A Shocking Moment

Has God Ever Surprised You?

Rarely do all four Gospels describe the same incident. That is the case with the crucifixion and the resurrection. Also when Jesus miraculously fed a large crowd who had come to hear Him preach. John 2 describes a third time a moment in Jesus' life is documented by the four Gospels. It is the famous confrontation between Jesus and the vendors in the Temple at Jerusalem. **When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"** (John 2: 13-16 NIV) When Matthew, Mark and Luke describe what happened, they indicate that Jesus' violent reaction was due to the fact that with all the chaotic and corrupt commerce going on in the Temple grounds, there was not enough quiet for peaceful praying. **"It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"** (Luke 19: 46 NIV) For centuries, people have wanted a place to go meet with God outside their homes. Just this past week someone got in touch with me wanting to know if she could at times come to our sanctuary and pray. Jesus clearly believed that the Temple was to be just such a place, but who can concentrate on God when all anyone wants who is there is to make a deal? Now I have known people who came to church services just to build their business, hoping to gain new clients. This anger of Jesus was due to an even more egregious sin. The money making was stopping people who legitimately wanted to spend time with God from being able to focus on Him and this made Jesus furious. Our Big Idea is this. Make it your lifelong passion to have zeal for God's house.

John however tells us there was something else that was bothering Jesus. It was zeal for God's house. **His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."** (John 2: 17 NIV) This is much more than simply wanting a quiet place for people to pray. It was an assertion of priorities. Let me explain. Immediately, after He drove out the merchants in the Temple complex, Jesus was confronted by a group of religious leaders. **Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"** (John 2: 18 NIV) Keep in mind that Jesus not long before turned the water into wine, something John called a "miraculous sign", the first of them in fact. Now the leaders wanted something of that sort to prove He had the spiritual authority to demand the merchants get out of the Temple grounds. His reply was shocking to them. **Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"** (John 2: 19-20 NIV) Notice this. It is a crucial point. The Temple represented Jesus' body.

Both the Disciples as well as these Jewish leaders focused on the wrong Temple. Luke describes a time when the Disciples expressed their awe over the beauty of the Temple. Jesus though was not impressed. **Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."** (Luke 21: 5-6 NIV) Jesus did not care a whit how the Temple looked as it soon would be completely wrecked. This was certainly an amazing assertion to make as the Temple grounds were one of the biggest religious facilities in the world, covering 35 acres. In fact, some of the stones used to build it weighed 50 tons. This Temple was known commonly as Herod's Temple. It had been rebuilt 400 years prior to Jesus' birth, but had become dilapidated over time and Herod, wanting to endear himself to the religious Jews, spent a fortune rebuilding, expanding and refurbishing it. It was even bigger than the Temple Solomon built! Lest you think Jesus was impressed by the faithfulness of King Herod, keep in mind the sort of man he was. Herod had his own wife and three sons murdered. He ordered the massacre of the children of Bethlehem when he found out about the birth of Jesus and just before he died, Herod ordered the murder of 300 political leaders. That was the sort of person, the renovator of the Temple was. No wonder Jesus was not impressed. Yes it took 46 years to build the Temple, but what good was it if it was as Jesus put it, a "den of robbers", built by murderers.

Let's return to the idea that the Temple was connected by Jesus to His own body. The value in the Temple was not in how it looked but what it was to accomplish. We are not told anything about how Jesus looked. Was he tall or short, chubby or skinny, did he have big or small eyes? Did he have a cleft chin, what was the complexion of his skin? We don't know. Isaiah the prophet does say this about Him. **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing**

in his appearance that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53: 2 NIV) What the Bible makes clear about the Temple that was Jesus is that how it looked on the outside was irrelevant but how it looked within is everything. The wonder of Jesus is not in His appearance or even what others thought of Him but in His life, His perfect, sinless life. The Bible says this about Him. **"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."** (1 Peter 2: 22 NIV) **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.** (Hebrews 4: 15 NIV) **But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.** (1 John 3: 5 NIV)

Now let us turn to the main point. The Bible says that you are the Temple of the living God. You are His home. **Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.** (2 Corinthians 6: 19-20 NIV) Many have completely twisted this verse to indicate that it is all about having a healthy body; not smoking or drinking or eating much sugar. All of that is well enough but it is far from the point; in fact it is not the point at all. Paul said this to make clear the importance of living a holy life, being faithful to God and obeying His words. He goes on to point out how ludicrous it is to be involved in any way with idols. **What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."** (2 Corinthians 6: 16 NIV) A most amazing revelation found in the Bible, one we are so familiar with but we take completely for granted, is that you are the home of God. He lives in you and the Temple Christ cares most about is you. Now, here is something that needs to be corrected that many Christian teachers and leaders have either completely misunderstood or misrepresented. God is not interested in your success, your popularity, your accomplishments or how productive you are. If He were, He would not have angrily driven out the merchants on the Temple grounds. He wants you, above all else, to be a house of prayer. The Temple is not built for you to get done what you think needs to be done. It is built solely for the purpose that you will be so thoroughly aligned with Christ Himself that when people look at you, like they were to do with the Temple in Jerusalem, they think of God.

I wonder, if Jesus were standing within you, just as He did in the Jerusalem Temple, what would He do there? What would He have to say about that Temple, the address of which is you. Many completely waste their lives and make nothing of them, not because of a lack of accomplishments or fun moments, but because they have done nothing to make the Temple a house of prayer. If you are to set a goal this year that will have lasting ramifications, that will stand the test of time, then make this your goal. Make yourself a house of prayer, so aligned with Christ and His view of holiness that He has nothing in you to correct or rebuke. The big idea is something to live by the rest of your life. Make it your lifelong passion to have zeal for God's house.