

John Chapter 2 v 13 - 25

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[0 : 00] Let's turn together in our Bibles to John and chapter 2. John and chapter 2. If you've got one of the church Bibles, the Red Church Bibles, that's page 1065.

Page 1065 in the Red Church Bible, the Gospel of John and chapter 2. And we're going to read verses 13 to 25. John chapter 2, verses 13 to 25.

It's a subtitle there for us, helpfully put by, if you've got the New International Version, Jesus Clears the Temple Courts. So we're going to read this event in the life of Jesus Christ.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, others sitting at tables exchanging money.

So he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle. He scattered the coins of the money changers, overturned their tables.

[1 : 27] To those who sold doves he said, get these out of here. Stop turning my father's house into a market. His disciples remembered that it is written, zeal for your house will consume me.

The Jews then responded to him, what sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.

They replied, it has taken 46 years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days. The temple he had spoken of was his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people, did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

[2 : 40] We thank God for his word and trust that he will help us to understand it. So please open your Bibles back in John and chapter 2.

And the event that we read about in the life of the Lord Jesus, we'll come to that in a few moments. And hopefully it will help us to understand some of the questions that we have.

Now of course, unless you have been on another planet, as they say, then you can't be unaware of the fact that on Monday night at the Manchester Arena, as thousands of youngsters and parents who'd been attending a music concert were leaving the building, one man set off a bomb amongst the crowd.

Twenty-two men, women and children were immediately killed, along with the bomber himself. And many dozens were injured, some very, very seriously.

Since that day, since that event, the media, TV, newspaper, internet, have given almost all their attention to finding out every detail about the tragedy.

[4 : 02] Who was this man? What drove him to act with such malice? Who were these people who were killed and injured?

And every single person in the country, and possibly beyond, has an opinion, a point of view, a reaction to these events. Yes. So we've had heads of states from different countries interviewed, presidents, prime ministers, yes, religious leaders of every variety as well, ordinary people, have all made a comment, expressed their outrage at what has happened.

Perhaps I'm wrong in thinking, and perhaps I haven't heard this yet, but I have not read or heard of anyone asking, what does God think about this?

After all, the reality is, as we know, this bomber, just a young man of 22, and a large number of people who think the same way that he does, believe that this attack was something that God wanted.

Believe that this was something that was pleasing to God. They believe that this bomber went straight to heaven. Because he sacrificed his life, he has earned some eternal life.

[5 : 29] Many other people feel very differently, of course. Many think that this atrocity shows that really we must not believe in any God at all, because if belief in a God can lead to such a twisted and evil act, it's better not to believe in God.

It's better to believe that there is no God. These people declare that all religion is bad. All religion is dangerous.

Better to have no religion. But of course, for many people, most people I think, in the UK at least, majority of people, they will have taken it for granted in their minds and thoughts, well of course, God hates this.

He hates this violence. He hates the taking of life. The question still remains, what does God think? We can presume or assume to know what God thinks, but what does he think?

Is there an answer to that question? Some people say, well surely it's impossible. Perhaps even you maybe this morning say, well it's impossible to know what God thinks. It's impossible for us to know how he is affected by what happens in this world, not just in Manchester as we thought before in Egypt and Syria, and all the other things that go on every day, where there is all sorts of loss of life and evil.

[6 : 58] Is it impossible to know the answer? No, I don't believe it is, because the Bible positively refers to itself as the revelation of God's thoughts. The Bible is God telling us what he thinks, that God is telling us how he acts, that God is telling us what he has to say.

The Bible is not simply a history of people who believed in God or who were seeking to understand God. The Bible is God telling the world who he is, what he's like.

That's why again and again, particularly when you read in the Old Testament, you'll find that people will say and write, this is what the Lord says. God had spoken to them and through them, and they wrote it down.

And this is what the Bible has to say about itself in 2 Timothy 3.16. All scripture, that's all that we have in the Bible, is God breathed, God spoken out, God's word.

And in one of Peter's letters, he writes and helps us to understand about how we come to know God's word. He says this, Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture, no declaration of the Bible, no words of the Bible, came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.

[8 : 19] People will say to you, well, of course, the Bible is just men's thoughts, men's words. He's saying, no, that's not the case. The Bible is not simply human thinking. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

God, the Holy Spirit, supremely authored the Bible. It's God's word, God speaking, God revealing, God telling us.

And the whole of life, of course, is found in the Bible. The whole spectrum of human experience is laid out in the Bible. We have the most dark and awful episodes of evil and wickedness and inhumanity.

And yet we have the most bright and glorious and beautiful virtues and deeds as well. And everything in between. The Bible is not a niche book, if I can put it that way.

Just in a little corner, it's a book that speaks about the whole panorama of life and God's involvement in it. For in all that the Bible has to say about God, it speaks about him at work in this world.

[9 : 32] It speaks about him with his sleeves rolled up, involved in, stuck in, handling. That's why in seeking this question, an answer to this question, we're looking at this event here in John chapter 2.

We could have looked in many different places. We could have looked in many different areas to look at how God deals with and reacts to and acts in certain circumstances. But we're looking here this morning at Jesus Christ as he clears the temple of market trades.

You say, well, why are we looking there? Why are we looking at the life of Jesus to answer this question? Because again, the plain testimony of the Bible is that Jesus Christ is God living in this world. If we really want to know what God is like and what he thinks of the world and how he interreacts with the world, then we look at Jesus Christ, God, who is God and man.

Not just a prophet, not just a messenger from God or a preacher of God. He is God living as man amongst us. Both God and man in one unique person.

And it's not just because that's what Christians think about him. It's because what Jesus thought about himself, what Jesus declared about himself. In John chapter 14, verse 9, he says to his disciples, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

[11 : 00] God. Anyone who's seen me has seen God. What a thing to say. And certainly those who opposed him, those who ultimately were moved to bring him to death and destruction upon the cross, they certainly understood what he was saying about himself.

That's why they wanted to kill him. That's why at one point they were going to stone him. In John chapter 10, these are his enemies, the religious leaders. We're not stoning you for any good work you've done, but for blasphemy.

That is, because you a mere man claim to be God. So they understood. And those who met with Jesus recognized him as such as well.

Remember Thomas, the doubter, as he's often referred to. Yet he was the one who made this extraordinary claim when he met with Jesus after he had been raised from the dead. My Lord and my God.

Jesus Christ is the one who truly reveals to us the thoughts of God. For, as it's written in Hebrews 1, as the Son of God, he is the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being.

[12 : 10] That's why we worship Jesus. That's why he is the very center of all that we are about as Christians, because he is the one who teaches us, reveals to us, shows us the very thoughts, the very actions, the very words of God.

You say, well, why are we here then? So, yes, we appreciate that Jesus is God, that he speaks to us of God, that he reveals to us of God, what God's attitude is.

So why are we here in John 2? Because here, I believe, is the answer to our immediate question. Here we have a snapshot, as it were, of God's character, of God's attitude.

And what we see clearly here points us to the answer we're seeking. Because here in this episode, here in these events, we see Jesus Christ, as God, is angry.

He is angry with what he sees. As he enters the temple, God's temple, that place which was set apart purely for the worship of God, where men could come to God and know forgiveness of sin from God and relate to God and him speak to them.

[13 : 22] There in the midst of that, there were men and women making money. It's always been the way. And Jesus, as he looks around, sees them cheating and stealing in that sense.

Because what would happen is that as people came to Jerusalem, they would come and to know God's forgiveness, they'd need to bring a sacrifice, either as a bull or a sheep or a goat or a pigeon or whatever.

Now, if you're traveling some distance, it's a bit difficult to put a cow in your suitcase and get it to Jerusalem. So you would go there and you would buy one. But of course, the price you would pay at the temple would be a lot more expensive than the price you'd pay at home and so people were making money.

And also, when you were to bring an offering to God, sometimes it would be with money. And you would need to use the temple shekel, a particular coin to pay your tax, to pay your gift.

And again, you didn't use that in everyday life. You had Roman coins. And so you would have to go and get your money exchanged. But instead of being a bureau exchange, in that sense, it would give you a fair price.

[14 : 33] Again, you would have to pay a lot more for your shekel than it was actually worth. And so here, in the midst of all this chaos, in one sense, you can imagine, cows mooing, sheep bawling, people haggling, doves maybe escaping and flying around.

Instead of people being concentrated upon God, they are concentrated upon greed. And Jesus, we're told, takes a whip of cords and drives them from the temple.

He is angry. And Jesus does get angry. We often think about baby Jesus, meek and mild, but Jesus is angry. We're told even elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus looked round at them in anger because of their stubborn hearts.

Now in our minds, of course, anger is something which we see as negative. When somebody's angry, we think it's wrong. When we get angry, it immediately relates to something which is to do with our selfishness.

We're angry because somebody has done something to us which has offended our pride or our ego or has upset us. We think of anger as losing our temper and raging and shouting. But the reason for that is because every single one of us is tainted with sin.

[15 : 47] Every part of our nature has been polluted by sin. And that means that everything that we do is twisted and ruined by sin.

You see, God is pure. God is holy. And so every emotion of the heart of God is pure and holy including anger. Now we have a little reference here from John and John was one of the disciples so he knows what they were thinking in verse 17.

His disciples remembered that it is written, zeal for your house will consume me. They saw Jesus' actions as something of zeal, something of passion.

And they remember a verse from the Psalms in which David speaks about how he was so angry and zealous for God's house because people were misusing God's name and insulting God and the things that belonged to God.

I want to say to you, dear friends, that according to God's word that God's attitude to what happened in Manchester is this, that he is angry. Aren't you angry?

[16 : 54] Aren't you angry with what happened there? Doesn't it make you furious that children were murdered, that young people were murdered, that parents coming to pick up their children were murdered? Don't we feel a rage at such cruelty and wickedness?

Now people, some of them are wrongly, wrongly turning their anger against anybody who happens to look like they're a Muslim. That's not the way. That's just simply doing exactly what the man did, isn't it?

Hating. In one sense, terrorism is winning. If it turns us to hate. And if we feel angry and upset with what was done there, surely God must feel angry as well.

What sort of God would it be? What sort of God could we worship? What sort of God could we trust who is indifferent about the loss of life in this way? What sort of God would we be worthy of our worship when he sees wickedness and he doesn't feel anything about it?

No, he is angry. In Isaiah, the prophet writes this, the Lord is angry with all nations. Our God is a God of pure anger.

[18 : 05] And yes, Jesus is angry here because these people were abusing the faith of others, because they were making profit out of what should have been God's worship, because they were treating God as a slot machine to get their money for themselves when they come to worship him.

And if Jesus is angry at that, which he, which is right to be angry about, how much more is God angry about what happened in Manchester? But let's look a little bit closer to home.

Let's bring it a bit closer from Manchester. Let's bring it home to us here this morning. Surely the pressing question must be not only what does God think about that violence, that wickedness, what does God think about my sin?

What does God think about my wickedness? Haven't every one of us got a catalogue, in one sense, at least in our minds, of actions, a lifetime of selfishness, a lifetime of pride, a lifetime of greed, even at times hate, even at times malice, perhaps not extending to physical violence, though maybe so, but certainly extending to verbal violence, mental violence, heartfelt violence, hatred, hatred, hatred, of others.

Haven't we got in our cupboard plenty of skeletons? And shouldn't God be angry with those things? Shouldn't God be angry with our thoughts and our words and our actions?

[19 : 41] Yes, He is. in fact, because of these undeniable sins that all of us have committed and all of us continue to commit, the Bible tells us that we are under God's anger.

We are objects of God's wrath. That's His controlled anger, His righteous, positive anger against what is wicked. Here's what Paul writes to the Christians, reminding them, all of us also lived among the people of this world, at one time gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, following its desires and thoughts, like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

It's so much easier to be angry at other people's sin than at mine. God is angry at sin wherever He finds it, in whatever heart, in whatever life.

There's something more here, isn't it, in this, and this is why I chose this passage. There's something more here, isn't it? It's not only that we see in one sense the anger of Jesus, we know that He's angry, but we see again, of course, the fact that God is active against sin.

God is active against sin. And surely the question that many people are asking is not simply what does God think about what happened in Manchester, but surely many people are asking why hasn't God done something about it?

[21 : 19] Why hasn't God done something about the evil in this world? And again, many people, will come to the conclusion, or some people will come to the conclusion, well, of course, the reason that God hasn't done anything about it is because there is no God.

It's one of the key stones of atheism. Because there's wickedness and evil in the world, there cannot be a God because surely we would see Him working and active and doing something about it.

And therefore, because we don't see Him doing anything, therefore He doesn't exist. Is that true? No, it's not. You see, when the Lord Jesus Christ is faced by this wickedness in the temple, when He sees this evil trade in greed and the abuse of people of faith and the abuse of God's wonderful gifts of grace and goodness, He is angry and He takes strong action.

What does He do? He makes a whip out of cords. You can imagine the scene. Here's Jesus. He is beating people. He is kicking over tables. He's chasing them out.

He's not simply just going, God is not a God of touch. He's a God of action. He's a God, not just of word, but of deed.

[22 : 33] We see that all the way through the Scripture. We see that in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. God doesn't simply look down on the world and shake His head and rub His hands and think, if only I could do something for those poor people, but I'm so powerless.

No, He is not that God. The evidence that God not only cares about the people of this world, the evidence that God is not only, that God is actively engaged in doing something in this world, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

His coming into the world is the proof positive that God is at work and God is active. That God does not remain in heaven and looks down, but God comes down. That's the glory, that's the wonder, that's the marvel of the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world.

And God is at work in this world and God has done something in this world and is doing something in this world, but His work is not the way we should think it would be. It's done in His time and it's done in His way.

And every one of us at times feels impatient when we see suffering, impatient about the evil, but let us never think, dear friends, that God is standing idly by and tutting.

[23 : 51] No, God has done something about the evil of this world. God has done something of the most positive, most powerful kind. He sent His Son to stop evil at its very root in the hearts of men and women.

See, many people, if you ask them, what would you have God to do to stop this evil? What would you have Him do? How would you want Him to stop this evil? Say, well, we want God to destroy these people.

We want these people to be condemned. We want ISIS to be overwhelmed. We want them to die. We want them to... But that's not God's way.

See, our way is judgment and violence with violence. God's way is mercy and grace. And so when Jesus is questioned here, what sign will you show us?

What right have you got to do this, to act in this way in this world? Jesus points them to His own death and resurrection. resurrection. Remember the temple? The temple is the place in which God is present for His people to come and worship Him.

[24 : 59] It's that place by which they can approach God. That meeting place. And so when Jesus says, no, you will destroy this temple, He's talking about His body because in Jesus is the meeting place between God and man.

In Jesus is the place where we can come and know God and meet with God and enjoy God. And so Jesus says, not that temple, not this building, my body, and the disciples knew that very well, was going to be put to death and raised in His resurrection on the third day.

In His own suffering, in His own death, Jesus purchased full forgiveness for our sins. Our evil deeds were punished upon Him.

That's mercy. That's grace. That's incredible. That God takes the sins, the sins of evil men and women like us, and instead of punishing them as He has every right to do, He says, I will place upon Jesus, my son, the punishment He deserves.

God's ways are not your ways and mine. God's thoughts are not our ways. But the wonderful thing is this as well, that by His death and particularly by His resurrection, because in His resurrection, He broke the power of sin so that we could live new lives, no longer turning to evil and hate and violence, but living lives which overflow with love and grace and forgiveness and mercy.

[26 : 33] You see, the wonderful thing is this, that here is the world with all of its sin, here is the world with all of its iniquity, here is the world with all of its death, and God has provided a cure, a cure for the heart of men and women who are evil and wicked and sinful.

He's provided an antidote, which creates a new heart of love. Maybe you watch some of these TV programs and these sort of superhero programs and people who, and they get these terrible illnesses which turn them into monsters and zombies and all that, and then somebody finds a cure and the cure transforms them back to the way that they were, the way they should be.

You see, you and I dear friends were created by God to be those that reflect His glory, those that love, those that live for Him, those that reflect who He is in His goodness. But when sin came with all of its poison and rebellion and hatred, it corrupted, it twisted.

Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde made monsters of us all. But when Christ came, He came with the antidote. He came with the cure. He came with the miracle.

He came with the transformation that takes us back to the way we were made to be in relation with God. A heart transplant occurs.

[27 : 55] Whenever somebody repents of their sin and turns to God in faith, in that moment they receive His Spirit within them. And the Spirit within them produces a new crop, a new attitude, a new way of living, a new lifestyle.

Here's what Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit as it is, in the heart of the believer. Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What is needed for those people in ISIS? What's needed for those people who are extremists in their hatred? Is this, they need a new heart. They don't need to be arrested and beaten.

They don't need to be arrested and killed. They don't need to be driven out or underground. They need Christ. That's what God has done for the whole world. For every person, whoever they are.

For every person, whoever they are. But we know this truth, that most people reject that healing that Jesus offers.

[29 : 06] Most people reject that cleansing, that renewing, that transformation. They don't want it. They want to continue as they are. They want to continue in their sin. They want to continue in their darkness.

They want to continue to do those things which please them and their pride and their selfishness and everything else. So God has promised a day is coming. when that cure and that antidote will no longer be available.

It's on special offer. It's free now. But there's coming a day when God will say, you've had your chance. You've had the opportunity. And now I will bring a stop to all evil forever.

God has set a day when his anger against sin will be revealed and there will be judgment and justice in the world. Paul, as he preaches, speaks about this truth.

He says here in Acts in chapter 17. In the past, God overlooked such ignorance. But now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

[30 : 14] For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He's given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead declares to us there's a cure for sin.

But it also tells us there is a day of judgment coming. A day when all evil, all wickedness will be destroyed. When all evil men and women who continue to cling to that sin will face punishment and judgment and eternal hell.

So what does God think about what happened in Manchester? He's angry. What has God done about it? He's provided a cure for sinful hearts that will change and transform.

But he's also set a day when justice will come. Set a day when all evil in this world will end. Well then we might be saying, well God, why don't you do it today? Why won't you act now and bring all this evil to an end?

Why won't you come now in your glory and stop it all once and for all? Why are you stalling? And here's his answer in 2 Peter chapter 3.

[31 : 27] He is patient with you. Not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. Why hasn't God done something about Manchester? Because he's patient.

He's so patient. He's patient because he wants men and women to turn from their sin and be saved. You see, if God came today, if he came at this very moment, if Christ returned at this moment and brought all evil to an end, what would happen to you, dear friends, who have not turned from your sin, who have not trusted Christ, who have not received that life-changing heart transplant?

You yourself will be gathered up and judged and punished. Today we must choose.

That young man, 22, he made a choice as he walked to Manchester Arena on that night. He chose evil. He chose wickedness.

He chose death. Dear friends, we've got a choice every single day. A choice today, especially, when are we going to stop evil?

[32 : 40] When are we going to stand against it? You see, we are quick to condemn. We're quick to tell you how terrible and awful these people are. We're quick to find sin and wickedness in other people's lives.

But we will not find it in our own lives. We find it easy to forgive ourselves for our sins. Well, it can't be helped. It's just human nature and so on.

We find it impossible to forgive the sins that we see in the hearts of others. What are you going to choose? Are you going to choose to continue with a heart which is evil and set against God and a heart that can only bring you and others sorrow, grief, sadness?

Or are you going to choose and ask, Jesus, take away that heart and give me that cure. Make me new.

And dear friends, as Christians, surely this is the best thing that we can do in this world. What can we do against the evil of the world? What can we do against the power of ISIS? What can we do? Well, we can do two things.

[33 : 47] One, we can pray because God is a God of the heart transplant. But then we can tell others. We can tell them that Jesus wants to change their hearts. Surely what a remarkable effect it would have upon the world if many people were beginning to have heart transplants and lives changed.

It would change a community. It would change a county. It would change a nation. It would change the world. It's happened before. As we tell others of Christ. Christ. As we call them to receive his salvation.

God is angry. God is active. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

So much, O Lord, we don't understand.

So much, O Lord, we don't know. But we thank you that all that we need to know you've revealed to us in your word and in your son. For we need to know.

[34 : 59] Which brings hope in this world. For this world. We thank you again, Lord Jesus, that you came.

You didn't stand apart from the wickedness and evil of the world. The suffering and the death. You stepped into the very heart of it. And went to the cross to suffer.

And die. For a sinful, broken, evil world. That it might be cured. Transformed and changed. We pray again, O Lord, for us.

Here this morning. We've got a choice. Will we continue? In the way that we've gone.

Or will we repent? Your word says you command everybody. To repent and turn to you. We ask, O Lord, that you'd move our hearts. That we might turn and receive from you that healing and restoring.

[36 : 02] We pray again, O Lord, for us. Who know and love you, Lord Jesus. Lord, we ask that each and every day. When we have that choice. Between sin and righteousness.

Between what is pleasing to you. And what is hateful to you. Lord, give us your Holy Spirit's help. That we may choose the right.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have a love for men and women. Here in Whitby. In Yorkshire. In the UK. And in this world.

We pray that wherever your wonderful antidote of grace is spoken, shared and spoken of. That men and women would receive it. That our world may be transformed.

That you would save the lost. And that in your good, perfect time. You would come again. To bring a new heavens. And a new earth. In which righteousness lives.

[37 : 00] Amen. Amen. Amen. Now may the God of peace. Who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead.

Our Lord Jesus. That great shepherd of the sheep. Equip you. With everything good for doing his will. May he work in us.

What is pleasing to him. Through Jesus Christ. To whom be the glory. Forever and ever. Amen. Amen.