

Matt 21:12-17

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Preacher: Hywel Jones

[0 : 00] Turn with me please to the portion of scripture that we read from the New Testament, Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21 and verses 12 to 16.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21, verses 12 to 16. We are still with the subject and the theme of the temple of God.

Jesus cleansed, that's the term that's used, he cleansed the temple twice. Once at the beginning of his ministry and now in its last week.

It isn't a case that John chose to insert an account of this action at the beginning of his Gospel for theological reasons.

There were these two occasions, beginning and ending. Jesus was God's king, his Messiah. He, when he entered the city of Jerusalem, made not for Herod's palace or Pilate's palace, but for God's temple.

[1 : 38] That was where he belonged. It was in connection with that, that his whole ministry was geared one way or the other.

These two occasions are not to be conflated, brought together as if they were one.

There are striking similarities between them, but also significant differences. This morning from John 2, we saw that Jesus spoke about the temple of his body.

And predicted that the Jews would destroy it, the crucifixion. But that he would raise it again on the third day, the resurrection.

So it happened, didn't it? Christ Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried and he rose again the third day, physically, according to the scriptures.

[3 : 04] What resurrection could be a resurrection after death if it were not physical? If it is not physical, it's fictional.

And if it's fictional, it's worthless. It's a dream, it's an illusion, it's an idea, it's a longing, but it isn't a reality.

He died. History. He was buried. History. History. He rose again from the dead.

History. But here in Matthew's gospel, immediately before his death and resurrection, he again interacts with the Jews in connection with their temple.

And what he has to say about it indicates that its significance is bound up with God and with himself.

[4 : 22] And it isn't something that they have the right to deal with and understand in their own terms.

That was part of the gross sinful failure of the Jews. That in spite of all that had been known to them in the Old Testament scriptures and provided for them, that they regarded their national identity and the religious distinctives which marked them out as a nation, as meaning that they were in a position of particular favor with God.

So the temple was theirs rather than God's. And here Jesus reminds them from the Old Testament scriptures that that temple was intended to be a house of prayer for all nations.

So Matthew records it. Sorry, so Mark records it. For all nations. And it's to be a house of prayer. Not a house of trade.

A place where God is to be glorified rather than where man is to gain advantage that is temporal and material.

[5 : 55] And where divine things are misappropriated and misused by human beings, as in this case, the expression a den of thieves, a cave of robbers is appropriate.

Plundering divine things and turning them to selfish ends and their own glory.

I want us to think about what Matthew records this evening under two headings. The first is the demise of the temple.

The demise of the temple. We normally refer to this incident and the one in John 2 by the word cleansing.

Quite serviceable and to a degree appropriate. Because what was happening in that holy place was corruption.

[7 : 15] And therefore to deal with those practices, the action of Jesus can be called a cleansing. There were these animals there.

And there were money changers there. Because it was Passover time. And there were three feasts per year. In which Jews were called upon to go to Jerusalem to worship.

But by this time, Jews had been scattered. Through the various parts of the ancient world. As Acts chapter 2 indicates to us.

And so those who would make their way to Jerusalem for the purpose of worship. Would need sacrifices. And they would need the temple tax. And so in order to provide the facility.

The high priest permitted this kind of activity. In the outer courtyard of the temple. Where various kinds of acceptable animals could be purchased for sacrifice.

[8 : 26] And where currency could be exchanged into Tyrian money. The silver of which was more valuable.

That's why they were there. And Jesus comes into that situation of impurity.

And acts radically. In the way that we are familiar with. So the term cleansing. Is not inappropriate.

But if we were to understand the term cleansing. As removing dross. So that what remains could be carried on.

Then we're misunderstanding. The activity of Jesus at this point. He was not endorsing.

[9 : 30] In an unqualified manner. What was going on in the temple. Rather. He was predicting its end.

Now in John 2. It's at the beginning of his ministry. And there he rehabilitates. The temple. In something of its proper glory and worth.

Three years have passed. Of rejection of the Messiah. Of distortion of his words.

Denial of his deeds. And of the Old Testament scriptures. That he taught. And so we come to the end of his life.

And the end of his life. Signals the culmination. Of the unbelief of the Jews. And therefore this action on his part.

[10 : 29] Is much more serious. It's much more profound searching. We're moving to a point of finality.

In the Old Testament. The house. Or the houses of God.

Were destroyed. What happened to the tabernacle? No one knows. That was constructed.

According to the pattern. Shown Moses on the mount.

The temple of Solomon. That was patterned after that. But. 586 BC. The Babylonians came. Raised it to the ground. 70 years later.

Jews return. And they rebuild the temple. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. And then toward. The end of the Old Testament period.

[11 : 31] Herod the Great. Determines that he is going to build. A much more magnificent temple. 46 years. 46 years. It was.

In the process of construction. And there it stood. When Jesus. Last week. On earth. I'm sorry. Last week. In his earthly ministry.

Began. And what he is doing here. Is saying to them. That if they reject him.

That if they reject him. Then. To use his own words. Your house is left. Desolate. You see this account. That we've been reading.

Is part of a large. Section of scripture. In which conflict. Comes to its head. And Jesus speaks. Powerfully. And pointedly.

[12 : 29] You noted the end of this chapter. That we read from. I'm sure. The Pharisees knew. That he was speaking about them. That fig tree.

To start with. The fig tree. The emblem. Of Israel. The nation. That belonged to God. Jesus.

Comes. Hungry. It's got leaves. The fig tree. Usually has fruit. Before leaves. There's no fruit. Only leaves. He curses it. He withers it.

He says. No one shall eat fruit. From you. Ever. Again. Then. He tells them this story. About the two sons.

Gentiles and Jews. Really. Or incipiently. Tax collectors. And. Prostitutes. Someone says to. [13:24] A son. Go and work in my vineyard. No. I'm not. Tax collector. Prostitute. Gender. But later. They go. Says to another son.

The same. Sir. I will. And he didn't. Which did the will of his father. You see the way in which he's sifting out his contemporaries. And they say the one.

Who went. And did. What he'd been told. And then there's the parable of the vineyard. And the owner has tenants. And he sends his servants.

To the tenants to gather fruit. That belongs to him. They're killed. More are sent. They're killed. Then. The owner thinks.

I. Will send my son. They will reverence him. But the tenants say. Here's the heir.

[14:21] Let's kill him. We'll get the vineyard. God. All of these. Teachings. Culminate. In that statement.

That Jesus reminded them of. From the Old Testament. Which we read at the beginning. The stone. Which the builders rejected. The same. Has become.

The head of the corner. God has done this. And it is marvelous. In our eyes. And so. As it goes on. Jesus is. Declaring. Without any. Uncertainty. A word of judgment.

On this generation. You remember these words. Matthew 23. Upon you. Verse 35. On you will come. All the righteous blood.

[15:16] That has been shed on earth. From the blood of righteous. Abel. Genesis 3. To the blood of Zechariah. Son of Berachiah. Whom you murdered.

Between the temple. And the altar. I tell you the truth. All this will come. On this generation. Your house.

Is left to you desolate. Judgment. Judgment. Is going to fall. On the temple. He.

As the real temple. Of God. Is rejected. And destroyed. Their temple. Becomes vulnerable.

Under God's. Just. Judgment. And so it happened. So it happened. 70 A.D. The Romans came.

[16:15] Talk about. The Holocaust. It doesn't compare. With. Josephus. First century.

Historians account. Of the decimation. Of the Jews. In 70 A.D. They said. His blood. Be on us. And our children.

You remember. The disciples. Said to Jesus. When they were on the Mount. Of Olives. Look at these. Wonderful buildings. These great stones.

And Jesus. Said to them. I tell you the truth. Not. One. Stone. Here. Will be left. On another.

Everyone. Will be thrown.

Down. It happened. It happened. No one. Will eat fruit. Heavenly. Eternal. Fruit. From Judaism.

[17:14] Ever again. The temple. Will never be rebuilt. Sacrifices. Will never be. Reintroduced. That's turning.

The whole order. Of redemption. On its head. And undermining. Something most. Significant. About the death. Of Christ. The death. Of Christ. Is the death knell.

Of Judaism. That doesn't mean. Jews can't be saved. Haven't been saved. Have been saved. Will be saved. But they must come. To the Messiah.

And into. The new. Israel. Of God. Into the church. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. There's only.

A wailing wall. Left. Nothing else. Nor is there any. Gospel. In a mosque.

[18:12] Or a synagogue. Or a heathen temple. Beware of pluralism. There aren't.

Many ways to God. There are many ways to Jesus. Others. But he's the only way to God. The demise of the temple.

That's what this action. The second. Cleansing. Of the temple. Indicates. But. But we don't just have.

The demise. Of the temple here. We have. The promise. Of the church. The promise.

Of the church. Jesus. Speaks. About. My. House. Here in. Matthew. 21. My.

[19:10] House. Taking. The words. Of. The Lord. God. Almighty. From. Isaiah. 56. Using them. Of himself. God's.

Temple. Is. In reality. Jesus. Church. International. My.

House. Will be called. A house. Of prayer. For all. Nations. We need. To.

Connect. These. Things. The death. Of Jesus. The demise. Of Judaism. The death.
And resurrection. Of Jesus. The origin. Of the church. We need. As. Evangelical. Nonconformists.
[20 : 05] To connect. The church. More closely. To the cross. Than. We do. And. Each.
Congregation. Where the gospel.

Is central. Needs. To. To. Continually. Realign. Itself. In the whole. Of its life. In all. Of its activities.
With Jesus. Christ. Crucified. And. Raised. From the dead. God. That's. What Jesus.
Is talking. About. He says. Your house. Is. Left. To you. Desolate. My house. He.
Replaces. The one. With the other. We. Are not. To. Conflate. Them. There's. One. Way. There's.
[21 : 01] One. Way. To God. There's. One. Mediator. Between. God. And. Men. The man. Christ.
Jesus. There is. None. Other. Name. Under. Heaven. Given.

Among. Men. Whereby. We. Must. Not. May. Salvation. Isn't. Optional. It's. Essential. Whereby.
We. Must. Be. Saved. He. Is. The. Good. Shepherd. All. That. Ever. Came. Before. Him. Claiming.
To. Be. Messiah. Thieves.
And. Robbers. The sheep. Didn't. Hear. Them. He. Is. The. One. Who. Lays. Down. His. Life. For.
The. Sheep. In. Order. To. Gather. One. Flock.
Jew. And. Gentile. One. Flock. And. One. Shepherd. And. He. Is. The. One. Whose. House. They.
[21 : 56] Become. Whose. Flock. They. Are. And. He. Is. The. One. Who. Is. King. And. Priest.
Over.

Them. That's. Why. I. Read. From. Zechariah. Six. You. Know. From. The. Old. Testament. That.
These. Two. Offices. Were. To. Be. Kept. Separate. The. King. And. The. Priest.
And. Whenever. An. Attempt. Was. Made. By. The. King. Of. The. Day. To. Engage. In. Sacrificial.
Practice. Then. He. Suffered. For. It. Member.
Isaiah. Tried. Leper. Till. The. Day. Of. His. Death. Saul. Tried. And. Was. Um. Was. Set. Aside. In.
Favor. Of. David. King. And. Priest. Jesus. Who. Died. And. Rose. Who. Came. To. Build. His.
House. His.
[22 : 50] Temple. He. Is. The. King. Over. It. He. Is. The. High. Priest. In. It. And.

There. Are. No. Other. In. Terms. Of. The. One. Through. Whom. God. Cares. For. The. Church.
The. One. Through. Whom. We. Come. To.
God. There. No. Saints. And. Virgin. Mary. As. A. Mediatrix. A. Blasphemy. Jesus.
Is. Building. Didn't he say it? Isn't there so much? In the gospel according to Saint Matthew? On this
rock. Peter's confession of him. As the Christ.
The son of the living God. On this rock. I. Will. Build. My. Church. Zechariah. He. Will. Build. The.
[23 : 44] House. He. Will. Wear. A. Crown. And. Be. A. Priest. And. So. He. Will. Build. The.
Church. And.

That's. What. He's. Speaking. About. Here. My. House. It's. The. Temple. It's. The. House. It's. The.
Church. Because. The.
Epistles. Talk. About. One. Corinthians. Do you. Not. Know. That. You. Plural. Are. The. Temple.
Of. God. Yes. The. Spirit. Dwells.
In. Every. Believer. But. Also. Corporately. In. Every. Congregation. That. Owns. The. Name. Of.
Jesus. Christ. That. Congregation.
Corporately. Can. Be. Described. As. The. Temple. Why? Well. Because. God. Dwells. There. And.
The. Verb. Means. He.
[24 : 38] Resides. He. Makes. A. Permanent. Home. There. Through. His. Son. And. The. Word.
For. Temple. Isn't. The. Word. That's. Used. For.

All. The. Sacred. Buildings. It's. The. Word. That's. Used. For. The. Holy. Of. Holies. The. Shrine.
God. Is. In. Our. Midst. Now. Monday.
To. Saturday. Prayer. Meeting. Bible. Study. Because. Jesus. Christ. Has. Died. And. Been.
Raised. From. The.
Dead. On. The. Spirit. The. Spirit. Of. His. Father. Dwells. Resides. Within. The. Church.
That's. What. He's. Talking. About. In. Other. Words. He's. Talking. To. Us. He's. Talking. About.
Us. He's. Talking. About. Those. Congregations.
[25 : 32] To. Which. We. Belong. And. He's. Saying. This. Is. What. You. Are. This. Is. What. You.
Are. To. Be. My.

House. Not. So. And. So. And. So. And. So. So. So. Church. Mine. The. Church.

Is. One. Foundation. Is. Jesus. Christ. Her. Lord. She. Is. His. New. Creation. By. Water. And. The. Word.

From. Heaven. He. Came. And. Sought. Her. To. Be. His. Holy. Bride. With. His. Own. Blood. He. Bought. Her. And.

For. Her. Life. He. Died. So. We. Must. Connect. Cross. Christ.

[26:28] Church. Not. As. If. There. Were. No. Distinctions. Between. Them. Of course. There. Are. But. There. Is.

To. Be. No. Divergence. There. Is. To. Be. No. Disharmony. There. Is. To. Be. No. No. No. No. No. No. Contradiction. Tension. The.

One. Who. Died. And. Rose. Again. Is. The. Head. And. He. Is. The. One. Who. Rose. Again. From. The. Dead. He. Is. The. Living. Lord.

And. He. Is. Among. Us. And. So. We. For. Whom. He. Died. Are. Members. Of.

Him. He. Is. The. Head. Of. The. Body. The. Church. It's. Regulating. Head. And.

[27:22] It's. Animating. Head. Now. We have a few. Glimpses. Here. In. Matthew. 21. Of. What.

That. Entails. They. Could. Only. Be. A few. Instances. Of course. Because. Here. There's so.

Put it like this. There's so much. More. Of. Revealed. Truth. Yet. To be. Disclosed. Than. We have. In the Gospels. Remember. As you're reading the Bible. Old Testament. Corruption. Of the Old Testament. In.

First century. Judaism. Then the Kingdom. Set up. And then the results of it. And there's a line of progression. Of revealed. Redemptive.

[28:15] Truth. Running. Through. The whole. Of the Bible. What we have here. In the. Gospels. Before.

The cross. Before. The resurrection. Are a few. Miniatures. Of what. It means. To be. In this.

Body. In this. Temple. Which is. Christ's. House. He regulates. It. We read that. Later.

Remember it. He regulates it. Church. Order. Comes from the cross. And the empty tomb. And from the heavenly session. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It isn't something that we devise at our own will. And think of what might be useful. What might be effective. And draw up our own plans. And our own programs.

[29:10] As if. We were a headless church. We're not. He is the one. Who first.

Descended. To the lower parts of the earth. And then. Ascended up to the highest heavens. That he might fill all things. And he is the one who gives. Ministries.

In the church. Once and for all. Ministries. Like apostles. Prophets. Evangelists. Ongoing ministries. Pastor. Teacher. For the perfecting of the saints.

That they might grow. Into a holy temple. There's the pattern. That's what we are always to heal to. Not devise our own scheme.

Christ is the one who gives. Pastor. Teachers. Preachers. To his church. His word is paramount. Determines everything.

[30:08] We aren't to devise. Our own schemes. It's laid down. Forever. And we are to adhere to it. In the pastoral epistles.

Of course. There are those who rule. Alongside those. Who are called to teach. So that there is. A plurality. In the church. By. The express designation.

Of the head of the church. He is the one. Who's. To whom the church. Belongs. We are to do his will.

Just as he did his father's will. But there are a couple of. Glimpses here. Of what.

Our church is to be like. When he animates it. And they concern. The children. And the lame. And the blind. A remarkable picture.

[31:08] Isn't it? Do you feel sometimes. As you read the gospel. I'd love to have been there. I'd love to have seen that. These teachers of the law.

And these. Boisterous. Noisy. Children. And it seems. Even. Infants. In their mother's arms.

And they're creating. The kind of hubbub. That respectable. Pharisees. And Sadducees. Find offensive.

And they say to Jesus. Don't you hear what they're saying? And Jesus says. Yes. I hear.

I hear. It isn't that you hear. And I don't hear. It's that I hear. Something you don't hear. Have you never read?

[32 : 09] And he quotes Sam 8 to them. The little children. And then. In the midst of all this commotion. You think of it.

Animals everywhere. Running amok. Tables overturned. Coins rolling everywhere. The lame and the blind.

Come to him. In the temple. They shouldn't have been there. Because of their.

Deformity. Their disability. But. They came. What is this saying to us? Well it's saying.

First of all this. My house. Shall be. A house of prayer. Isaiah 56. And that means worship. And the example.

[33 : 10] Of worship. That he uses. Is. Taken from. What these children. Are saying. Hosanna. Now.

We think of that. As an expression. Of praise. Really. It's prayer. It means. Save us. Hosanna. Even save us now. The son of David. That's praise. That's recognition.

Of identity. That's Messiah. That's king. And priest. And prophet. All together. Father. And in doing that. Of course. This proclamation.

They are. Sounding out. The word of the Lord. As they praise. And pray. That's the pattern.

[34 : 06] For what goes on. In the church. Those are the three. Essentials. Of genuine. Christian. Worship. Jesus Christ.

The son of God. His Messiah. Prophet. Priest. And king. Prayed to. Praised. Proclaimed.

From the Old Testament word. You see. Quoting Psalm 118. The reading of the word. The singing of God's praise.

The proclamation. The preaching of his word. Not merely teaching. In our reformed tradition. Quite rightly. And don't be afraid.

Of that word tradition. This tradition. That's good. And tradition. That's bad. But in our reformed tradition. Preaching has always been defined. As the proclamation. And the application.

[35 : 06] Of the word. To. Not just information. But. Answering the question. In our minds. Well. If that is what that means.

So what? What difference does it make? What difference should it make? The reading of the word. Praise.

Prayer. You know what? I've become conscious. That we've. We've not appropriated. Our heritage. As we should.

I'm sure I'm speaking. For a number of you. But when we were growing up. There was a pattern for worship. And. We regularly adhere to it.

And it's. So much a part of me. That I can't vary from it. Without leaving out a hymn. That I was supposed to announce. This morning. Why? Call to worship.

[36 : 05] Prayer. Hymn. Reading. Hymn. Prayer. Hymn. Sermon. Hymn. Benediction. Why? And it's as if there's no answer.

It's as if. Well this is what's always been done. No. It's not just. As if it's what's always been done. We are coming to God. He calls us into his presence.

With his word. We respond to him in prayer and praise. then we read his word in which he speaks to us and then we respond to him appropriately in our next praise then we pray in light of all that he's been saying and so on and on it goes and that makes you see worship conversation I don't mean chat conversation in which God speaks to us and we speak to him and he replies to us and we reply to him and isn't it living?

We need to recapture this we're in his house not ours we do his bidding not our own but then there's not just a house of prayer praise, prayer, worship, proclamation there's this and the lame and the blind came to him in the temple he'd gone about doing good throughout the whole of his life hadn't he?

well not the whole of his life the three years of his ministry up and down from Galilee down to Judea and he always had time for the poor and needy he would listen to them he would touch them he would pick up little children in his arms bless them you see in addition to speaking with authority he had this great heart of concern sheep without a shepherd saw them was moved within wept for them did more of that because what will happen you see is this that when we are upholding the name of God in the way I've tried to outline quickly and we have a heart for people and tell people about Jesus who died and rose for their salvation they'll come to us the lame and the blind came to him they knew he would receive them we go out and welcome them and if something of him is

present in the way in which we deal with them they'll come too and he will receive them and heal them in David's day

[39 : 54] King David that is before he had a capital in Jerusalem the Jebusites you can read it in 2 Samuel 6 the Jebusites owned the capital and David was intent on capturing it and making it his capital and building a house for the Lord there but the king of the Jebusites derided David and said the lame and the blind can defend this place now you wouldn't enroll those in your army would you and David and his soldiers took the place took and made it the capital and it that became a proverb the lame and the blind shall not enter the house it was a taunt turned on its head those that were nobodies marginalized unfit for service now are part and parcel this great and glorious temple which is being reared by the Lord

Jesus Christ Paul could say not many wise men not many noble not many mighty are called God has chosen the weak things of the world confound the wise foolish things weak to confound the strong foolish to confound that no flesh should glory in his presence doesn't matter that we're a church of nobodies he was a nobody in spite of who he was they came to him and he healed them and this is the church on earth that will become the church in heaven on this rock he says I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it you are the temple of God the spirit of God dwells in you if anyone defiles the temple of God him God will destroy be what you are a spiritual house sound his excellent praises the one who has called you out of darkness into his most marvelous light for Jesus sake

Amen now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant make us perfect in every good work to do his will working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory majesty dominion and power and unto us his grace thy love O God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit now and evermore Amen Amen Amen Amen