingdom, allowed certain Jews to return and start to rebuild the Temple. However, this Second Temple was not too impressive, especially considering how beautiful the one Solomon built was. Thus, when Herod said he wanted to improve the Temple, the Jewish leadership was excited, however, the Jews would not allow the Temple to be enlarged beyond Solomon's original dimensions so Herod added a huge 35-acre platform upon which the Temple would sit and he greatly renovated the Temple into an object of magnificence.

This picture shows a model that has been built in Israel which depicts the size and the glory of this building. It was surrounded by porticos on all sides and to the North West was the great complex where about 2,000 Roman troops were housed.

This next diagram gives a more close up view of the Temple itself. On the outside would be considered the court of the Gentiles. Up these stairs was the court of women and they would enter here through the gate of Beautiful. Then up the Nicanor Gate, the Jewish men could enter, but they were required to stay on the outskirts of this area. As shown in this next picture, immediately in front of the Gate would be the Altar of sacrifice and the court of the Priests. Entering in through these gigantic doors would be the Holy Place where the Altar of Incense and the candlestick was placed. And, at the back of this area was the veil through which was the Holy of Holies.

This next diagram gives you a view of the entire top of Mount Moriah upon which Jerusalem was built, the placement of the Temple Mount and some of the other key areas we will become familiar with like the pool of Bethesda, the Royal Palace, the pool of Siloam, and Solomon's porticos. Over here is the Western Wall a portion of which is still standing today and is where the faithful Jews gather daily to pray. You might know it as the Wailing Wall. What remains however is just a

small piece of this gigantic structure. Some of the stones at the Western Wall are 30-feet long and weigh up to 50-tons so that should give you a feel for the massiveness of this structure.

Few remnants of this temple survived its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D, but what survived tends to support descriptions found in the four surviving written sources from approximately the same period: the Gospels; the book of Acts; the part of the Jewish Talmud called the Mishnah; and the histories of Josephus, who was a Jewish priest and commander who later turned and became a Roman military aide. He lived in the years A.D. 30 to A.D. 100.

In terms of the archeological remnants, a stone was found inscribed with the words TO THE PLACE OF TRUMPETING, which corroborate Josephus' description of the signal for the beginning of the Sabbath. And still there was another discovery of a sign warning that if any non-Jew entered they would be responsible for their own death which would quickly ensue.

NO FOREIGNER
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AND THE PLAZA OF THE TEMPLE ZONE
WHOEVER IS CAUGHT DOING SO
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FOR HIS DEATH
WHICH WILL FOLLOW

So the sights and the smells at the Temple Mount would have been intense. The Temple Mount was itself like a small city. There were literally thousands of priests, attendants, and temple soldiers with their minions. Add to that the

worshippers, the animals, the smoke, the smell of blood, and you have got a pretty intense scene.

As Jesus would have entered the Court of the Gentiles there would have been all the money changers and the merchants selling animals for sacrifice. This was the heartbeat of the economic engine. The Law required that the animals offered as a sacrifice must be unblemished; and, wouldn't you know, the only ones who could make the determination of what was "unblemished" were the priests. This has compromise and corruption written all over it. If anyone tried to bring their own animals into the Temple, the priests would reject the offering saying it was blemished; thus, they would have to buy one of the ones that were offered by the merchants—of which the priests got their cut.

In addition, you could only purchase animals for sacrifice using temple money (the Shekel); thus, everyone would have to exchange their Greek and Roman money, which were the common currencies of the day, for the money used in the Temple. These money-changers were essentially bankers and they took a cut of around 2-4% on the exchange, from which, of course, the priests took their own cut.

So this whole system was wired for the benefit of the priests and there was really no way around it. You were required to be there, you were required to have "unblemished" animals, and you were required to change your money for Temple coinage—quite the system. Historians tell us that during this time the Priests lived as some of the wealthiest citizens in Jerusalem and they doused themselves in Roman luxuries.

This is the backdrop to Jesus' visit to the Temple recorded in our text. Being an able bodied male, Jesus would have found Himself in this exact spot every year from the time He was 13—so this experience was not new and He was not, all of a

sudden, shocked by what He saw. I am sure that year after year His heart was grieved by the whole charade; but this year everything would change. He was ready to have a power encounter. Jesus makes a whip from some ropes and He goes crazy on them. He turns over tables, scatters the money all over the floor, frees the animals and drives them out of the courtyard, and told the merchants to "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!"

Imagine, in this great platform there are thousands and thousands of people and there is this one man going crazy creating an uproar. People are moving out of His way, animals are running wild, and everything is suddenly in chaos. The priests have never seen anything like it. Who is this man and what does he think he is doing?

I find the next part of this story extremely odd. Why do you think the priests just came and questioned Jesus, why did they just not immediately arrest the rabble rouser and take Him out of there? They could have done it; after all they had their own temple guards. And Jesus was spoiling their big religious and money making event. Don't you think it is a bit strange that they gave Him such deference? Why do you think they did this?

First of all, we know that this was not Jesus' time; which meant that nothing could happen to Him outside of the sovereign will of God. We will see this later in John when they try to arrest Jesus and He just miraculously slips through the crowd and escapes. God would simply not have it—it was not His time!

This should be quite comforting to you for it really amplifies the point of God's control over your life. Nothing and I mean nothing can happen to you absent God's assent; and everything He allows to happen to you is supported by His love and is intended to help accomplish His goal of conforming you into the image of His Son.

For the believer, nothing is random nothing is capricious, and nothing is for naught. God is in control, period, and no one can circumvent His plan!

Second, these priests had to be very afraid for they knew that they had no real authority from the Lord. They dressed the part and they acted the part, but they were just a bunch of posers. Their entire authority was on loan to them from the Roman government. These priests, although Levites, were not from a true high priestly family and the high priesthood was now nothing more than a political office that the Romans used to ensure favor and a peaceful coexistence. Further, these priests were sell-outs to the Greek culture and they needed the power behind the economic machine of the Second Temple to sustain the lifestyle to which they had become accustomed.

So they knew their power and authority was not legitimate; thus, they were paranoid and always scheming to keep control (which illegitimate rulers always have to do). Yet, at the same time, they seemed to have a fear of God and were concerned about the arrival of one, according to their sacred texts, who had true authority and would likely remove them from their seat of power.

Remember, how they came to John the Baptist and questioned Him on the basis of authority. They wanted to know if he was the Messiah, the Elijah, or the Prophet, (one that they would recognize as having true authority which would supersede their own). And as soon as John said he was not one of those, they asked him what right he had to baptize. And then John really stuck it to them when he told them that he was not the one they needed to worry about, but that there was another one, in their midst, who was ready to start his ministry who has real power and authority. John told them that he was not even worthy to untie His sandals. I am sure this started a wave of paranoia that sent shock waves through the leadership.

Then all of a sudden this man shows up and just takes authority. There is no discussion, there is no negotiation, and there is not even a feigned attempt to show respect for their position or their authority. No, this man shows up and physically and violently takes authority over the Temple Mount.

And to boot, this man claims true authority and more than true authority, He claims ultimate authority. He threw over tables and drove people out claiming that this Temple was His Father's house; yes, His Father's house. This was no ordinary claim; in fact, in the mind of those who heard it Jesus might as well have said that this was His house. Yes, this statement would have been understood by those who heard it as if He was claiming to have the authority of God—which could only be possible if Jesus was from God.

We will see this again in *John 5* where Jesus made reference to His Father and the Jews sought to kill Him because, as they said, by making this reference He was claiming equality with God. This was huge. You must understand, a Jew would not even say or write out the full name of God but only an abbreviation because that name was too holy—too perfect. And this man shows up and stakes possessory claim, as a Son, to the Temple—calling it His Father's house. Properly understood, this was a public claim, by Jesus, of divinity; He was saying He is part of the Godhead.

The priests had never seen anything like this. Sure there had been people who challenged their position and their authority, like the Essenes, but they usually faded into the fringe of society and were of no real impending threat. The Romans had already put down many rebels with messiah complexes. But his strange man takes authority. He does not wait for it to be given and he is not even surrounded by a great army of supporters. He is His own support and He claims His authority comes from God. His words alone have power. As a result, these priests were very

afraid. Therefore, instead of having Him arrested, they asked Him to provide proof that God had indeed given Him authority to do what he had done.

Notice, they did not laugh at the claim that this was His Father's house. They did not treat Jesus as if He was a crazy man and needed medication. They did not call in the men with white coats. No! They did not miss the gravity of what He said—they fully understood His claim. Thus, they wanted some proof:

“If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it.”

Not backing down at all, Jesus answered their challenge by again making a statement of ultimate authority—appealing to the *creation* power of God which will produce life from the dead. Take my life and in 3-days I will raise it up again. But this time they did not understand what He said for He spoke to them in a parable referring to His body as the Temple. Naturally, they responded with disbelief:

"What!" they exclaimed. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?"

And that is it; end of story. They did not arrest Him, they did not punish Him, and they did not even touch Him. And, as far as we know, there was not even any further dialogue. Jesus disrupted their money making machine claiming authority based on His relationship with God; a claim that no other mere man would or could

dare to make. His words had authority and His words alone provided all the proof that was needed.

On this point of authority, I want you to notice in verses **17-22** that the disciples' source of ultimate authority to which they compared all that Jesus said and did was the Bible of their day, what we would call the Old Testament. **Hebrews 10:7** says told that the scroll of the book (or the entire Old Testament) was written about Him. So the disciples referred to the Scriptures and believed. All that Jesus said and did was not only supported but revealed in the Word of God.

This is a powerful lesson for us. What are you using as your ultimate source of authority in your life? Your own wisdom, common sense of the day, the wisdom taught you by professors, teachers, parents, politicians, philosophers, religious leaders, or what? What is your source of ultimate authority?

I know for me I want it to be the Word of God, but I also know that my *old man* still prefers his own wisdom and demands his right to be heard. I hate this battle, but the more and more that I let the Word of God become my *authority*, the more ridiculous my *old man* seems to me and the easier it is to dismiss his thoughts and ways.

Now, it is not enough to say that the Word of God is your authority or even that you want the Word of God to be your authority; it must become your ultimate *authority*. The disciples went to the Word and searched out the prophecies about Jesus. They studied and put in the effort to discern the Word and then they made the choice to believe it. This was not mere head knowledge to them. It was not even some spiritual truth that they ascended to in the innermost parts of their being. No! They chose to live according to what they believed and, as a result, faith was birthed in their lives.

This is the same process that we must go through. Believe me there is no short cut. I have tried to find one and so has everyone else, but there simply is no short cut to living a life of faith. It is based on making the Word of God your *priority* meaning that you will study it, search it out, and discern the truth that lies within. Then you must make the decision to believe what it says and let the Word of God form your reality. It must take a higher place in your life than your experiences, than your feelings, than your own wisdom, and even those voices in your head telling you to not believe it. Nothing can have a louder voice in your life.

But still that is not enough. You must then make the ultimate decision of faith and that is to make your choices according to what you know to be true from the Word of God. And in so doing, you will find life and power, strength and stability, and peace. Remember, there is no short cut! The way of faith is very narrow.

I would encourage you to take everything I ever teach you and compare it to the Word of God, and if it is not supported then reject it. But if what I teach you is founded in the Word of God, regardless of your feelings of like or dislike for me, you have a serious issue that you have to face—an issue of faith. Are you going to do the work to search out the truth? Are you going to choose to believe the truth? Are you going to make your day-in-and-day-out decisions according to the truth?

Think about this story of Passover. Think about the leaven—or the sin—that infected the Temple and impacted and impeded the ability of the people to truly be in fellowship with God. They may have made the Word of God their *priority*, hence all the religious trappings, but it was not their ultimate *authority*. Think about how violently Jesus attempted to remove the leaven and how He insisted on the Temple being purged. Think about how He challenged everything the religious system had become.

Then consider that your wrong belief and unbelief are the money changers, the merchants, the temple priests and assistants, the illegitimate rulers of your Temple. Think about that for a moment; your *old man* has a place in the courtyard of the Temple of God; a place that does not belong to him. Do you know what Jesus wants to do? He wants to turn over the tables, drive out the merchants and the animals of religious sacrifice, and dismantle the so called authority of these false rulers and false teachers that speak into your life. He wants to dismantle the religious system of worship that you have adhered to and He wants to restore true worship in the Temple of God.

Do you realize that you are the Temple, the place where God dwells?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

And then again in 2nd Corinthians Paul tells us:

2 Corinthians 6:16-18

For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people." "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you." "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.

When we accepted Jesus as our Savior we became born-again and God miraculously created within us what He calls a *new creation*. This *new creation* is His Temple and it is in this holy place that the Spirit of God dwells. It is where we meet Him, where we fellowship with Him, and where we worship Him.

This is an amazing thing. This is a miracle and a privilege that we must not waste away by pursuing our own ways and demanding that God does things the way we want them done. The leaven of unbelief and wrong belief must be purged from our lives—even violently if necessary. True worship must be restored between us and God and that takes a separation from our *old man* and all that is unclean, including all our religious attempts to get God to be ok with who we are and how we want to do things. If your ability to worship is impeded, I assure you your *old man* is in the way and you need to yield to the *authority* of the Word of God in your life.

Remember, passion for God's house burns within Jesus; therefore, He will not deal with you on the basis of your *old man*, so stop trying. Be separate, set apart, do not touch what is unclean, and you will be welcomed into fellowship with the living God. In fact, He will be your Father and you will be His sons and daughters. You will hold the same position with the Father that Jesus holds. Simply Amazing! It's time for you to drive out your wrong belief and unbelief.

John 2:23

Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him.

The priests demanded a sign and Jesus only gave to them confusing words; but to others He gave a reason to believe. In fact, after seeing Jesus back up His words with miracles many believed that Jesus just might be who He said He was—His Father's Son.

Let's pray.